

The Book of Acts

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Chapter 15

The Jerusalem Council and Decree 15:1-31

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Return from Mission Trip / Confronted / Important – What Saved & Stay Saved

Here in chapter 15 Paul and company have returned from their missionary journey, and immediately are confronted by some Messianic-Jews (and not so Messianic-Jews) questioning what is necessarily to be saved because so many Gentiles got saved on Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey. They will challenge that to be saved one must be circumcised and obey the Law of Moses. So we will read Paul and Barnabas and a council of elders (that includes Peter and James) will gather in Jerusalem to debate and determine what is necessary to be saved. So a very important passage for us today, for in this passage it gives us what is necessary to be saved, and.....to stay saved!

(Acts 15:1 NKJV) And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

Messianic Jews – Jesus Completer – but Keep Rituals / Gentiles – Beach Party

These Messianic-Jews believed that Jesus is the Messiah, and that he was their "completer", but they have issue that salvation can be "just Jesus", and they feel that works (circumcision) and dedication (keeping the Law) are a requirement also. They don't think it is right that the Gentiles can "just" receive Jesus, and skip over all the Levitical Laws (such as dietary laws, circumcision, keeping the Sabbath, etc). Hey they say, we kept all these laws and then they (the Gentiles) just come waltzing into the Kingdom of God, like it is some beach party, just saying I believe by faith and not having to do or show any works!

Satan seeks Legalism / Quench Joy / Diminish Blood – the Lifeline of The Gospel of Grace

So we see Satan is immediately, very early in the church trying to bring legalism into the move of God, to diminish and squash the freedom and joy there is in the "Gospel of Grace", and to diminish the life-line of the Gospel of Grace, and that life-line is the precious blood of Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son.

Stakes high at Jerusalem Council / Still Today – False Teachers – Legalism in Us

The stakes are serious and high, and the decision of this council is paramount for all believers from then until now; they couldn't just agree to disagree for this issue is the heart of all Christianity. Today there are still false teachers around us trying to twist and pervert the Scriptures, and on top of that there is still something in us that makes us want to add to our salvation (for it is difficult by faith to simply believe that God loves me, for there is no unconditional love that compares to God's love for us), so we can put conditions on His love by thinking I've done this today, or better yet didn't do that today, and therefore God is please with me (and that is easy for we are so use to trying to please our parents, our school teachers, our boss and think we have to earn favor from those around us). Very important are the issues that are settled here in this chapter 15. So let's get into the word, verse-by-verse, verse 1.

Conflict over Circumcision

(Acts 15:1 NKJV) And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

Certain Men – Train from Chicago to St. Louis

Verse 1, certain men came down - The story is told that, on a snowy January day at the turn of the century, a crowded passenger train steamed its way from Chicago to St. Louis. At one of many stops along the way, one of the travelers observed a young mother board the train with two small children in tow. "Please, sir, I need to get off at the city of Beaumont," he heard her say to the conductor. The passenger, taking note of the overworked conductor, approached the young woman and said, "The conductor is busy. No doubt he'll forget you want to get off at Beaumont. I've been on this train a hundred times. I'll make sure you get off at the right place." Several hours later, as the train decelerated, the man made his way to the young mother and said, "This is the spot. Here's where you want to get off." Thanking him, she gathered her children and went out into the blizzard. Half an hour passed before the conductor called out, "Where is the woman who wants to get off at Beaumont? It's coming up in five minutes." Horrified at what he heard, the man said, "What do you mean? Beaumont was the last stop we made." "No, sir," replied the conductor. "The last stop we made was to pick up water at a tank in the middle of nowhere." And both men instantly realized that the woman and children had been sent off the train to their deaths.

Not many of you Teach / Cause Blizzard of Confusion

"Let not many of you desire to be teachers," James wrote, "because if you seek to give instruction and direction, there is an inherent possibility that you will lead someone astray" (see James 3:1). And that is precisely what happened in Acts 15. Those who desired to be teachers in the radical missionary church at Antioch came from Jerusalem to give teaching to the new Gentile converts. But, as we will see, their teaching led to a blizzard of confusion and a storm of controversy.

James 3:1 (NKJV) *¹My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.*

(Acts 15:2 NKJV) Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question.

Paul recounts in Gal 2

Paul will say this in the Book of Galatians chapter 2 about this very event:

Galatians 2:1-5 (NKJV) *¹Then after fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and also took Titus with me. ²And I went up by revelation, and communicated to them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation, lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain. ³Yet not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. ⁴And this occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in (who came in by stealth to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage), ⁵to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.*

Titus there – False Brothers – Goal to Enslave

So we see Titus was with Paul and Barnabas as they went to Jerusalem. We see also that these men who present this issue were (false brothers), and their goal was to enslave the believers into the bondage of legalism. It is an either/or issue, for it is either all grace (God's work), or it is all the Law (Man's work), there is no in-between.

Grace first & last – to Heal Spiritual Sin Scars

Only when grace is the first and last word of contemplation can the scars of spiritual sin be healed. If it is not grace, then the scars of sin will never fully heal, for man's work will never have enough, will always fall short to bring healing, if anything man's works will continually reopen to wound.

(Acts 15:3 NKJV) So, being sent on their way by the church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren.

Legalizers – Heavy / Some joy Come – Some Joy Leave / Skip Repentance & Hell – NO!

When the legalizers came into town there was heaviness (got to be circumcised – ohh I thought Gospel meant “Good News”), but when Paul and Barnabas passed through, there was great joy. I like that! Some people bring joy wherever they go. Others bring joy whenever they go. I was really challenged by last week’s message when I considered the statement about Tim Tebow and how the announcer said if you spend 15 minutes with him you life surely will be better by it – and I asked myself if that is how it is when I leave people. We can bring joy wherever we go because the gospel is such good news. We have the privilege of telling people, “Your sins are forgiven. There is a God in heaven that is crazy about you. You don’t have to be better or try harder. The price has been paid. The work is complete!” Am I saying skip repentance, skip the penalty (hell) – by no means for that is all part of the good news in that we now have power over those sins that dogged us and brought us suffering, and on top of that we escape hell. When you talk about heaven, get to heaven and spend some time there, and then come down with the radiance of heaven upon you, and people will see the glow.

(Acts 15:4 NKJV) And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them.

(Acts 15:5 NKJV) But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses."

These Men Misinformed Believers / Study – Rightly Divide

Now the men who came down from Judea and made challenge to the Gospel of Grace, they were really unbelievers as Paul stated in Galatians 2; these Pharisees in verse 5 are Believers, so they are not unbelievers but misbelievers, who are errant in their understanding of the Gospel of Grace. Lots of misbelieving believing believers who need some course correction, thus why Paul said study to show thyself approved unto God, rightly dividing the Word. We must study it, there is no osmosis in the study of the word, we must roll-up our sleeves and dive in, and study all 31, 102 verses.

2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV) ¹⁵*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

People and Theology / Study of God / You are Great Theologians

People put a lot of worth on those who say they study theology, wow you are a theologian, man you must be some sort of super-saint. The word theology isn’t found in the Bible by the way, and the word comes from the compounding of “theo” and “ology”, theo means God, and “ology” means study, (biology – study of life, psychology – study of the mind, numerology – the study of numbers, theology – the study of God) So my point to you is that in this room we have a whole bunch of theologians. Study God; make Him your life’s hobby, along with your life’s love. Study God, and let His words study you, and you won’t make the mistakes so many of those “super-theologians” make, who only study words, and miss the Word the became flesh.

[The Jerusalem Council](#)

(Acts 15:6 NKJV) Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter.

(Acts 15:7 NKJV) And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: "Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.

Peter referring to Acts 10

Peter is alluding to the events of Acts 10, wherein he shared the gospel with the household of Cornelius. This would have been 10-15 years prior; you know time has a way of letting us forget, man can think that since it has been so long, the old no longer applies or has changed, so let’s

rework that thing. Many we see that all around us today in this country – oh those are old principles, they don't apply no more, let's rework them for today. Peter is referencing his revelation from God, and is making it clear – it is from God and it still stands today, whether it is through me, Paul, or someone else, the Blood of Jesus cleansing all sin, for all people.

(Acts 10:36 NKJV) "The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ; He is Lord of all;

(Acts 10:37 NKJV) "that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached:

(Acts 10:38 NKJV) "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

(Acts 10:39 NKJV) "And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree.

(Acts 10:40 NKJV) "Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly,

(Acts 10:41 NKJV) "not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.

(Acts 10:42 NKJV) "And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead.

(Acts 10:43 NKJV) "To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."

(Acts 10:44 NKJV) While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word.

(Acts 10:45 NKJV) And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.

Recap

Here is a recap on Peter's message to the Gentiles, and we see it is the Gospel of Grace through the finished work of the cross.

Personal:

Peter proclaims the Good News that man can have "peace" with God, and that this peace is offered to all men because He is God to all men.

(Acts 10:36 NKJV) "The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ; He is Lord of all;

Problem :

But even with such great news, there is a problem and that is that our sin separates us from the Holy God (that was the message the John the Baptist preached).

(Acts 10:37 NKJV) "that word you know, which was proclaimed throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee after the baptism which John preached:

Penalty:

Because of the problem there is a penalty, and every man will stand before God in judgment.

(Acts 10:42 NKJV) "And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead.

Provision:

Peter presents Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and the power of the resurrection.

(Acts 10:38 NKJV) "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

(Acts 10:39 NKJV) "And we are witnesses of all things which He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem, whom they killed by hanging on a tree.

(Acts 10:40 NKJV) "Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly,

(Acts 10:41 NKJV) "not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.

Profession:

Peter presents man role in salvation, BELIEVING.

(Acts 10:43 NKJV) "To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins."

Verse 43 – Biblical Definition / What must we do to do Works of God – Believe

Verse 43 is the biblical definition of "works of righteousness" – to believe in Him. When they asked Jesus what must we do, to do the works of God, Jesus said:

John 6:28-29 (NKJV) ²⁸Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?"

²⁹Jesus answered and said to them, *"This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."*

Paul Preaches Same Message

And Paul in his first sermon preached the same message, closing with these words that confirm the way of salvation, believing by faith in Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross, not the keeping of the Law:

(Acts 13:38 NKJV) "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins;

(Acts 13:39 NKJV) "and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses.

(Acts 15:8 NKJV) "So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us,

God knows Heart – Good & Bad News

God knows our heart, and that is good news. He understands and knows our intentions, even when things don't go so well. People get mad, feel we wronged them, but all the while we were really trying to bless and help them. Now, God knowing your heart can be a scary thing too if you are living in total disregard to His word and ways, even when it is hidden from all outward appearances.

Let me say REAL Clear / Holy Spirit in You / Better me Wrong than You

Both Peter and Paul preached a repentant based Gospel of Grace. Let me just say it very clearly, when a person believes, God Himself takes up residence within their heart, and if a person can profess Christ but continually live in a habitual unrepentant lifestyle, then I say "you are not saved". Some will say but right here it says all you have to do is believe and you are saved. That is right, but it also says here that God gives the Holy Spirit (God Himself) to a person, and if you can live a life of sin with God a millimeter from your heart and conscience, and have no conviction, I think you are deceiving yourself. A person needs to examine themselves and ask themselves why they can continue on with no conviction; better to ask that question and I be wrong about this whole thing – then you be wrong, because if you are wrong you will face the wrath and judgment of God on the day of reckoning.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 (KJV) ¹⁶Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? ¹⁷If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.

(Acts 15:9 NKJV) "and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.

Don't call Common

Remember the Lord had told Peter, don't call anything I touch common, and I have touched the Gentiles:

Acts 10:15 (KJV) ¹⁵And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common.

No Difference – through the Blood of Messiah / 1st attempt of Denomination

There is no difference between Jew and Gentile when it comes to being saved, and that is through the blood of the Messiah, Jesus Christ. These Jewish believers thought there was, and pretty much what we see is the first denomination of the early church where this group wanted to keep these traditions and practices, and if you didn't then you weren't as holy as they were. Kinda of like the Baptist today (no – just kidding).

Notice Purified because of Faith – not Before / Clean Fish / Philippians 1

Notice they were purified because of their belief, not before their belief. Although we're to be fishers of men (Matthew 4:19), the problem with so many Christians today is that they are trying to clean the fish before they catch them. In reality, it is not until after men are hooked on Christ and brought into the boat of salvation that their hearts will change. Therefore, the great need of our world, our communities, and our families is not reformation but regeneration. If you are

struggling, and you are convicted, just keep on being a “theologian”, keep on seeking Him fully, and Philippians 1:6 will come to pass:

Philippians 1:6 (KJV) ⁶Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

(Acts 15:10 NKJV) "Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"

(Acts 15:11 NKJV) "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they."

Notice Jews saved Like Gentiles – not Vice-versa / Not one Drop More

Verse 11 - "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they" – Notice, Peter doesn't say the Gentiles will be saved just like us, but that they would be saved just like the Gentiles. How are the Gentiles saved, through faith in believing that it was Jesus Christ and every drop of Jesus Christ, and not one drop more.

Don't Put Yoke on Man – Law is Schoolmaster / Thermometer – Fever - Medicine

Verse 10 - (Acts 15:10 NKJV) "Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" – Don't put the yoke of the Law upon a person Peter says. The Law is a schoolmaster to bring us to the recognition of a need for a Savior. It shows man's offense before the Holy God, but it couldn't justify a man before God. It's like a thermometer, a thermometer just shows we have a fever, it doesn't take the fever away, in order to do that we need another antidote such as medicine. The Law just shows man they are ill, but it can't heal them, it just shows they are ill and in need of antidote, a healing medicine, we know as the Blood of Jesus.

Galatians 3:24 (KJV) ²⁴Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

Romans 3:20 (KJV) ²⁰Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

Law can't Change / Man needs Inside Out / Law attempts to Muzzle / Dog's Muzzle

The Law could never change a human being, for man needed changing from the inside out. People want to lay the Law on people to try to control them from the outside in. We have laws in this land, and they are designed to control people from the outside in, but to change them from the inside out, man can't be reformed (like prison), he needs to be re-generated, born-again new. You take a mean dog who bites and puts a muzzle on them, they don't bite because the muzzle made them a good doggy, they don't bite because the muzzle controlled them from the outside in. Man must be changed from the inside-out, born-again. Thousands of years of the Law of Moses proved man cannot be changed from the outside-in, man must be born-again.

If we want Change in this Country – not new Administration / Begins 1 Heart at Time

The theme this week in our Nation (Obama Inauguration tomorrow) is change, yes we can! No we can't. If we want to see change in this country, it won't be through the law, through a new administrations implementing new policies, if we want change in this Country then it has to begin here, one heart at a time, one changed life at a time, and then a revival begins to sweep across a land. Oh Lord let it begin here, let it begin now.

If want a Yoke – Yoke with Jesus

If you really want a yoke around your neck, there is a great one to have, wear it with pride:

Matthew 11:28-30 (KJV) ²⁸Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.

No Coincidences in the Bible – Last words of Peter in Acts

There are no coincidences in the Bible and this passage be no exception, for these are the last recorded words of Peter in the Book of Acts.

(Acts 15:11 NKJV) "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they."

(Acts 15:12 NKJV) Then all the multitude kept silent and listened to Barnabas and Paul declaring how many miracles and wonders God had worked through them among the Gentiles.

(Acts 15:13 NKJV) And after they had become silent, James answered, saying, "Men and brethren, listen to me:

James 3rd Confirmation

James is now the third confirmation that it is the Gospel of Grace, first Peter, then Paul and Barnabas, now James.

James – Leader because of Character

This was James the half brother of Jesus and a great leader of the church at Jerusalem. I suggest to you that he wasn't the leader because who his big brother was, but because of who James was now. Early church writings called "James the Just" because he was so righteous and "James the Camel-Kneeder" because he spent so much time in prayer. There is a wonderful mix of any leader today, a person who is upstanding in character, but bowed-down in prayer.

James gets Attention – so will You

So James gets full attention from his audience because of his moral character, and the same will be true of you and I today.

(Acts 15:14 NKJV) "Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name.

(Acts 15:15 NKJV) "And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written:

(Acts 15:16 NKJV) 'After this I will return And will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, And I will set it up;

(Acts 15:17 NKJV) So that the rest of mankind may seek the LORD, Even all the Gentiles who are called by My name, Says the LORD who does all these things.'

Quoting Amos – Prophets said it would be So / Whole Council / Gospel – Rebuild Ruins

James is quoting Amos 9. James is saying that all the prophets agree that God was/is going to call out of the world, Gentiles to come into the Kingdom of God. James is saying that the prophets agree with the Gospel of Grace. Good council, takes the whole council "of God". The Gospel of Grace, God taking these ruins that have fallen down in sin, and building them up new again.

Amos 9:11-12 (NKJV) ¹¹ "On that day I will raise up The tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, And repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, And rebuild it as in the days of old; ¹² That they may possess the remnant of Edom (mankind) And all the Gentiles who are called by My name," Says the Lord who does this thing.

Tremendous Prophetic Meaning / Highway of Holiness / We Rule – but we See Him

Amos 9, and even this passage here in Acts 15 has tremendous prophetic meaning behind it (Jesus' Second Coming and the Millennial Kingdom), but we will have to hold that study off for another time, but what a day that will be as there will be a highway called the "highway of holiness" that leads to Jerusalem and men will come to worship in Jerusalem at the last Temple built, as men will worship for men will learn war no more, and we the saints will rule and reign with Him, but better yet we will see Him face-to-face.

Isaiah 35:8 (NKJV) ⁸ A highway shall be there, and a road, And it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, But it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, Shall not go astray.

(Acts 15:18 NKJV) "Known to God from eternity are all His works.

His works are mighty, and they are known from eternity.

DNA Information – some make Bone, Muscle, Brain

Did you know that when the egg that is fertilized by the sperm, and then it begins to split, it splits in two (with the exact same DNA information in the nucleus), then it splits again into four (with the exact same DNA information in the nucleus), then splits into eight (with the exact same DNA information in the nucleus), then again and again, but then at some point that exact same information says ok, now I'm going to start forming into bone tissue in this cell, while another set says I'm going to start forming into muscle in this cell, other cells say I', going to become brain tissue, another says a stomach. Scientist follow the early process well, but when the cells start to create bone, muscle, heart, and on – the scientist just get silent and say, we don't know.

Researcher – Morphed Resonance – Outside information Source / Psalm 139

There is one research doctor in England (Rupert Murdoch) who proposes “morphed resonance” which he says there is some outside resonance that gives additional information to these cells that doesn't exist in the DNA; this morphed resonance says (orchestrates), ok now you start building into muscle, and you start building into bone. I agree with, even if the scientific community doesn't, for Psalm 139 says God formed us in our mother's womb.

*Psalms 139:13-14 (NKJV)*¹³ For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb.¹⁴ I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well.

Equally Amazing – Wonderfully Created – Regenerated from the Inside Out / Drawn To

But you what is as equally amazing? Yes you were wonderfully created, but now you have been wonderfully regenerated, from the inside out, as God redeemed you by drawing you to Himself through His wonderful love.

(Acts 15:19 NKJV) "Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God,

(Acts 15:20 NKJV) "but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood.

(Acts 15:21 NKJV) "For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

The Jerusalem Decree

(Acts 15:22 NKJV) Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren.

(Acts 15:23 NKJV) They wrote this letter by them: The apostles, the elders, and the brethren, To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings.

Smart Thinking

So smart thinking here by the leaders in Jerusalem, figuring that if just Paul and Barnabas come back and tell the people here is what they said, people may have trouble believing it because they may think Paul and Barnabas were just telling the parts they liked. So they put it in writing, and even send some witnesses to confirm it.

(Acts 15:24 NKJV) Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "You must be circumcised and keep the law"; to whom we gave no such commandment;

(Acts 15:25 NKJV) it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

(Acts 15:26 NKJV) men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ship Safe in Harbor – But not what Ships Built For

Verse 26 - men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. - A ship in harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are built for. —Philanthropist John Shedd (1850–1926)

(Acts 15:27 NKJV) We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth.

(Acts 15:28 NKJV) For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:

When Christians Meet – What mind of Holy Spirit – not Mind of Majority

Verse 28 - For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit - Holy Spirit confirmation; when Christians meet...their purpose is not—or should not be—to ascertain what is the mind of the majority, but what is the mind of the Holy Spirit—something which may be quite different. — *Margaret Thatcher, former British Prime Minister*

(Acts 15:29 NKJV) that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.

(Acts 15:30 NKJV) So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter.

(Acts 15:31 NKJV) When they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement.

Don't Endorse Denomination – nor Rules / Notice – Didn't Add

They don't endorse a denomination, one theological position over another, whether you smoke or not, baptized or not. They did not add unto what Peter and Paul preached, the Gospel of Grace. They did not add to anything in reference to salvation, they only add on how to live in the grace (keep from sexual immorality, things offered to idols, and things strangled). They had their reason for saying these things, but here are some laws that someone wrote and they are beyond me (and these old laws are still on the book – but obviously not enforced):

- In Wheeler, Mississippi, young girls are never allowed to walk a tightrope, unless it's in a church.
- In Blackwater, Kentucky, tickling a woman under her chin with a feather duster while she's in church service carries a penalty of \$10.00 and one day in jail.
- In Idanha, Oregon, no one can eat unshelled, roasted peanuts while attending church.
- In Honey Creek, Iowa, no one is permitted to carry a slingshot to church except a policeman.
- In Leecreek, Arkansas, no citizen, is allowed to attend church in any red-colored garment.
- In Studley, Virginia, swinging a yo-yo in church or anywhere in public on the Sabbath is prohibited
- In Slaughter, Louisiana, turtle races are not permitted within 100 yards of a local church at any time.

Men are always trying to add rules and regulations trying to change men from the outside in.

Back to Decree – 4 things / 1 – Morality – 3 Sensitivity /

Back to the Jerusalem decree, "In light of the Gentile Age," concluded James, "there are four things from which we should tell new believers to abstain"—one of which dealt with morality, the remaining three with sensitivity. The moral issue was fornication, and it was running rampant in Asia Minor, and Apostles wanted it to be very clear, don't abuse the grace of God. I read in the paper recently that, according to one survey, couples who live together before marriage are fifty percent more likely to divorce during the first eight years of marriage than those who don't. The Word is right again.

Remaining 3 – Be sensitive to Jewish Brothers / We Stepping Stones - Stumbling Block

The remaining three issues dealt with sensitivity because Jews were very sensitive about the issues of blood, strangulation, and meat offered to idols. You see, the best meat in those days was offered as a sacrifice in pagan temples before it was sold in the market at cheap prices. That is why in 1 Corinthians 10, Paul said, "It doesn't matter whether meat is offered to idols or not. For yourself, don't ask where it came from—just enjoy it. But if your eating it will cause a weaker

brother to stumble—stay away from it.” The same is true today. Every one of us is either a stepping-stone or a stumbling stone, as we either allow people to get closer to God or cause them to stumble unnecessarily. In our freedom, we also need sensitivity.

1 Corinthians 10:31-33 (NKJV) ³¹Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

³²Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God, ³³just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

Decree adds Nothing / Ever place to make Clear / Simple – 5 minute Messages / Man - God

The Jerusalem decree adds nothing on to the words that were preached through Peter and Paul. Listen, if there ever was to be a chapter in the Bible to clearly clear-up any and all doctrinal issues pertaining to salvation, this is the chapter, the Jerusalem council of elders and apostles was the place. But we read nothing new, nor anything complex, Both Peter’s and Paul’s message they preached probably took all of 5 minutes. Man greatest need, God’s greatest deed. Man’s sin creating a Grand Canyon of Separation, Jesus Christ the bridge between the gulf. Believe it, receive it, now live it.

If ever a Chapter – this one It / Live for Self & Others /

If ever there was chapter that was to be the depth of doctrine, this one should have been it, but it wasn’t. We read confirmation of Man’s greatest need, God’s greatest deed, and then James add, now live it, and not just for yourself, but for others, be sensitive to your brothers.

Close with This / Doctrine Lost in the Words /

Let me close with this, men today have missed out what “doctrine” is meant for, they have complicated beyond measure and have got lost in the words and missed out on the God of the words. Theologians (super-saints) spend so much looking at the words, they miss out on the Word that became flesh and dwelt amongst us. Correct study (theologians) of God is observation (this is what the word says), interpretation (this is what it means in it’s context), and application (this is how I am to apply it to my life). Sadly many of the Bible-scholars just stop at interpretation, and never go on to the application, and never make it personal, missing out on the personal message from God –the Word that became flesh and wants to become flesh again in their lives.

2 Tim 3 – Unlocks what Doctrine is to Do

Paul’s letter to Timothy unlocks what doctrine is to do:

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV) ¹⁶All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

NT Variations

New Testament (Greek) variations of the word “Doctrine”, means teaching.

(Didaskalia) – word used in 2 Timothy 3:16

1) teaching, instruction

2) teaching

a) that which is taught, doctrine

b) teachings, precepts

Romans 15:4 (NKJV) ⁴For whatever things were written before were written for our *learning*, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

(Didachē)

- 1) teaching

a) that which is taught

b) doctrine, teaching, concerning something

2) the act of teaching, instruction

a) in religious assemblies of the Christians, to speak in the way of teaching, in distinction from other modes of speaking in public

2 Timothy 4:2 (NKJV) ²Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.

OT Variations

Old Testament (Hebrews) variations of the word "Doctrine" means the same.

(Muwcar)

- 1) discipline, chastening, correction
 - a) discipline, correction
 - b) chastening

*Job 5:17 (NKJV)*¹⁷ "Behold, happy is the man whom God **corrects**;
Therefore do not despise the chastening of the Almighty.

(Legach)

- 1) learning, teaching, insight
 - a) instruction (obj)
 - b) teaching (thing taught)
 - 1) teaching-power
 - 2) persuasiveness

*Deuteronomy 32:2 (NKJV)*² Let my **teaching** drop as the rain,
My speech distill as the dew,
As raindrops on the tender herb,
And as showers on the grass.

2 Timothy Unlocks

And 2 Timothy 3 unlocks for us what this teaching is to do in a person's life – it is to reprove (which means to convict), to correct, and to instruct in righteousness (how to walk and live rightly before God) – and the reason is so that the man or woman of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

*2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NKJV)*¹⁶ All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, ¹⁷that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Conviction

The word is to convict the human heart that they are in sin (saved or unsaved).

Correction

Which means to straighten up again, so when we are in sin, the word tells us how to get back in line.

Instruction in Righteousness

How to stay straight, how to walk in God's ways, and how to relate and interact with those around us (saved and unsaved).

Older I get – More See Limited Time to (Convict – Correct – Instruct)

You know the older I get in the Lord, the less I am interested in the debates of once saved always saved, can a person lose their salvation, the older I get the more I realize how limited my time is to help people become thoroughly equipped for every good work. Rather than debate the word with someone I want to "convict" them (with the word) if they need convicting, I want to lovingly "correct" them is they are no longer in the straight position they once were, and I want to "instruct them in righteousness" so they may stay walking straight and strong.

My God My God / Daddy - Daddy

As for the gospel of salvation, every morning I shave a creep. Every morning I look into the mirror and see nothing good in me, and see there is nothing I can do about it, and I thank God for the Gospel of Grace, that it was and still is – ALL HIM. What could I or any man ever add to this Gospel of Grace, whose life line is the precious blood of Jesus Christ. You can't add to it, you cannot add to, My God My God, why has thou forsaken Me. We hear that as My God, but God the Father on the day on a hill outside of Palestine would hear, Daddy, Daddy, where are you? When I hear my Camden cry out in pain after something happens, "Daddy, Daddy!", my heart goes out, and my arms come down; nothing would hurt me more than to see him suffer, and not

be able to reach him. Daddy, Daddy the only Begotten Son would cry, and the Heavenly Father would have to turn His back on Him as He took the sins of the world upon Him, but the Father would never be able to close His ears (for His ear is not heavy), nor harden heart to the cry of His Son – Daddy, Daddy, where are you. Oh the pain the Father endured that day – for you and for me, there is nothing that can be added to that, this Gospel of Grace.

Isaiah 59:1-2 (NKJV)¹ Behold, the Lord'S hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear.² But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.

Matthew 27:45-46 (NKJV)⁴⁵Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. ⁴⁶And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

More Leading of the Lord

Acts 15:22-41

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Return from Mission Trip / Confronted / Important – How Saved & Stay Saved / Grace

In our last study we saw how Paul and company had returned from their missionary journey, and immediately were confronted by some Messianic-Jews (and not so Messianic-Jews) questioning what is necessarily to be saved because so many Gentiles got saved on Paul and Barnabas' first missionary journey. They challenged that to be saved one must be circumcised and obey the Law of Moses. So we read Paul and Barnabas and a council of elders (that includes Peter and James) gathered in Jerusalem to debate and determine what is necessary to be saved, and stay saved, and we verse 11 summed up the whole study, which it is by grace and nothing but grace, Praise the Lord.

(Acts 15:11 NKJV) *"But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they."*

Grace continues to Pour Out / Question Asked Most – How do I Know the Leading

Well that grace will continue to be poured out unto all would receive it, and will use imperfect men and woman to do so. Through men and woman; the question I am asked more than any other is: "How can I know God's will for my life, how do I know if He is leading me?" In the passage before us today we will see more of the Lord guiding His people, and we will see how He guided them, and because the Lord does not change (Heb 13:8) I can tell you that how He led them, is the same way that He still guides His people today. Following are six ways I believe we can know the will of God as we see the hand of God guiding His people.

Hebrews 13:8 (NKJV) *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*

Simplistically – Subtlety – Supernaturally / So More Leading of the Lord

We will see the Lord guides us sometimes in simplicity, sometimes subtlety, and sometimes just purely supernaturally, as we see all three of these in the passage before us. So, "More Leading of the Lord", a subject we can never study and look into enough for this doesn't just apply for ministry, but the personal areas of our lives such as marriage, family, child rearing, employment, and even recreational pursuits. I'm going to keep this study simple, because God's leading in our life is not complex; Christian, you don't have to beg Him to get Him to tell you His will for you, nor do you have to go try some new thing, gimmick, of Christianity, to unlock the mystery of God's will for your life. Hey these guys were trusting in the Lord, desiring to be used by they Lord, and the Lord was the one who faithfully guided them through these

7 Points to Consider

Of course, before I move on, our study will enhance our standard 7 questions we always ask, and this study should help unfold them in many ways for we will see all 7 of them in our study today:

- **Major Point 1** *when considering your decision ask yourself, "how will this affect my relationship and service to the Lord?"*
- **Major Point 2** *when considering your decision ask yourself, "has this desire stood the Test of Time?"*

- **Major Point 3** when considering your decision ask yourself, “am I striving, trying to force or make something happen?”
- **Major Point 4** when considering your decision ask yourself, “who am I really doing this for?”
- **Major Point 5** when considering your decision ask yourself, “does it align with the Word?”
- **Major Point 6** when considering your decision ask the Lord, “please give me a Word to stand on?”
- **Major Point 7** when considering your decision ask yourself, “what does godly counsel say?”

1.) God guides through the NT Church.

[Continuing Ministry in Syria](#)

(Acts 15:22 NKJV) Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas, namely, Judas who was also named Barsabas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren.

(Acts 15:23 NKJV) They wrote this letter by them: The apostles, the elders, and the brethren, To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings.

(Acts 15:24 NKJV) Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "You must be circumcised and keep the law"; to whom we gave no such commandment;

(Acts 15:25 NKJV) it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

Believers in 1 Accord / Whatever Issue of Lifestyle or Doctrine – What Church Said

The letter written to the church at Antioch stated that the believers in Jerusalem were in one accord. That’s so important. Whether you’re wrestling with an issue of lifestyle or doctrine, find out what the church says about it. Throughout church history, what has been the stance of the church regarding the subject with which you’re struggling (Whether that be missions, salvation, giving, sex, marriage, you name it? Jesus hasn’t changed, and Jesus is the head of the Church. Go back and search through the NT and see what was the Church’s stance on that issue, how did they handle that situation, and you will easily be able to apply to your life. Yes it will take some digging, but you will be digging into the goldmine of God Himself (The Word that became Flesh), and you will come out with way more than you were looking for.

Hebrews 13:8 (NKJV) *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*

Beware – Don’t need Church / Emergent Church

Beware of those who say, “You don’t need the church. It’s outdated and old-fashioned.” Today there is a new move that says they are not into “organized religion”, that they are just going to meet in the home with a few of their friends for spiritual intimacy (aka – the Emergent Church). We have no Pastor, no eldership, we just kind of do what we feel the “spirit” is leading us to do. You know what, the Emergent Church movement is still going, but it is not going as it once was, because a lot of people are just kind of fading away, and that is what will happen

Proverbs 22 – Ancient Landmarks / True – not New / New – not True

Proverbs 22:28 says, “Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set.” The Church is a landmark, and the Heavenly Father has set it. If it is true, then it is not new, and if it is new, then it is not true; so watch all these movements in these last days that say church is out-dated and we need to do something new.

Proverbs 22:28 (NKJV) *Do not remove the ancient landmark Which your fathers have set.*

Wisdom of Church Presently & Historically Guides

It is through the wisdom of church unanimity presently and historically that God has guided His people very significantly. When struggling, or searching out an issue, see where the church historically has stood, and you will be standing on solid ground.

Outline of Acts 15:22-41

1.) God guides through the NT Church.

We see Applied here:

- **Major Point 5** when considering your decision ask yourself, “does it align with the Word?”

2.) God Guides Through Gifted Men and Women in the Body

(Acts 15:25 NKJV) it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

(Acts 15:26 NKJV) men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(Acts 15:27 NKJV) We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth.

Eph 4 / Be around them when they Expound

God gave to the church prophets, pastors, evangelists, and teachers for the perfecting of the saints and the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:11, 12). How can you know God’s will? Be around whenever prophets, pastors, evangelists, or teachers expound the Word.

Ephesians 4:11-12 (NKJV) ¹¹And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,

Mature Man – Comes Expecting to Hear

It’s the wise woman, the mature man who approaches every Bible study, every time of fellowship expecting the Lord to speak through His body. I remember going to a service when I was up in Philadelphia, and this like 18 year kid comes out to do the service, and I was like what is this kid going to tell me, I’ve been saved longer than he has been alive; but the Lord spoke to me, that He would speak to me through this man if I would have ears to hear (so I opened my heart and ears to hear). So this young man starts to teach on a passage I had taught several times, and 99% of everything he said I already knew and taught, but oh that 1%, 1% can change your day, and it can change your life. How wise is the man or woman who come into a Bible Study every time expecting to hear something from the Lord.

There is balance & Protection / Your Thoughts can be 1-Track

There is a balance and protection in the wisdom of God’s gifted men and woman. God can and will speak to you through your thoughts, that may be one-track, swayed and slanted to your perception, but then God speaks a word through them and breaks through your thoughts with a fresh new view of what is currently going on in your life, and you recognize things that you had never even considered.

Outline of Acts 15:22-41

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2.) God Guides through Gifted Men and Women in the Body

We see Applied here:

- **Major Point 5** when considering your decision ask yourself, “does it align with the Word?”
- **Major Point 6** when considering your decision ask the Lord, “please give me a Word to stand on?”
- **Major Point 7** when considering your decision ask yourself, “what does godly counsel say?”

3.) God Guides Through the Gifts of the Spirit

(Acts 15:28 NKJV) For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things:

(Acts 15:29 NKJV) that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.

Earlier a Debate – James Speaks – Room Melts / Times person speaks all Know

Earlier in this chapter, there was much debate and discussion. Suddenly, James the Camel-kneed stood up, and as he spoke, an interesting thing happened. Everyone in the room melted into unity and agreement. The same is true for us. There are times when, during an endless dialogue or discussion, someone suddenly says something that settles not only in your brain or your mind, but deep within your heart—and you know it's the Lord, speaking through a word of wisdom. I hope when you're struggling with finding God's will for your life, you avail yourself of settings where words of wisdom, knowledge, and prophecy are being exercised. Frequently, that's how the Lord speaks most clearly. Along with our Sunday, we have our mid-week home fellowships that are a great place that God exercises the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and along with that we have our prayer team in the back of the sanctuary during the worship portion of our service.

Get with Brother to talk Through / Exciting to be the one who Exercises the Gift

Get with some brothers or sisters and talk things through, and God may very-well at that moment give a word of wisdom from a brother or sister that will just move in your heart and you will know, this is a word from the Lord. It is also exciting when you are the one who gets to exercise the gifts of the Holy Spirit and bring that word into another person's life. As I had mentioned the 1-track mind, how easy it is for us to be so immersed in something that we can't see the forest through the trees, we can't see any other thoughts or ideas about the matter, many a times I say to Phil, so what do you think, for I think I am too close to this to see everything, and many a times he speaks a word and I am like, yes didn't even see that or think that, this is a word from the Lord.

God desires to Speak through 1-Track /

As I had mentioned the 1-track mind, how easy it is for us to be so immersed in something that we can't see the forest through the trees, we can't see any other thoughts or ideas about the matter. Tuesday when we sere down at the Inauguration, we went into this deli to warm-up and have a coffee. Well a young man came and sat at the table next to us, so we started to talk, finds out he was a street vendor who came up from Georgia to work the Inauguration. So we started to chat, he was a professing believer, and so I asked him how things were going and he just started to open up to me and share all the things going on in his life and it was heartbreaking things to hear, my heart was breaking for him, but I was giving internal praise to the Lord that at this moment in time the Lord was meeting him, out on the road all alone, but God brought me to comfort and listen. But before I left, and it was out of the blue really, I said to him, listen I want you to (and I told him several very direct and personal things – I believed before I spoke them they were discernment from the Lord), and as I did his eyes got real big, and he said wow – that is right from the Lord, wow that is total confirmation of what the Lord has been telling me, and now I need to apply it.

God is Amazing

I am so amazed always of how the Lord works, that he would bring a man from Georgia, a man from Pasadena, to meet in a Café in Washington DC, so that He may speak a word.

(Acts 15:30 NKJV) So when they were sent off, they came to Antioch; and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the letter.

(Acts 15:31 NKJV) When they had read it, they rejoiced over its encouragement.

Freeing Words / Freeing Words

"Wonderful!" these Gentile men would have cheered in unison. "We don't have to be circumcised. We don't have to carry the heavy burden of legalism!" It amazes me how many people feel they haven't been to church unless they walk out emotionally bloodied and battered. "I'm such a

wretch,” they say. “Beat me, Pastor. Beat me. That was great. I can’t wait until next Sunday.” I believe this is due to a failure to understand the finished work of the Cross. We are truly forgiven—not just theologically, but in reality.

15 Minutes

Before I move on, I want to make a point to each believer here, if you are saved, then you are filled, and I believe we all have the gift of “love” for it is a gift from God, and it is part of the Fruit of the Spirit, and therefore we can bless any and every person who comes into our lives. So I have been challenged all week about that 15 minute meeting, meaning when people walk away from me, after spending 5, 10, 15 minutes, is their life better for it. I had some triumphs in that this week, but I can honestly say I had some (nothing), that as I walked away I hadn’t given them anything. I didn’t lift them up, but just met and left. I want to live a life that in the forefront of my mind, I think of making a person’s life better, a word of encouragement, a word from the Lord, a man that actually listens, eyes that actually look into theirs, a smile that is real – I’m glad to see you. I want people to want to see me, that when they see me, they know “this person likes me, this person genuinely cares about me”.

Galatians 5:22-23 (NKJV) ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

Outline of Acts 15:22-41

- 1.) God guides through the NT Church.
- 2.) God Guides through Gifted Men and Women in the Body
- 3.) God Guides through the Gifts of the Spirit

We see Applied here:

- **Major Point 5** when considering your decision ask yourself, “does it align with the Word?”
- **Major Point 6** when considering your decision ask the Lord, “please give me a Word to stand on?”
- **Major Point 7** when considering your decision ask yourself, “what does godly counsel say?”

4.) God Guides through Desires We May Have Personally

(Acts 15:32 NKJV) Now Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also, exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words.

(Acts 15:33 NKJV) And after they had stayed there for a time, they were sent back with greetings from the brethren to the apostles.

(Acts 15:34 NKJV) However, it seemed good to Silas to remain there.

Everyone heads back to Jerusalem – Silas wants to Stay / I teach – Love seeing Victory

As the delegation headed back to Jerusalem, Silas said, “I like it here in Antioch. I think I’ll stick around.” We’ll see how the Lord will use Silas’ personal desire as the book unfolds. The reason I personally teach the Word is because I love to teach (in to see people overcome snares and live victorious Christian lives). I’m doing exactly what I want to do.

Ministry not Drudgery / People afraid to say – Send Me

Those who imply that ministry is supposed to be a drudgery are lying (and if you are in a ministry that is drudgery – you need to get with the Lord and determine why, for it may be time to get out of that ministry). Some people say “I’m afraid to say send me Lord, because He may send me to Alaska and I hate the cold”. That’s bad theology and a blasphemy to the nature and character of our Father.

Papua New Guinea

In the highlands of Papua New Guinea, there is an area where it rains 362 days a year (wettest spot on the earth) and the frogs spit poison that will burn your skin. As of yet, Wycliffe Bible

Translators has not found anyone to go into that region to translate the Word for the few folks who live there. But somewhere the Lord is preparing someone who will have a fascination with spitting frogs and rainy weather. That's the way the Lord works. How do I know? Because Psalm 37:4 declares, "Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart."

*Psalms 37:4-5 (NKJV)*⁴ *Delight yourself also in the Lord, And He shall give you the desires of your heart.*
⁵ *Commit your way to the Lord, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass.*

I know True / Huge Snake / Come Visit – Highly Doubtful / Russia

I know this is true, for I have a personal friend who is a missionary in the jungles, and he tells me stories that make me cringe, saying that is the last place I want to be. He told me one story that he was sleeping in this hut and a huge 10 foot snake, like 10 inches in diameter was crawling along the ceiling rafters fell 10 feet, right over his chest as he was sleeping in the hammock. Knocked the wind out of him while knocking him out of the hammock unto the floor, and he says to me, it was so wild, it was great (with a big smile on his face), I can't wait to get back into the jungle. He asked if I thought I would ever be able to come visit him in the jungle, and I "full of faith", said it is highly doubtful. Now send me to Russia in the dead of winter, "where is my plane ticket".

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- 3.) God Guides through the Gifts of the Spirit
- 4.) God Guides through Desires We May Have Personally

Silas stays – Others go

Silas says I want to stay here, while the others want to go home.

We see Applied Here:

- **Major Point 1** *when considering your decision ask yourself, "how will this affect my relationship and service to the Lord?"*
- **Major Point 2** *when considering your decision ask yourself, "has this desire stood the Test of Time?"*
- **Major Point 4** *when considering your decision ask yourself, "who am I really doing this for?"*

(Acts 15:35 NKJV) Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

Time gap

Time is summarized. A substantial amount of time goes by before v.36.

5.) God Guides Through Concerns We Feel Internally

Division over John Mark

(Acts 15:36 NKJV) Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they are doing."

Paul Mothers the church / Same for Us – Tug on our Heart / Person next to You Nothing

Paul "mothers" the churches, he prays for them, writes them, keeps in touch with them, and counsels them. Paul said, "I'm curious about how the believers we saw five years ago are doing." The same thing happens today. Suddenly, a situation, a need, or an opportunity will tug on your heart. The person next to you might not feel a thing—not because he's insensitive or unspiritual, but because meeting that particular need is not his calling, so don't project your calling unto everyone else, and think your calling is super-spiritual. The way of the Lord is to guide us individually through concerns we feel internally.

When god Calls – have the Energy to do It

When God calls a person, they will have the energy and excitement to carry it out. If a person does it because they think it is a good idea, then it will be a burden and the energy won't be there to carry it out.

Honest about DC Trip

I'll be honest, the idea of going to DC for the Inauguration wasn't high on my list. It crossed my mind, and then I thought of 2 million people and trying to get in and out of the city, and I just let it fall away. But then Chris P approached me and said he wanted to put a team together. Thankfully the Lord gave him a personal desire, and gave him the energy to organize it, because left to me I probably wouldn't have gone. As I prayed God gave me a passion for the day. It was exciting to watch how God weaves all of peoples personal desires together and makes this beautiful tapestry of love. Chris wanted to go, I then added that I just wanted to stay up around the Union Station Train Station, and then when we hit the area up there Renee and Maggie had a heart for all the "Street Vendor" and we spent our whole day witnessing and ministering to them. It was quite a day, we handed out hundreds of tracts, one man prayed to receive the Lord, and we had dozens of deep conversation about the Lord with unbelievers, and believers alike.

Outline of Acts 15:22-41

- 1.) God guides through the NT Church.
- 2.) God Guides through Gifted Men and Women in the Body
- 3.) God Guides through the Gifts of the Spirit
- 4.) God Guides through Desires We May Have Personally
- 5.) God Guides through Concerns We Feel Internally

We see Applied Here:

- **Major Point 1** when considering your decision ask yourself, "how will this affect my relationship and service to the Lord?"
- **Major Point 2** when considering your decision ask yourself, "has this desire stood the Test of Time?"
- **Major Point 4** when considering your decision ask yourself, "who am I really doing this for?"

6.) God Guides through Interpersonal Difficulty

(Acts 15:37 NKJV) Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark.

(Acts 15:38 NKJV) But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work.

(Acts 15:39 NKJV) Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus;

(Acts 15:40 NKJV) but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God.

(Acts 15:41 NKJV) And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Reminder – Uncle – Bailed Out

Just a reminder, Barnabas was John Mark's uncle, and John Mark ad went home early (bailed out) on the first missionary journey for reasons we do not know (but it was probably because of a woman as I always guess). Paul won't give Mark a second chance, and it reminds me of Proverbs 18:

Proverbs 18:19 (NKJV)¹⁹ A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, And contentions are like the bars of a castle.

Glad Barnabas took him / Helped Pen Gospel of Mark

Aren't you glad that Barnabas gave Mark another chance? Mark became Peter's penman and converted Peter's gospel from the Aramaic to the Greek which gave us the Gospel of Mark!

The Account – The Debate

“Let’s take John Mark with us,” said Barnabas. “I know he backed out last time, but I see potential in him.” “We can’t afford to bring someone we can’t count on,” insisted Paul. “Let’s leave him here.” Paul said, “What can he do for God’s work?” Barnabas said, “What can God’s work do for him?” Who was right? They both were. When Paul was in prison awaiting his death, who did he send for to comfort him? John Mark (2 Timothy 4:11). The consoling ministry of Barnabas paid off. Who crisscrossed the known world with the gospel? Paul. The compelling ministry of Paul paid off.

2 Timothy 4:11 (NKJV) ¹¹Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.

God uses Interpersonal Difficulties

So God takes this interpersonal difficulty to double the work. That can be hard for us to understand but he does.

We see Applied here:

- **Major Point 1** when considering your decision ask yourself, “how will this affect my relationship and service to the Lord?”
- **Major Point 2** when considering your decision ask yourself, “has this desire stood the Test of Time?”
- **Major Point 3** when considering your decision ask yourself, “am I striving, trying to force or make something happen?”
- **Major Point 4** when considering your decision ask yourself, “who am I really doing this for?”
- **Major Point 5** when considering your decision ask yourself, “does it align with the Word?”
- **Major Point 6** when considering your decision ask the Lord, “please give me a Word to stand on?”
- **Major Point 7** when considering your decision ask yourself, “what does godly counsel say?”

Is this the Best Way – I don’t Think So / Better: Hear Word, Wisdom, Spirit, Unity

God often guides through interpersonal difficulty. Is it the best way? I don’t think so. I think it’s much better to hear a word of wisdom, to learn from a teaching, to receive counsel and understanding from a gifted brother or sister, and keep the unity amongst the brethren.

Lots Time – Dull of Hearing

But a lot of times I’m just too dull of hearing and hard of heart to receive a word of wisdom or to make personal application from a Bible study. I have to bump heads with someone for God to get me going in the right direction. I wish I could say, “My spiritual sensitivity is at such a level that I never have conflict with anyone at any time. I hear the voice of the Lord whispering in my ear in every situation. Consequently, I never have to go through contention or difficulty”—but I’m not there, folks. I find great comfort, however, knowing that even Paul the apostle, at the high point of his ministry, was directed through interpersonal difficulty.

Hard to Know how Strained / Wrong to Step On People – No Excuse for Carnality

It is hard to know if their personal relationship was strained for a prolonged period. As Christians, we are commanded to resolve relationship problems with others before we present ministry to God (Matthew 5:23-24). It is always wrong to step over people in the name of ministry, and when it happens it must be made right. There is no doubt God used this division; but this can never be casually used as an excuse for carnal division. God can redeem good out of evil, yet we are all held accountable for the evil we do, even if God ends up bringing good out of the evil. Either Paul or Barnabas - probably both - had to get this right with God and each other.

Matthew 5:23-24 (NKJV) ²³Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

God took it – Made it for Good

The Lord used interpersonal difficulty to send two teams out instead of one. As a result, twice as many believers were encouraged, and twice as much ministry ensued.

Silas Joins Paul

Remember back in verse 34, Silas wanted to be there, and since he was there, Paul tapped him on the shoulder and said lets go.

Outline of Acts 15:22-41

- 1.) God Guides through the NT Church.
- 2.) God Guides through Gifted Men and Women in the Body.
- 3.) God Guides through the Gifts of the Spirit.
- 4.) God Guides through Desires We May Have Personally.
- 5.) God Guides Through Concerns We Feel Internally.
- 6.) God Guides through Interpersonal Difficulty.

In each Case – God worked Uniquely – Surprisingly / If You Love Him – Desire Guided

In each one of these cases and events we see the Lord is working uniquely, surprising, unexpectantly and always the way we think that He may or should, but in each case we see, and we can claim for ourselves today, that if we love Him, if you know Him, and if it is your desire to be guided by Him, He will guide you – even if it is a way you would never have thought He would have. Christian, you don't have to beg Him to get Him to tell you His will for you, nor do you have to go try some new thing, gimmick, of Christianity, to unlock the mystery of God's will for your life. Hey these guys were trusting in the Lord, desiring to be used by they Lord, and the Lord was the one who faithfully guided them through these ways.

I say to You Today – God will Guide your Steps / Just say Father – Based on You

I say to you today, that God will guide your steps, don't panic, don't sweat, just say Father based on your character and your love for me, that you will guide me, I know it. I know that He will, I know it for sure, and all it takes is for you wanting to be in His will.

Chapter 16

The Principles and Practices of Barnabas – Acts 4-15

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Paul & Barnabas Split / Last hear of Barnabas

Well the missionary team of Paul and Barnabas has split, and Barnabas set off with John Mark, and Paul sets off with Silas. Chapter 15 will be the last time we hear of Barnabas as the Holy Spirit will just record the journeys of Paul, as Luke is often his companion and the writer of this account.

Paul Major Press / Recap life of Barnabas / Paul Externally – Barnabas Internally

Paul gets the major press coverage for the rest of the Book of Acts, but before moving on I'd like to recap the life of Barnabas, for though he is usually in the shadow of Paul, he was a tremendous man of God, and so much can be gleaned from studying his life. As for me personally, Paul was greatest evangelist in the history of the world (second to Jesus Christ), where Paul went, regions were changed forever, when Paul and his gang (Silas, Timothy and Luke) crossed the Dardanelles, they changed the whole course of Western Civilization! But, as for me, as much as I want to see the world changed around me externally (as with Paul), for me internally, Barnabas is possibly the man I most desire to be internally. For Paul I see the gifting and the anointing of the Holy Spirit to do great and mighty deeds for the Lord, and I see it as God choosing him, and then using him to reach the masses. But with Barnabas, I see the heart of a man, who had a heart for people, one person at a time.

One Person at Time / Glad have Barnabas Example / Wife – Kids – Coworkers – 7/11

For me personally, my life's ministry is the "one person at a time" ministry; and I'm glad to have the example of Barnabas, as I minister to my wife, to my children, my co-worker, to my friends, to the man at the 7-11, and the youth at the local high school. I think you, like me, all want to love our spouse more today, don't we? We want to be a better parent, a great friend, a breath of fresh air to those chance encounters in our community. Well let's take a look at the life of Barnabas in one snapshot, and let's take what he taught by example, and let's be better husbands, fathers, and friends.

Barnabas Life Sentence / Good one for Us Too / Spirit Recorded It

If Barnabas had a life-sentence, then Acts 11:24 would be it I believe, and what a sentence to be known as for each of us personally. Whether man recognizes it, let god decide that, but that God would consider us the same, as the Holy Spirit would be sure to record what the Holy Spirit recognized in heaven – a good man, full of the Holy Spirit, and full of faith!

Acts 11:24 (NKJV) ²⁴*For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.*

Study the Principles and Practices of Barnabas / Def of Principle / Spiritual DNA

We will study the principles and practices of Barnabas. We must be a people of personal principles and practices. The definition of "principle" is "a determining characteristic of someone;

essential quality”; basically I kind of sum that up to mean, it is their very being, it is who they are, it is what is in their “spiritual DNA”. As that bank commercial goes, “hey what’s in your wallet, I say to you, “hey, what’s in your DNA?” Christian, what your principles are, will direct what your practices are. Barnabas will be who Barnabas is, because of his core, what’s in his heart, and that will carry forth in his actions and lifestyle. We can glean a lot from our study of Barnabas, and I will promise you, that he who has an ear to hear, your life will be changed today as we apply the wonderful, life changing, mind transformation power of the Holy Scriptures to our life today. Funny thing as we compare him t Paul, and that is that the little one-to-one things we see in Barnabas, are the very things that do change the world.

Outline

The Personal Principles and Practices of Barnabas

- He Sold Out for the Lord (Personal Principle)
- He stood beside a Man when others Distanced Themselves (Personal Practice)
- He was an Encourager of Others (Personal Practice)
- He was a Good Man (Personal Principle)
- He Saw Talent (Gifts) & Developed Talents (Gifts) (Personal Practice)
- He Searched out a Brother until he Found Him (Personal Practice)
- He had a Burden for His Hometown (Personal Practice)
- He was a Kingdom Builder (Personal Principle)
- He Endured (Personal Principle)
- He was a giver of Second Chances (Personal Practice)

1.) The Personal Principles and Practices of Barnabas **He Sold Out for the Lord (Personal Principle)**

Acts 4:36-37 (NKJV) ³⁶And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, ³⁷having land, sold *it*, and brought the money and laid *it* at the apostles’ feet.

Sell All / Not Required – Voluntary / Line in the Sand – I am a New Creation

Barnabas sells all that he has (the context was that he sold everything – as Ananias and Sapphire try to imitate the same but lied), this is a radical conversion. He wasn’t required or compelled to sell all that he had, but he freely and voluntarily did so. Now nobody is required to sell all he has, and doing so or not doing so isn’t the road to super-spirituality, but what we see in the life of Barnabas is a new life, a line drawn in the sand, a statement declared to all – I am a new person, and this new person follows Jesus Christ.

Barnabas a Levite / 2nd Home – 1st Home – Paycheck – 401K / REPUTATION

You see Barnabas was a Levite, he would have been part of the Levitical Priesthood, and yet in one defining act, he gives it all away. Oh he doesn’t just give up his second home, but he gives up his first home (for a Levite who would follow Jesus would be out of a job the next day). With that job came your portion (Duet 14:29) as the offerings would supply their needs. So Barnabas is not only giving up his second home (that piece of land in Cyprus), but his first home in Jerusalem, his bank account, his weekly paycheck, his 401K because there is no retirement now, he is giving that all up to follow Jesus Christ. AND, let us not miss, he gave up his reputation, not gave it up, but traded it for a new reputation. Now rather than being respected in his community and inner circle of friends, he is now cast out, ridiculed, mocked, possible threaten, turned on by friends, and now considered a failure and disgrace.

Deuteronomy 14:28-29 (NKJV) ²⁸“At the end of every third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store it up within your gates. ²⁹And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.

Risked it All – Gave it All – to be Linked / What's in Your DNA

Barnabas, risked it all, gave it all (and I'm speaking more than possessions) to be linked to and identified with Christ. Christian, what is in your "spiritual DNA", what is it that you are most known for in your life right now today? Is it your work, your recreation activity, your physical appearance, your things, or your relationship with Christ. Think that through, come to your answer, and you'll know what is your "spiritual DNA."

***The definition of "principle" is "a determining characteristic of someone; essential quality"*

2.) The Personal Principles and Practices of Barnabas

He stood beside a Man when others Distanced Themselves (Practice)

Acts 9:26-27 (NKJV) ²⁶And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. ²⁷But Barnabas took him and brought *him* to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

Even Apostle Distancing from Paul / Ever been there – Know that Hand Feels

When everyone was running from, keeping their distance from him (even the Apostles all full of faith), Barnabas was reaching out to him. What a wonderful and much needed practice in the church today. If you have ever been broken, if you have ever fallen, blew-it, then you know what that hand feels like on your shoulder. Paul the murderer, the widow and orphan maker, but he has met the Resurrected Savior, and his heart has been resurrected from dead, and he now wants to tell all who hear, God forgives, God restores, no matter where you have been and what you have done, His hand extends to you.

Hands of believers don't Extend so Fast or Far / Church needs more Barnabas

But sadly, the hands of believers don't extend so fast, nor so far. My how the church needs more Barnabas', hands laying on shoulders, feet-next-to-feet as we stand next to that brother or sister saying hey, no matter where you have been or what you have done, I'll always be here for you.

Ever been there – Will Enjoy Extending your Hand

And I can tell you, as one who has been there, if you ever have had that hand laid upon your shoulder, when you feel all alone, then you remember what it meant to you, and you will enjoy being the hand layer when the opportunity comes.

CCAAC – Last stop for Many People

I've said it many a times from this pulpit, Calvary Chapel AAC may be the last stop for many a people before they call it quits on God, feel they just don't fit in, have gone too far, but may we be a church like Barnabas, standing beside a people, holding them up, loving them all the way.

3.) The Personal Principles and Practices of Barnabas

He was an Encourager of Others (Personal Practice)

Acts 11:22-23 (NKJV) ²²Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. ²³When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.

Barnabas the Encourager of Others / Hey Beloved – Bride, Keep On, Set Back, Get Up

Barnabas, an encourager of others. Again, what a need in the body of Christ, that people would be encouraging the believers. "Hey Beloved, you are the beautiful bride of Christ, He adores you, he can't stop thinking about you. Hey Beloved of God, you are doing great, keep on keep on. Hey Beloved of God, your set-back is but for a moment, keep fighting on Christian soldier, Hey

Beloved of God, ok you have fallen, now get up, you can do it, don't quit, he who began a good work will be faithful to complete it in you.

Body needs more Encouragement / Got enough Fault Pointers / Make it a Practice

The Body of Christ needs more encouragement. Does anyone here need anyone more help pointing out all your failings? There never seems to be a lacking of those people with that gift, and they are faithful to exercise it aren't they. We need more Barnabas', and may we purpose it in our hearts to make it part of our practice, to encourage others.

May cost you – 20 – 40 – 60 / Barnabas went the Distance

And that may come at a price by the way, we may have to go out of our way to get to that somebody that needs encouraging. Barnabas proved that, Lystra, - is 20 miles away, and then back down to Iconium which is 40 miles away, and then to Antioch which is 60. Barnabas went the distance, and sometimes we are just going to have to go out of the way and do it.

Acts 14:21-22 (NKJV) ²¹And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, ²²strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."

4.) The Personal Principles and Practices of Barnabas **He was a Good Man (Personal Principle)**

Acts 11:24 (NKJV) ²⁴For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord.

Holy Spirit Records these Words / why Good – Fasting, Prayer, Word – His DNA

The Holy Spirit, God Himself, records these words in the Scriptures for us, wow. The Scriptures give us some insight to why he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and full of faith, and that is that he was a man of prayer, fasting, and the word (essentials for our Christian principles, it is what will make up our "Spiritual DNA"):

Acts 14:23 (NKJV) ²³So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Acts 13:2-3 (NKJV) ²As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." ³Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.

Acts 13:4 (NKJV) ⁴So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

His Life Verse / Death Notice at Work / 20 Minutes – Life made Better

This is Barnabas' life verse, a verse I very well would like to be known for. A man at work died this week, I hadn't the pleasure to meet him before he retired, but heard of him often through other people. A friend at work sent out his death notice to us, and as I read it I told my wife Renee, what a man of God to be known as he was, and how I desire to be such a man as he. He sounds like what the Lord has challenged me with for the 4th week in a row, if you spent 20 minutes with him, your life will be the better for it.

Dr. Lee Colquitt

Dear Prayer Warriors,

With many tears of sorrow and of joy I want to let you know that Dr. Lee Colquitt at the age of 72 is home with our Lord. Today at 2:45 pm Lee went from life, through the door of death and into eternal life and into the waiting arms of his Savior and Lord. This dearly loved friend and warrior for Christ went peacefully in the company of his loving family. Wanda who is steadfast in her faith is doing well and said to me that she has a tear in one eye and a smile in the other. She knows that to be absent from the body, is to be present with the Lord.

For those of you who didn't know Lee, he was a soft spoken man that when you first met him you knew that you were in the presence of a wise and godly man who loved the Lord with all of his

being. Off and on for about 6 years Lee had supplied me with Christian videos to share with others. Lee had a huge library of videos (over 500 in total) and every time I went for a 15 min. visit an hour later we were like two kids in a candy store trying to decide what to pick. I fondly remember laughing with him about it.

Lee retired from Westinghouse 10 years ago and taught at the Washington Bible College until he was unable to continue due to his failing health. In Lee's final classes of leading us in the "Truth Project", he was like the Apostle Paul who despite the obstacles in front of him kept on going with a one track mind of sharing "The Truth", Jesus Christ. Every time Lee came in he was full of pain and you could see it in his face and in his body. Lee's body was getting weaker daily, due to the fact that his body was full of cancer and he also had severe back pain, which turned out to be a fractured spine, but he kept coming and coming, week after week. He would even call me to make sure we were on for the upcoming week. When I escorted him down the halls of the ATL building, where he used to work, we couldn't go 10 feet before he saw someone he knew and with a smile on his face he'd greet them by name and ask personal things that he remembered like, "How's your beautiful wife Mary doing?" and then he would invite them to come to watch the "Truth Project". Everyone greeted him with a smile and fondly remembered the past.

He is a man to be respected and admired for his unflinching dedication as a faithful servant of Jesus Christ. We've lost a good man, but we will join him at our Lord's Table praising our Savior!

Ps 116:15 Precious in the sight of the Lord Is the death of His saints.

Please lift Wanda and Lee's family up in your prayers. Please post or/and forward the funeral arrangements to those who may have known Lee. Thank you. Dave

5.) The Personal Principles and Practices of Barnabas **He Saw Talent (Gifts) & Developed Talents (Gifts) (Personal Practice)**

Acts 11:25-26 (NKJV) ²⁵Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. ²⁶And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

Acts 15:37-38 (NKJV) ³⁷Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. ³⁸But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work.

Ultimate Talent Scout / Overlooked – Under-recognized / Brought Apostles - Antioch
Barnabas was the ultimate talent scout, and he is so often overlooked or unrecognized for it. It was Barnabas that searched out Paul and got him audience with the apostles, but secondly, it was Barnabas that searched out Paul and brought him to Antioch (which was the new beachfront of the gospel as it moved into and through Asia). Barnabas was like ok, we got a whole bunch of Gentiles getting saved, and now they need to be taught, hey I know the perfect man for the job, Paul.

Barnabas Developed John Mark / What do For God – What God do for Him

And, it was Barnabas who developed the talent in John Mark, even when Paul said no way, not on this mission team (he quit once, were not going for round two), what can he do for God, but Barnabas would say, what can God do for him. Glad Barnabas was who he was, and so was Paul as he would later say, send John Mark, for he is very profitable to me. Peter would use him to for the recording of the Gospel of Mark, and what a gift that Gospel is.

2 Timothy 4:11 (NKJV) ¹¹Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.

Mark 1:1-2 (NKJV) ¹The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. ²As it is written in ^{the} Prophets: "Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You."

Application – Find someone to Invest In / Start with your Kids

Application for today, Christian find someone to invest in, personally help them develop their talents. Start with your children.

6.) The Personal Principles and Practices of Barnabas

He Searched out a Brother until he Found Him (Personal Practice)

Acts 11:25-26 (NKJV) ²⁵Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. ²⁶And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

Search up and Down / Barnabas – Son of Encouragement / Ultimate Encourager

The word translated “to seek” is anazeteo, which means “to search up and down, or high and low (meaning Barnabas didn’t know exactly where Saul was except in Taurus).” It’s used only one other time by Luke—in Luke 2 where he wrote that Mary and Joseph searched diligently for Jesus after Passover. The idea of anazeteo is that of a parent frantically, desperately, energetically searching for a lost child. And that’s exactly what Barnabas, the “son of consolation,” the quintessential discipler, the ultimate encourager, did. He searched high and low for Saul, who had been in Tarsus for seven to ten years, living in obscurity.

Sometimes we have to Go Distance / Call-Call, Write-Write, Drop-by – Until You reach

Sometimes that is what we are going to have to do to be that encourager, that talent scout, that giver of second chances, we are going to have to go the distance to reach that person. We may have to call, call, and call; write, write, and write, drop by, and drop by until you reach that person that God has laid on your heart to reach out for.

7.) The Personal Principles and Practices of Barnabas

He had a Burden for His Hometown (Personal Practice)

Acts 13:4 (NKJV) ⁴So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

Hey where Go – I know Perfect place / they are in Need

Hey where should go on our mission journey they may have said, I know the perfect place Barnabas may have said, it is full of mislead and misguided people who are in need of the Good News, lets go to Cyprus my hometown (it is rampant with prostitution and idol worship).

Example of Barnabas – Give us a Heart for Hometown / Look Around / Not Spend to There

The example Barnabas gives us having a heart for our hometown. You see I don’t think it is something we need to whip up, but it will be something that happens when we look around. Look around, and it won’t be hard to see the need. The beauty of this is that we don’t have to spend a lot of money to get there, for we are already here.

Pray 7 Days Straight / set Time Aside / Get the Newspaper – Talk to Lord about It

I give the challenge, pray for specifically for your hometown, pray it for 7 days straight in a dedicated and directed way (meaning not – Lord I pray for Pasadena), but set time aside to pray about your hometown. Maybe get the local newspaper, read what’s going on and pray about what you read, talk to the Lord about what you are reading, and let’s see what the Lord might do.

8.) The Personal Principles and Practices of Barnabas

He was a Kingdom Builder (Personal Principle)

Acts 12:25 (NKJV) ²⁵And Barnabas and Saul returned [£]from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled *their* ministry, and they also took with them John whose surname was Mark.

Acts 13:13 (NKJV) ¹³Now when Paul and his party set sail from Paphos, they came to Perga in Pamphylia; and John, departing from them, returned to Jerusalem.

Acts 14:12-15 (NKJV) ¹²And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. ¹³Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice with the multitudes. ¹⁴But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out ¹⁵and saying, “Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them,

Goes to Paul & Company / Doesn't Care – As Long Jesus Proclaimed / Kingdom Builder

It goes from Barnabas and Paul (Acts 12), to Paul and his company. But Barnabas just kept preaching, he wasn't swayed by whose name got top billing, as long as Jesus Christ was proclaimed. We saw later they thought him a god, but he rejected the praises and glory of man. Barnabas give us the principle, be a Kingdom Builder, whether it is in the front seat driving the bus, or being under the bus changing the oil, serving wherever God has placed us, for the furtherance of the Kingdom.

9.) The Personal Principles and Practices of Barnabas **He Endured (Personal Principle)**

Acts 13:50-52 (NKJV) ⁵⁰But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. ⁵¹But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium. ⁵²And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Acts 14:19-22 (NKJV) ¹⁹Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul *and* dragged *him* out of the city, supposing him to be dead. ²⁰However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. ²¹And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, ²²strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and *saying*, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”

Life Principle – Hard Walk & Long Walk / Many tribulations

Baranabas gives us the life principle, this Christian life is a hard walk, and it is a long walk, and, *“We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”*

Thus – We Need more – Barnabas (Son's of Encouragment)

Because it is a long walk, and a hard walk, thus why the Church needs more Barnabas' to encourage, and to seek out the brethren.

10.) The Personal Principles and Practices of Barnabas **He was a giver of Second Chances (Personal Practice)**

Acts 15:37-38 (NKJV) ³⁷Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. ³⁸But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work.

No Way – No How – John Mark / We Love 2nd Chances / Maybe today you Give One

No way, no how, not John Mark Paul would say. Hey John Mark didn't just bail on Paul, he bailed on Barnabas too, but we see Barnabas giving him a second chance. We all love to get those second chances, but I take this point to ask you, "is there someone in your life that you need to give a second chance?" Maybe someone who has hurt you in a time past, and they have matured, they have repented, they are sorry for what they have done and want a second chance with you. Maybe today is your day to be a Barnabas.

But, Barnabas was not perfect

Lots to glean From / wish End there / Galatians 2 – Legalism / Snare of Man

The life of Barnabas, his principles and practices, what a life to glean from for us today. I wish I could have ended the study right there, but that would be amiss for me to do so, for Barnabas wasn't perfect. Paul tells us in Galatians 2 that after Paul and Barnabas split, somewhere along the way Barnabas who had stood like a mountain against legalism, about the grace that had come to the Gentiles, had weakened and played the hypocrite. Barnabas whose name means "son of encouragement", got influenced by legalistic, and he would not hang out with the Gentile believers when the legalistic believers were around. Proverbs 29, the fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe.

Galatians 2:11-13 (NKJV) ¹¹Now when ⁵Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; ¹²for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. ¹³And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy.

Proverbs 29:25 (NKJV)

²⁵ The fear of man brings a snare, But whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe.

Wish end #10 / Holy Spirit gives whole Counsel / Somber & Sobering – even most godly

I wish I could have ended on point 10 to end on a high note, but the Holy Spirit gives us the whole counsel of God, and what we end with is a very somber and sobering note, and that is that even the most godly man or woman of God is vulnerable to the snares of man, the cares and concerns of what others think, and I believe it is going to get harder and harder in the very days we live in if you just take a casual glance of what new laws are being passed out of Washington.

Constantly examine – Constantly Plugged In – Strengthening 1 Another

We must constantly be examining ourselves, we must constantly stay true to the things we read, and stay plugged into our fellowship, so that we encourage one another, and strengthen one another, so that we may

Acts 11:22-23 (NKJV) ²²Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. ²³When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord.

Need More Barnabas' 1-10 / No made it – Till Make It

We need more Barnabas (Points 1-10) to make it; and may I remind you, there is not made it, until we make it (seeing Him face-to-face).

Outline

The Personal Principles and Practices of Barnabas

- He Sold Out for the Lord (Personal Principle)
- He stood beside a Man when others Distanced Themselves (Personal Practice)
- He was an Encourager of Others (Personal Practice)
- He was a Good Man (Personal Principle)
- He Saw Talent (Gifts) & Developed Talents (Gifts) (Personal Practice)
- He Searched out a Brother until he Found Him (Personal Practice)
- He had a Burden for His Hometown (Personal Practice)
- He was a Kingdom Builder (Personal Principle)

- He Endured (Personal Principle)
- He was a giver of Second Chances (Personal Practice)

Callings (part 1)

Acts 16:1-7

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Paul & Barnabas Split / Paul & Silas Now / Gospel to End of Earth / Ch15 – Leading of Lord

Well the missionary team of Paul and Barnabas has split, and Barnabas set off with John Mark, and Paul sets off with Silas. So the gospel continues to go to the ends of the earth, and Pasadena Maryland too. As we finished chapter 15, we studied "The Leading of the Lord", of how God guides His people. Below is the recap of that study.

The Leading of the Lord - Acts 15:22-41

- 1.) God Guides through the NT Church.
- 2.) God Guides through Gifted Men and Women in the Body.
- 3.) God Guides through the Gifts of the Spirit.
- 4.) God Guides through Desires We May Have Personally.
- 5.) God Guides Through Concerns We Feel Internally.
- 6.) God Guides through Interpersonal Difficulty.

More Leading – As in Callings / Everyone has One / Additional / Child – Vision – Block

As we look at verses 1-15 today, we will see more leading of the Lord, but in a much different way as we see God leading in His "Calling" upon a person. I'll just start by saying for each person here today, God has a calling upon your life. Called to be a husband, called to be a parent, called to be a friend, called to be a witness (for some callings are pre-set, they are happen by default, you need not hear the voice of the Lord saying this is your calling, for it is your calling by default – they day you get married, the day you have a baby, the day you become a friend). And then there are the callings into a specific ministry, which all the just said are ministries but additional ministries as called into the church, the community, and/or the world. We will see a calling from childhood in terms of Timothy, a calling to come preach (in terms of Paul's Macedonia calling through a vision), but in between there we will study a twist, and that is a calling that was directly influenced by the Holy Spirit leading, but not leading through an open door, but by closing a door, which is quite fascinating to me, and has more application to our daily lives than we probably recognize.

18\$ Painting

I am reminded of a story, and perhaps you recall the story. A man bought a painting at a Philadelphia flea market for eighteen dollars. The painting was rather plain, but the frame was of interest to him. After returning home, he set to work to remove the canvas, when a piece of paper tucked inside caught his eye. As he carefully extracted the document, he was amazed to find one of only four original copies of the Declaration of Independence, which he in turn sold for over four million dollars. This incident interested me because often when I look at a passage of Scripture, I see it framed and painted, only to find that behind the scenes there can be a wealth of information waiting to be discovered. Such is the case here in our study today as we look at the "callings" of the Lord.

Start verse 40

So we pick it up in verse 40 of chapter 15 for context..

Timothy Joins Paul and Silas

(Acts 15:40 NKJV) but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God.

(Acts 15:41 NKJV) And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

(Acts 16:1 NKJV) Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek.

(Acts 16:2 NKJV) He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium.

(Acts 16:3 NKJV) Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek.

Circumcised him to Deliver Freedom Decree

So Paul is going to have Timothy be circumcised so they can take a letter to surrounding churches that you don't need to be circumcised and keep the dietary laws, or traditions of the father's to be saved! Surely there must be a reason, right Paul? We will come back to that in a minute, but first let's talk about this young man Timothy.

2 Callings – From Childhood & a Parent / Set Apart – then Developed

We see two callings here, one of a young man (Timothy), and the calling for the parent. Paul says that Timothy, like himself was set apart by God for the work of the ministry at a young age (Paul says he was set apart in the womb). God set them apart, then He developed them into His chosen vessels. Paul's development went on full-tilt with a personal visit on the Damascus Road, and Timothy's developed by his godly mother and grandmother through his childhood.

2 Timothy 3:14-15 (NKJV) ¹⁴But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, ¹⁵and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 1:15-16 (NKJV) ¹⁵But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me through His grace, ¹⁶to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood,

2 Timothy 1:4-5 (NKJV) ⁴greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, ⁵when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.

Can enough be Said / Split Family / Hey Single Mothers – Negative Influence / Keep On

This Timothy, can enough be said about him? His mother was a Jew, who became a follower of Christ, his grandmother too. His dad was a gentile, apparently a non-believer; and you single-mothers be encouraged by these woman that in spite of the negative influence a non-believing father could have on a young and impressionable child, their witness and teaching of the Scriptures was enough to raise this young man to be a godly follower of Christ. You can do it, single mom, so keep on doing-it.

Don't Despise Youth – Tim Didn't / Same Youth Today / Tim Endured / Youth stay True

Don't despise your youth Paul would say to Timothy, and Timothy didn't, what an example of a young version of Barnabas. I can guarantee that youth then and youth today have not changed that much. Timothy would have been teased for coming from a mixed family of Jew and gentile, he would have had friends who thought it was boring and bondage to have to go to church (the temple) and study the scriptures as he had too, but we see Timothy obviously endured all of that, made sacrifice and endured peer pressure to stay true to what he knew was true. And that is my word to the youth today, and that is "stay true to what you know is true". Don't trade the truth for anything, whether that is peer-pressure relief, or more time in front of the television, or more time hanging out with your friends, "stay true to what you know is true", and your life will be greatly rewarded for it.

1 Timothy 4:12 (NKJV) ¹²Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Always be Rewarded for Obeying the Word / Proverbs 4

You will always be rewarded by following and obeying the Word of God. Parent and child, let's read Proverbs 4, just simply read these words and let them sink deep into our heart, the call for our children to gain wisdom now, at their young age, not later when they are grown up, for the wisdom of the Lord is riches and will lead them in solid path, and a fruitful life.

Proverbs 4:1-27 (NKJV)

1 Hear, my children, the instruction of a father, And give attention to know understanding;

2 For I give you good doctrine: Do not forsake my law.

3 When I was my father's son, Tender and the only one in the sight of my mother,

4 He also taught me, and said to me: "Let your heart retain my words; Keep my commands, and live.

5 Get wisdom! Get understanding! Do not forget, nor turn away from the words of my mouth.

6 Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; Love her, and she will keep you.

7 Wisdom is the principal thing; Therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding.

8 Exalt her, and she will promote you; She will bring you honor, when you embrace her.

9 She will place on your head an ornament of grace; A crown of glory she will deliver to you."

10 Hear, my son, and receive my sayings, And the years of your life will be many.

11 I have taught you in the way of wisdom; I have led you in right paths.

12 When you walk, your steps will not be hindered, And when you run, you will not stumble.

13 Take firm hold of instruction, do not let go; Keep her, for she is your life.

14 Do not enter the path of the wicked, And do not walk in the way of evil.

15 Avoid it, do not travel on it; Turn away from it and pass on.

16 For they do not sleep unless they have done evil; And their sleep is taken away unless they make someone fall.

17 For they eat the bread of wickedness, And drink the wine of violence.

18 But the path of the just is like the shining sun, That shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.

19 The way of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know what makes them stumble.

20 My son, give attention to my words; Incline your ear to my sayings.

21 Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart;

22 For they are life to those who find them, And health to all their flesh.

23 Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.

24 Put away from you a deceitful mouth, And put perverse lips far from you.

25 Let your eyes look straight ahead, And your eyelids look right before you.

26 Ponder the path of your feet, And let all your ways be established.

27 Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil

Parents no time to Rest – Even if Wearing you Out / Rest in Heaven – New Body

Those with children in your home today, there is no time to rest, are you tired, are they wearing you out, do you want rest? You'll get your rest in heaven; in fact you will be getting new body, so you might as well wear this one out for Jesus.

Duet 6 – Every Opportunity you Get

Teach these words to them (Duet 6) when they rise, as they walk, and when they lay down, which simply means "every waking moment" be investing in your child the things of the Lord, always be looking for ways to show them, expose them, to a new and deeper understanding of who Jesus Christ is and what He means to them. Talk the Scriptures with them, not force it upon them.

Weave godly principles into the things happening around you, watching on television, stories of their friends. Talk about vanity as we watch yet another Hollywood star crash with drugs and alcohol. Talk about consequences as we watch another sports superstar make a bonehead decision. Talk about the deceit of riches as we watch the economic turmoil. Talk about man seeking glory as we watch these politicians try to fix the Country apart from Jesus Christ. Where ever you see an opportunity, invest in it.

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 (NKJV) ⁶And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Parents remember Proverbs – When Old – Return / Free-will & Promise / Prayer Team

And parents, we must remember Proverbs 6, to train-up a child in the way they should go and when they are old they shall return. Hey, as much as I believe in the free-will part of salvation, I believe this as equally so, I take it as a promise. And maybe you need that promise to comfort

you because your child whom you raised in the ways of the Lord has gone off, and your heart is breaking, then I encourage you to take hope in these words, for all the promises of God are yes and amen which means so-be-it. Take the opportunity to go back and pray with our prayer team to accelerate the passing of this verse in your wayward child's life.

Proverbs 22:6 (NKJV) ⁶ *Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.*

2 Corinthians 1:20-22 (NKJV) ²⁰*For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us. ²¹Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, ²²who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.*

If You have been Raised by godly Parents

And if you have been blessed so much that you had believing parents (and grandparents), parents who would go against the flow, who would go the long way to raise you in the things of the Lord, you have tremendous parents. I would encourage you today, call them and say, "mom and dad, thank you for raising me in the ways of the Lord, I am forever in your debt, you have blessed me beyond measure".

(Acts 16:4 NKJV) And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem.

(Acts 16:5 NKJV) So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.

Second Lap – Seeing People already Saved / Timothy one of Them

Now mind you, Paul is making his second lap in these areas, and would be seeing people who had gotten saved under his ministry on round one about 5 years ago, it appears Timothy was one of those very persons who after being raised to be looking for the coming Messiah thought the OT scriptures, comes to the belief and acceptance that Jesus is the Promised Messiah.

We a Church 6 Years / Some Saved – some Babes / Love Salvation – No Grtr Joy

We have been a church now for about 6 years, and I can reflect back and remember some here right now being saved through this ministry, and other here coming when they were days old in the Lord, and I say praise the King of Kings. I love to evangelize, and yes it is a treat when someone prays to receive the Lord, but every time I am a part of it I'm saying to myself, I hope this is for real, I hope they are serious. What do I enjoy more so, it is watching people who are still walking with the Lord now after all this time. Just as John said, I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are waling with the Lord.

3 John 1:3-4 (NKJV) ³*For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. ⁴I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.*

John 15:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶*You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.*

Paul looking to bring Alongside

It seems as though Paul was always looking for young men to bring alongside him. Six times, in six different epistles, Paul referred to Timothy and called him "my son in the faith." If you're older in the faith, one of the greatest joys you'll ever have is that of investing yourself in a younger person. What joy it must have been for Paul that when he was at the end of his ministry, that he would say he would entrust the church in Ephesus to no one else but Timothy.

(1 Timothy 1:2 NKJV) To Timothy, a true son in the faith: *Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.*

2 Timothy 2:1-2 (NKJV) ¹*You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. ²And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*

(1 Timothy 1:3 NKJV) As I urged you when I went into Macedonia: *remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine,*

What about Circumcision / Champion of Grace / Higher Priority

Now about having Timothy circumcised, what is up with that. Paul had Timothy—with whom he would deliver decrees of liberty to new believers—circumcised, was that the best example to teach Timothy?. Why would Paul, the champion of liberty and grace, place Timothy under this ritualistic burden? I don't think that Paul was not compromising his theology. No, he was conforming to the higher priority of love. You see, although Timothy's father was Greek, his mother was a Jew—making Timothy a Jew as well. Therefore, Paul didn't want Timothy to be a stumbling block to the very people he sought to win. On the other hand, in Galatians 2, when the Judaizers wanted to circumcise Titus, Paul absolutely forbade it. Why? Because Titus was a Gentile. Paul would later write,

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 (NKJV) ¹⁹For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; ²⁰and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; ²¹to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; ²²to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. ²³Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.

Are we Willing to Give up Rights / My Alcohol

Are we willing to give up our rights so that we won't unnecessarily cause someone else to stumble? Are we, like Timothy, willing to give up our liberty for the sake of love and effective ministry? I remember I had been a Christian about a year, and I had just started teaching Sunday school, and one of the things I had matured in was that I knew that drunkardness was a sin, so I just limited myself to a max of 2 beers in a sitting (so I'd drink 2 beers in the living room, then go out on the balcony and drink 2 out there – just kidding, but legalism always finds a way doesn't it). So I was bowling with my buddies as we did every Friday, and I had a beer in my hand, my back facing the pins, and I just felt someone staring at me from behind, so I turn my head, but not my whole body, thus the beer was still not visible to anyone, and there was one of my sweet little 5th graders that I was teaching Sunday school to. She was so excited to see me, but too shy to actually come up to me, so when I smiled and waved, she smiled and waved, and went running off to go tell her parents, "guess who is here". The Lord spoke to me right there, and said, "Ray they are watching you." At that moment I vowed to never drink in public again, but only a few weeks passed and I knew that wasn't enough. It wasn't God saying I want this from you, but just knew in my heart what I needed to do. And so 17 years ago, I said ok Lord, it's done – and it was hard at first to be honest with you. But I have had 17 years of total freedom that when asked, when "snooped" that I could simple and very clearly say – No I do not drink, not a drop, and the conversation is over. There are certain liberties that just aren't worth it, and we will each have to let the light of God's love reveal what needs to be let go for the sake of the beloved.

Other Liberties

Be sensitive to what God may be asking you to lay sown for the sake of another, whatever it may be I doubt it will be anything as bad as being circumcised as an adult. It may be a television show, some music artist, some hobby, or whatever it may. Timothy, what an example; willing to endure such pain for the sake of others. Wasn't easy on Paul I'm sure, for no father likes to see their beloved child suffer. I'll be honest, I don't miss any of the liberties I have laid down for the Lord, and you won't either, because I believe God will never be a debtor to man (Col 3:23-24), and whatever we give up for His glory, He will replace a hundredfold, and He will replace what we gave up for love, with love – His love, and we will then become more like Him, because the more love that becomes part of our very being, the more we become like Him, because God is love (1 John 4:8).

Colossians 3:23-24 (NKJV) ²³And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, ²⁴knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

1 John 4:7-8 (NKJV) ⁷Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

The Macedonian Call

(Acts 16:6 NKJV) Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.

(Acts 16:7 NKJV) After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them.

Mind Blowing / God has the Time – Person - Place

This is mind-blowing to me that God would prevent us, forbid us, from entering into a place to preach the Gospel, but He does, and we can enjoy the fact that He is not being limiting, but freeing. Why would He prevent us, I think simply because God has a timing and a person for every place, and He will wait for the right time and the right person for that place. As we have seen that the Gospel didn't go out to the Gentiles until some 10 years after Pentecost.

Simple Rule-of-thumb / Not an Excuse / Consider a Go – Let God Prevent

Now, as a simple rule-of-thumb, I just say preach the word, be ready in season and out of season, and let God be the decider if you are the right person at the right time. I think too often out of fear we want to help God along in that decision, but saying I don't feel the Spirit moving here, so I'm not the right person or this isn't the right time. I say when the opportunity comes, take it, and let God prevent.

2 Timothy 4:1-2 (NKJV) *¹I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead ²at His appearing and His kingdom: ²Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.*

How did God Prevent – Don't Know / Flood – Hurricane –Malaria - Food

How may He prevent, well in this case we really don't know, it isn't mentioned on how God forbid them from preaching there, and I'm sure that is for a reason because if the Holy Spirit did tell us how, then we would apply that as proof–text that in every situation such as that it is a clear indication God is saying don't preach. It could have been a flood or a hurricane preventing passage through the area (so men would say, hmm see that is God's judgment against that area, so much He won't even open the gospel to them). Maybe Paul, Timothy or Luke got Malaria or something (men would then say if you get sick on your missionary journey you went to the wrong place). Food poisoning? I got that when I did missions in Russia, people could say the same – he wasn't called thus God had to stop him. So the Holy Spirit doesn't record for us how they were forbidden, jus that they were.

Ukraine – Bible College / San Diego – Ukraine / S. Africa / Plant – Pastor - Broken

I am glad that God does prevent and forbid, because there have been times in my life where I had some really good ideas, had the heart to do them, even thought I had the word of God to go do it, but then when the time came, roadblock after roadblock was placed in front of me, and I was never able to bring that thing to pass. My most memorable was a period of time of a couple years and I was in Bible College, and looking to my future after graduation. There was a wonderful man of God who I was friends with, I was kind of a Timothy to him and he a Paul to me; well we had done two foreign mission trips together, and he felt called to go plant a church in one of the two places we had gone (Russia and Ukraine). After some prayer I really felt that I was called to go and help him. So as he was putting his life in order to quit his job, sell his house, I worked out a plan with the Bible College that had me doing 4 semesters in 3, so I could be done by the summer departure for the church plant. Well about halfway through, the Pastor says, he was thinking that God may want him to plant a church in the States, and about 3 months before I was to graduate he said he felt that is what God wanted, and asked me to join him in that venture. I didn't feel the Lord's leading in that, and was rather disappointed as I had spent almost a year preparing and praying for my 2 years in the Ukraine.

Then shortly thereafter I got a call from a church in San Diego that had planted a church in the Ukraine (which I ministered at while I was there a year early on short-term missions), the Pastor was coming home for the summer for 2-3 months for some much needed R&R and they asked me if I would go and pastor the church for the summer. I prayed, felt led, and accepted. They said, you would need to totally support yourself, and I agreed. They then called back a couple weeks later and said we need you also to support the church, pay all their expenses. I said I couldn't, I can either be the pastor or the fundraiser, but I couldn't be both. They said they would call me back; well I don't hear anything from them and I am only 2 months away from

graduation, needing to get my plane tickets, so I kept calling them until finally they called me back and said they had found someone who could pay all the way. Well, about a month before graduation they call me back, said the man bailed on them, and asked if I would go, but at this point I had considered the door shut.

So then, after graduation I met up with my missionary buddy to South Africa, we started talking, then I started meeting other people in leadership, and they ask me to go over and take over their Bible College. Well I pray, felt led, gave up my apartment, put all my stuff in storage, packed myself down to 2 suitcases, went and stayed at my parents, and put a for sell sign in my car window. Then, everything went silent, all my phone calls and emails seemed to fall off the face of the earth. I then after a long period of prayer came to an agreement with the Lord that if I didn't hear from these people by (say Thursday at noon) then I was considering the door closed, but that I fulfilled letting my yes being a yes. So Thursday at noon comes, and goes, and I say after 6 weeks of not hearing from them, door closed, what's next Lord. The next day, I get a call from the founding church in the States, sorry about not calling and returning, but are you still interested, I said no. And then, the next day I get a call from my buddy in South Africa, he says "great you haven't left", he said unless you hear God speak audibly to you, don't come down here, things are horrible, the director has gone off the edge, and everything is a mess, missionaries are leaving along with the students.

Long story I know, but let me wrap what God had been doing. The closed door in the Ukraine, turned into a Church plant in Gainesville Florida (which is now doing missions worldwide), and they are reaching the kids at the University of Florida, and all the CC in Florida, now have a solid bible teaching church to send their kids to when they are away at school. As for the pastor who took a 2-3 month sabbatical, it turned into a forever. Who ended up filling in for those 3 months, a young man, a native of Ukraine, and he ended up staying as pastor, and now that church doesn't need American support, they are self-supporting, and have planted several more sister churches as the home church. As for South Africa, they purged that mission base after some really hard times (having that Director to move on), and there is a church there and they are going strong, and actually now have live-linked church services with the sister church in Florida. As for me, God took that two year period, and rather than me being a pastor, he led me into the wilderness for two years. I couldn't get a decent job, I was cleaning out garbage shoots and replacing light bulbs and only clearing 150 a week at that (mind you I quit my job at the Space Center to go to Bible College). What God did in that time was break me, He crushed all my self-righteousness, self-sufficiency, because to be totally honest, I really thought myself to be something (and I was far from it), but as God took me through that long lonely wilderness experience, He taught me about gentleness, about extending grace to others, about love (His for me, and mine for others), and He showed me that at any given moment, I was capable of cursing Him and failing Him, for I had reached a point where I said, I give-up, I got nothing left, I can't go on. That was the place that God had to bring me before He could use me as He wanted to. I find my counsel is much sweeter and much gentler since that breaking.

Oh by the way, in reference to the love of missions, after that breaking period was over, god made me a mission coordinator for 6 years, and I was able to take close to 200 people into the mission field, to experience it, and to grow through the experience. I was able to multiply myself far beyond anything I could ever had imagined by being a coordinator.

I Happened to See / You May Not / Don't be Discouraged – Discontented

The Lord took care of that city in the Ukraine, the Bible College in South Africa, and, He took care of me. You know I just happened to see how it all unfolded and why the Lord was doing what He was doing, but I want to say to you, if you find doors closing before you, don't be discouraged, don't become discontented, just trust, trust Him that He is doing a something, and it will be something good. Just be content where God has you, and know He is working (Phil 4). As for Paul, he will make it to Galatia and Phrygia, and if that is God's will for you, doors will open at the right time. You'll get someplace, trust me, He doesn't want you on a shelf, and when you get there, you'll be glad you are there, for you'll see it is the perfect place for you.

Philippians 4:10-13 (NKJV) ¹⁰But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. ¹¹Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in

whatever state I am, to be content: ¹²I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. ¹³I can do all things through ^εChrist who strengthens me.

(Acts 18:22 NKJV) And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up and greeted the church, he went down to Antioch.

(Acts 18:23 NKJV) After he had spent some time there, he departed and went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

Callings (part 2)

Acts 16:8-15

Part 2 / Last – Parent / Not to Rest – but Invest / Take every Opportunity Presented

We will finish part 2 of our two part study on the “calling” of God on a person’s life. Last week we saw the calling of the parent in a child’s life as we looked at Lois and Eunice, the godly grandmother and mother team that raised Timothy in the Scriptures and the ways of the Lord since his childhood (16:1-3). We seen the calling of the Lord upon every parent in this room that we are not to be resting, but investing the things of the Lord into our children. We need to invest, point to His Glory at any opportunity presented to us (Deuteronomy 6). I pray you spent time this past week speaking to the Lord about these things.

(Acts 16:1 NKJV) Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek.

(Acts 16:2 NKJV) He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium.

(Acts 16:3 NKJV) Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek.

2 Timothy 1:4-5 (NKJV) ⁴greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, ⁵when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 (NKJV) ⁶“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

God’s calling no Age Limit / Lois to Timothy / 2 godly Woman Developed Timothy

We saw the calling of the Lord, and His using of people, has no age limits (aka grandma Lois), nor does it have any minimal age limits (aka the young Timothy) was not to despise his youth. God has set Timothy apart for great things at a young age, and He used two godly woman to develop Timothy for the purposes God had ordained for him. So two great callings, the calling of a parent, and the calling of the youth.

1 Timothy 4:12 (NKJV) ¹²Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

Calling to lay our Liberties Down / Not to Stumble / God will Reward – Replace

We then looked at the calling to “lay our liberties down”, as we seen Timothy was willing to be circumcised as a young man for the sake of not stumbling the very Jews they were trying to reach with the Gospel of love (16:3-5). We made note that any liberty we are willing to lay down for the sake of another, so that we might not cause them to stumble (1 Cor (“19-23), God will reward us mightily (Col 3:23-24) for so doing because whatever we would give up, God replaces because He will never leave the void there, and what He will replace that hole with, is Him very Self. Thus we were challenged to listen to the calling of God on what He may be asking us to “lay down” for the sake of others, so that they may not be stumbled. Did you spend time with the Lord asking if He had anything He wanted you to lay down?

(Acts 16:3 NKJV) Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek.

(Acts 16:4 NKJV) And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem.

(Acts 16:5 NKJV) So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 (NKJV) ¹⁹For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; ²⁰and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; ²¹to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; ²²to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. ²³Now this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.

Colossians 3:23-24 (NKJV) ²³And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, ²⁴knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

Calling – aided direction – by Blocking / Not right Time / Person, Time, Place / Content

And then we closed with a calling, which would be aided in its direction by God blocking, preventing, prohibiting Paul and team from going to a certain place to proclaim the good news. We seen that even though something may be laid on our heart, God may be saying that it is not the right time to bring that calling to pass. We saw that God has the perfect person, at the perfect time, for that particular place, and we not be discouraged or discontented when doors close, we need only learn to be content in whatever state we are in, trusting God is in total control (Philippians 4:10-13).

(Acts 16:6 NKJV) Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia.

(Acts 16:7 NKJV) After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them.

Philippians 4:10-13 (NKJV) ¹⁰But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. ¹¹Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: ¹²I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. ¹³I can do all things through ^cChrist who strengthens me.

Today – Calling through Visions, Calling of Salvation (the Ultimate Calling)

So moving on to today's study (Callings – part 2), we will see God calling through visions (as Paul is called to come over to Macedonia to preach), and we will see the ultimate calling (the calling of a personal relationship with Christ) as we will read of a woman named Lydia and her family receiving the Gospel and being baptized. It is the ultimate calling, and it is the calling from which all other callings must stem from. And if you are here today and have never received Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and saving, then I pray you listen to this whole message today so that may respond today to God calling you into a personal relationship with Him.

(Acts 16:8 NKJV) So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.

(Acts 16:9 NKJV) And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

(Acts 16:10 NKJV) Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

Notice the “we” / 4 man team/ My Mission Teams / Paul prays for a Doctor / Driven - Vision

Notice the “we”, as Luke is now part of the “we”. So when you read “we” in the Book of Acts that means Luke (the physician) is with them, and when you see “them” that means Luke is not with them. So Luke has joined them, and the party is now Paul, Luke, Silas, and Timothy. So you have an apostle (Paul), a prophet (Silas), a protégé (Timothy), and a doctor. I organized several mission trips, and if I was doing a “coffee House” I’d pray or someone who had that type of gift (or who had spent a lot of money at Starbucks), when we did basketball camps, someone who actually knew the rules, when I went into Mexico in the rainy season and we had to somehow make it up 1000 foot hills of mud, someone who was a 4 wheel drive master. In every case, for every mission trip, God brought that perfect person for that perfect time and place. If Paul was the same, then it is almost humorous, “hmm what do I need for my mission trips, what would be a great asset, I know – a doctor”. Stone me all you want, ha, I have my own doctor to stitch up all the cuts, and set a any broken bones. You just can’t stop a man like Paul! He was driven by his vision, and He see the resurrected Lord. What do we see?

God Leads through a Vision / I had a Vision – but Take Word any Day / All Called

Now here in Acts 15 and 16 we see another way God guides His people, as here He directs through a “vision” supernaturally. Only once in my life did I ever receive a vision from the Lord, and I do remember it very vividly as I reflect back on it. That vision was actually a vision of pastor/teaching, as I saw myself on a stage behind a pulpit doing such. God used that vision at various times and various places to remind me of His calling. I think we can rack and stack, place rankings on how God spoke something to us, and dreams and visions rank high up there, but to be honest, the vision isn’t the top on my list (and I don’t necessarily mean in importance but in

remembrance). When I may be struggling (in the ministry), feeling discouraged (because the ministry can be very discouraging at times, as you invest so much time and then people walk away from the Lord and just want to go back into the world), or they say you aren't doing enough for me, or I've just preached a real yawner of a bible study and all those things can make one discouraged, but the first thing I remember to do is go back to the Word, and as I do, just as promised, the Word of God will not return void (Isaiah 55:11). When I think upon the Word of God, I become strengthened, encouraged, uplifted, and I move on from that low point. I am reminded in Jeremiah 23:28 that dreams are as chaff compared to the wheat of the Word. If I had to choose between the Word and a vision, I'd take the Word every time. And, I want to make the point again, we are all in the ministry (just in different forms of it, some the ministry of parenting, some the ministry of being a spouse, some ministry inside the church, some in the community), and we all have experienced at some point the things I have just spoken, "discouragement" (which I think is quite possibly Satan's number tool against the Christian), ohh you may say, I'm a terrible parent, I'm a terrible spouse, can't counsel, can't witness, hey Beloved stand on the word of God, and He will strength you with it to get up and continue on, and let nothing separate you from the Lord – nothing! God lays no charge against you, therefore don't you.

Isaiah 55:11 (NKJV)

So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

Jeremiah 23:28-29 (NKJV)²⁸ *"The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; And he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?" says the Lord.*²⁹ *"Is not My word like a fire?" says the Lord, "And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?"*

Romans 8:31-35 (NKJV)³¹*What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? ³³Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

People want to Know Will - Point to Word

Along that same thought, people always want to know what is the will of God in their life, the first place I point them to is the Word, for I know the Word is sure, and that God will speak through His Word, and just maybe every now and then give a vision; but I never tell people wait for a vision, but always tell them to seek His word and obey what has been spoken.

Take the Word – Exactly as Presented / Read the Scriptures – then Obey what you Read

Take the word, exactly as the word is presented to us in the Scriptures, and read it, and then obey what we read, entirely, leaving nothing out. Read the Word, and then obey what we read.

Obey Entirely – Give it out in its Entirety / The Peanuts

And when we give the word out, give it out in its entirety, leaving nothing out. Don't try to guess what the person wants based on popular opinion, just give it out exactly as it is laid out, and let God have His way with it (for His Words will not return void, but yours surely will). I am reminded of the story of when CBS approached Charles Shultz requesting him to take his then cartoon comic strip, and write a script to turn them into an animated television Christmas special to air on prime time television.

It was during the 1960's, a phenomenon called "Peanuts" was born. The comic strip began popping up in newspapers all over America. It was destination reading. The cartoon's simplistic characters and modest storylines had become the perfect placebo for millions looking for a dose of innocence.

And none of it was lost on Madison Avenue.

CBS first approached Charlie Schultz, creator and writer of the Peanuts comic strip, with an idea of an animated television Christmas Special featuring Charlie, Lucy, Linus and the whole gang. The writer agreed and the work began, and CBS was quick to review the script.

Schultz titled the special, A Charlie Brown Christmas. CBS approved.

The opening scene placed Charlie on his tiptoes peeking into his snow-covered mailbox hoping to find a Christmas card - to no avail... again. Feeling dejected, he stopped by Lucy's psychiatric booth to mourn the commercialism of Christmas. Lucy agreed, adding her own lament: "Christmas is nothing but a lot of stupid toys. What I really want is real estate!"

CBS loved it.

In the next scene Charlie became further disillusioned as Snoopy was busy decorating his doghouse with an endless string of lights and gaudy decoration in hopes of winning a neighborhood contest. "Good grief!" says Charlie.

"Yeah, yeah, that's it!" thought CBS.

Even Sally, Charlie's baby sister, was caught up in the trappings. She recruited him to take dictation for a letter to Santa. "Dear Santa. Just send money, preferably tens and twenties."

More laughter from the CBS heads.

As the story progressed, Lucy sent Charlie to pick out a Christmas tree for their neighborhood pageant: "A big, shiny aluminum tree... maybe painted pink." But Charlie couldn't do it. Instead, he brought back a real, albeit small, pathetic, lifeless tree... and the kids hated it. "You blockhead, Charlie Brown!"

In frustration, Charlie screamed, "What is Christmas about, anyway?!"

"This is good, really good!" CBS drooled.

Then Linus stepped into the spotlight and answered Charlie's question:

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, 'Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward all men.'" (Luke 2:8-14 OKJV)

"Hold everything!" demanded CBS. "You can't recite Bible verses on national television...and especially the King James Version! You'll alienate our viewers and chase away our advertisers. The tree can stay but the Bible has to go."

Schultz stood firm. "If I can't tell the Christmas story, you can't have the Peanuts cast. If the Christmas reading goes, so do they!"

CBS looked at the fast approaching deadline... and gulped. "Ok, it stays. But we're going to pay a terrible price for this."

And, sure enough, on the night of the Christmas Special, the CBS switchboard was flooded with calls from around the country, all asking the same question, "When can we have more Peanuts Christmas Specials?"

"Soon," CBS promised, "very, very soon." And a TV tradition was born. 50 percent of America tuned into the show that night. It won an Emmy and a Peabody award. TV Guide claimed Linus' biblical recitation was one of the top 35 moments in television history. And it became the longest running Christmas special on CBS.

Christmas story never told Enough / God Emptied Himself / Carbon Monoxide

The Christmas story can never be told too much. His coming was never meant to be secretive. After all, God "emptied Himself" and "became a man." He stepped out of eternity and into time, and "we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father." Now it's our turn to step into the spotlight and tell the old, old story that's ever new. 2000 years old. Whether we are taking it in, or giving it out, every word can and will be new in our heart if we approach it as such, I am opening this word to get something new out of it (to apply to my life today), and I am giving it out as new, not something old and out of date (regardless what the world may say). The word is new (Hebrews 4), and it is just like every breath we take, for every breath we take is new, and sustains life. If you are ever in a confined space that has no fresh air, after some time the breaths you take are no longer new, they are the old breath you had already taken, and they are now filled with carbon monoxide, and eventually you will die. May we breathe this word in as something new each time, may we never enter a confined space (been there, read that, heard that), but may each time we open it we say, "ah fresh air".

Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV) ¹²For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Lydia Baptized at Philippi

(Acts 16:11 NKJV) Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis, (Acts 16:12 NKJV) and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days.

Roman Colony

Philippi was a Roman colony, and was very prominent in the Roman Empire.

(Acts 16:13 NKJV) And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there.

Paul's Custom / Needed 10 Male Jews

Upon entering the city of Philippi, Paul and his company must have looked for a synagogue, as was their custom. Finding none (there needed to be 10 Jewish men to constitute a synagogue), they instead found women gathered on the bank of a river for their own Sabbath meeting.

(Acts 16:14 NKJV) Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.

(Acts 16:15 NKJV) And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us.

In Vision heard Male Voice – In Actual a Female / Not Always what we Think

It is interesting to me that, although Paul heard the voice of a Macedonian male in verse 9, when he arrived he found only women in verse 13. So, too, sometimes I feel the Lord directing and guiding—but when I reach my destination I find it a whole lot different than I expected. I think maybe Timothy would have felt the same. Ok he may have said, it is going to be worth being circumcised because of all the people that are going to get saved, and after all that pain and suffering, he shows up here in Philippi expecting large masses of people, and then there isn't even 10. Be careful of projecting the outcome of obeying, you may find yourself discouraged by doing so, just rejoice and be encouraged that you were obedient to what God told you to do.

Worshipper – but not yet Saved

Verse 14 – who worshipped God – Lydia was a worshipper of God, but we can see from the context of the story that she had yet to hear that Jesus Christ was the Messiah that all the Jews were waiting for.

Lord opened her Heart

Verse 15 - The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul - Here is the freedom of evangelism, “the Lord opened her heart”, and we see we need worry or put undue pressure on ourselves, we just let the word out, and God let’s the word in.

John 6:44 (NKJV) ⁴⁴*No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.*

1st Person Saved in Europe

She by the way, is the first person saved in Europe, and she is a woman.

If Faithful - Great Saleswoman

“If you have found us to be faithful, come to our house.” said Lydia. What could Paul say? No wonder Lydia was a successful saleswoman! She just convinced an apostle, a doctor, a prophet, and young Timothy.

Lydia Excited / Remember Day you Saved / There were 2 Involved that Day

This Lydia’s heart was opened, wouldn’t ya love to see the video on this. She is saved and excited, oh come to my house and tell me more about Jesus. Christian, do you remember the day you were saved, remember what it felt like, remember the mind-blowing thought, I am forgiven, God loves me, so much so He would take the nails for me – oh I love you, I love you Lord. Now, when we think back we usually think about our side of salvation, of how we felt, but let me remind you, there were two involved sides on that day, you and God. The day you opened your heart, and said come in Lord Jesus, He came and soon as He came in He said, oh I like it here, this is home to me, I can’t wait to start remodeling. I’ve waited so long for this moment the Lord may have said, and today has finally come, you are mine – forever. I can hold you, I can kiss your face, I can whisper my words of love into your ears, yes today has finally come, and I rejoice in it.

Luke 15:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰*Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”*

You are precious / He is at Work

You are precious in His sight beloved, and He is at work in your life, and He is leading you, for His leading came when He called you to Himself, and He who began a good work in you will be faithful to complete.

Philippians 1:6 (NKJV) ⁶*being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; .*

Today Communion Service – Remember what He means to You – You to Him

Today we will be having communion service, and I want you to enter into a time of remembrance, of what He means to you, and what you mean to Him (if you are reading this after the fact, I pray you will have a personal communion service with Him right now wherever you are).

The Becoming One – What do you need Him to Become Today

When Moses asked who shall I send me when they ask, what is your name, and the Lord answered, “I Am that I Am”. The literal translation of “I Am” (which is in the “Qal – Imperfect Tense”, is “the Becoming One”. I like that, for that is what God is and desires to be in our life, “The Becoming One”, as He wants to become to you all that you need Him to be. What is it that you need Him to be in your life today?

Exodus 3:13-14 (NKJV) ¹³*Then Moses said to God, ‘Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you,’ and they say to me, ‘What is His name?’ what shall I say to them?’* ¹⁴*And God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”*

The Names of God

God most beautifully displays His love and attributes to us through the seven compound names that He revealed Himself as to His people throughout the Old Testament.

- Jehovah Jireh - Gen 22:14 - The Lord God our Provider
- Jehovah Raphah - Ex 15:26 - The Lord God our Healer
- Jehovah Nissi - Ex 17:15 - The Lord God our Banner
- Jehovah Shalom - Judges 6:24 - The Lord God our Peace
- Jehovah Ra - Psalm 23:1 - The Lord God our Shepherd
- Jehovah Tsidqenuw - Jer 23:6 - The Lord God our Righteousness
- Jehovah Shammah - Ezk 48:35 - The Lord God our Ever Present One

Jehovah Jireh - Gen 22:14 - The Lord God our Provider

- He revealed Himself as Jehovah-Jireh to Abraham and that He would become His provider for his greatest need at that very moment. Call out to Jehovah-Jireh.

Jehovah Raphah - Ex 15:26 - The Lord God our Healer

- The children of Israel came to a well that was bitter, and would make one sick. Is there a bitter situation in your life - has someone hurt you; are you sick and in need of healing. Call out to Jehovah Raphah

Jehovah Nissi - Ex 17:15 - The Lord God our Banner

- The Amalek (a picture of the flesh) were coming upon Israel, but as long as Moses hands were in the air (picture of prayer), Israel prevailed. And God put His banner over Israel to let the enemy know, I will fight for them each and every time they ask me to. Do you need God to fight for you, then call out to Jehovah Nissi.

Jehovah Shalom - Judges 6:24 - The Lord God our Peace

- The Israelites were under the oppression of the Midianites, and God told Gideon go fight them, and Gideon' heart became filled with anxiety and turmoil, but he built an altar, met the Lord there, and God filled him with peace. Are there troubles surrounding you today, meet with the Lord and enter into His Peace, call out to Jehovah Shalom.

Jehovah Ra - Psalm 23:1 - The Lord God our Shepherd

- The Bible doesn't compare us to strong lions, swift antelopes, or clever snakes. No, the Bible likens us to sheep. We, like sheep, desperately need to be shepherded. We have a Shepherd—the greatest Shepherd there could ever be: the Lord Himself. Call out and invite Jehovah Ra.

Jehovah Tsidqenuw - Jer 23:6 - The Lord God our Righteousness

- In Jeremiah times all the leaders were corrupted and foolish, had no idea how or where to lead the people, and worse of all they lead people away from the Lord. In contrast to Judah's corrupt leaders, we see the righteous Ruler, the King of kings, Jehovah Tsidkenu, or the Lord our righteousness. He has made us righteous and will lead us in righteousness. Call out and enjoy Jehovah Tsidqenuw.

Jehovah Shammah - Ezk 48:35 - The Lord God our Ever Present One

- At the time of this writing the people of Israel were displaced into Babylonian captivity, but God speaks of the city of Jerusalem, while at the same time referring the New Jerusalem, and says I am there, I am ever present. So if you are feeling displaced, feeling alone, know God is the Ever Present One, and call out to Him, Jehovah Shammah, and enjoy His presence in your life today.

Green Lights and Stop Lights

Acts 16:16-24

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

The Mission Continues / Going Well – Doors Open – Lydia / Wind in Sails

Well Paul and company are continuing on in their missionary journey (Paul's 2nd). Things have really been going well on this journey, verse 5 says the churches were strengthened in the faith and were increasing in number daily. Even when the Spirit prevented them from going one place (stop light) a door was opened wide for them to go to another (as they come to Philippi – green light), and we read the wonderful story of salvation coming to Lydia and her household, and they all get baptized. Lydia invites Paul and company to her house for some more fellowship, and no doubt some great food, warm beds with clean sheets, and fresh showers. The mission trip is going great. In fact just getting there is kind of the picture of the whole trip up to this point (smooth sailing with the wind at their back) as we read in verse 11 that From Troas to Neapolis, the port of Philippi was a distance of about 150 miles (Philippi lay ten miles inland from Neapolis), and it took them two days to make the journey. Later, the trip in the opposite direction would take five days, apparently because of contrary winds (Acts 20:6).

Acts 16:5 (NKJV) ⁵*So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.*

Acts 16:11-12 (NKJV) ¹¹*Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis, ¹²and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days.*

Smooth Sailing / We often think the way should Be / People Saved – Satan in Action

So far a mission trip of smooth sailing, the winds in their sails, and don't we all wish and many times think that is the way our lives and ministries should all be – smooth sailing, with the wind in our sails, and green lights all the way. But no sooner are lost people saved, then Satan jumps into action and starts trying to disrupt the work, take the wind out of our sails, and throw up some stop lights in our path as we will see and thus should never be surprised when it happens, and we will pick up our study in verse 16 of chapter 16.

Paul and Silas Imprisoned

(Acts 16:16 NKJV) **Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling.**

Maybe Bible Note – Spirit of Python / Mythical Serpent – Killed Apollo

Maybe your Bible margins have a note that says "spirit of python", rather than the "spirit of divination". The reason for that is that Luke's description of the **slave girl** in Greek indicates that she had a "spirit of Python." The python was a mythical serpent killed by mythical god Apollo, who took both the serpent's gift of predictions and sometimes its form. Apollo became known as Pythian Apollo. When it was said that one had a "spirit of Python," it meant that the person was controlled by an evil force.

Those who knew her – Considered Genuine / Master \$\$\$\$ / Bobby in Florida

Verse 16 - possessed with a spirit of divination - Apparently those who knew the girl did not regard her as insane or fraudulent. Rather they viewed her ability to foretell events as genuine. People paid the girl for her divination services, earning her masters a lot of money. So we have Biblical proof that there are fortune-tellers that can tap into the spiritual realm and be able to tell the future. I have no idea how, and have no desire to know, for every Christian needs to keep their distance from Ouija Boards, Madame Big Hair or Big Hat, the psychic hotline, and the likes for many of these people are not just running an entertainment business, they are actually tapped into the demonic spiritual realm. When I was going to school in Daytona Beach, just 30 minutes away was a little town that for some reason all the fortune-tellers lived in (kind of their own little community). Well my friend Bobby was on a long bike ride and ended up getting a flat tire in front of one of their houses. One of the psychics came out to get her mail and started talking to him, asked if he wanted to come in for a session, and he smiled and said no. The lady said “so your not a believer”, he said no not really. Then she said, so she said “who is David”, and he is like well that is my dad, but there are a lot of David’s in the world ya know. She said so what does Colorado mean to you, and then he is like, well that is where I want to move to as soon as college is over. The psychic did this like three more times. Then he was biking away, and here he is someone who biked like 200 miles a week, and he said he had only went 200 more yards, slide off the side of the road, wrecked his bike and flew over the handle-bars. Folks, many of these people are for real – **bike the other way.**

Leviticus 19:31 (NKJV) ³¹*Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God.*

My Personal Thought

Now my personal thought on the matter is that demonic spirits, or Satan himself, can’t actually see into the future, but they are able to watch a person’s past and use those things as if they are talking about the future. Who’s David? What does Colorado mean to you? But enough said about the demonic realm, we have already given them too much air time today; bottom line just pull the plug on them – throw your own stop light on, hit the road man.

Notice – Distraction to Prayer / Paul like me – keep thinking about It / Cards – Out Loud

Verse 16 - Now it happened, as we went to prayer, Notice this also before we move on our story, that there are always those things or people that want to distract you from your time of prayer. Recognize them, resist them, and keep your prayer time a set time. Paul and company are keeping with their tradition as they were raised in Judaism and that was that they prayed 3 times daily, and here is this gal distracting them along the way (trying to throw some stop lights up). If Paul was anything like me, his whole prayer time was spent thinking about this gal, how annoying she was, how upset she was making Paul, and most likely Paul’s prayer time was greatly distracted and diminished. What can we do when these types of things happen, when we are distracted and worked up over something and we are having a hard time focusing on our prayer life? What I have found that works well for me is that I have my prayer cards that keep me on-track of what I came to talk about with the Lord, and secondly, I have found at these times it is a good time to pray out loud. Our minds can race a hundred different places in a second, but if we speak, we have a very hard time to speak except what we are thinking.

3 Times Example

Now we have seen the example of three times daily on the OT as David proclaimed it in his Psalm (55), Daniel exercised it (Dan 6), and in the NT we saw Peter and John faithful to keeping the hour of prayer it in Acts 3.

Psalms 55:16-17 (NKJV) ¹⁶ *As for me, I will call upon God, And the Lord shall save me.* ¹⁷ *Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, And He shall hear my voice.*

Daniel 6:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰*Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.*

Acts 3:1 (NKJV) ¹*Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour.*

Let's not Miss Opportunity talk of Prayer / Prayer is coming into His Presence / Gal 5

Let us not ever miss the opportunity to talk about the power of prayer; now what is one the most basic powers of prayer, and why we will be blessed by entering into prayer regularly and continually? Because prayer is continually coming into God's presence, and thus we are then continually reminded of His presence in our life, and then we actually are enjoying His presence intimately in our lives at those times of prayer. Jesus would say that men ought always to pray and not faint (Luke 18), and thus we see and know why He would say that, for He is saying men ought to always be living in the presence of God. For whatever we are asking for, will never compare to God's presence, and when we live in the state of God's ever-presence, we will live in the place of knowing that he will take care of all our needs. In His presence we are immersed in His very being, which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. All the things He is are, all the things we need, for in His presence is fullness of joy (Psalm 16).

Luke 18:1 (NIV) ¹Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

Philippians 4:19 (NIV) ¹⁹And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 5:22-25 (NKJV) ²²But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. ²⁴And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

Psalms 16:11 (NKJV) ¹¹ You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Reminder – 1 of the 8 Keys to Power

If you recall, living in the state of God's ever-presence in our life was one of the keys to the power that the early church had, as they never knew when Jesus would just appear out of nowhere.

8 Keys to the early Disciples Power:

- They Experienced the Resurrection Power (1:3)
- They Lived in the Consciousness of the Ever-Present of God (1:3)
- They were Filled with the Holy Spirit (1:8)
- They Were Looking for His Soon Return (1:11)
- They found Power in the Upper Room of Prayer (1:13-14)
- They found Power in the Word of God (1:15-26)
- They found Power by Remaining Steadfast (2:42)
- They found Power in Evangelism (2:1-41)

Never knew When Jesus would Appear / Teaching to live Continually / If Believe - Sermons

We read of Jesus appearing, and then disappearing before His disciples over this 40 days period. There they are behind closed doors and Jesus walks through the wall. There are the disciples on the road to Emmaus, they stop to eat, there Jesus is, then there Jesus wasn't. Jesus was teaching His disciples to live continually in the presence of God, that Jesus was there, just as he said He would be, that He would never leave them nor forsake them. Christian, if we were truly conscious of His presence, how many sermons would we ever need to hear on holiness, on purity, on guarding our mind and thoughts? If we were truly conscious of His presence how many sermons would I need to preach on not entering into sexual sin, to not using our tongue as a sword to shred a loved one, a friend, a fellow believer. Over those 40 days Jesus taught them that He was always there, even when they didn't see Him.

(Acts 1:3 NKJV) to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

John 20:26 (NKJV) ²⁶And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!"

Luke 24:30-31 (NKJV) ³⁰Now it came to pass, as He sat at the table with them, that He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. ³¹Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight.

John 21:1 (NKJV) ¹After these things Jesus showed Himself again to the disciples at the Sea of Tiberias, and in this way He showed Himself:

Prayer Many Things – One Great Thing is His Presence

Prayer is many things, and one of the great things it is, is the bringing of us into His presence.

Most Interesting / 9 – 12 – 3 / Each Hr – Corresponding event at Cross

As I wondering this prayer practice of three times a day I found it most interesting that the three times of prayer (traditionally – it varies from sect to sect) for the Jews were 9am, noon, and 3pm. And I find it a most fascinating parallel that Jesus our supreme sacrifice was:

- Crucified (nailed to the cross) in the third hour (9am) of the day (Mark 15:25).
- Darkness over the land occurred in the sixth hour (12 noon) (Mark 15:33-34)
- Jesus breathed His last at the ninth hour (3pm) (Mark 15:34-37).

At each hour of prayer, there was a significant corresponding event happening at the cross.

Mark 15:25-26 (NKJV) ²⁵Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. ²⁶And the inscription of His accusation was written above: THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Mark 15:33 (NKJV) ³³Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.

Mark 15:34-37 (NKJV) ³⁴And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"³⁵Some of those who stood by, when they heard that, said, "Look, He is calling for Elijah!" ³⁶Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink, saying, "Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down."³⁷And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last.

According to Talmud – Prayer a Biblical Command / Service of the Heart

According to the Talmud (tractate Taanit 2a), prayer is a Biblical command: "'You shall serve God with your whole heart.' (Deuteronomy 11:13) - What service is performed with the heart? This is prayer." The prayers are therefore referred to as Avodah sheba-Lev ("service that is in the heart").

Deuteronomy 11:13 (NKJV) ¹³And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love the Lord your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul,

Talmud 2 Reasons – why 3 Basic Prayers / 3 Sacrifices – 3 Patriarchs

The Talmud (tractate Berachoth 26b) gives two reasons why there are three basic prayer times:

- Each service was instituted parallel to a sacrificial act in the Temple in Jerusalem: the morning Tamid offering, the afternoon Tamid, and the overnight burning of this last offering.
- According to one sage, each of the Patriarchs instituted one prayer: Abraham the morning, Isaac the afternoon and Jacob the evening prayers. This view is supported with Biblical quotes indicating that the Patriarchs prayed at the times mentioned (However, even according to this view, the exact times of when the services are held, and moreover the entire concept of a mussaf service, are still based on the sacrifices).

Abraham – 9am / Mt Moriah – Thy only Son / Jesus nailed to Cross

Abraham, the morning prayer (9am) – the first thing I think of when I think of Abraham is him going up to Mount Moraih and sacrificing his only son Isaac. So at 9am on that day, in that exact same location (777 meters the peak of Mount Moraih, also known as Mount Calvary) Jesus Christ was being nailed to the cross in perfect fulfillment of the promise of God, Jehovah Jireh the Lord will provide Himself the sacrifice. In the morning right at 9am as they prayed for their greatest need, "father forgive a sinner like me", God was working (answering their prayer) nearly right next to them being nailed to the cross; man's greatest need, God's greatest deeds

Genesis 22:13-14 (NKJV) ¹³Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴And Abraham called the name of the place, The-Lord-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of the Lord it shall be provided."

Isaac 12 noon / Not recognize works of Flesh / Law – Condemnation - Darkness

Issac, the afternoon prayer – and the first thing I think of when I think of Isaac is that God would not recognize the work of the flesh (Ishmael) but only the work of God, giving Abraham and Sarah

a son in their old age (Isaac) just as He said that He would. At 12 noon darkness covered the whole earth, as Law brought condemnation upon every man, and the works of the flesh cannot fulfill the Law, and thus Law brought the cloud of doom over every man, but God provided a New Covenant that would be based on His works, His promise to breakthrough and overcome the darkness, the Promised Seed, the Messiah of Israel – Jesus Christ. As those who were at the noon day prayer, and darkness covered the land, no doubt they would have been praying for God to breakthrough this darkness, and nearly right next to them God was working (answering their prayers) as He would not only breakthrough the darkness, but bring an end to the darkness. **Genesis 21:12 (NKJV)** ¹²But God said to Abraham, “Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called.

Galatians 4:28-31 (NKJV) ²⁸Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are children of promise. ²⁹But, as he who was born according to the flesh then persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, even so it is now. ³⁰Nevertheless what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the bondwoman and her son, for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.” ³¹So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman but of the free.

Romans 8:1-4 (NKJV) ¹There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. ²For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. ³For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

1 Peter 2:9-10 (NKJV) ⁹But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

Jacob – 3pm / Changed Nature – Governed by God

Jacob – the evening prayer – and the first thing I always think of when I think of Jacob is the changed nature, the changed name, as you will no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, governed by God. And so it is that at the evening prayer, as Jesus breathed His last, we could breathe our first, our breath of new life, a new beginning, a new nature for us – Governed by God.

Genesis 32:27-28 (NKJV) ²⁷So He said to him, “What is your name?” He said, “Jacob.” ²⁸And He said, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but ²⁸Israel; for you have struggled with God and with men, and have prevailed.”

2 Corinthians 5:17-19 (NKJV) ¹⁷Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. ¹⁸Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Men must be governed by God, or they will be ruled by tyrants - Penn, William

Shape Your Prayer

May we each and every time we enter into prayer come to these 3 conclusions, (Abraham) only God has the power to meet this hopeless situation, (Isaac) my flesh is totally powerless, let me not trust in it, (Jacob) in my hopelessness and powerlessness, may I be totally governed by God in everything I do, everything I say, and everything I think. May we no longer trust in ourselves, or the things of this world, but God and God only, and I will guarantee we will experience power in our lives like never before.

Faithful for 3pm Prayer / Saw the Holy of Holies – Presence of God – Glory of God

And here is something I want you to see, for those who were faithful in prayer, those Jews who went to the Temple for their 3 hours of prayer. As they prayed the evening prayer (3pm), as they prayed facing the Temple (as is the custom), as they prayed the earth shook so greatly the great doors of the Temple swung open (according to Josephus), and they would be able to see into the Holy Place, and then God would reach down and tear the Veil from top to bottom, and every person there at the evening prayer would then see right into the Holy of Holies, the very place God dwelt, where His Presence abided, and they would see the Glory of God. These hours of prayer are "Memorials" of Him who made it possible for you and me to enter the Holiest of Holies (spiritually for ourselves) coming boldly before the throne of God in prayer, making our petitions known (Hebrews 10:19), having free access to boldly (with all confidence) to enter into His presence, and we can do so because the veil has been tore.

Hebrews 10:19-20 (NKJV) ¹⁹Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh,

Missed the Prayer – Missed the Presence / Let not Distractions Keep from Presence

Had they not made it the hour prayer that day, my what they would have missed, but oh my what those who did make it, went against all the resistance and distractions that came against them, my oh my what they saw that day. Oh Beloved of God, don't miss the entering into His presence, no matter what the distraction, no matter what "super ceding circumstance is", stand fast to making and meeting time with the Lord your God, and you will come into His presence, and His presence will come into you, and you will have all you need for that day, because you have Him fully in your heart and mind.

(Acts 16:17 NKJV) This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation."

(Acts 16:18 NKJV) And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour.

Paul Ignores – As Instructed

Paul ignores her and gives no regard to her for many days, just as instructed to do so in the Old Testament writings.

Leviticus 19:31 (NKJV) ³¹Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them: I am the Lord your God.

Annoyed – because she viewed source of Truth / Don't need their Help / Louisiana

Verse 18 - greatly annoyed: Paul was upset not because what the girl said was untrue, but because the girl was being viewed as the source of truth. We have plenty of these "helpers" around us, and I like Paul tell them I don't need their help. I remember working in Louisiana and I loved working on the factory floor, away from all the suits and ties, and just workers sweating and being real. Because everyone was real, it was real easy to talk about Christ. Always was getting opportunities to share Christ on the factory floor. But I'll tell ya, there was this one older guy that as soon as I started to share, somehow he just knew it and came over (he could be on the other side of the hangar (which held 4 707's) and somehow find himself next to me, and he always wanted to "help", and pipe in. I didn't want his help because he was a horrible witness, now I don't question his salvation (for we had conversation), but I just didn't want him helping. He would drop vulgarities while I would share (like: what are you a stupid #####, you need to listen), or as he told me he would go out drinking with them so they could relate to one another. This went on and on for weeks and then finally I just had to say, I really prefer to do this solo, and I'm asking that you wouldn't help me, please I can handle this. So we reached an agreement he would witness at the bars, and I'd cover the factory floor (oh brother). Point, this girl may have spoke the truth, but she wasn't a true source for truth, and Paul wasn't going to let the message be confused in any way by the messenger.

Why Paul allow Several Days – Waiting for Green Light

Why, then, did Paul allow this girl to cry out for many days before commanding the spirit to come out of her? I believe he was waiting for the green light, the authority of the Holy Spirit before stepping out in the power of the Spirit.

James 1:19-20 (NKJV) ¹⁹So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; ²⁰for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

Proverbs 14:29 (NKJV) ²⁹ He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, But he who is impulsive exalts folly.

Psalms 103:8 (NKJV) ⁸ The Lord is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger, and abounding in mercy.

We do Well to Slow to Speak

We would all do well to be slow to speak, and wait for the Holy Spirit directing us when to address certain situations.

Street Witnessing in CA / Learned to Wait for Green Light

I remember one time when I was street witnessing in California that there was this young girl that she just seemed like she was demon possessed, and she was giving us quite the challenge. And I full of boldness stood before her and said, in the name of Jesus Christ I command you to leave her. Then her eyes got real big, and I think her head spun around her neck 3 or 4 times, and she just kept smiling at me. My immediate fear was that demons were going to jump me and say "Jesus we know, but we don't know you", and I'd be running home in front of all my friends naked. Yea, I was young in the Lord, and learned that it is best to wait for the green light from the Lord before dealing with people I think are demon possessed.

More Personal Application / Wait for Lord before Addressing an Issue / What say – When

But on a more personal application, we would all do well to wait on the Lord, pray to the Lord, and have the leading of the Lord before we would address any issue we know could cause problems with another. Ask the Lord, what do you want me to say to that person I see is in error, and equally as important is when do you want me to say something. When in doubt, wait, wait until you feel the Lord has given you the green light to speak into that person's life.

(Acts 16:19 NKJV) But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities.

(Acts 16:20 NKJV) And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, "These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city;

(Acts 16:21 NKJV) "and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe."

No Care girl Delivered – but \$\$\$ / Only Recourse Roman Law

Now these men have no care that this beautiful young person was delivered from demons, but they are upset because it now messes up their income source, God has crushed their god. Their only recourse was the Roman law, and they thought they had a pretty good case because the missionaries were Jewish and were propagating a religion not approved by Rome. Moved by both religious and racial prejudices, the magistrates acted rashly and did not investigate the matter fully. This neglect on their part later brought them embarrassment.

Jews – Rome – Racial / Philippi – Rome from Rome / Honor Rome – Certain Privileges

Verse 20 - "These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city; I'm sure these men thought they would have an easy case because we know from history the Jews did not find favor with Rome, and we can see the racial slur made here in verse 20, "these men, being Jews". You see Philippi was a Roman colony, which meant that it was a "Rome away from Rome." The emperor organized "colonies" by ordering Roman citizens, especially retired military people, to live in selected places so there would be strong pro-Roman cities in these strategic areas. Though living on foreign soil, the citizens were expected to be loyal to Rome, to obey the laws of Rome, and to give honor to the Roman emperor. In return, they were given certain political privileges, not the least of which was exemption from taxes. This was their reward for leaving their homes in Italy and relocating elsewhere. So Philippi was a very pro-Rome region, thus making it a very anti-Jewish area at the same time. So Paul and company are not going find any favor amongst these men.

Why Wait – Gospel kept Going Forth / Now Over & in Prison / God knew – we must Trust

What I want you to see here about "green lights" and why we need to wait for them from the Lord, and that is that the gospel continued to go forth over those "many days" and no doubt people were getting saved, lives were being changed, marriages were being healed, families were eating dinner together again, and had Paul not waited for the green light, had he preceded immediately, that crusade would have ended before fulfilling all God had intended for it to do. As soon as Paul casts the demon out, the preaching is over, the riot breaks out, and they are in jail. So God knew, and God withheld the green light for a reason, and we need to see that, trust that will be the same in our situation, and apply this principle to our lives.

(Acts 16:22 NKJV) Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods.

(Acts 16:23 NKJV) And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely.

(Acts 16:24 NKJV) Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

3 Levels in Prison / Fastened at Feet – This after being Whipped

There were three levels in the prison, one was top floor (where there would be light and windows), then the middle prison which was dark and dirty, all shut in, but still nothing compared to the inner prison (which was below the other 2 levels and was at the very bottom of the prison – as everything runs down hill we know) which is Paul and Silas are, there was no light, human waste flowed through the floors, rats and rodents, and the prisoner was placed into wooden stocks to fasten their hands and feet. The wood would be fastened to extend the legs as far apart as possible and thus the prisoner could never stand up, only sit down, and the only thing a prisoner could do for rest was to fall on their backs. Now imagine how that must have felt, falling backwards either onto the floor or against the walls of the prison for Paul and Silas after they have just had their backs shredded open from their whipping.

(Acts 16:25 NKJV) But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.

How can that Be – Singing Hymns

How can that be, how could they have been singing hymns in that wretched prison? Come back next week and we will pick it up here.

Recap What Learned

So let's recap what we have learned today, and let's ask God to lock it into our hearts this week as He grows us more and more into His image:

1. The demonic spiritual realm is real – stay clear
2. On the way to prayer – distraction will come
3. Make it to prayer – and see and experience God's presence
4. Wait for God's "Green Lights" before we act

Freedom in the Chains

Acts 16: 25-40

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Recap – Smooth Sailing – Church Growing / Cast Demon – Cast into Prison

Well chapter 16 it had been smooth sailing up to the point where Paul cast the demon out of this young "fortune-maker" fortune teller. The church was being strengthened and growing, people were getting saved, the wind seemed to be at Paul and company's back, things were great, but then this Paul cast the demon out of this young girl, she can no longer tell the future, thus she is no longer making money for her masters, and the masters have Paul and Silas illegally beaten and thrown into prison.

Acts 16:5 (NKJV) ⁵*So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.*

Acts 16:18-19 (NKJV) ¹⁸*And this she did for many days. But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour. ¹⁹But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities.*

3 Levels in Prison / Fastened at Feet – This after being Whipped

What a horrible prison it is at that, as Paul and Silas are in the "inner" prison. There were three levels in the prison, one was top floor (where there would be light and windows), then the middle prison which was dark and dirty, all shut in, but still nothing compared to the inner prison (which was below the other 2 levels and was at the very bottom of the prison – as everything runs down hill we know) which is Paul and Silas are, there was no light, human waste flowed through the floors, rats and rodents, and the prisoner was placed into wooden stocks to fasten their hands and feet. The wood would be fastened to extend the legs as far apart as possible and thus the prisoner could never stand up, only sit down, and the only thing a prisoner could do for rest was to fall on their backs. Now imagine how that must have felt, falling backwards either onto the floor or against the walls of the prison for Paul and Silas after they have just had their backs shredded open from their whipping.

Acts 16:23-24 (NKJV) ²³*And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. ²⁴Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.*

The Philippian Jailer Saved

(Acts 16:25 NKJV) **But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.**

(Acts 16:26 NKJV) **Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.**

(Acts 16:27 NKJV) **And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself.**

(Acts 16:28 NKJV) **But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here."**

How? – Praising not Dependent upon Circumstances / Rejoice in Sovereign God

How could the two missionaries praise God under such conditions? Because they understood what many Christians seem to forget—praising God does not depend on circumstances. Christians rejoice in the glorious truth that the sovereign God controls every circumstance of life (oh how happy is the Christian that recognizes this). The key to having joy in every circumstance of life is to be filled with the Spirit. Joy is a part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), and yielding to His control produces songs of joy (Eph. 5:18-19). The problem with sad, miserable Christians is not their circumstances but the lack of living a Spirit-controlled life.

Galatians 5:22-25 (NKJV)²²*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. ²⁴And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*

Ephesians 5:16-20 (KJV)¹⁶*Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. ¹⁸And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; ¹⁹Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; ²⁰Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;*

Their Theology not based on Circumstances / Songs expressed Confidence they Knew True

Paul and Silas did not base their theology on their circumstances. Instead, they evaluated those circumstances in light of what they knew to be true about God. Their songs expressed confident trust that God would use their circumstances for their good and His glory. They did not have long to wait until He did.

3 Times of Prayer – 3 Patriarchs / Each time we Enter Prayer Chamber / Experience Power

In our last study we looked at the 3 times of prayer the orthodox Jew observed. We studied that those 3 times were based on the sacrifices that were being offered at the Temple at those times (9am, 12 noon, and 3pm); but also how those 3 times were observed/based on the three patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob). May we each and every time we enter into prayer come to these 3 conclusions:

- (Abraham) only God has the power to meet this hopeless situation,
- (Isaac) my flesh is totally powerless, let me not trust in it,
- (Jacob) in my hopelessness and powerlessness, may I be totally governed by God in everything I do, everything I say, and everything I think.

May we no longer trust in ourselves, or the things of this world, but God and God only, and I will guarantee we will experience power in our lives like never before, and we I promise will experience His power.

Got Insomnia – Not take Laying Down / Meet Lord – Get a song in the Night

Got insomnia, something keeping you up at night, don't just take it laying down, get up and meet with the Lord and sing songs of praise like Paul and Silas did, and God will give you a song in the night just as He did for Paul and Silas. Psalm 42 is simply beautiful.

Psalms 42:7-8 (KJV)⁷*Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. ⁸ Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.*

Important – ever felt Imprisoned? / Stay until Peace Comes / We leave too Early / Phil 4

Very important Christian, have you ever felt imprisoned by your situation, chained, frustrated, angry or upset, beaten-downed, poured out, in the dark, the waste of the world spewing all over you, then let me suggest to you to enter into your prayer chamber and stay there until you have come to a place of peace, stay there until you have come to the place where you can lift your voice up in prayer. Too often we leave too early; we leave before the peace will come. Listen Christian I can promise you this, because the word of God is sure, and that is Philippians 4:6-7. Peace is waiting, but too often we don't want to wait through it, labor through it, and we never get to it. Here is the simple math behind it Christian, and that is that we don't want to labor for it, labor in whatever it will take, whether that be 30 minutes, 60, 90, or 120 minutes, because we say we don't have time, we have to get on with our other things, so we leave without peace, and then for the next 12 hours that thing constantly churns and burns in our heart and we have not joy nor

peace. Beloved, just the simple math tells us it would have been worth investing 1 or 2 hours to get 10-12 hours of peace. Wait until it comes.

Philippians 4:6-7 (NKJV) ⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Jehovah Shalom

Jehovah Shalom - Judges 6:24 - The Lord God our Peace

The Israelites were under the oppression of the Midianites, and God told Gideon go fight them, and Gideon' heart became filled with anxiety and turmoil, but he built an altar, met the Lord there, and God filled him with peace. Are there troubles surrounding you today, meet with the Lord and enter into His Peace, call out to Jehovah Shalom.

Judges 6:18 (NKJV) ¹⁸Do not depart from here, I pray, until I come to You and bring out my offering and set it before You." And He said, "I will wait until you come back."

Wait until it Comes / Worship CD – Prayer Card – Talk out Loud / Don't Churn - Meditate

Wait until it comes. Put on a worship album and sing. Get your prayer cards out and stay focused, pray out loud to stay focused. Don't keep churning and burning over what got you, don't mediate on those things, but mediate on whatever things are lovely and beautiful, and that is Jesus Christ (Phil 4:8).

Philippians 4:8-9 (NKJV) ⁸Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things. ⁹The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

Great Concert – brought the House Down / Prisoners didn't Leave / Dan 3 / Christian Wait!

So here is a concert that was so successful that it brought the house down! Other prisoners "attentively listening..." When it came time to leave, even the other prisoners didn't leave. I suggest to you that is because the songs and the prayers filled that whole place with the presence of God, and that is exactly what happens when we enter into prayer and worship, the presence of God fills the place. Not sure if you realize it or not, but what we have here is the New Testament version of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego cast in the fiery furnace. They weren't coming out of the furnace, even though they were free (they were loose), they weren't coming out of there because they weren't leaving Jesus. Paul and Silas didn't take the opportunity to run because the presence of God was in the prison, and they were probably afraid to leave the prison and leave the presence of God. The other prisoners must have felt the same because they weren't leaving either. It is a dynamic of God, and that is that refuse of the world flows downhill, but the praises of God rise up, and nobody was leaving that place because the peace and presence of God was there. Oh Christian, wait, wait I say and do not leave or get up until you have it.

Daniel 3:24-25 (NKJV) ²⁴Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished; and he rose in haste and spoke, saying to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." ²⁵"Look!" he answered, "I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the^e Son of God."

Psalms 27:13-14 (KJV) ¹³ I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.
¹⁴ Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

(Acts 16:27 NKJV) And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself.

(Acts 16:28 NKJV) But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here."

(Acts 16:29 NKJV) Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas.

Discernment? – Totally Dark / Paul knew Environment – Jailer put to Death

Was this spiritual discernment on Paul's behalf that although it was dark (for the jailer needed a light to see Paul) Paul knew that the jailer was about to take his own life. It could have been, but I

think more so that it was simply Paul being familiar with the environment he was in. It was common knowledge in the Roman Empire that should any prisoner escape under the keeper's authority, that keeper would be put to death for failure of duty. The death sentence would send a strong message that their duty was to be taken most serious, and anything less than perfection would bring the wrath of Rome upon that guilty party. Of course the message would be clear to the prisoner, that if you try to escape, and succeed then I (your keeper) am a dead man, so when in doubt I (the keeper) will not hesitate to kill you if you try anything funny.

Powerful Testimony of Paul – Not celebrating Freedom – but Other-centered / All Things

Paul knew the rules of Rome, and he knew this Jailer would consider his life over. Here is a powerful testimony of Paul, how Christ-minded and Christ-like he was, that at a most freeing moment from a most horrible situation in a most cruel place, Paul isn't celebrating his freedom, but immediately is being other-centered, hey what does this mean to this Jailer. When Paul said he becomes all things to all men that I might save some, he lived it, even until the point of being a prisoner, AGAIN.

Philippians 2:5 (NKJV) Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 (NKJV) ¹⁹For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; ²⁰and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; ²¹to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; ²²to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. ²³Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.

If we want to Be Effective – Know your Environment / Become Proactive

Christian, I think if we truly want to be effective in the ministering of other, we need to know and understand our environment, and we need to be thinking how current events are affecting the people around us. If we can reach that point, then something amazing will start to happen, and that is that we will find ourselves being proactive in the ministry as compared to reactive (which many times is too late).

- I know the environment when I see youth start hanging out with all unsaved friends; proactively I can tell them this is not good they will lead you in places you shouldn't be going.
- I know the environment when I watch people compromise in their dating guidelines; I can tell them proactively that you two do not need to be alone snuggled up on the couch watching television late at night.
- I know the environment of people who are over-extending themselves with money; and proactively I can tell them is that necessary, could this very well cause you to have to work all kinds of overtime, miss bible study, miss fellowshiping, for I know proactively what happens when that happens.
- I know the environment of people going through divorce, illness, troubled teens; and proactively I can say to them, I know all seems lost, all seems dark, but listen to me, there is a God who calls out through the darkness, through the rumblings of life, to speak things that you have never heard of before, so can we have coffee together someday, how about tomorrow?
- Even something as simple as travel. Traveling can be very stressful, not knowing where to go, worried of missing the connection. I find it a great opportunity to know each airport I am at, then look for lost or worried travelers along the way and point them in the right direction, and then say hey "here is some good reading for the trip", as I hand them the Good News.
- How about the economic times, the foreclosures, job losses? Take note of any changes in your neighbors patterns; car being in the driveway during the day for weeks, moving vans, for sale signs, and just ask is there anything you can do to bless them. This is our current environment, and may we consider them, even when they may not be directly affecting us at the moment.

Great to be Free – BUT Free to Free Others

It is great to be free, but we have been freed to free others.

(Acts 16:29 NKJV) Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas.

(Acts 16:30 NKJV) And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

(Acts 16:31 NKJV) So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

(Acts 16:32 NKJV) Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.

Jailer in Prison / Our Chains become peoples Thrones

You see it was the jailer who was the prisoner, not Paul; and Paul not only saved the man's life, but pointed him to eternal. Irony: their stocks become a throne as their jailer lies suppliant at their feet! Saints, sometimes what you consider chains or a prison in your life, becomes God's throne in another person's life as they watch how you overcome the world, and live in a totally different dimension. Do you think any other prisoners ever were singing songs of joy in the inner prison? Of course they listened intently, who wouldn't be drawn and blown away by such things.

Doesn't Mean All Saved if One Is

This does not mean, as has been suggested, "If you believe, your whole house will be saved." No, it means, "You believe and you'll be saved. And when your family believes, they'll be saved as well."

Paul Explained the whole Gospel

Verse 31 - Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved – Verse 32 says they spoke the word of the Lord, so Paul added and explained the whole Gospel to the Jailer, Paul didn't give him some gospel-light, but gave him the whole gospel.

Definition of Believe

Let me give the Biblical definition of "believe", for believe is 3 things, it recognizing, repenting, and receiving.

1.) Recognize

It is recognizing that we are sinners and that we have offended the Holy God (Rom 3:23). It is recognizing that there is nothing we can do in our works but it is all the grace of God (Eph 2:8-9), the grace of the cross (John 3:16).

Romans 3:23 (NKJV) ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Ephesians 2:8-9 (NKJV) ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, ⁹not of works, lest anyone should boast.

John 3:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

2.) Repent

It is repenting of our sin, the turning away from it and the turning to the way of the Lord, as spoken in His word, this Bible. That word "depart" in 2 Timothy 2:19 means to revolt against, so this isn't some "if ya get around to it, or some gentle recommendation", it means to revolt against, go to war against.

2 Timothy 2:19 (NKJV) ¹⁹Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

3.) Receive

And receive, as we ask Him into our heart and life, to take control, and we do that by faith.

Romans 10:9-10 (NKJV) ⁹that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

The Wheel Barrel

I am reminded of the story of the performer in the 1900's who use to put on high-wire tight-rope performances over Niagara Falls. The story is told on one day he asked the crowd, who thinks I can walk this rope back and forth, and the crowd says we believe you can. So he said how about with this sack of potatoes in my arms, and the crowd says we believe you can, and so he did. Then he got an empty wheel barrel and said how about this, and they said we believe you can, and so he did. Then he loaded it up with rocks, and said who thinks I can do it now, and the crowd says we believe you can, and then he dumped the rocks out and said who will be the first to get in the wheel barrel. If we believe He can, then we will get into God's wheel barrel, we will do more than profess with our mouths, but we will live it out by getting in the wheel barrel and living a life for Him. We will put shoe leather to our faith and live it out – daily and by the moment.

(Acts 16:33 NKJV) And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.

(Acts 16:34 NKJV) Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.

Saved to Serve / Wonder how many Prisoners Saved Thereafter / Jesus still shakes World

We are saved to serve, and here we see this Jailer get saved and immediately wash feet and clean bloody wounds. I wonder how many prisoners got saved in the years to come as this Jailer was washing their feet, treating them as human, cleansing their wounds, and proclaiming Jesus Christ still moves stones, and will shake your world if you will open your heart to Him.

God shake whole Building for 1 Family / Too many Numbers

God will shake the foundation of a building; He will affect multiple other people's life, in order to reach one person and one family. Too many numbers in the ministry today, too much focus on reaching the masses and too little efforts to pour time, resources, and energy into what the modern day church would consider a dismal response, just one family. God made the earthquake for just one family. Recognize that as you look at the environment around you.

Paul Refuses to Depart Secretly

(Acts 16:35 NKJV) And when it was day, the magistrates sent the officers, saying, "Let those men go."

(Acts 16:36 NKJV) So the keeper of the prison reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now therefore depart, and go in peace."

(Acts 16:37 NKJV) But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, and have thrown us into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out."

Grasp This – Paul comes Back / Death for Jailer – Chained for his Sake /

Grasp this, Paul left the Jailers home to come back to put the chains back on (see verse 40 – they went out of the prison). Paul knew that to not return would mean death to his new brother in Christ. Christian, what types of chains are you will to put on for your brother or sister in Christ. What types of liberties, what types of rights are you willing to give up for that brother or sister in Christ.

(Acts 16:38 NKJV) And the officers told these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans.

(Acts 16:39 NKJV) Then they came and pleaded with them and brought them out, and asked them to depart from the city.

Paul used his Rights – to Protect the Church

It was then that Paul made use of his Roman citizenship and boldly challenged the officials on the legality of their treatment. This was not personal revenge but a desire to give protection and respect for the church.

Paul Slips Out – Message seemed did Wrong – Turn on the Church

Once the magistrates learned that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they realized that they were in danger of the wrath of Rome. It was unlawful to whip a Roman citizen or deny that person the right to due process. Paul refused to leave when he had the opportunity because he was protecting the infant church in Philippi. Because Paul and Silas were beaten in public, people probably believed that they had done something wrong. If Paul left quietly, then the perception would be that those associated with him, in particular the members of the Philippian church, had also done something wrong.

Paul Mothers the Church

So here we see Paul mothering the church, always thinking about his children. Great example for all of us to have that mothering-heart for the church family. Always looking out for them, seeking to ensure their well-being.

(Acts 16:40 NKJV) So they went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.

Encouraged – Frees us From & Meets us In

It is not just encouraging that God frees us from the world's prisons, but that He meets us there in the prison.

Recap our Study

- Praising God is not dependant on our circumstances
- We are to pray until peace comes (don't leave until it comes)
- Look and know your environment so we may minister to those around us.
- Salvation is for all (Recognize, Repent, and Receive).
- We are saved to serve
- We were challenged to put the chains back on for a brother's sake.
- God will not only free us from the prisons, but meet us in them too.

Chapter 17

Turning the World Upside Down (17:1-7)

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Released – but not looking for R&R / Go and Encourage

Paul and company have been released from the Philippian jail, and their first course of action isn't R&R up at the Mountain Resort, waiting for their wounds to heal from their beating, writing their memoirs, rather we see them immediately going to the brethren and bringing them words of encouragement.

(Acts 16:40 NKJV) So they went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.

May we be People of Encouragement / Encourage Body – World – Know your Environment

Oh may we always be a people that are speaking words of encouragement for how this world more than ever needs encouraging, and I am talking the body of believers, not just the people of the world that is wondering aimlessly. As we spoke last week, know your environment, and speak the words of encouragement that people need to hear in the environment (the season of life they are currently experiencing).

We Free from Prison – Meet in Them / Encourage in Prison Too – Write not from Resort

What words Paul would have spoken to these believers, how encouraging that God not only frees us from the world's prisons, but that He meets us there in the prison too. Paul will not only bring encouragement in his freedom, but in his bondages too as He will write this church in Philippi some time later, but not from the mountain resort retreat center, but from another dark dingy prison cell as he has been imprisoned by Rome again by the stirring up of the Jews. But even in the prison he can write words of encouragement to the Church in Philippi, and from prison he will say over again, "Rejoice in the Lord". Can we say such things to others when we are imprisoned?

Philippians 1:3-8 (NKJV)

³I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

⁴always in every prayer of mine making request for you **all with joy**,

⁵for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now,

⁶being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

⁷just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.

⁸For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 3:1 (NKJV) Finally, my brethren, **rejoice in the Lord**. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.

Philippians 4:4 (NKJV) **Rejoice in the Lord** always. Again I will say, rejoice!

Paul Lived in Constant state of – the Joy of My Salvation

Paul lived in a state of continual joy over his salvation; I was destined for hell, a rebel to God, did unthinkable things, yet He still would reach down and say, "I love you". I loved my season of being a new believer because that is all I did for months after getting saved, was walk around

smiling at the fact that I was saved. Paul was living example of Isaiah 12, and I pray we too will come back to the waterfall of flowing joy, our salvation, and enjoy the simple fact – we are saved.

Isaiah 12:1-6 (NKJV)

¹And in that day you will say: "O Lord, I will praise You; Though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me.

² Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; 'For YAH, the Lord, is my strength and song; He also has become my salvation.'"

³ Therefore with joy you will draw water From the wells of salvation.

⁴And in that day you will say: "Praise the Lord, call upon His name; Declare His deeds among the peoples, Make mention that His name is exalted.

⁵ Sing to the Lord, For He has done excellent things; This is known in all the earth.

⁶ Cry out and shout, O inhabitant of Zion, For great is the Holy One of Israel in your midst!"

Could Write – because Never thought a Prisoner / Prisoner of Lord / Rome chained to Paul

You see Paul could write words of encouragement, words of such love, even from the pit, because he never believed himself to be a prisoner of Rome, but the prisoner of the Lord, that he was exactly where he was because God purposed it to be so. Do we feel the same way? How about your job, how about your marriage, how about your financial situation? I love how Paul not only accepted it, but embraced it. To Paul he wasn't chained to the Roman guards, but it was they that were chained to him so that they may not get away. Every 4 hours (shift change) here came a new group of witnessing opportunities. It appears that a great many must have gotten saved because Paul says in one epistle that the whole palace guard send their salutations.

Ephesians 4:1 (NKJV) ¹I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called,

2 Timothy 1:8 (NKJV) ⁸Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God,

Philippians 4:21-22 (NKJV) ²¹Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. ²²All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household.

Get to That / Great Chapter – Athens / Verse 1 / Book of Acts – Acts of the Holy Spirit

Well we will get to those stories of Paul's imprisonment in the coming chapters, but today we enter into chapter 17 and let's pick it up in verse 1 of chapter 17 as we continue our verse-by-verse study of the Book of Acts. This book is called as some say it is about the acts of the disciples, but I say it is called Acts because it is the Acts of the Holy Spirit through the disciples; and thus anyone here today who desires it to be so, the Holy Spirit will Act through your life, and you will experience the presence and power of God in every aspect of your life. So we don't just read about history, but if we apply it to our lives, we will be making and writing new history – because the Book of Acts has never ended, it just keeps going on and on in the lives of Believers who say, "here am I Lord, have your way in and through me". I pray that is the heart you have come with today to receive this word from the Lord.

Guilty as Charged – Turning the world Upside Down

For those in the Book of Acts who had lived such lives had a wonderful charge laid against them (and our text today), and a charge that we may be found guilty of ourselves, "turning the world upside down". I pray that we be a people that turn our world upside down, and I don't just mean globally, but locally, and I don't just mean locally but individually – as in our personal lives, our marriages, and with the children God has entrusted to us.

(Acts 17:6 NKJV) But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.

Preaching Christ at Thessalonica

(Acts 17:1 NKJV) Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews.

Thessalonica – Greece / Strategic – Capital Macedonia / Business Center – Trade & Harbor

Thessalonica (modern Thessaloniki also called Salonika, in modern day Greece) was strategic center, the capital city of Macedonia, and had approximately 200,000 residents. Not only was it the capital of Macedonia, but it was also a center for business, rivaled only by Corinth. It was

located on several important trade routes, and it boasted an excellent harbor. The city was predominantly Greek, even though it was controlled by Rome

Tim & Luke Left / Paul & Silas use Via Egnatia / Use the Roads before Us

Timothy and Luke were left behind in Philippi to strengthen the new church, and Paul and Silas continue on. Thessalonica was about 100 miles from Philippi. Paul and Silas used the famous Roman road: Via Egnatia, which crossed Macedonia, connecting the Adriatic Sea with the Black Sea (the Romans apparently built over and/or improved in 113AD). (The Via Egnatia was the Greek extension of the Via Appia which connected to Rome). The gospel travels quickly because the roads were laid out for quick travel; hey if that was true then, how much more so now. Paul would have walked a whole day to get to Curtis Bay, I can get there in 15 minutes. I can share the gospel with a friend in Florida with the speed of light because of this internet. Let's use the roads that have been laid out for us, with no labor of our own, to reach the world around us, to encourage with the world of the Lord. If you look at the NT Church, they had fewer resources than we do, less money, less people, less mission boards, less radio stations, less information superhighway (internet), less church building, less than all the tools that we have today – but they were able to turn the world upside down.

Challenge you who Work / If do So – God will never be Debtor

We read of Paul doing mighty works for the Lord, but maybe you say I just don't have time to work for the Lord, for I am so busy working. Well I want you to see that Paul worked while he was ministering in Thessalonica, he made tents. I challenge all here today, you can work, and you can serve, God will enable you to do so, just as He did for Paul. If you will do so, this I promise you, that you will never be left on the short end because of your labor; God will never be a debtor to man, and He will bless you beyond measure for having a heart and passion for his people.

Acts 18:3-4 (NKJV) ³So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers. ⁴And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.

1 Thessalonians 2:7-9 (NKJV) ⁷But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. ⁸So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. ⁹For you remember, brethren, our labor and toil; for laboring night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.

2 Thessalonians 3:7-9 (NKJV) ⁷For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; ⁸nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, ⁹not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us.

Luke 6:38 (NKJV) ³⁸Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

(Acts 17:2 NKJV) Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,

(Acts 17:3 NKJV) explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ."

(Acts 17:4 NKJV) And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas.

3 Sabbaths / Visiting Rabbi

Verse 2 - and for three Sabbaths - So Paul is there for at least 3 Sabbaths (Saturdays) preaching. As was the custom in those days, the ruler of the synagogue would turn part of the meeting over to a visiting rabbi of Paul's stature.

Reason from Scriptures / Reason with Kids – From Scriptures

Verse 2 - reasoned with them from the Scriptures – when we reason with people about Jesus Christ, reason from the Scriptures as Paul did, not clever stories, not passionate pleas from your heart, but from the Scriptures for they are what is guaranteed not to return void (1sh 55:11). You can use those other things such as stories and personal testimonies to compliment your

reasoning, but let your reasoning be based on the Scriptures. Also, parents, how we need to reason with our kids out of the Scriptures—not merely telling our kids what to do, but telling them why. Truly the Word is reasonable. It's logical. It makes sense. Don't just tell our kids they can't because it is a sin, but explain to them why God says to do something or not to do something. Show them, He wants to protect them from harm, and provide for them blessings, because He knows best (He's God) and loves them most (demonstrated on the Cross).

Isaiah 55:11 (NKJV)¹¹ So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

Explain – Open – Deliver Child / Road Emmaus / Key opening Scripture – focus on Jesus

Verse 3 – explaining – The word used here for explaining means “to open”, it means to open something that was once closed, it was used when referring to the womb opening to deliver a child (delivering life). We seen the word used elsewhere in the Scriptures when on the Road to Emmaus; Jesus appeared to the two disciples and “opened” the Scriptures to them. He opened their understanding to what was once closed, and His opening brought and delivered life unto them. How do I open the word up to people I share with you may ask, or to my children, precious people, here is the key to our biblical study, and that is that Jesus is the “key” to the opening of the Scriptures. As seen so beautifully in the ministry of Paul, the key to opening the Scriptures is always to look for, talk about, and focus on the Person of Jesus Christ. Whether sharing with children, talking to a neighbor, or teaching a Bible study—the key to opening men's hearts is to look not for principles of parenting or methods of marital communication, **but looking for Jesus Christ**. Our faith is not in a philosophy, not in principles, but in a Person. You will be a wonderful Bible student and an excellent Bible teacher if you learn this simple lesson: talk about Jesus. Look for Jesus. He is the key to opening Scripture. When Jesus is the key to opening the Word, that is when the Word will burn within our heart just like it did for those disciples on the road to Emmaus.

Luke 24:32 (NKJV)³² And they said to one another, “Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?”

Thorny Situation / Messiah Ben Joseph – Messiah Ben David

Verse 3 - explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead

- This presented a thorny problem to the Jewish theologian who knew passages like Isaiah 53, which spoke of a suffering Messiah, but also Psalm 2, which spoke of a ruling Messiah. The only way to reconcile a Messiah who reigned with authority, with a Messiah who suffered brutally, was to have two Messiahs.

- Thus, the Jews called the reigning Messiah “Messiah Ben David,” after Israel's mightiest king.
- They called the suffering Messiah “Messiah Ben Joseph,” after the Old Testament hero who suffered unjustly at the hands of his brethren.

In the synagogue, Paul opened the Scriptures and explained how both sets of prophecies were fulfilled in one Person, how Jesus—son of Joseph—was the suffering Messiah who was crucified on the Cross, but after three days, He—Son of David—rose from the dead to rule and reign forever.

Isaiah 53:5-6 (NKJV)⁵ But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

Psalms 2:7-8 (NKJV)⁷ “I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. ⁸ Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession.

The Gospel – Plain and Simple

Paul sums the gospel up in his letter to the Corinthians, saying very closely the same things he said here to the Thessalonians. The resurrection, it is the power of the gospel. The same power that raised Christ from the dead is available to you today (Eph 1:19-20). My friend what is the need in your life today? God is more than able and powerful to raise you over that need.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (NKJV) ³For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,

Ephesians 1:19-21 (NKJV) ¹⁹and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power ²⁰which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

Demonstrating – Evidence – Legal Trials / OT Prophecies of Jesus

Verse 3 - and demonstrating - This word demonstrating means “proving or producing evidence” and was used in legal trials. Paul’s evidence that Jesus is the Messiah was not all His miracles, but all the prophecies He fulfilled (because Paul is reasoning from the Scriptures). The greatest proof that Jesus is the Christ is the Old Testament prophecies that He fulfilled, over 300 of them. Here is our top 8 (only 8 of the 300) (and the in-depth study can be found in our study of 1 Peter).

Top 8

His Birth & Lineage

- 1.) The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Micah 5:2a / Matthew 2:1-2
- 2.) The Messiah would be a descendant of David. Isaiah 9:7 / Matthew 1:1

His Environment & the World Setting

- 3.) The Messiah would be announced to his people 483 years, to the exact day, after the decree to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. Daniel 9:25 / John 12:12-13
- 4.) The Messiah would be killed before the destruction of the temple. Daniel 9:26c / Matthew 27:50-51
- 5.) The Jew’s authority to administer capital punishment would be gone when the Messiah arrived. Genesis 49:10c / John 18:31

His Death

- 6.) The Messiah would be sacrificed on the same mountain where God tested Abraham. Genesis 22:14 / Luke 23:33
- 7.) The Messiah’s back would be whipped. Isaiah 53:5c Matthew 27:26
- 8.) The Messiah’s hands and feet would be pierced. Psalm 22:16c Matthew 27:38

All facts that can be backed up by historical writings.

The Word / Word a Seed – Produces Change / Entertainment / Seed Genetic / Jer - Hammer

Verse 4 - And some of them were persuaded - The Word, the Word, the Word—that’s what impacted the Jews in the synagogue. It wasn’t Paul’s excellence of speech, but his exposition of the Scriptures that caused them to believe. Jesus said the Word is like a seed, and when that seed finds fertile soil it takes root and grows. It is the Word that persuaded the people, and brought change in their heart. There is such a danger today in that sermons are becoming a form of entertainment, that they are given to entertain people with humor, and cute stories, but no substance to bring forth everlasting change. The power is in the Seed (the Word); every seed is genetically preprogrammed to produce fruit, and when it is planted in the right conditions it will produce fruit. Jeremiah says the Word is like a hammer that breaks the rock into pieces; is there something solid that is blocking your life from spiritual growth, then let the hammer of God’s Word have it way in your life and let it break the rock into pieces so that the seed will be planted deep into your heart and do what it is programmed to do, produce spiritual fruit.

Matthew 13:3-9 (NKJV) ³Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: “Behold, a sower went out to sow. ⁴And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. ⁵Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. ⁶But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. ⁷And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. ⁸But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

Jeremiah 23:28-29 (NKJV) ²⁸ “The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; And he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?” says the Lord. ²⁹ “Is not My word like a fire?” says the Lord, “And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?”

Big Crowd

Verse 4 - and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas - Luke's phrase "not a few" (Acts 17:4, 12) is one way of saying, "It was a big crowd!"

Assault on Jason's House

(Acts 17:5 NKJV) But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people.

(Acts 17:6 NKJV) But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.

Staying at Jason

The house of Jason is where Paul and company are staying at.

Note Reason versus Charge / Be careful to Hear Charge – Seek Lord underlying Problem

And note the reason, as compared to the charge. The charge, they have turned the world upside down, they spoke contrary to Rome; the reason, they were envious of them. These men were envious that Paul and company come to town and get all kinds of attention, thus diminishing the esteem they so much enjoyed and sought from the community. The unbelieving Jews, envious of the ministry of Paul and Silas, decided to take action against them. When people bring accusations, almost invariably it is due to a deeper reason than that which appears on the surface. Therefore, if you're working with people, it's wise not to listen to the charge itself, but to seek the Lord concerning the underlying problem.

(Acts 17:6 NKJV) But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.

(Acts 17:7 NKJV) "Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king; Jesus."

AD 49 / King Unlike Caesar / Jesus unlike rulers this World – Weapons are Love - Cross

Verse 7 - saying there is another king; Jesus - In A.D. 49 the Roman emperor Claudius expelled all Jews from Rome due to riots that were ignited by a group of zealous Jews. These insurrectionists were advocating revolution against Rome and were opposing the installation of a new king. Paul's accusers were trying to paint him as a revolutionary who was bringing sedition to Thessalonica. The Greek word translated "another" means "another of a different kind," that is, a king unlike Caesar. The kingship of Jesus Christ is unlike that of the rulers of this world. He conquers with ambassadors, not armies; and His weapons are truth and love. He brings men peace by upsetting the peace and turning things upside down! He conquers through His cross where He died for a world of lost sinners. He even died for His enemies! (Rom. 5:6-10)

Pray this Accusation / Upside Down – Right side Up / Woe Evil Good – Acceptable

Verse 6 - These who have turned the world upside down have come here too - I pray this could be the accusation against us as a church. I pray people would say that we have turned this community upside-down, for if we could do that, then it would finally be right-side up, for it truly is the wrong-side up right now. When evil is called good, and good is called evil, things are wrong-side up. Things that are contrary to the word of God are acceptable (homosexuality, drunkenness, fornication, greed), and things that are true in the word of God are unacceptable (abstinence, fidelity, purity). Until Jesus is the "County Executive" of Anne Arundel County and each family there within, this County is wrong-side up (and the same is true for the nation).

Isaiah 5:20 (NKJV)²⁰ Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

Pray we Turn It / Not Bible Studies, Evangelism, Programs / Spirit Filled People Tapped

I pray we will someday be accused of turning it right-side up, what a compliment to any church. Although more bible studies, more evangelism, more programs would be great, that is not what will turn this County, or your individual world within your home, upside-down, it is only the Sovereign God using Holy Spirit filled people who have laid their life down and said, I am yours, do with me as You will. And, the only way to continually live a Spirit-filled life such as that, to walk in the Spirit, is to be continually tapped in and connect to the Spirit – and you will never be more in the presence of God than when you are in prayer. Prayer is when we are separated from this world, and connected to “Thy Kingdom Come”.

Galatians 5:22-25 (NKJV)²²*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. ²⁴And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. ²⁵If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*

Some things not Learned – but Imparted / Camden – Chapped Lips

People there are some things that just can't be learned, they have to be imparted from God to us supernaturally. More Bible Studies and more Programs are great, but may not be the answer, certain things can only be breathed into our very being by the breath of God (of course God can't change our hearts until we change our minds, thus we need to be in the word so we can see what is God's heart). God is Spirit, and we have to meet Him in the Spirit, so that He may impart spiritual things to us. My little 2 year old Camden has chapped lips, I've try to apply the lip balm via the chap stick, but he moves his head all around, he has tried to put it on himself but half ends up on his nose, and then the other he tries to eat, so I have found the best approach is I apply it to my lips heavily, and then give him a long kiss. So too it is with prayer, as God has the anointing balm of the Spirit that He wants applied to our lives, and He finds no better way to apply it but thorough long kisses of prayer, the intimacy of prayer, the union of prayer with our Lover.

John 4:23-24 (NKJV)²³*But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. ²⁴God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.*

Precious Saints, enter into the prayer chamber, let His lips soak you in His anointing oil.

(Zechariah 4:6 NKJV) *So he answered and said to me: "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the LORD of hosts.*

Prayer Night

God is calling us that I am sure of, and I have been getting confirmation by confirmation from many of you. I've been seeking the Lord to add a prayer night to our weekly church schedule, and every person I've mentioned it to have all said, we too have felt that being impressed upon our hearts.

Recap what we Learned

- We were Encouraged to be Encouragers.
- We are Prisoners of the Lord, not this World.
- Use the Roads around us to reach the World.
- We can Serve and Work (just as Paul did).
- When we reason with People, reason from the Scriptures.
- Open the Word to People, by pointing out the Person of Jesus Christ.
- The Resurrection Power is Available for you Today.
- The Word is a Seed, Preprogrammed to do a Work in Your Life.
- Jesus is “unlike” any Ruler of this World.
- We can turn the World Upside Down – through the Holy Spirit.
- Something can't be taught, but Imparted from God (His Lip Balm).

Being Good Bereans (*Searching the Scriptures Daily*)

Acts 17:8-14

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Last Study

In just our first seven verses of our study last week, the Lord really showed us and taught us a lot of things to consider and apply to our spiritual walk.

Recap of what we Learned last Study

- We were Encouraged to be Encouragers.- How beautiful and refreshing it is when someone comes and brings a word of encouragement. A word of encouragement can change the whole day, even a whole life.
- We are Prisoners of the Lord, not this World.- Whatever your situation, if will you see that God has allowed it, you will not only accept the situation, but embrace the situation.
- Use the Roads around us to reach the World.- the roads have been paved not for economic reasons, but for the spreading of the gospel.
- We can Serve and Work (just as Paul did).- Paul made tents; work was only the means to support his ministry of bringing God glory; ministry wasn't what time was left over from work.
- When we reason with People, reason from the Scriptures.- the word of God is logical, it makes good sense when explained why God says what He says. Reason with our children from the Scriptures, not because we "said so".
- Open the Word to People, by pointing out the Person of Jesus Christ.- Christianity is about the Person of Jesus Christ, point to Jesus as we study or present the Word to people or ourselves. Everything in the Scriptures point to Jesus Christ. Each Word of God comes with God, the Person of Jesus Christ.
- The Resurrection Power is Available for you Today.- The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to meet whatever your need is today.
- The Word is a Seed, Preprogrammed to do a Work in Your Life.- The Word of God is pre-programmed to produce fruit in our lives, make time to plant the Seeds of the Word.
- Jesus is "unlike" any Ruler of this World.- Jesus is unlike any ruler in this world, for He conquered with His blood, and He rules by way of unconditional love. He doesn't send armies, but ambassadors.
- We can turn the World Upside Down – through the Holy Spirit.- Our world needs turning right-side up, and we will only do that by tapping into the Spirit and Power of God.
- Something can't be taught, but Imparted from God (His Lip Balm).- We must take all our teachings, evangelism, and programs and have them soaked and saturated with God Himself before they will ever produce fruit, thus we need to spend equal time in the prayer chamber as we do in those activities.

(Zechariah 4:6 NKJV) So he answered and said to me: "This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the LORD of hosts.

Last Study – We saw the Union (God works through Man) / Changes Us / Wiersbe

I hope that you seen from last study, and today's study, that there is a union in the works of God, and that is simply God working in and through man for His purposes. I believe one of the main

reasons God works this way is so we get off the sideline and into the game. For it is when we are enlisted into the work, God does a work in us, because we realize our inadequacies and cry out to Him (commune and union with Him) Lord help me. And it is with that invitation that He can freely move in and through us. Warren Wiersbe one of my favorite Bible teachers has defined ministry as the following, and we would all do well to memorize this so it becomes part of our very being:

"Ministry takes place when divine resources meet human needs through loving channels to the glory of God"—Warren Wiersbe

Don't Tune Out / Not just Ministers – but Husbands - Parents

Now, please don't tune out on the teaching today, for this study isn't only applicable to the highway and byways minister, but to you mom and dad, to you parents, to you who are called "friend" by others.

Today's Message – Good Bereans

Well today the heart of our passage and message is about those in Berea who searched the Scriptures daily, and we will look at those applications for our lives today. One of the base requirements to be used of God is to know our Scriptures.

(Acts 17:11 NKJV) These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

Left Off Verse 7 – Jews stir Crowd Up – Insurrection / Going to get Kicked out Thess

So we left off in verse 7, Paul and Silas are in Thessalonica preaching, many people believed, but some envious Jews have stirred the crowd up, accused them of causing an insurrection against Rome and king Caesar, and now Paul and Silas are going to be kicked out of city. So let's pick it up in verse 6.

(Acts 17:6 NKJV) But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.

(Acts 17:7 NKJV) "Jason has harbored them, and these are all acting contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying there is another king; Jesus."

(Acts 17:8 NKJV) And they troubled the crowd and the rulers of the city when they heard these things.

(Acts 17:9 NKJV) So when they had taken security from Jason and the rest, they let them go.

Payoff – Posted Bond / Debated / Russia & Mexico

Verse 9 - when they had taken security from Jason and the rest – Taking security was similar to posting bond today. So these men require a payoff in order to let them go. This could be debated within the body if Jason should have paid the money, for by doing could be interpreted that they were doing something wrong; or it could be debated that it was better to pay and free, then not pay and be imprisoned. I know when I was in the Ukraine I had like 30,000 dollars worth of medical supplies with me in one suitcase, and 300 dollars worth of bandages, ointments, gauze packets in another. The Custom agent took the suitcase with bandaids, and gave me the one with 30K of supplies and told me to come back tomorrow for the other suitcase – which I knew wouldn't be found (I gladly left with my 1 suitcase). Once in Russia I was bringing in a computer for the missionary coordinator, and the Custom Official gave me a hard time for quite sometime, and my playing stupid wasn't working; he told me open my wallet, I had 600 dollars, he picked out three 20's for himself and told me to hit the road, and I did. But I also remember the time when I was going into Mexico with 3 pickup trucks full of blankets (for dozens of people were dying because of unseasonable cold front in the region – and few had warm blankets to endure the cold), the border guards keep hounding me, it was obvious to me a bribe would have worked well, but I just stood there, and finally they said "just go". So I'm not really sure what the rules are when you are in a place where there are no rules, so it is good to hear what God is saying to you in those situations. The only answer I have to this debate is to trust God

When in the Mission Field - Nicaragua

Let me add a side note here for any of you who are going to do 3rd world missions. This may sound contrary, but please be very careful about being so generous with your money, because your generosity may affect the residing missionary you are working with. When I was doing missions in Nicaragua a group of us went out to have tea and cookies at a local café down the road. The bill for the 6 of us came to like \$1.50. I said I'll get this (the big spender that I am), and I left a 15% tip. People were shocked at my cheapness, but I said let's not set the precedence of a local price and a price for Americans. No one agreed, thought I was missing the opportunity to be a good witness, etc, etc. So they all handed the threw another dollar down as the owner came by to pick up the check. Well the next morning I see the local missionary and say how is your day, and he says not good, every day I like to stop at the local café for tea and a cookie, it usually cost me like 25 cents, but today the owner charged me 1 dollar. He said, I can't afford 1 dollar a day for tea, I'm on a real tight budget down here, I guess that is the end of that blessing. So gang if you are ever in the mission field, I always recommend, and practice, that if you want to be bless someone, give the money to the local missionary who knows the area, and let him distribute the blessings as he sees fit. We need to apply that to our ministry up at the local homeless park too.

Ministering at Berea

(Acts 17:10 NKJV) Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews.

Snuck Out – Started to Preach / 50 Mile Walk – Good talk Walks with Lord / Take R&R

They snuck Paul and Silas out of the city under the cloak of darkness, and they traveled to Berea which was about 50 miles away from Thessalonica, and as soon as they got there they immediately went into the synagogue to preach. Fifty miles was a good couple day trip, and plenty of time to think of what just transpired in Thessalonica, especially the part of having to leave by the cover of night after having to pay money to be released. That could be quite discouraging, quite humbling, quit upsetting, but by the time 50 miles has been put under the feet, they are ready to preach again. It is good to take some walks with the Lord, walking and thinking, walking and talking, and it is good to have a partner that walks with you so that you might encourage one another with the word, with prayer, and with song. It is good to take some time and do nothing but walk with the Lord; let someone fill in for ya, let someone cover your duties, as you just spend some time walking with the Lord and getting refreshed and recharged.

(Acts 17:11 NKJV) These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

(Acts 17:12 NKJV) Therefore many of them believed and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.

Don't Believe Ray Bollas

This verse means, "do not trust a thing Ray Bollas says, but search out for yourself if what he has said is true". Beloved, trust no man or woman as absolute truth, but check everything they say against the Word of God.

Great Combination (Teacher Teaches – Student Searches)

Here is coupling power God intends, and that is that a teacher teaches (under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit), and the student confirms the teaching in their own study. The Scriptures tell us that God manifests (brings to light) the Scriptures through the Pastor/Teacher, but here we see God still says the student needs to follow it up.

Titus 1:3 (NKJV) *³but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior;*

Not Casual Research / Searched Daily – not 1 Time / Received Readiness – Clear Heads

Their research was not casual. They searched (see definition of search below) the Scriptures. It was worth it to them to work hard at it, and investigate what the Word of God said, and how Paul's teaching matched up with it. They also searched the Scriptures daily to find out. It wasn't a one time, quick look. They made it a point of diligent, extended study. Also, they searched the Scriptures daily to find out. They believed they could understand and find out truth from the Bible (many people today are told that the Scriptures are too lofty for the average Joe and need an "expert" to tell them what it means). For them, the Bible was not just a pretty book of poetry or mystery or nice spiritual inspiration for thoughts-for-the-day. It was a book of truth, and that truth was there to find out. But with all their diligent searching and concern for the truth, the Bereans did not become skeptics. They received the word with all readiness. When Paul preached, they had open hearts, but clear heads. Many people have clear heads, but closed hearts, and never receive the word with all readiness. It was both of these things that made the Bereans more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica. We should be more fair-minded than the Bereans. We should receive the word with all readiness, with open hearts. But we must also have clear heads, and when we hear a preacher, be those who search the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things [are] so. If the great apostle Paul was worthy of this kind of close examination, how much more should teachers and preachers today be carefully compared with the Scriptures!

"Search" (GK – anakrinō)

1) *examine or judge*

a) *to investigate, examine, enquire into, scrutinise, sift, question*

1a) *specifically in a forensic sense of a judge to hold an investigation*

2a) *to interrogate, examine the accused or witnesses*

b) *to judge of, estimate, determine (the excellence or defects of any person or thing)*

Paul had nothing to Fear / If seeking Word – Will find It

Verse 12 - Therefore many of them believed: Paul had nothing to fear by the diligent searching of the Scriptures by the Bereans. If they were really seeking God and His Word, they would find out that what Paul was preaching was true. This is exactly what happened among the Bereans, and therefore many of them believed.

Youth Group Concern / 5 Year old Correction

I was once at a church and helping in the Youth Group, and there was a concern that came up that some of the youth were going to this Youth Conference or visiting this youth group who met on other nights, and the leadership was getting anxious saying we need to forbid them from going for they may get deceived. My response was, we have taught them well, we teach them verse-by-verse, they know their Bible (some of them we have been teaching since grade school in our Sunday School classes – hey I remember talking to a 5 year old and saying Jonah got swallowed by a whale, and she said to me, actually Mr. Ray the Bible says "a great fish", so it might not have been a whale; We can rest in that, that they will not be deceived because they will see through the errant teaching. If anything we can rejoice that we are sending missionaries out who will lead others out of deceptions or errant teaching. I can say we never lost a one of our kids to errant teaching, if anything when they saw such teaching we were able to use the opportunity to grow them even stronger in the word.

Anti-Christ – Signs & Wonders

On another note may I remind you also that when the Anti-Christ comes on the scene he will deceive with all lying and deception, and people will follow him because they don't know the Word of God, because those who know the Word will see through his lies and not receive him nor his mark.

Matthew 24:24-25 (NKJV) ²⁴For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵See, I have told you beforehand.

Paul - Not Flashy Speech / Peter says we Saw Him – but the Word / Ps 138 / Matt 24

Paul said I didn't come with persuasive speech, but the word of God. Peter said we seen Jesus and held Him, we were eyewitnesses to His resurrection and glory, but we don't trust in that, but we trust in the Word of God which is more sure of anything we have seen with our eyes. The

Scripture is more solid ground than anything we will ever see with our very own eyeballs. God magnifies His Word above His Name, and at His Name every knee will bow and tongue confess; that is one mighty name, and yet He says His Word is even greater. Jesus said heaven and earth will pass away, but His Word shall remain forever.

1 Corinthians 2:4-5 (NKJV) ⁴And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

Colossians 2:4 (NKJV) ⁴Now this I say lest anyone should deceive you with persuasive words.

2 Peter 1:16-21 (NKJV) ¹⁶For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. ¹⁷For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." ¹⁸And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. ¹⁹**And so we have the prophetic word confirmed**, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; ²⁰knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private [£]interpretation, ²¹for prophecy never came by the will of man, but [£]holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. **1**

Psalms 138:2 (NKJV) ² I will worship toward Your holy temple, And praise Your name For Your lovingkindness and Your truth; **For You have magnified Your word above all Your name.**

Matthew 24:35 (NKJV) ³⁵Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.

Power in Word – What does God Say / Faith comes to those in Word / PROBLEMS

Folks, the power is in the Word—it's not "What do you think?" or "What do I think?" but "What does God say?" How many problems would be solved, how many questions would be answered if people would only take the time to study the Scriptures daily. Faith comes not by encounter sessions or group therapy, but by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Faith comes to those who are in the Word, for only the Word can affect lives, change hearts, strengthen faith, and renew minds.

Romans 10:17 (NKJV) ¹⁷So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Christian Invest in the Word / Shake Slumber Off

Christian, invest yourself in this Word with all you have. Those of you who have been saved for sometime, maybe you have grown lapsed in your reading and studying of the Word, then shake yourself out of that slumber and get back into the Word. Go past the knowing it is good, to doing what is good. Remember when you first got saved and the passion you had to read and hear the Word of God, God misses that time with you.

Jeremiah 2:1-2 (NIV) ¹The word of the LORD came to me: ²"Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem: "I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown.

The Trees at Downs Park Pasadena

Psalms 1 says "blessed is the man". The blessed man is planted deep in the Word of God, whose root system reaches deep to tap into the water of the riverbed, not just catching the surface water that comes from the rain. Yesterday when I was at the park I took some pictures of a huge tree with a huge root system that was blown over by a hurricane. Upon further inspection although the root system went out 12 feet in diameter, I could see that they only went down several inches. There were several trees in that were taken down by this one tree falling upon them, and their root systems were equally shallow. It to me was an illustration of a husband and wife whose root system is shallow in the Word, and when one tumbles, they other goes down too, and sadly (as in the pictures I took), the little trees get crushed too (the little children). We must be a people who "search" the Scriptures, DAILY, so we build deep and strong root systems that will withstand the storms of life.

Psalms 1:1-3 (NKJV)

¹ Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;

² But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night.

³ He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.

Paul not offended they Searched / Eating Watermelon / My Open door Policy

Also, we can see from the context of our story that Paul loves it that they went and searched the Scriptures, and he was not offended at all by them doing so. If any Pastor/Teacher gets offended or defensive if you question him on where he came up with that interpretation or application, then that may be a warning sign for you to consider. Now I always say, listening to sermons or reading books and commentaries, it is like eating watermelon, and that is sometimes you have to spit out some seeds. Not all they (I) say will be 100% perfect, they may have stretched it a bit, but that doesn't mean they are false-teachers, but just not as good a teacher as Paul the Apostle was. I have an open door policy here, that you may ask me anything about my teaching, of where I got my references, what passage was I quoting, and I will gladly discuss it with you; and sometimes you will ask me some deep theology, and I will actually say – I don't know. But I will be glad to see that you are searching and contemplating the Scriptures on your own.

When I Teach (O-I-A)

When I teach, which is verse-by-verse, I follow the same pattern every time I teach: Observation, Interpretation, and Application.

- Observation – simply what does the text say.
- Interpretation – what does the text mean in it's context (the surrounding verses), in it's cultural environment (what we know from history or other scriptures), and in it's historical settings (who was king, archeological discoveries, etc)
- Application – how we apply the interpretation to our lives, how we can become more like Christ. In my application I look to apply what I call "**SPECS**".

Atlas Centaur

While working at the Space Center several years ago, I was a rocket mechanic working on the Atlas Centaur Rocket carry satellites into space. This rocket was approximately 20 stories tall, had 100,000 pounds of rocket fuel, the engines produced 500,000 pounds of thrust, and would travel at Mach 25 (which is roughly 18,000mph), to get to that speed we would have to fly around the earth and use the earth's rotation to slingshot the rocket into space, 23,000 miles above the earth in what is called geosynchronous orbit. The whole flight time was 23 minutes.

250 Million / All or Nothing / 100% Success or Failure

The rocket cost 100 million dollars, and the satellite cost 150 million dollars. So each launch was worth a quarter of a billion dollars. Once that rocket lifted off, there was no getting it back. The mission was either 100 percent success or 100 percent failure; basically it was all or nothing.

Extensive Testing / SPECS / 99.99 Thrown Out / Guidelines for Success

To give ourselves every chance for a successful mission, we did extensive testing on the launch pad for 3 months prior to the flight. We had a Test Manual and every test was pass or fail based on the "specifications" – "SPECS" as we called them. If a part was outside the "SPECS" then it was replaced at whatever the cost. If the SPEC said 100 or more, and the test results said 99.99, then it failed. The SPECS were our guidelines for "Mission Success".

God's Economy / Study Word – Got SPECS / Life's Mission Success

In God's economy, 250 million dollars is chump change compared to one day in the life of one of His children's, after all it was for us that He endured the Cross (not some rocket and satellite). So, as I am studying the Word (and as I teach it) (The BIBLE is the Life Manual for mission success, Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth), I have a set of SPECS I am constantly looking for as I read. SPECS, S...P...E...C...S; for my life's mission success.

S – Sins to Forsake - There is no negotiation, they have to be forsaken:

- **1 Cor 6:9-11 (NKJV)** ⁹Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, ¹⁰nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.
- Flee from youthful lust (2 Tim 2:22)

- I've made a covenant with my eyes (Job 31:1)
- "Judge not, that you be not judged. (Matthew 7:1)

P – Promises to Believe - God's promises get me through the hard times. God's promises warm my heart and soul as I read of His great love for me:

- **Jer 29:11 - 13 (NKJV)** *"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. ¹²Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. ¹³And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.*
- "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you (Matthew 7:7)
- My God shall supply all my needs (Philp 4:19)
- I will never leave you nor forsake you (Heb 13:5)
- It is Finished (John 19:30)

E – Examples to Follow - this book is loaded with great examples of great men and woman who followed after God:

- John the Baptist, would not waiver or water down the Word. (Matt 14:1-12)
- Moses intercedes on behalf of the people after their great sin (Exodus 32).
- Jesus sees the hungry, so He feeds them (Matt 14)
- Jesus is moved with compassion, so He teaches the people (Mark 6:34)

C – Commandments to Obey – They are not suggestions, but commands of God. The word command in the OT means “specifically”, and in the NT it means “an authoritative prescription”. I like that, this is the specific prescription from the Great Physician to make us well, and to keep us well:

- Study to show yourself approved unto God (2 Timothy 2:15)
- Go therefore and make disciples (Matt 28:19)
- Husbands love your wives as Christ loves the Church (Eph 5:25)
- Sara called her husband Abraham Lord (haha) (1 Peter 3:6)

S – Stumbling Blocks to Avoid – Just as there are great examples to follow, there are great examples not to follow but to avoid.

- Solomon took for himself many wives (Neh 13:26-27)
- Peter warmed himself by the enemy's fire (John 18:18)
- Aaron feared man and made the golden calf (Exodus 32)
- Lot pitched his tent towards Sodom (Genesis 13:12)

SPECS – Assure Mission Success

S-P-E-C-S – to assure success in my life's mission.

This is the IBS / DVD Series Available

What I just mentioned is called the Inductive Bible Study Method, it is a core class in our “School of Discipleship and Ministry”, but the DVD series is available to anyone who would like to go through the course. If there is enough interest, I'll invite Pastor Ted up again for the weekend and we can do it live as we did a few years back. It is a priceless investment.

Greg Laurie – 8 Principles

I would also like to share for a moment with those of you who teach the Bible. Greg Laurie in his teaching called “First Century Principles for Reaching the Twenty-First Century” gave 8 principles for delivering a great Bible study, and I'd like to highlight them of all of us today. I take them to heart and to apply them to all my studies. His text that he used to teach this message is from Paul preaching on Mars Hill in Athens (our passage next week).

Effective Biblical communication begins with a burden to reach people. That burden can only be imparted supernaturally through communion with God in the prayer chamber.

Be culturally relevant while never shortchanging biblical accuracy. People are people, and the people we read about in the Bible are no different than us except for the way they dressed. They faced temptation, they worried about their finances, how to put food on the table, raising kids, peer pressure, and all the bombardment of the flesh around them. It doesn't take much to look at the culture in the Bible and see how closely it relates to the culture of today.

The content must arouse and capture the interest of the listener. The message will only be as interesting to the hearer as it is to you. They will only be excited about the message if you are.

The teaching needs to be directed to the people. Let them know why this is important to them, and that applying this teaching will change their lives.

All preaching must be biblical. Stay within the bounds of the text, regardless if it upsets the hearer, or makes God out to be unloving or unmerciful.

The message must focus on Jesus Christ crucified and risen. As we spoke last week, the Word of God is not about a Program, but a Person, the Person of Jesus Christ. Bring Jesus out in every message for only Jesus changes lives.

The whole gospel needs to be preached. Don't present the gospel if you can't present it all; it must include repentance, it must include the resurrection for the resurrection is the power of the Gospel.

Trust God for the results. Don't worry if people say wonderful job, or fall asleep, but at the end of each study just ask yourself, if they take this word and apply it their lives, will their lives be better.

So 8 good principles to keep in your mind as you prepare to teach and share the Word of God.

(Acts 17:13 NKJV) But when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that the word of God was preached by Paul at Berea, they came there also and stirred up the crowds.

(Acts 17:14 NKJV) Then immediately the brethren sent Paul away, to go to the sea; but both Silas and Timothy remained there.

Word Produces a Response / Some acceptance – other Upsetting

The Word of God produces a response, for some it is a response of acceptance, but for others it produces an upsetting response in their heart.

Why some Stay – Paul Planting Churches – Strengthening Christians

Why didn't they all go? Because Paul had a passion for planting churches, not just making converts. If Paul could not stay in the city and strengthen the Christians there, he wanted his trusted associates to stay and do the job.

Recap what we Learned

- The Definition of Ministry
- Take some Walks with the Lord.
- Acts 17:11 – Search the Scriptures Daily.
- The need to build a Deep Root System
- S-P-E-C-S
- 8 Principles for Teaching a Good Bible Study
- The Word of God Produces a Response

Paul on Mars Hill – 17:15-34

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Paul Kicked Out Again

Well the Apostle Paul has been run out of another town, but not until the Word of God did a mighty work in Berea. And now he will come to Athens, and deliver one of my most favorite sermons I have ever heard. Paul is going to reach out to a community, a city filled with people who are searching for something, but they just don't know what it is. A city filled with people doing unspeakable sins, yet from the surface they appear to be wise and intelligent. But Paul had a heart that was sensitive to what was really happening, and Paul will be provoked within his heart that he had to do something, else the people will perish. If you have any desire to see the lost and mislead – lead to Jesus, then you will gain a wealth of practical application that you can apply to your very witness to reach those whom God has laid on your heart. Athens we will see is little different from Anne Arundel County, the people and the culture has little difference, and we will see that as Paul reached the people of Athens, you apply the same approach to reaching "your Athens".

Definition of Culture

The Definition of "culture" is – the sum total of ways of living built up by a group of human beings and transmitted from one generation to another. As I look at that definition, I can see that as it is passed from generation to generation, the receiving generation accepts it, almost blindly, never questioning if the previous generation truly knew what they were doing. We can see that in our study here on Mars Hill, as generation after generation just kept living and believing the same way, and we can see it in our culture today, as people just keep living in what they consider the norm, never really question – hey maybe our culture is messed up. Well Paul when he comes to Athens, will confront their culture, in a masterful way, and bring people to a place of at the least, having to make a decision, "is it time for me to change". What is culturally acceptable is not necessarily acceptable to God.

Outline: Paul's Message on Mars Hill – To Reach a People Paul:

- A Burden for the Culture (17:15-21)
- A Respect for the Culture (17:22-23)
- A Dispelling of their Culture (17:24-25)
- A Using of their Culture (17:26-29)
- A Dividing from their Culture (17:30-31)

1.) A Burden for the Culture (17:15-21)

The Philosopher at Athens

(Acts 17:15 NKJV) **So those who conducted Paul brought him to Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him with all speed, they departed.**

(Acts 17:16 NKJV) **Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the city was given over to idols.**

200 Miles / Intellectual Capital of History (Aristotle – Plato – Socrates) / Paul Stirred – 3K

Paul left Berea and headed for the next city, the city of Athens (about 200 miles away from Berea) —the intellectual capital of all of history, the city of Aristotle, of Plato, of Socrates. While Paul waited for Timothy and Silas to join him, his spirit stirred within him, for here, in the intellectual center of the world, were over three thousand altars and temples built to different deities.

- The temple dedicated to Aphrodite, with temple prostitutes abounding, was man's attempt to justify sexual promiscuity.
- The temple of Zeus was for those with a "Clint Eastwood Make My Day Mentality" who were into savagery.
- The temple of Bacchus was for those who enjoyed alcohol.
- The temple of Demeter, mother of the earth,

Over 3,000 idols; they had a saying that it was easier to find a god in Athens than the person you were looking for.

Paul no sightseer – but Soul Winner / Europe Looked Over – but Overlooked

Paul arrived in the great and beautiful city of Athens, not as a sightseer, but as a soul-winner. The late Noel O. Lyons, for many years director of the Greater Europe Mission, used to say, "*Europe is looked over by millions of visitors and is overlooked by millions of Christians.*" Europe needs the Gospel today just as it did in Paul's day, and we dare not miss our opportunities. The same holds true t America today. Like Paul, we must have open eyes and broken hearts.

Paul didn't Mobilize a Committee / Christian Boycott Hell / Go on the Offensive

Paul's heart was stirred within him. But we will see that he neither mobilized people politically to campaign against idolatry nor gathered a group of people to take a stand culturally. What will he do, he will preach! I think it is fine and dandy that Christians lobby against this, and lobby against that, boycott this, and boycott that; but I always says if you want to make an impact on your little corner of the world, boycott hell – preach Christ and as people get saved, that will be one less person to support and engage in the things that are contrary to the things of God, things that have become culturally acceptable even though they are a direct affront to the things of God. Christian, boycott hell – get on the offensive, and attack hell on its front lines (soul winning), rather than just trying to hold your position and make it through another day.

A Burden can only be Imparted / Not Called – no Heart / Think Self – more than Lost

A burden can only be imparted to us by God, our sinful selfish nature always thinks of us first (Now God can't change our hearts until we change our minds, thus we need to be in the word so we can see what is God's heart). Just because you don't have a burden for the lost doesn't mean you aren't called to evangelism, it is just an indication you think of yourself more than the lost. You can wave to your neighbor all the way to hell, or you can go over and say hello, or write them a letter explaining the gospel. You can do friendship evangelism with your co-workers and bowling league friends, but if you don't share Christ with them you are hardly a friend.

God Break our Hearts

God break our heart of the things that break yours.

Look at NT Church – Few, Resources, Money, People, Mission Boards / Less but More Heart

If you look at the NT Church, they had fewer resources than we do, less money, less people, less mission boards, less radio stations, less information superhighway (internet), less church building, less than all the tools that we have today – but they were able to turn the world upside down. They seemed to have less of everything, except less of a broken heart for the lost and dying. The early church turned the world upside down.

(Acts 17:6 NKJV) But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some brethren to the rulers of the city, crying out, "These who have turned the world upside down have come here too.

David Livingston

I am reminded of the story of David Livingston, the great missionary to Africa. In Scotland as a young boy of only 16, here is his incredible prayer written in his diary:

"Lord, send me anywhere, only go with me.

Lay any burden on me, only sustain me.

Sever any ties but the tie that binds me to Thy service and to Thy heart."

He says that God answered him and said "Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the ages".

He would go to Africa when he became an adult. On his first trip he went alone, separated from his wife for 5 long years. When he returned they asked him to talk about his great sacrifice, and he said sacrifice, "*I merely am making payment on the un-payable debt to a God who would give His only begotten Son for me*". Sacrifice he said, *you mean privilege*. When he had returned he could barely see out of one eye from a stick that had pierced it while traveling through the thicket. He barely had use of one of his arms because his shoulder was ripped out of the socket from a lion attack. He had yellow fever, typhoid, and malaria (over 20 times). When they put him in front of the students at the local seminaries he would say, "*I will place no value on anything I have or posses except in their relationship to the Kingdom*". They asked him, what has been keeping you going in the mist of all this and he said "*the promise of a gentleman who said, "lo I am with you always to the end of the age"*", He headed back to Africa, this time with his wife, and as soon as they arrive she contracts a fever and died. He kneels by her grave and said, "*My Jesus, my King, my Life, my All; I again dedicate my whole life to Thee. If I can do anything in thy service for thy kingdom, so is my plea to you*". He said the Lord answered him and said "*lo I am with you always to the end of the age*" At the end of his life he had a fever, and they carried him back to his home village on a gurney. They said you need to rest, and said "*place on the floor in the kneeling position so I may pray, and then I will rest*". They waited 15 minutes, 30, 45, then finally after an hour they come to get him and they find he has died in prayer. He had died how he had lived, in the presence of God. They found his NT opened to Matthew 28:20, "*Lo I am with you always, even to the end of the ages*", the promise of a Gentleman as he would say. The natives took his body, cut open his chest and removed his heart, and buried it there in Africa, and then they sent his body back to Britain. They said his body is yours, but his heart belongs to Africa.

I asked myself – Where is my Heart – Needs Breaking / Where bury your Heart

I had to ask myself, where is my heart? How it needs breaking. If you were to die today where would they bury your heart? Would it be next to the television, at work, the bowling alley, your bank account? Would someone you invested your life and your love into take your heart and tell the world they can your body, because your heart belonged to them.

Paul Stirred / Our 1st Step – is a Burden / He will only give if we Ask – The Gentleman

Paul's heart was stirred for the condition of these people; and the first step we need if we are ever going to reach our neighbor, our loved one, that person in the mission field, is to have a burden on our heart for them. That burden can only be imparted to us from God, but He will not give it unless we ask for it – for He is a Gentleman who will not force Himself on anyone.

(Acts 17:17 NKJV) Therefore he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there.

(Acts 17:18 NKJV) Then certain Epicurean and Stoic philosophers encountered him. And some said, "What does this babblers want to say?" Others said, "He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods," because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection.

Beyond Church – Went to Highways

Paul went beyond the church walls, and unto the highway and byways.

Epicureans - Stoics

Epicurean and Stoic philosophers (Gk. Epikoureioi kai Stoikoi philosophoi):

- **The Epicureans** – (The Party Animals) – They were those who followed the teachings of Epicurus (341–270 b.c.), who said the chief end of humankind was pleasure and happiness. This pleasure, they believed, was attained by avoiding excess and the fear of death, by seeking tranquility and freedom from pain, and by loving other people. They believed that if gods existed they were not involved in events on this earth. Epicureans were the philosophers who said, “Eat, drink, and be merry. Tomorrow we die, so satisfy yourself sensually. Live the good life. Relax. Their whole life was the pursuit of pleasure, thus all the temple prostitutes.
- **The Stoics** – (The Ultimate Tree Huggers), - Everything is god, god is everything and everywhere. They were followers of Zeno (c. 334–262 b.c.). They got their name from the Greek word stoa (meaning “porch”), for Zeno taught at a place in Athens called the Stoa. The Stoics were pantheists who thought the universe was ruled by an absolute Purpose or Will, to which a person had to conform his or her will, unmoved by all external circumstances and changes. The person who did this would reach the perfection of virtue. The byproducts of such a philosophy were pride and self-sufficiency, as can be seen in their arrogant response to the gospel (see 17:18, 32). The Stoics, were tree-huggers. “Be disciplined,” they said. “Free yourself from anything that is emotional, sensual, or material.”

Babbler – Seed Picker / Bits of Knowledge without fully Thinking Through

Verse 18 - What does this babbler want to say - This babbler (maybe your translation says “seed picker”: Some of the philosophers in Athens mocked Paul, calling him a “seed picker” or gutter sparrow, a small bird that snatches up scraps of food. Paul was being accused of grabbing at bits of knowledge without fully digesting or thinking through what he taught (maybe you get accused of that too). Because Paul did not speak eloquently (1 Cor. 2:1), some philosophers in Athens arrogantly ridiculed him, arguing that he was not sophisticated enough to be taken seriously. Others thought that Paul was advocating foreign gods named Jesus and Resurrection, incorrectly understood to be a male and female deity.

Neither Believed in Resurrection – So caught Attention

Neither Stoic nor Epicurean believed in eternal life. Therefore, Paul’s talk about the resurrection captured the attention of both. The Epicurean said, “Enjoy life.” The Stoic said, “Endure life.” Neither considered eternal life. The idea of creation is nowhere to be found in classical literature and ancient philosophy...No one is ever going to believe in the resurrection if he does not believe in creation.

(Acts 17:19 NKJV) And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak?"

(Acts 17:20 NKJV) "For you are bringing some strange things to our ears. Therefore we want to know what these things mean."

Place where Held Court / Paul not on Trial – They Are / God not on Trial – Person Is

Verse 19 - And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus - The Areopagus: Just southwest of the Acropolis in Athens was a hill called the Hill of Ares (Mars in Latin), the god of war. This was where court was held concerning questions of religion and morals. In Athens, the gospel message was examined by the supposed experts of philosophy and religion. Paul isn’t being put on trial here, although this is where court was held, but his message was being tried. It is always interesting to me that people want to put the Gospel on trial, but as we know, a person may think it is the God and His Word on trial, but in the end it is the person who is on trial as they have to make a decision about what they have just heard, and what they do with it will determine where they will spend eternity.

(Acts 17:21 NKJV) For all the Athenians and the foreigners who were there spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing.

World Today – Search Novelty overshadows Search for Reality

Verse 21 - spent their time in nothing else but either to tell or to hear some new thing - How like our world today, the request for novelty overshadows the search for reality.

Continually looked for New / New not True / Need to Return old Truths / Don't Look Unlock

The Athenians endlessly analyzed and continually discussed new things. But, folks, if it's true it's not new. And if it's new, it's not true. What the Athenians needed, what saints today need, is not some novel truth or new understanding. We need a return to the old truths that have been with us from the beginning. If you're searching for some new book, tape, or teaching that will suddenly unlock the mystery of spirituality, you'll be on a wild goose chase. Paul warned that in the last days people will not endure sound doctrine, but will heap up unto themselves teachers who will tickle their ears with some strange doctrine (2 Timothy 4:3). How I thank the Lord for every church family that has over the months and years determined to know the Word and the sound doctrine of this timeless Book, and if you missed last week's study about searching the Scriptures, that you would go back and listen to it so that you may be great students of the Word.

We Must Have Burden / Go to God – before go to the People

So Paul had a burden for these people, and took any and every opportunity to gain an audience with them to share Christ with them. So too must we have a burden before we go, so go to God and get the burden, and then go to the people and watch God open the doors of opportunity.

2.) A Respect for the Culture (17:22-23)

So Paul had a burden for the people in this culture, and secondly we will see Paul had a respect for their culture, and so to must we have a respect and be sensitive to a person's culture

(Acts 17:22 NKJV) Then Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things you are very religious;

(Acts 17:23 NKJV) "for as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you:

Respect – Not Stupid Idol Worshipers / Let them Speak – then ask if I Can Speak

Paul had respect, notice he didn't say you stupid idol worshippers, three thousand idols, that is just foolish and stupid, but rather he says "I see you are religious people", can we talk about it. Paul rather than cause them to go on the defensive, gives them respect, and because of that, they allow him to continue to speak. Notice that Paul took the time to look into their culture, he looked through all 3000 idols, to find the UNKNOWN God. That is easy application for us, that we may listen to them, let them speak about what they believe. I let a person speak, and then I just ask them, can I ask you a few questions about what you believe? Then eventually I just ask them, can I share what I believe is the biblical gospel, and then I preach Christ to them.

Actions Proof they are Looking / Athens picture of USA / Socrates – Alex Great

These people's actions just show they are searching, and they are looking for something spiritual, but they just don't know what it is (hence the UNKNOWN GOD). Athens is a picture of your city and culture today – this great United States of America. Athens, the intellectual capital of all of history, the home to the greatest minds of the age, the home of Socrates, and Socrates greatest disciple Plato, and Plato's greatest disciple Aristotle, and Aristotle's greatest disciple Alexander the Great.

Great Mind – yet on Decline / Morally bankrupt – Philosophy no Peace – Look for New

So all these great minds, all the great philosophy, all the places of Higher Education, yet history tells us that at the time of Paul's visit to Athens, Athens is on the decline. All the greatness of the things they had heard, they were on the decline, they were morally bankrupt, their philosophy brought no peace and satisfaction for obviously they continually come back to hear if there was something new (and that would be the one piece they were so longing for that would give what the true meaning of life is).

Great Minds – Now Another Great Mind / they had no Peace in Philosophy – Paul none Rel

All these great minds, and now God brings another great mind to them, the Apostle Paul. These people could not find peace in their intellect, in their pleasure, in their idols, for they kept searching out to hear others (in hopes to find the missing peace), and now God will bring Paul who will obliterate any notion that peace is found in religion, as he is proof of that by being the Top Rabbi in all of Israel, yet still having no peace in his life until he met Jesus Christ. Paul was an utter failure in religion; his life was in decline, until he met the grace of God on the road to Damascus.

Philippians 3:4-6 (NKJV) ⁴though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: ⁵circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; ⁶concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

Pastor Chuck – Invitation to Great minds / I have Total Peace / World Looking Peace

Pastor Chuck tells the story of how he was invited to share at a brain-trust of great minds. They wanted to hear his side of Christianity. Chuck said that when he got there he didn't even get a word in as these men and woman immediately started to philosophize about the meaning of life, and their thoughts on the matter, just another repeat of what they had been doing week after week of when they met. Chuck says that as he sat there listening, he said oh Lord please forgive me, forgive me for giving up another night away from my family, a night to hear these people just ramble on. But then a woman interrupts all the others and says, hey we invited this man here tonight to hear him speak, not you, so please let's let him speak. So they turn to Chuck, and his first words were, "I have total peace in my life, I am completely at rest". Chuck says the room went into a holy moment, as every eye and ear were fixed on him, for in all their ramblings, debates, and dialogues, no one had ever said, they had peace. And so he was then able to present Christ. The world is looking for peace, they continually chase after these other things hoping to find peace, but what they find never lasts. Jesus Christ is peace, and if you are looking for peace, it can only be found in the "Prince of Peace", who brings a peace which passes all understanding. Paul will bring to them, the "one" piece (P-I-E-C-E) that brings peace (P-E-A-C-E).

Isaiah 9:6 (NKJV) ⁶ For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Philippians 4:6-7 (NKJV) ⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Mars Hill – to men in California – Very Sincere / But Sincerely Wrong / Dispel Error

Now know this, these men meeting with Chuck, and the men on Mars Hill were all very sincere about what they were doing, but were sincerely wrong. Maybe you have friends and family that are sincerely religious. They are sincere about their religious activities, denominations, but unfortunately they sincerely wrong. Thus the need for someone to come to them and dispel the error of their culture

3.) A Dispelling of their Culture (17:24-25)

(Acts 17:24 NKJV) "God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands.

(Acts 17:25 NKJV) "Nor is He worshiped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, since He gives to all life, breath, and all things.

Paul Dispel their Error – While still being Respectful

So Paul has a burden for them, thus he has a passion in His voice (and again people when you talk about Jesus, talk with passion), he has respect for their culture, but now we see him masterfully remaining respectful to them, while at the same time clearly telling them – the error of the culture they live, the culture they have come to believe in their mind is the only way to live, after all we are the intellectual capital of the world, and the party headquarters to boot, but the culture is in direct opposition to God ways (how familiar does that sound to you today).

God Creates / Rom 1 / Bring to Fact – God is all Powerful

Verse 24 - God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth - Because the men of Athens had scant knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures (because they were always looking into something new), Paul started with the general revelation visible in creation itself. The fact that this building exists proves there was a maker who made it. No one would ever argue that simple fact, but somehow man debates that there was a master builder and maker of this earth. Paul is bringing them to the first simple fact, God is all powerful, it is He who created you – not you He!

Romans 1:20 (NKJV)²⁰For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse,

Pointing to Temples / Little god – Need a Big God

Verse 24 - God does not live in temples made with hands. – I can picture Paul pointing to the Parthenon, home of Athens, the goddess for whom the city was named as he said this. Paul is bringing them to a place to see and understand, you made your god with your own hands, what a tiny god. Often times people say to me, “I need a little god in my life”, and I say to them, you don’t need a little god, you need a God big enough to work in your marriage, to raise and lead your kids, to hold you in the storms of life, to bring you peace in the turmoil, to lead you to life everlasting – no little god can do all that. People we need a BIG GOD!

More than Historical Story – Picture of Human Heart – Man is a Worshipper

I believe this is more than a historical story, but a historical representation of every human heart. Here mixed in with the intellectual capital of the Roman Empire, is over 3,000 idols and altars. To me it illustrates to me that every man, regardless of intellect or lack thereof, is a worshipper. Man was made to worship (just as Revelation 4:11 says).

Revelation 4:11 (KJV)¹¹Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Every man Worships Something / 3K gods in AA County

Man worships something; and these people all had a god to match the desire of their heart. Man is not much different today, you’ll easily find 3,000 gods in Anne Arundel County today. On a beautiful Sunday morning I’ll see people rubbing and buffing their shiny idol – BMW (Beamer you are lord, Beamer you are shiny, and I praise your name). On a Saturday night I can hear the praises of (what can make me whole again, nothing but the “Bud of weiser”). The god of ease (leaning on the bank of my checkbook, there has never been a friend like you).

Any given Evening / Satan content bring down by Increments – End game in Mind

On any given evening you can hear the offerings being made to the internet god of pornography (click, click, click). Listen to all who can hear, Satan is perfectly content to bring your life down by increments. He has an end game in mind, he has much patience, he will be glad to wait to see the final destruction. And each final destruction is just another increment in another persons destruction as the kids, the spouse watches on and has to play a part in the cruel game. Satan has brought down great kings, and great nations, because of his great patience of being willing to wait, to bring a life down increment by increment.

Teens and Music

You teens and the music you listen to, whatever a man sows that shall he reap, and if the music you listen to would make Christ blush, trash it and trash it now. Here is a real easy gauge of television, movies, and music that you allow in through the ear and eye gate and if you should allow them through, and that is – would you say to Jesus, pull up a chair and lets watch this together. If you would be embarrassed to invite Jesus to join you, then you don’t need to be allowing it through your sensory gates. Increment by increment is what Satan will do to you, here a little, there a little, until it is who you are.

Galatians 6:7-8 (NKJV)⁷Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. ⁸For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.

Karl Marx

Interestingly, Karl Marx says to change the course of a nation forever, don't give me your scientist, your college professors, nor your politicians, rather give me your poets, give me your musicians, and I will change your nation forever.

David Livingston

"I will place no value on anything I have or possess except in their relationship to the Kingdom"

Paul can't remain Silent – Knows End Destruction / Building built Reason / You Created

Paul comes to town and see all these things and is pierced to the heart by them, and cannot stand by silently. Compassion is when you cannot stand by and just watch something, but that you are so moved by it you have to get involved to do something about it. God break our heart of the things that break yours. Paul knows that the end of all their idols, all their sexual pleasures, all their parties, all their save the whales, the planet, and spay your dogs, is eternity. He is taking them from little god, to see the BIG God who created them, and if He created them, He created them for a reason. This school building was made for kids to come and learn, that was the intent when the builders made it. My watch was created to keep time, that is how it was designed (I know some of you think sometimes I should look at). If you are here today and you don't know Christ, know He created you, and He has a reason for creating you, and that is to fellowship with Him.

Revelation 4:11 (KJV) ¹¹Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

4.) A Using of their Culture (17:26-29)

So Paul has a burden, he can't just watch them throw their life away. He comes with respect, but masterfully dispels their errant understanding of who God really is. And now we see he will actually use their culture by quoting one of their own poets. By doing so Paul keeps them engaged, and uses it for another piece to dispel what they thought was so true, in hopes to show them what is the real truth.

(Acts 17:26 NKJV) "And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings,

(Acts 17:27 NKJV) "so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;

(Acts 17:28 NKJV) "for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'

Quotes Poet Epimenides – Horrible Plague on Athens – by Appealing to Unknown God

Verse 28 - as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring – Paul quotes one of their poets; in the sixth century B.C. it was said that a poet from Crete named Epimenides turned aside a horrible plague from the people of Athens by appealing to a god of whom the people had never heard. An altar was built to honor this god, whom the Athenians now called the unknown god. Paul obviously knew of Epimenides; he quoted the poet in Titus 1:12.

Titus 1:12 (NKJV) ¹²One of them, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons."

Paul Uses Familiar – to Open the Unfamiliar / Example of Law – Good Judge

So Paul uses something they are familiar with to open their understanding to something they are confused with (who the unknown God truly is). I do the same in that as I try to bring understanding of God's Law to a person, I use an example of our Modern National Law. I say if someone was to murder an innocent person, and the said "I'm sorry judge, I'm really a good person, I only murdered a couple times, but for the most part I try to do what is good"; I then ask them what wouldn't expect the judge to do? And everyone always answers, "Punish him". So it is good to use the culture around you to help people understand the God they don't know.

Paul makes some powerful statements in these couple verses. Verses every person, saved or not should perk up and listen and ask themselves, what does this mean to me.

All 1 Blood

Verse 26 - And He has made from one blood every nation of men - We are all of one blood, one family. Remember that next time you think you want to say anything less than praise about that brother or sister next to you.

Set Timetable – Clock Winding Down

Verse 26 - and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings - Go has a set timetable for every person and every Nation, and the clock is winding down, it won't be long until God says enough. Anyone over 30, just look in the mirror and you will see that you are winding down, God's loving sign to you.

God gives Signs – Things Winding Down / Ready? / Where bury your Heart?

Verse 27 - so that they should seek the Lord – God gives signs of the times that things are winding down so that a man and a Nation will seek Him. Are you ready? Where will they be burying your heart?

He is not Far / Promise of a Gentleman

Verse 27 - though He is not far from each one of us – He is close, whether you feel Him or not.

He gives to you the promise of a Gentleman:

Matthew 28:20 (NKJV)²⁰teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”^εAmen.

If You Don't Know Him – Know He is Near

If you are here today and don't know Him, know that He is near, and today He is trying to tell you why He created you, and that is for fellowship with Him.

5.) A Dividing from their Culture (17:30-31)

Like every good or teaching or teaching, there should be a call to separate oneself from the things that separate them from God. Paul has been respectful, he has used their culture, he has dispelled it's errors, and now he will give them a call, request a decision from them on the knowledge that they now have.

(Acts 17:29 NKJV) "Therefore, since we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising.

(Acts 17:30 NKJV) "Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,

(Acts 17:31 NKJV) "because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead."

Psalm 115 – rebukes Israel for Idolatry

Verse 29 - we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by art and man's devising - The Psalmist says: 115, as Israel is rebuked for their idolatry.

Psalms 115:3-8 (NKJV)

³ *But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases.*

⁴ *Their idols are silver and gold, The work of men's hands.*

⁵ *They have mouths, but they do not speak; Eyes they have, but they do not see;*

⁶ *They have ears, but they do not hear; Noses they have, but they do not smell;*

⁷ *They have hands, but they do not handle; Feet they have, but they do not walk; Nor do they mutter through their throat.*

⁸ *Those who make them are like them; So is everyone who trusts in them.*

Man becomes like Idol / Stop Seeing, Hearing, Saying, & Feeling

And so it is that a man becomes like the idol he worships, and they stop seeing who created them, they stop hearing the truth, they have nothing of value to say, and eventually they stop feeling. They become just like the idol they worship. And so too will anyone here today should they worship anything other than the One who created them.

God call to Repentance – Change one's Mind

God calls all men everywhere to repent. Repent to change one's mind, to change one's ways, to turn away from and to turn to. The turning to the One that created them. Paul dispels their culture; for they had a god to bow to if they want indulge in lust, they had a god to bow to if they wanted financial increase, and they had a god they bowed to if they were ill. Paul is dispelling their culture, while calling them to turn to the One who is all that we will ever need.

Need to be Honest about Sin – Offense to Holy God / Cease in Sin – Seek Him

People need to be honest about sin, the offense it is to the Holy God, and they need to change their mind that “no it isn't alright”, and that it is an offense to the Holy God, and quit their sin, and follow the Word of God which is how He calls us to live.

Call to Repent – for

God calls every man to repent, because He has a day appointed that a man will stand (alone) before the Holy God and give an account on what they did about their sin.

Revelation 20:11-12 (NKJV) ¹¹Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. ¹²And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

(Acts 17:32 NKJV) And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, "We will hear you again on this matter."

(Acts 17:33 NKJV) So Paul departed from among them.

(Acts 17:34 NKJV) However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them.

Resurrection Ignited Reaction

Paul's reference to the resurrection of the dead ignited a reaction among the Athenians. The Greeks repudiated the idea of a bodily resurrection. Though they embraced the concept of the soul living forever, they were repulsed by the idea of a bodily resurrection because they considered the body to be evil, something to be discarded. This idea, known as dualism, was derived from the teachings of the Greek philosophers Socrates and Plato. It held that everything physical is evil and everything spiritual is good, and that it makes no difference what one does with one's body so long as the spirit is good. Tragically, the Athenians' adherence to this philosophy blinded them to the truth of the gospel.

3 Groups – Mocked / Day of Noah

Verse 32 - some mocked – there are three groups, and the first group mocks. How hard it is to watch people come here, leave mockingly, and then enter into eternity apart from Jesus Christ. Some will always mock. They mocked Noah for one hundred years. “You're all wet, Noah,” they said. But when judgment came, they missed the boat.

Procrastinator

Verse 32 - "We will hear you again on this matter." – Group 2 that say I'll check into this when I have more time. Just know, a “not now decision” is the same as a “no” decision.

2 Corinthians 6:2 (NKJV) ²For He says: “In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you.” Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

Believed

Verse 34 - some men joined him and believed – Then there were those that believed.

The 3 Choices

These are the three choices people make, all three are eternal decisions, for every man lives for eternity, the issue at hand is where will a person spend that eternity. Will he spend it in the presence of the Holy God who gave His life so he may live with God for all eternity, or will a person reject His offer and judge himself to hell. The choice is before all men today.

Outline: Paul's Message on Mars Hill – To Reach a People Paul:

- A Burden for the Culture (17:15-21)
- A Respect for the Culture (17:22-23)
- A Dispelling of their Culture (17:24-25)
- A Using of their Culture (17:26-29)
- A Dividing from their Culture (17:30-31)

You Say – I Don't Know their Culture

Maybe you are saying at this point, but I don't know their culture, therefore I can't relate to where they are at, or I can't use their culture to bring understanding to them. Fear not, all you need is the burden, all you need is the gospel, and with a passion in your heart, don't try to reason with their intellect, and just reach into their conscience with the presentation of the gospel, that they have offended the Holy God by their sin, and are in need of a Savior.

Romans 2:15-16 (NKJV) ¹⁵who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) ¹⁶in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

Chapter 18

Everyday Blessings (18:1-17)

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Ministering at Corinth

(Acts 18:1 NKJV) **After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth.**

50 miles West / 200K

Corinth was 50 miles West of Athens. It was a city of about 200,000 people, which was a huge city of its day.

Julius Caesar / 3 miles over Land

Julius Caesar, appreciating its natural military and commercial potential, made it a Roman colony, and capital of the Roman province of Greece, Achaia. The reason being is that this was a major economic center. If you look on a map you will see that the distance between the eastern port and the western port is only 3 miles, so they would bring ships in, unload what was going out for trade in the city (or on the established roads that ran north and south), and then roll the ship over that 3 mile stretch on logs (a wooden railroad). This would save weeks of time (not to mention risk of shipwreck) at sea by not having to sail around the bottom of Greece. Once on the other side, they would continue on in the transportation of trade goods. So this city has major economic wealth and political importance.

Exceedingly Wicked – Temple Prostitutes / Debased Mind – Romans 1 / Ease of Sodom

Corinth was an exceedingly wicked city (that seems so often to be the case for those with wealth and ease – as was the case with Sodom). In the center was a temple dedicated to Aphrodite, from which one thousand prostitutes would emerge each evening to offer themselves to men as an act of worship to the goddess of sensuality. So sinful was Corinth, calling someone a Corinthian was synonymous with calling him a “party animal” or a “lounge lizard.” It is therefore not surprising that Paul wrote the first chapter of the Book of Romans—the passage that traces the “devolution” of man—while in Corinth.

Ezekiel 16:49-50 (NKJV) *Look, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: She and her daughter had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty and committed abomination before Me; therefore I took them away as I saw fit.*

Romans 1:28-32 (NKJV) *And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.*

He Corinthinizes / Paul stays 18 Months / Picture of USA / Title – Everyday Blessings

There was a saying in that day that was used as a character attack on someone, and that was to say, “He corinthinizes...” Paul summarizes in (1 Corinthians 6:9-11) the culture and lifestyle that was rampant in Corinth (and says such were some of you), and maybe you can see the great parallel of Corinth to the United States. Paul would live in the midst of this culture for 18 months,

he would have friends, he would work, he would do ministry, he would go to church, and he would have opposition. If you notice, the things I just mentioned are all part of the everyday life that we live, and thus today we will get to study a passage of Scripture that probably closely resembles every person's life that is here today more so than any other passage of Scripture we may study. We will see in our study today that Paul was greatly blessed while living in Corinth, living his everyday life, and thus the title of this message today is "Everyday Blessing", because if we allow ourselves to see them, the blessings are in the everyday life. We are so often are looking for "earth moving" blessings, the "wow did you see that" blessings, that we miss the "everyday blessings", because the blessings are in the everyday life.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (NKJV) *Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.*

Outline: Everyday Blessings (Acts 18:1-17)

- The Blessings of Friends (18:2)
- The Blessings of Work (18:3)
- The Blessings of Ministering (18:4-6)
- The Blessings of the Home Church (18:7-8)
- The Blessings of Oppositions (18:9-17)

The Blessings of Friends (18:2)

(Acts 18:2 NKJV) **And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them.**

Jews driven out of Rome / 20K

Verse 2- because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome - The Jews were driven out of Rome, and it is recorded for us in secular history books. Emperor Claudius, an anti-Semite, drove the Jews from Rome, and it is recorded in history books that about 20,000 were forced to leave.

Priscilla and Aquila Saved Somewhere / See them Often in Scriptures

We do not know if Priscilla and Aquila were saved before Paul met them, but we do know that they were saved at some point, and we see them often throughout the Scriptures. We see them in Ephesus, back in Rome, and having a church in their home:

Romans 16:3-5 (NKJV) *Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. Likewise greet **the church that is in their house**. Greet my beloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ.*

They become Great Friends

So Paul becomes great friends and coworker with them.

Beloved – Friends are a Blessing

Beloved of God, it is a blessing to have friends, and if you have just want friend, you are a rich and wealthy person. Friends are a tremendous blessing, and we should give God praises each day for them.

Proverbs

Passages about Friends:

Proverbs 27:17 (NIV) *As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.*

Proverbs 27:9 (NKJV) *Ointment and perfume delight the heart, And the sweetness of a man's friend gives delight by hearty counsel.*

Proverbs 17:17 (NKJV) *A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity.*

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NKJV) *Two are better than one, Because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, For he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; But how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.*

Cherish Your Friends / Treat as Treasure / Consider life without Them

Cherish your friends, respect your friends, and treasure your friends. Understand that friends are a gift from God, and any gift from God is a treasure, and so you should treasure your friends. I ask you, imagine a life without friends, and that very thought will show you the treasure that a friend is.

The Blessings of Work (18:3)

(Acts 18:3 NKJV) **So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers.**

All Rabbis & Teachers – had to have Trade / Paul Tentmaker / Those called to Ministry

Like all Jewish rabbis, Paul had a trade. To this day, the rabbis teach that every man—be they rabbis, teachers, or business executives—have a trade to fall back on should something unforeseen happen in their professions. Paul was a tentmaker, but as he sewed tents, he was primarily sowing seeds as he shared the truth of the gospel with Aquila and Priscilla. I meet many people who feel called to the ministry, and I have always encouraged them to learn a trade so if need be they can support themselves in the ministry if the ministry can't support them fully. Now I'm not necessarily saying you need a 4 year degree, but a person should have some type of trade such as (maintaining pools, landscaping, fixing cars, driving cars, house cleaning, daycare, etc) something that will allow them to continue with the ministry in that location, if the church can't support them fully. Paul made tents.

BTW – Your Job/Campus #2 Ministry

By the way, your job (or school campus – you youth) is your second mission field, after your family. People so often say “oh Lord, show me where to minister, where can I get involved”, and they miss they are going to their mission field every day. Ask God to give you eyes to see them, the way He does, and you'll have a burden for them. You may be their last link to eternity; you may be the answers to someone's prayers who has been praying for a loved one, and you just happens to work with them.

Beloved – Work a Blessing

Beloved, work is a blessing; work is a gift from the Lord. Be thankful for the job you have (if you are fortunate enough to have one – anyone that doesn't I want you to back and pray with the elders before you leave here today).

Proverbs

Passages on Work:

Proverbs 22:29 (NKJV) *Do you see a man who excels in his work? He will stand before kings; He will not stand before unknown men.*

Proverbs 12:14 (NIV) *From the fruit of his lips a man is filled with good things as surely as the work of his hands rewards him.*

Ecclesiastes 2:24 (NIV)

A man can do nothing better than to eat and drink and find satisfaction in his work. This too, I see, is from the hand of God,

WORK

Let us recap a past study on the blessing of work. Work, that dirty four letter word:

W-O-R-K

W – Whatever, you do, do it heartily unto the Lord, for it is Him you serve not man. Nothing God calls you to is common, therefore whatever He calls you to (whether it is work or school), then do it heartily unto Him. That is the first reason we are to work hard, and that is because whatever it is we are doing we are doing it unto the Lord, anything we do for our beautiful Savior is a blessing.

(Colossians 3:23 NKJV) And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men,

(Colossians 3:24 NKJV) knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ.

Whatever you do, do it heartily unto the Lord, because work gives you a.....Because work gives you an.....

O – Opportunity, to witness for Him, not in word, but in deed. Hey rejoice if you get all the junk jobs. People will say why are you always so pleasant, even though you get to do all the rotten jobs. Let's face it, good workers get more work, and not always more pay. If there are 100 bricks that need to be moved, and ole Joe is moving kinda slow and can only do 40, that means you get to do your 50 and Joes 10. Hey rejoice that the company sees you work over and above your minimum requirement. Companies should be calling churches and saying do you have anybody there that needs a job, we find the best workers are these people who say they are born-again Bible Believers, man they really get the job done.

The Amish have a saying, "witness for Christ, and if all else fails use words." Let your first witness at work be your hard work, your work ethic and integrity. If you can't witness first through that, if you are a 40 brick worker causing others to pick your 10 short up, then please just keep your mouth shut, you will give people reason to blaspheme the Lord.

But you hard workers rejoice in your job, because you are witnessing for Christ in deeds and actions, and be assured people are watching.

Students- the same goes for you on your campus, what a great place to witness for Christ.

W-O-R-K,

Whatever you do, do it heartily unto the Lord, because work gives you a..... Because work gives you a.....

R – Reason, to praise Him with thanksgiving for His provisions. Tell ya what, miss a paycheck or two, you will get a whole new perspective on your job. Let the rumors of layoff come around, and you'll realize what is at stake.

Our Father who art in heaven we pray.....give us this day our daily bread. Work is our daily bread.

(Matthew 6:9 KJV) After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

(Matthew 6:10 KJV) Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

(Matthew 6:11 KJV) Give us this day our daily bread.

When I worked at Sikorsky aircraft, I can remember Supervisor Demarco saying, "I want all you complainers to go down to the unemployment line and complain to that guy standing in line; and after he punches you in the nose, he will then come down and apply to take your job."

The children of Israel wondering in the wilderness complained about the daily bread, manna, that supplied their physical needs every day. Be careful about complaining about your job or you may find yourself purging quail through your nose. Father, thank you for "giving us this day, our daily bread".

Students you will be thankful when you are out of your parents house, out of college, and making your own paycheck living on your own. I was going to work in the mills of Pittsburgh which is

honorable work, but thankfully my parents made me get an education because guess what, all the steel comes in through China now.

W-O-R-K

Whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, - Verse 24 –

K – Knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ (Colossians 3:24 NKJV)

You have to know who your real boss is or you will continually be frustrated at work.

Hey Gang, the more they treat you poorly, and you keep your witness, the more your reward in heaven will be, and here on earth because you will become more like Jesus.

You know what, I appreciate a good dumping every now and again. It keeps me in the right perspective; invest in heavenly things, not earthly things. If I work to please man, so the boss man recognizes me, he is man and he will let me down.

I should work hard while I am there, but not get so wrapped up I neglect my family, devotion time, and ministry. How often I'll be driving home thinking about what I need to do. Or I'll skip my morning devotion so I can hurry to work to get working...sometime 10-12 hours a day. Then I say after weeks on a big project, and I get overlooked, or taken advantage of, why did I trade temporal things for eternal things. I can't get that time back. There is always opportunity to make money another day, but never an opportunity to get the time back. Once our time is spent, it is spent for life.

Students, do your studies on to the Lord, it will change the way you look at school.

100%

Every week when you work, give your employer 100%, and I don't mean...

12% on Monday

23% on Tuesday

40% on Wednesday

20% on Thursday

5% on Fridays

= 100%

Christians should be Overachievers

Christians should be over-achievers at work, employers should want to hire Christians because they are such great workers; workers who don't just meet the minimum requirements and then cruise the web the rest of the day, or hang out chatting in the break room, but looking for ways to over-achieve without working extra hours.

Also – be careful about Complaining / Also – Separate from Coworker

And can I say this, be careful about joining in on the complaining sessions about the company or the boss. Be positive, and stay positive, and when someone wants to complain at work, turn the conversation to the positive side, not the negative. Say how blessed you are to have this job to provide for your home, give God thanks, and who knows you may find your coworker starting to ask question of why you have so much peace, and joy in the midst of the work environment, and it won't be hard for you to talk about God to them because you have already been giving Him praise before your coworkers.

The Blessings of Ministering (18:4-6)

(Acts 18:4 NKJV) And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks.

(Acts 18:5 NKJV) When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ.

Paul's Custom

As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue on the Sabbath.

Good to have Ministry / Definition of Ministry

It is good for us to have a personal ministry; there are many tremendous blessings in being involved in a personal ministry. For one reason, it is the very definition I read last week, "*Ministry takes place when divine resources meet human needs through loving channels to the glory of God*"—*Warren Wiersbe*. The everyday blessing of ministry is that God flows through you (His divine resources) to meet the human need present. Every day that you minister, is a day that God flowed through you. That is a blessing.

Proverbs

Passages on ministering

Proverbs 11:25 (NIV) *A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed.*

Luke 6:38 (NKJV) *Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."*

We become Christ-Minded / Most miserable People – Think about Self

Ministry makes us "Christ Minded" which makes us Christ Centered as we take our eyes off of ourselves and unto other people. If you want to be miserable, keep thinking about yourself, all that you don't have, don't do, etc and you'll be miserable. Get your eyes off yourself and unto others and you will see the blessings of all you do have (as little as that may be), you'll stop thinking about yourself and be thinking of others, and less of you is always a good thing. Self-centered people I find are always the most miserable and depressed people.

We're Distributors – Not Manufactures / Wanting to see others See Jesus

Remember this, we are not manufactures', but merely distributors. We don't have to manufacture the blessings of God, we need only distribute what He produces. It is like we are just waiters and waitresses with a tray full of blessings, and we put it in front of a person and ask them "what would they like". It is God's love I give, not mine, it is God's warmth and acceptance I am giving, not mine, God's Word, not my words, and when I can come to the place I don't have to manufacture the blessings, but merely distribute them, all the pressures and fears of being inadequate are gone, and I can just go and love a person as God has lead me too; whether that is with a word of encouragement, a meal, a bag of clothing, a cup of coffee and a listening ear, it is all God, and I'm just along for the ride. Ministry is simply wanting to see people see Jesus. Youth, don't wait until you're an adult to fulfill your ministry.

Not Until Timothy & Silas Came – Preaches Jesus

It interests me that although Paul went into the synagogue and shared prophecy and theology, he never specifically said, "Jesus is Messiah" until Timothy and Silas arrived on the scene. Why did he wait to make this declaration? I believe he was emboldened by the presence of his friends. Don't you find yourself becoming a whole lot bolder when standing by a fellow believer? That's why Jesus sent His disciples out two by two (Luke 10:1). It's wonderful to minister with another brother or sister. Oh the blessings of friends!

Paul preached in Power in Corinth

And as for being a distributor, Paul will preach in power here and we know that for sure, because he isn't going to try to use persuasive words (which didn't get the greatest response in Athens), but he only preached Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and it was filled with power, and man's faith would not be based on man's wisdom, but the power of God.

1 Corinthians 2:1-2 (NKJV) *And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God.*

For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

You Say – I Don't Know their Culture

As I closed last study with, maybe you are saying I don't know their culture, therefore I can't relate to where they are at, or I can't use their culture to bring understanding to them. Fear not, all you need is the burden, all you need is the gospel, and with a passion in your heart, don't try to reason with their intellect, and just reach into their conscience with the presentation of the gospel, that they have offended the Holy God by their sin, and are in need of a Savior. If you will do that, then you will be preaching in Power.

Romans 2:15-16 (NKJV) ¹⁵who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) ¹⁶in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

(Acts 18:6 NKJV) But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, "Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

Blasphemy not against Paul – But God

The blasphemy is not against Paul, but against the Holy Spirit, for the people are rejecting the witness of the Holy Spirit that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah) the only way for the forgiveness of a man's sin.

(Acts 18:5 NKJV) When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ.

Matthew 12:31-32 (NKJV) "Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

Ezekiel – the Watchman

Verse 6 - Your blood be upon your own heads - God tells Ezekiel that he is a watchman, and that it is his job to warn the people; if he warns them and they fail to heed the warning, then their blood be upon their head, but if he the watchman fails to warn them, then their blood be upon him.

Ezekiel 33:1-6 (NKJV) ¹Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying, ²"Son of man, speak to the children of your people, and say to them: 'When I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from their territory and make him their watchman, ³when he sees the sword coming upon the land, if he blows the trumpet and warns the people, ⁴then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, if the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be on his own head. ⁵He heard the sound of the trumpet, but did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But he who takes warning will save his life. ⁶But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand.'

What does this Mean to You

What does this mean to you today? Well, I have to put all 31,102 verses together to tell you, and that is that every man is responsible for his own salvation, it is his personal decision. Should he reject the blood of Jesus Christ that person will have all eternity to think over in his mind his rejection of Jesus Christ, he will have all eternity with the thought of the blood on his mind and the chance he rejected. As for you, when you hear that that certain person has died, you will have on your mind, one of two thoughts; one – that you shared Christ and gave them opportunity, or two – you will have to deal with the fact that you had chance after chance, and you didn't do anything about it.

Mark 9:43-44 (NKJV) ⁴³If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched— ⁴⁴where 'Their worm does not die And the fire is not quenched.'

1 Corinthians 10:31 (NKJV) ³¹Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

Results not on Us / Sow and Water

We are distributors, not manufactures, results are not our responsibility, we just sow and water:

1 Corinthians 3:6-8 (NKJV) ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.

⁷So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. ⁸Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

Ministry Builds the Church Up

Ministry builds the church up (whether yours specifically or another down the road doesn't matter), but ministry builds the church up, and the home church is a blessing.

The Blessings of the Home Church (18:7-8)

(Acts 18:7 NKJV) And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justus, one who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue.

(Acts 18:8 NKJV) Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized.

Literally Next Door

"I'm going to the Gentiles," said Paul. Where did he go? Next door (it was actually attached to the synagogue as you read it in the original text). Talk about provoking the Jews to jealousy! With Paul right next door, these Jews couldn't help but see miracles happening, joy abounding, the church growing.

Acts 18:7 (KJV) 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.

Crispus Head of Synagogue / What happened Next door was Irresistible

Crispus was the head of the synagogue! What was happening next door to the synagogue was so irresistible and undeniable that even the ruler of the synagogue believed. Crispus (& Gaius & household of Stephanas) were baptized by Paul himself (1 Cor 1:14-16).

1 Corinthians 1:14-16 (NKJV) ¹⁴I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. ¹⁶Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other.

Somewhere the Church Established

So somewhere along the way, a church is established in Corinth. Maybe they started to have a bible study in Justus' home we don't know, maybe it was in the home of Aquilla and Priscilla, but we know a church is established in Corinth, hence why Paul would write 1st and 2nd Corinthians. Paul would stay here for 18 months (Acts 18:11).

Oh the Blessing of Home Church

Oh the blessings of a home church, a place to worship the Lord, to be taught the word of God, to gather in corporate prayers, and to have fellowship. In that fellowship a place to be encouraged, a place to be held accountable, and a place to be challenged to go deeper. God has given the church as a gift to His people.

Ephesians 4:11-13 (NKJV) ¹¹And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹²for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;

Proverbs

Passages on the Church

Hebrews 2:11-12 (NKJV) ¹¹For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, ¹²saying: "I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You."

Hebrews 10:24-25 (NKJV) ²⁴And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, ²⁵not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

Church a Place of Blessing – Safety / ZERO TOLERANCE

The church is a place of blessing, and thus it must stay as such. We have wonderful fellowship here, and it must stay as such. If you are new to this church, I want you to know that you can come here and be protected from the world, you can come here and drink in the blessings of the Lord, without the culture of the world robbing your blessing. I want everyone to know this:

We have a zero tolerance policy on gossip and division.

Anyone gossiping or trying to cause division in this church will be asked to move on. Gossip and division is what the world does, and this is the Church, and we are going to be separated from the world and the ways of the world. Who would ever feel the church is a haven if they come and hear gossip and see division. If they are gossiping about ole Joe when he isn't around, you can be sure they will gossip about you when you aren't around, and oh the pain of heart when you hear that people are talking about you in a negative way. Who would ever want to come to church if they know people are talking negatively about them. I want everyone to know this: **We have a zero tolerance policy on gossip and division.**

Gossip Huge Problem / Very Stealthy / Some truth shouldn't be Passed

Gossip is a huge problem in the church and sometimes gossip is very stealthy. Satan has a slick marketing trick that he sells to Christians. We don't call gossip by its name. We like to call gossip by euphemisms like "sharing our concerns", "prayer request", or "venting to a brother or sister". We gossip when we divulge unnecessary details in prayer requests as if God needs to be brought up to speed on the entire situation. We like to think we are in the clear if we know that the information is true and we are simply being "honest" and "telling it like it is". But Frank Clark correctly stated that "gossip needn't be false to be evil - *there's a lot of truth that shouldn't be passed around.*" Words that tear down, rather than build up, words that divide rather than unite, are evil, and not of the Lord.

Scriptures

The Bible is very clear about gossip. I found several specific mentions of gossip in Scripture. A couple of Old Testament highlights...

"Do not spread slanderous gossip among your people." Leviticus 19:16

They visit me as if they were my friends, but all the while they gather gossip, and when they leave, they spread it everywhere. Psalm 41:6

A troublemaker plants seeds of strife; gossip separates the best of friends. Proverbs 16:28

Paul lists it in Menu of Sins

Paul reveals how seriously he ranks gossip when he includes the act of gossip in this not so attractive menu of sins.

Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip. Romans 1:29

Who would lump it with Hatred

Seriously, do most of us lump gossip in with hate, murder and deception? Paul does. The church at Corinth also had an ugly list of problems and gossip made the list.

For I am afraid that when I come I won't like what I find, and you won't like my response. I am afraid that I will find quarreling, jealousy, anger, selfishness, slander, gossip, arrogance, and disorderly behavior. 2 Corinthians 12:20

Gossip is a Parasite needing a Host to Live

If Paul were to write a letter to the modern church he would surely include gossip in his list of rebukes. A follower of Jesus certainly should not spread gossip any further. **Gossip is a parasite that requires a host organism to survive.** Don't give gossip a place to live.

No Wood – No Fire

Solomon wrote this in Proverbs. *Fire goes out without wood, and quarrels disappear when gossip stops. Proverbs 26:20*

Jim Cymbala

Pastor Jim Cymbala of Brooklyn Tabernacle writes how his church handles the topic of gossip. *About 20 years ago, I said something impromptu to the new members lined up across the front of the church. As we received them, the Holy Spirit prompted me to add, "And now, I charge you that if you ever hear another member speak an unkind word of criticism or slander against anyone—myself, an usher, a choir member, or anyone else—that you stop that person in mid-sentence and say, 'Excuse me—who hurt you? Who ignored you? Who slighted you? Was it Pastor Cymbala? Let's go to his office right now. He'll apologize to you, and then we'll pray together so God can restore peace to this body. But we won't let you talk critically about people who aren't present to defend themselves.' "I'm serious about this. I want you to help resolve this kind of thing immediately. And know this: If you are ever the one doing the loose talking, we'll confront you."*

*To this day, every time we receive new members, I say much the same thing. That's because I know what most easily destroys churches. It's not crack cocaine, government oppression, or even lack of funds. **Rather it's gossip and slander that grieves the Holy Spirit.***

God not Glorified / Book of James

Powerful. And so achingly true. God is not glorified when we spread gossip and idle chatter. The test is very simple. If I am not part of the situation or a part of the solution I should not be talking about it. James is typically to the point in this brutally honest assessment.

A careless or wrongly placed word out of your mouth can do that. By our speech we can ruin the world, turn harmony to chaos, throw mud on a reputation, send the whole world up in smoke and go up in smoke with it, smoke right from the pit of hell. James 3:6 (MsgB)

Need a Biblical Injection of Truth against this Deadly Virus

Vaccinate yourself with a couple of scriptural truths about gossip. An injection of biblical truth and a dose of how God views gossip can control the deadly virus. And that will make the body of Christ a whole lot healthier.

Oh to see Living God Flow – But Gossip Quenches the Spirit

Oh how I want the Spirit of the Living God to flow through your life, your marriage, your kids, and your marriage. But the Spirit cannot and will not flow where there is division, dissension, gossip, or contention; for those things grieve and quench the Holy Spirit in the life of a person and a church.

1 Thessalonians 5:19 (NKJV) ¹⁹Do not quench the Spirit.

The Blessings of Oppositions (18:9-17)

(Acts 18:9 NKJV) Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent;

(Acts 18:10 NKJV) "for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city."

God does a Work in Opposition

There is tremendous blessings in oppositions. God does a great work in you as opposition comes against you.

Proverbs

Passages on Opposition:

1 Peter 4:12-16 (NKJV) ¹²Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; ¹³but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. ¹⁴If you are ^εreproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. ¹⁵But let

none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. ¹⁶Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

2 Corinthians 12:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

How do in other 4 Areas Help in Opposition

A key to handling opposition is greatly dependent upon how much you blessings you grab from your friends, your work (attitude about work), your ministry, and your church. It is a tremendous blessing to have friends and the home church to stand beside you in the wave of opposition come.

Proverbs 27:17 (NKJV) ¹⁷ As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.

Greatest Blessing – God comes to You

But here is the greatest blessings with opposition. If the Lord came to Paul at night, saying, "Don't be afraid," the implication is that Paul must have, indeed, been afraid. As he saw revival happening, he must have been reminded of the stoning he endured in Antioch and of the beating he received at Philippi. Paul was beginning to realize that wherever he saw external gain, it was followed by personal pain. Thus, as he rejoiced in his heart over what was happening in Corinth, no doubt he was concerned in his mind about what was to come. So the Lord appeared to Paul and gave him the same two gifts He gives to us in the dark seasons of our lives: His promise and His presence.

Answer to Fear – Is God's Presence

Throughout the Bible the answer to all fear, is the presence of God. The single encouragement that God gives us in fear is that He is with us. All fear is based on the sense of loss. Divorce, I'm going to lose my spouse. Cancer, I'm going to lose my life, my kids, my spouse. Unemployment, I am going to lose my means of provision, maybe my house, my car, my marriage. Fear is based on loss, and God answers all of our fear with – I am with thee. Don't be afraid Paul, nor anyone in this room, for "I am with thee" – the promise of a Gentleman.

Matthew 28:20 (NKJV) ²⁰teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

Deuteronomy 31:6 (NKJV) ⁶Be strong and of good courage, do not fear nor be afraid of them; for the Lord your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you."

Psalms 23:4 (NKJV) ⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

God has many People – Some just not Saved

Verse 10 - for I have many people in this city." - It is important to keep in mind that the people of whom the Lord was speaking were not yet Christians. You see, at this point, "His people" were still wandering the streets, frequenting the temples of prostitution, partying, struggling, and straying. Yet in the Lord's perspective, they were His people nonetheless. Therefore, I can't help but wonder what He would say about Pasadena, Annapolis, Baltimore; about the cities in which we live, the schools we attend, the places we work. For although we might be disgusted by them and grieved by what goes on within them, surely the Lord would say to you and to me as He did to Paul, "Don't pull away. Don't hold back. I have many people in your city, in your school, in your neighborhood. They're just not saved yet." Therefore, I believe the Lord wants us as a Christian community to be city-takers for Him

Paul's Vision at Night – What do you see in the Darkness

Acts 18:9 tells us that Paul had a vision from the Lord in the night—in a time of darkness. So, too, when you go downtown to the dark areas of the County and you cruise by the Sunrise Hotel, what's your attitude toward the men and women there who will become part of the millions of people this year who will contract a sexually transmitted disease? Some of those very people are the Lord's people—they're just not saved yet. What about the high-school kids who smoke during lunch hour? How does the Lord view them? I believe He would say to you and to me, "Don't pull back. Don't pull away. I have many people in that orchard. They're Mine. Many of them think

they're seeking some sort of family and some kind of acceptance, but in reality, they're seeking Me. I'm going to work on them and reach out to them, and I want to use you in the process of praying for them and sharing the truth with them." What about the guys who sit on the hoods of their cars, waiting for a drug deal to take place? We say, "Let's clean up those areas. Let's call in the law." But the Lord says, "I have many people there—people who are doing these things because they're craving Me. I know them; I want to reach out to them. And I want to use you in the process." Gang, I'm praying that every time you go into a "dark" place—into an area that tends to turn you off, that your eyes are opened and your heart is deeply touched by the Lord's perspective of the people there.

(Acts 18:11 NKJV) And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

Read 1&2 Corinthians for Results

Read 1 & 2 Corinthians to see the impressive results of his efforts in that vile city. During this period, he wrote the Thessalonian letters. He wrote the Epistle to the Romans from Corinth.

Paul taught the Word – the Greatest Need

The fact remains that the great need in the church and in our homes today is not "encounter sessions" or pie-eating contests, but the teaching of the Scriptures.

(Acts 18:12 NKJV) When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat,

(Acts 18:13 NKJV) saying, "This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law."

(Acts 18:14 NKJV) And when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrongdoing or wicked crimes, O Jews, there would be reason why I should bear with you.

(Acts 18:15 NKJV) "But if it is a question of words and names and your own law, look to it yourselves; for I do not want to be a judge of such matters."

(Acts 18:16 NKJV) And he drove them from the judgment seat.

Historical Fact

Verse 12 - When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia – Historical writings tell us that in the spring of a.d. 52, a proconsul named Gallio was appointed by the Roman senate to govern the province of Achaia (Greece). Gallio was a brother of the famous stoic philosopher Seneca, who possessed great influence in Rome.

Decision frees the Gospel in Region

Very important decision! Paul was now free to preach the gospel throughout the Roman empire without being charged with breaking the law. (Gallio declared, in effect, that Christianity was, in the eyes of Romans, officially a Jewish sect.). "This is not a question of civil judgment," Gallio said. "It's a religious matter for you Jews to figure out among yourselves."

God Defends Paul

Verse 14 - And when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said - Paul goes to open his mouth to no doubt defend himself, but he gets interrupted by Gallio. It is good to be slow to speak; you never know what might happen in the interim before you speak.

James 1:19 (NKJV) ¹⁹So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;

(Acts 18:17 NKJV) Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. But Gallio took no notice of these things.

Perfect Picture of world's Reward

Sosthenes apparently succeeded Crispus after his conversion. He is a perfect picture of how the world rewards you for being faithful to the world rather than God; it beats you and mistreats you.

Later Converts / Beating not Best way Evangelize

Sosthenes also later converts. (Beating is not recommended method for evangelism...)

1 Corinthians 1:1 (NKJV) 'Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,

People often come through Trial

Like Sosthenes, people are often brought to salvation when they get beat up. If someone you care about is in the process of being beaten, don't try to protect him or her because oftentimes it is through that very process that people finally see their need of the Lord. If you are being beaten up presently, take heart. Blessing will follow, if, like Sosthenes, you allow the beating to draw you closer to Jesus.

Wonder if Paul met him – Cleaned his Wounds

I wonder if Sosthenes goes back to the temple, all beaten and bruised, and out of the house next door, came Paul; "ohh I remember what it was like to be beaten like that, and I remember what it was like when the Philippian jailer cleaned my wounds". Please, come inside, please let me clean your wounds. The blessings of opposition, for both Paul and Sosthenes, and you and me.

Outline: Everyday Blessings

- The Blessings of Friends (18:2)
- The Blessings of Work (18:3)
- The Blessings of Ministering (18:4-6)
- The Blessings of the Home Church (18:7-8)
- The Blessings of Oppositions (18:9-17)

Conclusion

Oh the blessings of everyday blessings. But may I close with the greatest blessings of all, Jesus Christ and Him crucified. May we rejoice that our names are written in the Lambs Book of Life, and that life isn't just eternal life, but life in Him today.

Luke 10:20 (NKJV) ²⁰Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

John 10:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

Life Intertwined

(18:18-28)

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Gospel Continues / Finish Cp18 / 2nd & 3rd Journey

Well the Gospel is continuing on, expanding around the globe, going to the outer parts of the world. Before we finish these eleven verses today to finish chapter 18, Paul will finish his 2nd missionary journey and with no break begin his 3rd missionary journey (boy there is just no stopping a man like Paul).

1 – History / 2 – Personal / 3 – Big Picture / Life Intertwined

In these eleven verses we will read some great church history, we will glean some great personal application for our lives, and if we step back a few steps we will see a beautiful big picture that is going on at this time and still continues on in our time, and that is God's beautiful intertwining of His people's life together.

Last Study Outline

In our last study, called "Everyday Blessings", our outline was as followed:

Outline: Everyday Blessings

- The Blessings of Friends (18:2)
- The Blessings of Work (18:3)
- The Blessings of Ministering (18:4-6)
- The Blessings of the Home Church (18:7-8)
- The Blessings of Oppositions (18:9-17)

Passage Today – God's beautiful Tapestry / Eph 2 – Poem / We the Letters – Make Words

Well in our passage today, we will have pretty much the same outline again for our study in these eleven verses called "Lives Intertwined", and see we that and how God intertwines all of our lives together to make a beautiful tapestry of love. In Ephesians 2 it says that we are "His Workmanship", and that word for "workmanship" in the Greek is "poiēma", where we get our English word "poem". God is writing a beautiful love poem, and the "ink on the paper" (if you will) is you and I. We are the letters that make up the words that make up the sentences that fill the paragraphs that make up the poem. As a master weaver, weaves the threads together to make up a beautiful tapestry, so too is God creating His beautiful tapestry (the Body of Christ) as you and I are the thread woven together to create His Masterpiece.

Ephesians 2:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*

Precious Saints – We all in this Together / I Pray you Realize / We Woven Together

Precious saints, all of you who call Him Lord, we are all in this Christian walk together, God has intertwined us together, whether you realize it or not, and my prayer is before this study is over, that we will all realize it, and we as a body called "Calvary Chapel Anne Arundel County" will be woven together in love, woven together in ministry, and woven together in unity.

Outline

Outline: Lives Intertwined

- The Intertwining in Friends (18:18a)
- The Intertwining in Work (18:18b)
- The Intertwining in Ministry (18:19-23)
- The Intertwining in the Home Church (18:24-27)
- The Intertwining in Oppositions (18:28)

The Intertwining in Friends (18:18a)

Paul Returns to Antioch

(Acts 18:18 NKJV) So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila were with him. He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow.

Stays – Loved the Everyday Blessings

Verse 18a - So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria - I can see why he did stay there so long, he loved it there because of all that he had in the everyday blessings of friends, work, ministering, a home church, and God's presence.

Outline: Everyday Blessings

- The Blessings of Friends (18:2)
- The Blessings of Work (18:3)
- The Blessings of Ministering (18:4-6)
- The Blessings of the Home Church (18:7-8)
- The Blessings of Oppositions (18:9-17)

Paul sails Away after 18 Months / Emotional Moment

Paul sails away, no doubt to many a people standing on the shore waving good bye. After 18 months that must have been an emotional moment, and a hard time to say good bye.

Russia 1993

I remember my first mission trip to Russia in 1993. We were teaching the Inductive Bible Study Method there over 4 day seminars. We had about 50-60 students and over 4 days you can imagine the relationships that were made. Well after the last day we had to catch a train to our next city late in the evening around 9-10pm. The station was about an hour away from where we taught, so we said good bye to everyone, had a graduation party....it was beautiful. Being American we could afford to rent a taxi to get us down there, so we get there, load our stuff onto the train, and then a couple people from the class show up. They walked, hopped several different buses, taking an hour to get there to say goodbye - all in the snow I might add. So we hop off the train and we go out on the platform, and then here come another 10, another 20, I believe every last person came to say goodbye. It was so beautiful. So Pastor Ted said lets pray, as we say goodbye. So we all hold hands in this huge circle, and pray – there was barely enough room for the rest of the passengers to get through the door of the train. I remember looking up, and snow was falling across the dim lights of the night, and then Igor starts to sing a praise song. So here is 50-60 people holding hands, singing praise to the Lord as the snow fell through the dim lights of the night. Then the most amazing thing happened, a Russian hockey team arrived to get on the same train. As they approached the platform, they all got in a single file line, big duffel bags filled with hockey gear, and slowly and quietly slipped by us to not disrupt what was going on. It was beautiful, then when we were done I turned to the train, and every window was down, and people were leaning out watching in silence. We were able to share the gospel that night with the woman who was the train conductor of our boxcar.

Never Know – till Someone Leaves / Piece of Heart Torn / Gerald / Friendship – Gift of God

You never know how close we are to each other, how intertwined we are together, until someone has to leave. It feels like a piece of your heart is being torn off. Who here doesn't miss our

Brother Gerald who is working in Missouri now? But although Paul, and we, get separated, we are still family, we never forget each other because we are so closely woven together – friendship is one of the most beautiful gifts the Lord gives to us while we are on this earth. Cherish your friends my friends, treasure them for you never know when they may have to sail away.

On to Ephesus / We always think Paul Strong – the Encouragement of Priscilla

Paul is going on to Ephesus, a great move of God will happen there; but you know I think we always think Paul was so strong and always so faithful, a one man show. But I think Paul is no different than us, and I think there were days he just wanted to quit, felt totally defeated, and at times like he was just making a mess of things; after times of people not listening, sometimes feeling like he was saying the wrong things, or saying it the wrong way, because the response of people. I wonder how many times Priscilla and Aquila were his encouragement, the one God used to refresh Paul, to strengthen him, to spur him on.

Doubt we Realize how we Spur Others On / Touch a Life – that Touches a Life / Intertwined

Christian, I doubt you'll ever know just how God used you in another person's life to strengthen them, to spur them on, and thus you'll never know how they went on to touch a life, that touched a life, that touched a life. We are so intertwined together, that for every person you touch in this Christian life, ripples out to hundreds of people. Be a friend, you have no idea how far you are really reaching and touching.

Priscilla kicked out of Rome / Risked Neck / 2 lions Tamed

What the Roman emperor Claudius meant for evil turned out for good for Priscilla and Aquila. They were living in Rome in 49 when Claudius expelled all the Jews because of a riot over a certain "Chrestus," probably an allusion to Jewish arguments over Christ. Jewish Christians like Priscilla and Aquila were also forced to leave. So the couple moved to Corinth, where they set up their tent making business. When Paul arrived, Priscilla and Aquila opened their home to him and invited him to work with them. The trio later worked and ministered together here in Ephesus, which may be where Priscilla and Aquila "risked their necks" for Paul, possibly when he "fought with beasts at Ephesus." In Church History, Priscilla is sometimes pictured with two lions who refuse to attack her, lending credence to this tradition. When Claudius died in 55, Priscilla and Aquila returned to Rome and again hosted a church in their home, to whom Paul sent greetings in his letter to the Romans. A tradition of the sixth century claims that the Roman church "Prisca" on the Aventine Hill stands over their original house-church.

Romans 16:3-5 (NKJV) ³Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, ⁴who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles. ⁵Likewise greet the church that is in their house. Greet my beloved Epaphroditus, who is the firstfruits of ⁶Achaia to Christ.

Life Intertwined / Kicked out Rome by Claudius

How deep the intertwining as God moves Priscilla and Aquila from Rome, to Corinth, to be friends and encourager to Paul, such friends they risked their necks for him (now tell me how blessed Paul was to have friends such as that), and it all began with a Roman Emperor kicking them out of Rome.

I Believe – every Person Woven in by God

I truly believe that person in your life, every person in this church, has been woven into your life by God. Cherish them, for you never know when they may sail away.

The Intertwining in Work (18:18b)

(Acts 18:18 NKJV) So Paul still remained a good while. Then he took leave of the brethren and sailed for Syria, and Priscilla and Aquila were with him. He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow.

Coworkers to Missionaries Together / No Free Rides / Many Sent Today – Covered \$

Verse 18b - and Priscilla and Aquila were with him – from friends and coworkers (as they made tents together) they are now missionaries together. Oh the blessing of work, and how it is interwoven in our lives together. How many coworkers become good friends, even best friends? Let us also consider this, and that is that there were no free-rides back then, just as today. How did Paul, Priscilla, and Aquila pay for this missionary journey? No doubt with the money they made at working selling tents. Not only does the Lord bless us with work to provide for our families, but also for furthering of the Kingdom. How many missionaries can go forth today not having to worry about finances because people wake up every day and put in their 8 plus and then give a portion of that for the furtherance of the Gospel. I remember talking to my one friend, and she was being a little “puffed up” saying I’m not being cooped up in some 4 walls, working 9-5 for the man, I am going into the missionary field and make a difference for the Kingdom. I said, oh that’s great; now just exactly were you planning on paying for all this? With the (good point) look she said, by support letters.

Your Work Intertwined all over World / Our Tithe / Your Love – Deeper than Imagine / Thread

Your work is intertwined into the lives of others all over the world. Just from this little church (our support) there are believers in India, Kenya, Sudan, Nicaragua, and Nepal (not to mention Anne Arundel County) that are being blessed because you are willing to be cooped-up (haha). Your love goes farther, deeper, and wider than you imagine. God is making a beautiful tapestry of love, and your thread precious saint weaves over threads all around this world. I believe people will be coming up to you in heaven and say thank you, and we will say for what, and they will say for when I was hungry you fed me, when I was naked you clothed me, when I wanted to know more about Jesus you helped send someone to me.

Eastern Harbor / Imagine what that Head Looked Like

Verse 18c - He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow - Cenchrea is the eastern harbor of Corinth. I can only imagine what Paul’s head looked like all shaven off, it was probably all knotty looking, big bumps and dents in it from all his beatings and stoning.

What type of Vow? / Nazarite – Prayer Vow

Verse 18 - for he had taken a vow – What type of vow this was we are not told. Some think it was the Nazarite vow which a dedication to service, and it included to touch no grapes, drink no wine, touch no dead body, and to allow his hair to grow before cutting it off as a sign of purification (Numbers 6). Some think it was a prayer vow because the word used for vow is “eucheen” and it can mean a prayer or vow (see Jas 5:15), and that was a very Jewish way of giving thanks to God, and at the end of that prayer period they would cut their hair.

James 5:15 (NKJV) ¹⁵And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

Some have Problem with Paul’s Vow / Grace to Bondage / All things to Win Some

Paul taking a vow causes lots of problem for Christians today saying Paul was watering down the gospel, he was merging Judaism with Christianity, bringing bondage rather than grace, and that causes confusion. Because I don’t have all the details I really can’t agree or disagree with this position, but what I do know about Paul is that he was willing to become all things to all men that he might win some, and we will talk about that again in the next chapter.

1 Corinthians 9:22-23 (NKJV) ²²to the weak I became ^εas weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. ²³Now this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.

I really don’t have a Problem / 7 days no TV / Problem – Works or Puffed

So really what is a vow, but it is making a promise. So Paul made some type of promise to God. Now I really don’t have a problem with that; I have at certain times in my life said, for the next 7 days I am not going to watch any television and just replace that time with a special time of prayer (as I feel that is what God is calling me to do). The problem with things like that is that if you are doing it other than because God called you to do it, then you can put yourself under a works trip, and be miserable when you fail, or puffed-up (self-righteous) when you make it.

Friend at Bible College

I had a friend when I was in Bible College who took the Nazarite Vow in that he just wasn't going to shave or cut his hair for 40 days, and was just going to spend time with the Lord, totally undivided attention. During that time he wasn't going to date either. Well God honored his desire, and so too did the girls because he was quite a scruffy site to behold, and he did have a wonderful and special time with the Lord. Funny thing, three days after he shaved his beard and got a haircut, he met his wife at the Snack Bar. So I don't have a problem with people wanting to have a special time set aside for the Lord, but I just give warning not to turn it into works or allow it to puff them up. You are free to disagree on that point, and we can still fellowship together; I'll just make a vow never to bring it up before you again.

So the Big Picture / Won't know how Far Intertwined – the Threads Crossed

So the big picture, the Lord intertwines our work life beyond anything we can imagine, and we won't know how greatly He did that until we get to heaven and see how far our threads crossed the threads of those around the world.

The Intertwining in Ministry (18:19-23)

(Acts 18:19 NKJV) And he came to Ephesus, and left them there; but he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.

Ephesus major City in Asia Minor / Banking Center / Temple Diana (425-220-60)

Ephesus was the major city of Asia Minor, it was the banking center for that region of the world. Ephesus had the Temple to Diana, and it was considered one of the seven wonder of the world; it was 425 foot long, 220 feet wide, and was made completely of marble. It had 127 completely white marble pillars that were 60 feet high that held up the ceiling. People came from all over the world to worship at the Temple of Diana.

Paul's Normal Routine

Paul's normal routine, enter the synagogue and preach to the Jews.

(Acts 18:20 NKJV) When they asked him to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent,

(Acts 18:21 NKJV) but took leave of them, saying, "I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing." And he sailed from Ephesus.

Funny – Please Stay vs Get Out / Seems that Way for Us – Phone Rings – Get Kids

Verse 20 - When they asked him to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent – How funny, everywhere Paul went the Jews were kicking him out, and now here he is in Ephesus and these Jews in the synagogue are begging him to stay, but Paul has to keep his vow and make it to Jerusalem. Doesn't it seem like that is the way it goes more time than not. You are talking with someone, trying to minister to them, you have all this time available to do so, and they have no interest in what you have to say. But then it's like your late for work, or got to pick the kids up, and the phone rings and someone you were trying to minister to for weeks or months is on the other end of the line ready to pour their heart out to you.

Paul comes back on #3 / Stays 3 years / Write Book of Ephesians while Imprisoned

Paul will later come back to them on his 3rd missionary journey and stay there for 2-3 years; when he is imprisoned by Rome he will write a letter to them also (the Book of Ephesians).

Book of Ephesians – Swiss Alps / Openness relative to Heights

The Book of Ephesians has been called the Swiss Alps of the New Testament, when you read the Book of Ephesians, you are taken up into the heavenlies, The openness of the people of

Ephesus (please stay and tell us more) to the things of God were directly relative to the heights God could take them to in spiritual truths. The same is true still today for you; how open are you to the things of God? How open you are to the things of God is dependent upon how open you are to God. Openness (honesty, transparency, the masks taken off), and saying Lord I see I need changing in this area of my life, Lord I see that I am not as spiritually mature as other people think I am, Lord I not only see the need to go higher, but my heart is asking you – take me higher. Oh may we be a people who are always reaching higher, never being content where we or our children are spiritually, but a people who say – “Lord could you stay a little longer, could you take me a little higher”.

Ephesians 1:3 (NKJV) ³*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,*

Wanted Paul to Stay – Sweetness of Jesus Upon Him / Younger – hang out Older

They wanted Paul to stay, but he had to go. I think they wanted Paul to stay because the word and the passion for the Word/Jesus (the Word that became flesh and dwelt amongst us), was so sweet to the people that they just loved to be around him. There is something sweet about hanging out with people who have been saved for a long-long time. Young people, find some Christians that have been saved a long-long time; oh you may say that sounds so boring, I want to hang out with my young peers where all the energy and laughter is. Listen, older people can tell you what they have seen, they don't just have Bible knowledge, they have Christian-life experience, they can tell you about God's faithfulness, because they are still standing after all these years, in spite of all that Satan and the world has thrown at them.

Which Feast?

Verse 21 - keep this coming feast in Jerusalem – which Feast we do not know, Passover, Pentecost, we do not know.

Will Return – God Willing – Make no Promises / Paul will Come back

Verse 21 - but I will return again to you, God willing – Paul is wise enough to make no promise that he couldn't keep. James would write those wise words to us to do the same. God would will this, and we will see Paul coming back to Ephesus for 2-3 years.

James 5:12 (NKJV) ¹²*But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your "Yes" be "Yes," and your "No," "No," lest you fall into judgment.*

No Man can Make Promise Apart from God / Jesus Could

No man can make a promise apart from God's will; but there was a One who could say these words (I will return) because He knew it is the will of God – Our King Jesus. Jesus is returning for us, and that is God's will. People, hear ye, hear ye, Jesus is Coming Back! For You! I know it is a hard walk, I know it is a long walk, but Jesus Christ said He is coming back for you, and He will, and it may be today – may He find us being faithful when He returns.

John 14:1-3 (NKJV) ¹⁴*Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. ²In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.*

Paul Goes – Priscilla Stays / God leaves team to Meet the Desire

Although Paul had to leave, Priscilla and Aquila were left behind. God left a team to meet the need, to meet the desire of these people to hear and know more. So here we see the beautiful intertwining of life as Paul's ministry rubs off on Priscilla and Aquila, and they stay there to meet the heart's desire of these people of Ephesus just wanting to know more about the Lord.

Priscilla and Aquila never Mentioned Apart / Cleave

It is interesting to me in that Priscilla and Aquila are never mentioned separately. They are a great picture of a godly Christian marriage – “inseparable”. The two shall become one, and they shall cleave together. The word for cleave literally means glue together.

Genesis 2:24 (KJV) ²⁴*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*

Can I Encourage You – Find a Ministry Together – Very Defined & Specific

Can I encourage you married couples in something today? Find a ministry that the two of you can do together. Take the example of Priscilla and Aquila. Yes I know we are raising our kids together, that is our ministry, of course it is. But I mean something that is very specific, very defined, very regular, that the two of you will have to come together to make it work.

Adam & Eve

"Adam and Eve must have had fun working together in the garden. No commutes, no child care, no financial worries. Just the opportunity to be with each other all day and feel the satisfaction of doing something together that neither could do alone.

We hunger for this today: cooperating together, meshing, working like a mountain climbing team, ascending the peak of our dream, and then holding each other at the end of the day. God has planted this hunger deep within every married couple. It's more than a hunger to create new life. It's a third hunger, a hunger to do something significant together. According to God's Word, we were joined to make a difference. We were married for a mission.

'One of the missing ingredients of couples today is they do not have a mission; they do not have a sense of God having called them together to do something as a couple.' But often, as we begin to feel this basic longing, we don't know what it is. We get the 'seven-year itch' or the '12-year anger' or the '18-year blahs.' We think, **WHAT'S WRONG WITH US? OUR COMPANIONSHIP MAY NOT BE PERFECT, BUT WE HAVE EACH OTHER. AND, many can add, WE HAVE OUR CHILDREN. SO WHAT ARE WE MISSING?**

We may be missing one-third of what God created marriage for—serving Him together. Marriage Counselor James H. Olthuis writes, 'To try to keep love just for us . . . is to kill it slowly We are not made just for each other; we are called to a ministry of love to everyone we meet and in all we do. In marriage, too, Jesus' words hold true; in saving our lives we lose them, and in losing our lives in love to others, we drink of life more deeply.' "

Need Common Goal – Natural is Drift towards Isolation

"We were shocked to learn that 55 percent of all affairs begin at the office. The fact is, sharing goals pulls people together. Men and women grow closer through their work, and suddenly they find they have more in common than their jobs.

Why can't this same powerful force—working together toward a common goal—pull our Christian marriages together? Let's face it: Today we need all the common ground we can find.

Like most couples today, we spend the longest portion of the day—our best hours—miles apart. Even though we call each other, our workday interests and conversations are radically different.

Marriage Counselor Dennis Rainey warns, 'Every marriage, given its own course, will naturally drift toward isolation, two people separate from one another. Let's make sure we stop that natural drift toward isolation. Whenever we minister together, we build into our week precious hours where we focus on exactly the same thing at the same time. That's a powerful practice, and it builds marriages.'

God Sent them out By 2's / Power in Pairs

"When the time came for a strategic decision during His ministry, Jesus made an interesting choice. He gathered 70 workers, like regional representatives, and sent them to various towns to prepare people for His visits (see Luke 10:1). He could have sent each disciple separately and reached more towns. Instead, He chose to send 35 teams of two. An efficiency expert might criticize that decision for duplicating effort and cutting productivity in half, but Jesus knew that some ministries are performed best by two, not one. When two people work together, one can protect the other. One can encourage another. Two can split the work, offset each other's

weaknesses, and draw on each other's strengths. Companionship makes two more effective, not less, than one.

Today, Jesus sends our Christian couples just like He sent those pairs of disciples, because a pair has power. God uses each couple's gifts and together, with God's help, we can minister in a more powerful way.

Most Christians have been trained to think of serving Christ individually—all alone. How often might our ministries—and our marriages—be strengthened if we could find a way to draw on our spouse's strengths? It's not always possible, and it's not always easy. But God has called you to serve Him. He also has called you to be married. Those two callings not only CAN go together, they SHOULD go together. When they do, you'll find a stronger Christian life and a stronger Christian marriage."

The Intertwining of Husband and Wife / Meet need In Ephesus & Apollos

So here we see God powerfully using the intertwining of a married couple to meet the heart's desire of these people of Ephesus who want to know more about the Lord; and God will use them again to do a great work in a young man's life named Apollos who will go on to do a great work for the Lord.

(Acts 18:22 NKJV) And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up and greeted the church, he went down to Antioch.

Always go up To Jerusalem

You always went up to Jerusalem; every time you read someone going to Jerusalem that are going up (even though it is less than 1,000 meters in elevation). But Jerusalem is considered the Holy City of God, and thus you always went up.

That was somewhat Anticlimactic

Well that is somewhat anti-climatic, here Paul is all stirred that he got to get to Jerusalem, it is so important that he can't stay in the place that wants him to stay, and then he gets there – and all we get is, **and gone up and greeted the church, he went down to Antioch.** What happened while he was there? We don't know.

My Calculation – 2000 miles

My calculation is that Paul's 2nd Missionary journey was in all total of 2,000 miles. Imagine 2,000 miles of missionary stories that Paul could tell when he was invited over for dinner.

(Acts 18:23 NKJV) After he had spent some time there, he departed and went over the region of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples.

Begins #3 / Cycle ends when we get to Heaven

Paul now begins his 3rd missionary journey. Timothy, Erastus, Gaius, Aristarchus (and probably Titus) accompany him on this journey. I like this, as soon as Paul finishes trip #2 he starts trip #3. God picture for us, as we are never done; when one cycle is complete we just start a new cycle, and so on until the Lord calls us home.

In Order

Verse 23 - in order – I like this as we see Paul doesn't do things haphazardly, but in order. Order reduces confusion, confusion raises anxieties, and anxieties squeeze out the Spirit. So it good to keep order in your homes and everyday life.

How Strengthen – He Teaches

Verse 23 - strengthening all the disciples – how will Paul strengthen them? By teaching them, and so is our principle and practice here at CCAAC. Teach the Word and people will be strengthened.

The Intertwining in the Home Church (18:24-27)

What we will read in these next several verses is God rises up a man to replace Paul in Corinth. The people of Corinth were now missing Paul after his 18 months, and God will not leave them lacking, and will send another to take his place. Christian, God will never leave His Church lacking. He will not leave your church lacking. If there is a gap in His supplying it is only because of His divine design in order to draw something out of someone. Maybe for the church in Corinth it was the drawing out that they wanted more of the things of Lord, and the separation of relying on a man (Paul), for the building up of a man (Apollos); whatever the case was, God was not leaving the Church in Corinth lacking, nor will He ever leave your church lacking. God is people in motion to meet the need, and we see a beautiful and dynamic picture of Him doing so by intertwining people and churches to strengthen and grow up His body, and not just one church or another. God continually does the same today as He moves people sitting in pews in one church to lead and serve in a greater degree at another. So a beautiful picture we see here in these next verses as the Lord is intertwining the churches together to make a great body, for God will never leave a church lacking because it is His desire to see all come to the fullness of Christ. Let me add a warning here as this is an applicable place to do so; God will never leave your church lacking, and if you are (or ever) complaining about our church, you are complaining against God, for it is God's church. If you see something lacking, don't complain about it, get on your knees and pray about it until the need is met. As we said previously, God leaves a gap between filling the need, in order to draw something out of a people.

Ministry of Apollos

(Acts 18:24 NKJV) Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus.

(Acts 18:25 NKJV) This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John.

(Acts 18:26 NKJV) So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

(Acts 18:27 NKJV) And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace;

Why at Synagogue / Learned from Paul / Went to see what Lord Might Do – Minister to Other

Why are Aquila and Priscilla at the synagogue? They are saved, they are Christians! I believe they are there because they had learned their ministry approach from Paul, who when he went into the town, he headed right to the synagogue. Paul worked for Aquila and Priscilla when he sewed tents. He worked on Aquila and Priscilla by giving them the gospel. He worked with Aquila and Priscilla as they headed into Ephesus together. Aquila and Priscilla could have said, "We're beyond this synagogue stuff. We're more advanced than this," but they didn't. You see, even though Aquila and Priscilla were Christians, they went back into the synagogue to see what the Lord would have them do there—not to be ministered unto, but to minister to others.

Took Aside - Sensitive

Notice they took him aside; that means they took him aside privately, quietly, they didn't do it in front of the entire crowd. Good application for us, that we be sensitive to our younger brothers and sister in the Lord.

Divine Appointment – Right People, Right Place, Right Time

We clearly see God's divine appointment here. Providential that Priscilla and Aquila left in Ephesus. (Right people, right place, at the right time.)

Apollos to Greece - Corinth

Verse 27 - And when he desired to cross to Achaia – Where is Achaia? It is Greece. Where will Apollos end up in Greece? At Corinth. They write Apollos a letter of endorsement that he understands the things of the Lord, and he is qualified to teach. He will be used in a great way by the Lord; his life will be intertwined with Paul's and the people of Corinth.

(Acts 19:1 NKJV) And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples

1 Corinthians 3:6-8 (NKJV) ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.

⁷So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase. ⁸Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

Just Look how God Weaves all this Together for Corinth

Just look at that how the Lord intertwines lives together to strengthen the Home Church. The Lord wasn't going to leave the church in Corinth short now that their teacher Paul was moved on after 18 months of being there, so the Lord brings Apollos to them, but had to do it through Priscilla and Aquila (in Ephesus) first, who were themselves first touched and blessed through the Apostle Paul back in Corinth. Did you follow all that? Amazing how God weaves lives together to make His tapestry of love, and He is still doing it today, taking care of, making sure of, that your Home Church will meet your needs.

The Intertwining in Oppositions (18:28)

(Acts 18:28 NKJV) for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.

All of Us will Suffer / Persecution or Fallen World / We all Hurt – When one Hurt

Let me just close with this last piece, and that is that we know that all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution, or we will suffer just because of the fact that we live in this fallen world. Letter or no letter, Apollos would face opposition at times because of the message and life he lived, and so too will we. And we are all in this Christian life together, and when one of us hurt, we should all hurt, because we are all so tightly woven together.

2 Timothy 3:10-12 (NKJV) ¹⁰But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, ¹¹persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. ¹²Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.

Mouse Trap Fable

I am reminded of the fable about the mouse and the mouse trap. A mouse looked through the crack in the wall to see the farmer and his wife open a package.

What food might this contain?' the mouse wondered - - -he was devastated to discover it was a mousetrap.

Retreating to the farmyard, the mouse proclaimed the warning; There is a mousetrap in the house! There is a mousetrap in the house!'

The chicken clucked and scratched, raised her head and said, 'Mr. Mouse, I can tell this is a grave concern to you, but it is of no consequence to me. I cannot be bothered by it.'

The mouse turned to the pig and told him, 'There is a mousetrap in the house! There is a mousetrap in the house!' The pig sympathized, but said, 'I am so very sorry, Mr. Mouse, but there is nothing I can do about it but pray. Be assured you are in my prayers.'

The mouse turned to the cow and said, 'There is a mousetrap in the house! There is a mousetrap in the house!' The cow said, 'Wow, Mr. Mouse. I'm sorry for you, but it's no skin off my nose.'

So, the mouse returned to the house, head down and dejected, to face the farmer's mousetrap . . . alone. That very night a sound was heard throughout the house -- like the sound of a mousetrap catching its prey.

The farmer's wife rushed to see what was caught. In the darkness, she did not see it was a venomous snake whose tail the trap had caught. The snake bit the farmer's wife. The farmer rushed her to the hospital, and she returned home with a fever.

Everyone knows you treat a fever with fresh chicken soup, so the farmer took his hatchet to the farmyard for the soup's main ingredient.

But his wife's sickness continued, so friends and neighbors came to sit with her around the clock. To feed them, the farmer butchered the pig.

The farmer's wife did not get well; she died. So many people came for her funeral, the farmer had the cow slaughtered to provide enough meat for all of them.

The mouse looked upon it all from his crack in the wall with great sadness.

So, the next time you hear someone is facing a problem and think it doesn't concern you, remember ---- when one of us is threatened, we are all at risk. We are all involved in this journey called life. We must keep an eye out for one another and make an extra effort to encourage one another.

REMEMBER. EACH OF US IS A VITAL THREAD IN ANOTHER PERSON'S TAPESTRY; OUR LIVES ARE WOVEN TOGETHER FOR A REASON.

We all Hurt

We are all in this together, we need each other, for we are all intertwined, woven together by God, to make His beautiful tapestry of love. Our threads cross over each other, and to the outer parts of the world. When a marriage hurts we hurt, when a teen goes rebellious we all hurt, when a brother backslides, when a sister goes lukewarm, when illness strikes, when unemployment comes, we all hurt because we are all so tightly woven together.

Recap of what we Learned

Outline: Lives Intertwined

- The Intertwining in Friends (18:18a)
- The Intertwining in Work (18:18b)
- The Intertwining in Ministry (18:19-23)
- The Intertwining in the Home Church (18:24-27)
- The Intertwining in Oppositions (18:28)

We are In Him

We are all in this together, because we are all woven together, because we are all of the same body, His body. And that is the great news that I leave you with today, and that is that we are in Him, and that He loves us, and lives and breathes for us.

***Ephesians 1:22-23 (NKJV)**²²And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, ²³which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*

The Rest of the Story

Acts 18:24-28

Video Clip

Opening Prayer

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Gospel on Move / Today – Apollos / Only ½ Story – Coming / Other ½ - Easter / Ress - Pwr

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is on the move, it is going to the ends of the earth just as Jesus said that it would, and in our passage before us today we will read of a young man named Apollos who has a passion and zeal for the things of God, he is out on the circuit telling people about God, but he only has half the story (the Savior is coming). The half story he does have is great (the Savior is coming), but in our text today we will read the story of him getting the other half of the story, the story of the death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Easter story, it is the power of the gospel, and it is what changes everything. It is what takes a good story and makes it great, it is what takes an ordinary life and makes it extraordinary, it is what takes pain and turns it into joy, it takes defeats and turn them into victories, it is what takes night and turns it into a new day, and above all it is what takes death and makes it into life.

Fri – Crucified / Sunday – the Rest of the Story / Fri – Death doing Well / Sun – Lost Sting

On Friday the Savior is crucified, but on Sunday – is the rest of the story – He is Alive! On Friday sin and death are doing well, but on Sunday – the rest of the story, Death has lost its sting, and the power of sin has been defeated. Oh thank God my brothers and sisters for the rest of the story. **1 Corinthians 15:54-55 (NKJV)** ⁵⁴*So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"*

We Love – Rest of Story / Paul Harvey – Could you turn the Dial? / Awesome - Amazing

Don't you love hearing, the rest of the story? Who can forget the great radio announcer Paul Harvey. Could anyone of us ever turn the dial when he started to tell his stories, knowing that coming soon was "and now, the rest of the story". You would listen to the first half of the story and say, "awesome", and then when he would give the "rest of the story", you would go "amazing".

The way he Told It

Oh the way he told that story just hooked you in (remember this one?), it is my personal favorite.

Snow Man

Harry deLeyer and his childhood sweetheart crossed the Atlantic Ocean together from the Netherlands to America in the 1950's. Harry landed the job as horse riding master at the Knox School for Girls on Long Island New York.

It was a wintry day in February 1956 when Harry returned from the horse auction. The entire family came out to greet him and see what he had chosen for the riding stables. When the trailer doors opened out came a mammoth gray-white horse with bony ribs, matted mane, and scarred legs. Harry bought the horse for a mere \$80. Even back in 1956, \$80 is dirt cheap for a horse. As he stood in the fresh ankle-deep snow one of the 5 children said, "he looks just like a snow man", thus he was named Snow Man.

No one knows Snowman's breeding (an obscure mixed breed) or previous history, although it was thought he used to be a plow horse. Harry trained Snow Man who was trained well that season, they had a special connection together, and he became a good riding horse. But when the school closed for the summer, a farming neighbor offered to buy him...he offered to pay twice what Harry had paid. Reluctantly Harry sold, after all he was in the horse business, and he couldn't let personal sentiments enter in.

As the days passed Harry began to regret his sale, and apparently so did Snow Man. That's when the hidden talents of Snow Man came out. The neighbor's fences were high, very high (over 6 feet high); but somehow Snow Man escaped. Again and again he would jump the fence to be reunited with his master.

One day the reunion became permanent. Harry bought back Snow Man and the record books would be changed forever. Winner at horse show after horse show until the ultimate dream...the National Horse Show at Madison Square Garden in 1958. Snow Man would be "Horse of the Year" two years running, but not for running or beauty, but for jumping. He was made champion show jumper in 1958 and 1959. He would even jump over the backs of other horses. And, as if that wasn't impressive enough, Snowman even appeared on "The Tonight Show" with Johnny Carson. Snow Man was jumper, Snowman was inducted into the Show Jumping Hall of Fame in 1992, *and no one would have know were it not for the neighbor's fence that separated a grateful animal from the master who missed him.*

And now for, the rest of the story:

Snow Man had reason to be grateful. You see Harry arrived late at the auction that first day they met on that snowy day in February 1956. The best horses had long since been sold. The "jumping great" was one of the last to be auctioned, and he had been saved from the only other bidder that bid for him that day, the glue factory. *And now you have, the rest of the story.*

Awesome – turns Amazing / How you waited to Hear / Apollos – gets Rest / You Today

Awesome story, turns into an amazing story, and how you waited to hear – the rest of the story. Knowing there was more to come, did it not keep you locked into my every word? For me to say there was more, and then not deliver it no doubt would have left you somewhat lacking and wanting. But to hear the "rest of the story" turned an awesome story into an amazingly awesome story. Well in our story today, (Apollos) is going to hear an awesome story, but when he gets the rest of the story, he will now have the whole "amazingly-awesome story", and his life will change. I pray for anyone here today that maybe you are what you consider "a seeker", checking into the things of God that before this message is over, you will clearly see the "rest of the story", and your life will be changed forever. And for those here today, that know the "rest of the story", that you will enjoy today the Easter story in a new and fresh way, and your heart will spill over with praise and adoration for the One who came to rescue you.

Today's Text

Let's read our text today, verses 24-28.

(Acts 18:24 NKJV) Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus.

(Acts 18:25 NKJV) This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John.

(Acts 18:26 NKJV) So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

(Acts 18:27 NKJV) And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace;

(Acts 18:28 NKJV) for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.

(Acts 18:24 NKJV) Now a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus.

Background Apollos – better grasp the Account

Let's look into the background of this young man Apollos so we might better grasp all that is going on in this account.

Apollos a Hellenistic Jew

Apollos was a Hellenistic Jew. Hellenist were Jewish people were not born or lived in Israel, but their family lineage was of the Jewish descent; they lived in areas that were predominately of the Greek culture, and they spoke Greek as their first language, and Hebrew as their second.

We see Greek Culture influenced Family – Named Apollos

We can clearly see that the Greek culture had a large influence on Apollos' parents that they gave him a Greek name. Apollos means, "given by Apollo. Apollo in Greek and Roman mythology, is one of the most important and many-sided of the Olympian deities. Apollo has been variously recognized as a god of light and the sun; truth and prophecy; archery; medicine and healing; music, poetry, and the arts; and more. Apollo is the son of Zeus and Leto, and has a twin sister, the chaste huntress Artemis. What a picture what the human heart still seeks and desires today. Apollo was worshipped in both ancient Greek and Roman religion.

Influenced by Gk Culutre – regardless Jewish Nationality / Camden's Name / You Today

We can see Apollos' family must have been greatly influenced by the Greek culture, regardless of the Jewish nationality. I must say when Camden was born, Muhammad was never a consideration as a potential name. Let me say to anyone here today, regardless of your religious background, upbringing, or lack thereof, Jesus Christ is ready to do a work in your life, He is ready to meet you where you are at, and show you the things of Himself more accurately, to make you complete and perfect in Him. Never let your past, never let your family's religious preferences, or religious ignorance keep you from coming to Jesus Christ. May we never worry what man thinks of us, only what God does.

Born Alexandria / 2nd Largest in Roman Empire / Major Cosmopolitan

Apollos was born in Alexandria which was the second largest city in the Roman Empire (Historian Philo reckons population about 1,000,000). This city was founded by Alexander the Great. It was very modern (for its day), it was a major cosmopolitan center, comprised of Egyptians, Romans, Greeks, and Jewish. History books say that over a quarter of the population was Jewish.

The Only Testament / Septuagint 150 before Christ / Great Library – 700K

Verse 24 - mighty in the Scriptures: Apollos was mighty in the Scriptures, and that would be what we call the Old Testament today - the Old Testament (as we call it – but back then the "O" didn't stand for "old" but "only", for there was no New Testament. The Old Testament (as we call it today) had been translated from Hebrew to Greek about 150 years before the birth of Christ (that work is what is called the Septuagint). So Apollos had the Old Testament Scriptures to study – and was mighty in them. The city was famous for its great library, and was considered the cultural and educational center of the universe. The library was said to house 700,000 volumes (imagine that in our day, let alone that day). Consider today that the Library of Congress is the largest library in the world, with more than 120 million items on approximately 530 miles of

bookshelves. The collections include more than 18 million books, 2.5 million recordings, 12 million photographs, 4.5 million maps, and 54 million manuscripts. That is huge, and Alexandria would be the Library of Congress of its day. So counting just writings, our Library of Congress is only 100 time bigger than library in Alexandria. Thus, Apollos was well read, and well educated, and had a bountiful supply of material to be educated with.

Well Educated – Humble enough to be Corrected

Apollos is well educated, but we will see he is humble enough to receive correction. We see was humble enough to see his wealth and intelligence was not enough to impress God, and that he needed a Savior. May our intellect never keep us from being humble, it is ok to say – I am wrong, or I need help. For all those that would be humble enough hear the word of the Lord for the humble from Psalms:

Psalms 149:4 (NKJV)⁴ For the Lord takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the humble with salvation.

Mighty in Scriptures – Maybe someday we'll be Called That

Here is a man who was mighty in the Scriptures – hopefully someday someone will say the same about us. May week in and week out may we as a church - Study to show thyself approved
2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV) ¹⁵*Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

(Acts 18:25 NKJV) This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord, though he knew only the baptism of John.

Taught Diligently – They Meant Something to Him

He was fervent in the spirit and he taught diligently and accurately; this means that the Scriptures meant something to his life, the things of the Lord meant something to him, and he wanted others to understand the same, however he did not have the rest of the story. Apollos had never heard about the death of Jesus Christ nor of His Resurrection from the dead. All he knew at this point was what John the Baptist preached. That is, “Repent, Messiah is coming:, prepare ye the way of the Lord (quoting Isaiah 40):

(Matthew 3:1 NKJV) In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea,

(Matthew 3:2 NKJV) and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

(Matthew 3:3 NKJV) For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.'"

Way – a path – way of life / John said – clear the path – clutter – open gate / You Today

The Hebrew word for “way” is 'derech'. Derech means a path, or a way of life. John said make a path for God to walk into your life, clear the path, clear the clutter, open the gate and say come on in. The calling is still the calling for every man, woman, and child today – prepare the way for the Lord to come into your heart.

3 Great Truths he Had / 3 Great he had Missed

Verse 25 - though he knew only the baptism of John - John the Baptist taught three great truths:

- 1) Forgiveness of sins (only) on the basis of repentance.
- 2) Expression through baptism – burying the old selfish man
- 3) One was coming who complete their salvation – the Promised Messiah

But John's message had 3 things missing as he was only the forerunner to Jesus Christ:

- 1) Cross.
- 2) Resurrection.
- 3) Holy Spirit's baptism.

Top 8 / Apollos well-versed / Verse 28 – convince w/Scriptures / He would know these 8

Apollos was well versed in the Scriptures (he was mighty in them), he was well educated, we will see him in verse 28 (after he gets the rest of the story) convincing the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah through the Scriptures (as the OT – stood for the “only” testament). Apollos knew the

prophecies written in the Holy Scriptures as they predicted the coming Messiah, and He would know these 8 (of the 300 prophecies that Jesus specifically fulfilled) and that we have studied so in-depth here at CCAAC (you can find the detailed notes for them out on line in our 1 Peter study notes).

His Birth & Lineage

- 1.) The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Micah 5:2a / Matthew 2:1-2
- 2.) The Messiah would be a descendant of David. Isaiah 9:7 / Matthew 1:1

His Environment & the World Setting

- 3.) The Messiah would be announced to his people 483 years, to the exact day, after the decree to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. Daniel 9:25 / John 12:12-13
- 4.) The Messiah would be killed before the destruction of the temple. Daniel 9:26c / Matthew 27:50-51
- 5.) The Jew's authority to administer capital punishment would be gone when the Messiah arrived. Genesis 49:10c / John 18:31

His Death

- 6.) The Messiah would be sacrificed on the same mountain where God tested Abraham. Genesis 22:14 / Luke 23:33
- 7.) The Messiah's back would be whipped. Isaiah 53:5c Matthew 27:26
- 8.) The Messiah's hands and feet would be pierced. Psalm 22:16c Matthew 27:38

A Coin in Texas

The following probabilities (The Law of Compound Probability) are taken from Peter Stoner in Science Speaks (Moody Press, 1963) to show that coincidence is ruled out by the science of probability. Stoner says that by using the modern science of probability in reference to eight prophecies, 'we find that the chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled all eight prophecies is 1 in 10 to the 17th.' That would be 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000. In order to help us comprehend this staggering probability, Stoner illustrates it by supposing that "we take 10 to the 17th silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep. "Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man."

Knew them – but not the Rest of the Story

Apollos knew these prophecy stories, but he did not know the "rest of the story" about them.

Top 8

His Birth & Lineage

1.) The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Micah 5:2a / Matthew 2:1-2

The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, but the rest of the story is that a field within the limits of Bethlehem known as Migdal Edar was where lambs were raised, but not just any lambs, but special lambs, only spotless and perfect lambs (if not perfect moved to another field), for Migdal Edar was the field where the Passover lambs that would be slain would be raised. Jesus the Messiah was born in Bethlehem, He would be the last and final Passover Lamb, and he would take away the sins of the world. Apollos did not know the rest of the story that on Friday Jesus (the Messiah) was being crucified at the exact same time that all the Passover lambs were being sacrificed (as required by the Levitical Law), nor that on the 3rd day the final Passover Lamb would raise again and walk out the Garden Tomb. Blessed be the Name of the Lord.

(Micah 5:2 NKJV) "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting."

(Matthew 2:1 NKJV) Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem,

Micah 4:8 (NKJV)⁸ And you, O tower of the flock, The stronghold of the daughter of Zion, To you shall it come, Even the former dominion shall come, The kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem."

John 1:29 (NKJV)²⁹The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!"

Study Notes on Migdal Edar

Migdal Edar means the "the tower of the flock", and it was a tower to not only watch over the flock, but to protect the flocks from bandits and predators. For you see, these weren't just ordinary sheep, these sheep were destined for a purpose (mind you Bethlehem is only 5 miles from Jerusalem, and the tower at Migdal Edar is only about 2.5 miles from Jerusalem. Migdal Edar (Bethlehem) according to the ancient rabbis was the place that the Passover Lambs that would be sacrificed at the Temple would be delivered and raised. Female Sheep (ewes) who were pregnant were brought to Migdal Edar, and when they delivered, the shepherds would receive them, give special attention to them to ensure that they would remain perfect (spotless without blemish). The rabbis it is said even trained the shepherds on how to raise these Lambs, for they were destined to become Passover sacrifices at the Temple. Any lambs that were not perfect at birth were cast out of fields. Jesus Christ, the final Lamb of God, who would take away the sins of the world was born in Bethlehem, the place where the millions of other Passover lambs were born, 33 years later but Jesus would be "The Last Lamb" needed.

2.) The Messiah would be a descendant of David. Isaiah 9:7 / Matthew 1:1

Apollos would know that the Messiah would be a descendant of King David, but now the rest of the story that not only was the Messiah a descendant of David through Mary (remember virgin conception), but that the Messiah was God Himself in the flesh, the God-Man. When Mary conceived they were told to call Him, Emmanuel, "God with Us". Not just another sacrifice, but God Himself would become the sacrifice.

(Isaiah 9:6 NKJV) For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

(Isaiah 9:7 NKJV) Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

(Psalms 89:3 NKJV) "I have made a covenant with My chosen, I have sworn to My servant David:

(Psalms 89:4 NKJV) "Your seed I will establish forever, And build up your throne to all generations." Selah

(Matthew 1:1 NKJV) The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:

Matthew 1:23 (NKJV)²³"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,"^{23c} which is translated, "God with us."

His Environment & the World Setting

3.) The Messiah would be announced to his people 483 years, to the exact day, after the decree to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. Daniel 9:25 / John 12:12-13

So it was that exactly 483 years, 173,880 days, down to the exact day Jesus rode into Jerusalem and was heralded the Messiah, but the rest of the story they didn't know was that the Messiah wouldn't come as a conquering General, ready to crush and overthrow the oppressing Roman government and set the Nation of Israel free, but rather the Messiah would ride in humbly and lowly on a donkey, and crush not a the reins of an oppressive government, but crush the power of sin and death.

(Daniel 9:25 NKJV) "Know therefore and understand, **That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince**, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times.

(Daniel 9:26 NKJV) "And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined.

(Daniel 9:27 NKJV) Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate."

(John 12:12 NKJV) The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem,

(John 12:13 NKJV) took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' The King of Israel!"

1 Corinthians 15:54-55 (NKJV) ⁵⁴So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"

4.) The Messiah would be killed before the destruction of the temple. Daniel 9:26c / Matthew 27:50-51

But the rest of the story they did not know was that after the death of the Messiah, God would no longer dwell in the Temple that was made with hands; His Shikeniiah Glory (the glory of God) would now dwell in the hearts of all men who bowed their knees and made Him Lord of their life. **(Daniel 9:25 NKJV)** "Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times.

(Daniel 9:26 NKJV) "And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined.

(Daniel 9:27 NKJV) Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate."

(Matthew 27:50 NKJV) And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.

(Matthew 27:51 NKJV) Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split,

1 Corinthians 3:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

5.) The Jew's authority to administer capital punishment would be gone when the Messiah arrived. Genesis 49:10c / John 18:31

The Jews grieved when Rome took away their ability to perform Capital Punishment upon condemned and convicted men guilty of breaking their Law, but they did not know the rest of the story that the Messiah would take their sentence of death, their punishment for the breaking of God's Holy Law, the Ten Commandments. They thought the Messiah would free them from the hands of their oppressors, not knowing that they needed to be freed from the sentence of death that was upon them for offending the Holy God, for transgressing His Law.

(Genesis 49:10 NKJV) The scepter shall not depart from Judah, **Nor a lawgiver** from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people.

(John 18:31 NKJV) Then Pilate said to them, "You take Him and judge Him according to your law." Therefore the Jews said to him, "It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death,"

Colossians 2:14-15 (NKJV) ¹⁴having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

James 2:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.

His Death

6.) The Messiah would be sacrificed on the same mountain where God tested Abraham. Genesis 22:14 / Luke 23:33

The Messiah as prophesied would be sacrificed on the exact same mountain (Moriah), that Abraham took his only son Isaac, but they did not know that the rest of the story that while God Himself would be sacrificed at that exact spot, He would say, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do". Nor did they know those last words that would come, "It is Done", the rest of the story, and the end of the story, it is done precious saints, your sins are forgiven and you can boldly come before Him as your sins have been wiped away once and for all.

(Genesis 22:2 NKJV) Then He said, "Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you."

(Genesis 22:14 NKJV) And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, "In the Mount of The LORD it shall be provided."

(Luke 23:33 NKJV) And when they had come **to the place** called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left.

Luke 23:34 (NKJV) ^{34E}Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots.

7.) The Messiah's back would be whipped. Isaiah 53:5c Matthew 27:26

Not only is the exact spot of His death written 2000 years before his death, but even the details of His whipping and scourging, His back being ripped open by the whip, but they did not know that rest of the story in that the God-Man would not just bear our sins upon His back, but He would say “Cast all your cares upon Me, for I care for you”. The rest of the story begins today, the moment a man asks Jesus into their hearts, that man doesn’t have to do “life” alone and try to figure it out along the way, rather the Mighty God says give it to Me, I’ll carry it from here.

(Isaiah 53:5 NKJV) But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.

(Matthew 27:26 NKJV) Then he released Barabbas to them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to be crucified.

1 Peter 5:7 (NKJV) ⁷casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

8.) The Messiah's hands and feet would be pierced. Psalm 22:16c Matthew 27:38

Some 400 years before crucifixion was invented, both Israel's King David and the prophet Zechariah described the Messiah's death in words that perfectly depict that mode of execution. But nobody knew the rest of the story, for God Himself had to walk amongst men to show man His heart, and it was a heart of love, a heart of compassion, a heart of grace, and it was not nails that held Jesus to the cross, but His great love for you and for me.

(Psalms 22:16 NKJV) For dogs have surrounded Me; The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet;

(Matthew 27:38 NKJV) Then two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and another on the left.

John 3:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

John 15:13 (NKJV) ¹³Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

Apollos had Great Story – but not the Rest of the Story

Apollos had a great story, but he didn’t have the rest of the story, and my how a life changed when a person has – *the rest of the story!*

(Acts 18:26 NKJV) So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

(Acts 18:27 NKJV) And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace;

(Acts 18:28 NKJV) for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ.

Has the rest of the story

Apollos now has “the rest of the story”.

Apollos tells the Whole Story / 400 yrs since Micah / It is Jesus we waited For

Verse 28 - showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ – Apollos would tell all that would hear the message of John the Baptist (and now the whole story, the rest of the story) – it was 400 years from the last OT Prophet to speak (Malachi) and to John the Baptist message of, “repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is near – prepare a path to your heart”; it was 400 years they waited, and John the Baptist, and now Apollos will say, “that it was Jesus Christ that we were waiting for”

- it is Jesus that took our sins (the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world),
- it is Jesus that rose again from the dead,
- it is Jesus that brings new life,
- Jesus is the answer.

- Jesus has come to set people free; from the bondages of sin, from the bondages of our old nature, to give us life and that more abundant, and life eternal!

Luke 4:18-19 (KJV) ¹⁸The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, ¹⁹To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

John 10:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

Woman caught in Adultery – now 1 more Time / GO – Free / We are Unshackled

It is Jesus that sets us free, for whom the Son sets free is free indeed (John 8:36). When they brought the woman caught in adultery, Jesus didn't give her a warning, but He set her free. Jesus didn't say, "Ok that's 1, and now 1 more time that is it for you". Jesus said "I don't condemn you, go (you are free) to sin no more". Jesus said in your old nature you had to sin, but you are now free to go and sin no more, to have victory over sin, to live free from the bondages of this world. Jesus has set the captives free, unshackled from the sin of the world so that we might be intertwined with Him. To say "go" means that a person is unshackled, unchained, unbound, no external forces to keep one limited to the same place. We are free to be free!

John 8:36 (NKJV) ³⁶Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

John 8:11 (NKJV) ¹¹She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

Fri – Crucified / Easter Sunday – Rest of Story

On Friday the Savior is crucified, on Sunday – the rest of the story. Easter Sunday, the rest of the story!

Too Many Christians – Living story John Baptist / Rest of story – Christ in you

Listen Christian, there are too many Christians who are living their Christianity on the "John the Baptist" side, oh I'm a sinner, when I make it to heaven all will be well, but for now I am a total failure in life. Christian, the rest of the story, Christ in you the hope of glory - Jesus Christ in you! That is life, that more abundant (John 10:10b), live in the Spirit, call out to Him in victory – not defeat, live from victory (the victory of the cross). Christians we live from victory, not to victory, the victory has been won and done, 2000 years ago! Amen. Take this Easter Sunday and enjoy the battle (the empty tomb), and tomorrow and everyday thereafter live a life that enjoys the victory.

Colossians 1:27 (NKJV) ²⁷To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Room full of Snowman's / People Cast Off - Worse than Glue Factory /

Today because of Easter, the power of the Resurrection, there is a room full of Snowman's; a people who were cast off, a bidder was against us to take us to a place far worse than any glue factory, until a loving Master came and said I'll take you home with me. He showed us His nail pierced hands, the rest of the story, and said this is how much I love, do you believe me know? No greater love has he than this, to lay down one's life for a friend. God doesn't just love you, but He considers and calls you friends. Who here today can't but leap for joy? If there are any fences separating you from Him, leap them, leap them all and get back into the pasture of the Master that rescued you. How happy Easter, happy Easter Christian.

And – If Here Today / 50% not Acceptable – Know not Enough / Must Receive

And, if you are here today and have yet to give your life to Jesus Christ, the 50% mark is not acceptable; the understanding that you are a sinner and separated from the Holy God is not enough for salvation. The understanding that you need a Savior is not enough. Salvation comes only at the 100% mark and that is the mark of receiving Jesus Christ, becoming His Follower, even to the point of death (in the dying to self), and living on to and for Him, and the asking of Him to come into your heart and take up residence.

February 1991 – my Date / Everyone should have Exact Date / Recognized / Set Free

February 1991, that was my date (although I don't know the exact day – I do remember the month), and everyone should have a date, an exact moment in time (doesn't matter if you don't know the exact date – but you know the moment) that you recognize that you were a sinner, and that your sin separated you from the Holy God, and that Jesus took your sentence of Capital punishment to give you eternal life, and to set you free from the power of sin.

The Lamb of God / the Laying on of Hands

The message of John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world". That Friday some 2,000 years ago, as the Passover lamb was being prepared, men and woman would have come to temple (bringing the lamb, the special lamb from Migal Edar), and they would lay their hands upon the lamb's head, confess their guilt and shame, their sins and failing, and it was symbolic of them transferring their guilt and sin unto the innocent substitute, and the Priest would then take the knife and slit the lambs throat, sprinkle the blood of the lamb upon the altar in the Temple, and man's sin would be covered, but not wiped away. And when John the Baptist said behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, he in essence was saying here is the final Passover Lamb, take your hand, lay it upon His head, and confess your sin and shame unto the perfect, spotless substitute – Jesus Christ, and He will go and take the punishment that was deserved of you, intended for you, there upon the cross – so that your sins may not be covered, but cleansed, wiped away for good – your sin is dealt with – FINISHED!

John 1:29 (NKJV) ²⁹The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

John 19:30 (NKJV) ³⁰So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.

Broad Enough

How precious is the Blood of Jesus Christ. Those who say the "way" is too narrow are greatly mistaken. Narrow - look at the quality and the quantity - the quality is the blood of God Himself (willing to suffer for me - sinner), the quantity - broad enough to cover 6 billion people on this planet if they would so bow their knee to Him as Savior and lay their hands upon His head to confess their guilt and shame, and be willing to repent of their sins..

John 14:6 (NKJV) ⁶Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

John 3:15-17 (NKJV) ¹⁵that whoever believes in Him should ^εnot perish but have eternal life. ¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Sacrifice Accepted

We know the sacrifice was accepted, the substitution was agreeable to the Father, because the rest of the story, Easter Sunday, He is Alive! Risen and Alive, and so too will all who will lay their hands upon the Lamb's head, confess their sin, and turn (repent) from their sins.

Luke 24:1-3 (NKJV) ¹Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, ^εand certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. ²But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. ³Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus.

If no Date – Make it April 12th, 2009

If you do not have "a date", please do not leave here today without making Sunday April 12th 2009, your date.

Chapter 19

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit (19:1-7)

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

3rd journey

Paul is now into his 3rd missionary journey, mighty words, mighty works, mighty ways are being wrought through this man Paul. The only such things can happen are through the Mighty God; this book has been titled "ACTS", and people say it is the Acts of the Apostles, but I like to clarify that in that it is the "Acts of the Holy Spirit" through the Apostles and many other just every day people such as Silas, Barnabas, Priscilla and Aquila, Apollos, and many more – everyday people just like you and I, who one day were touched by Jesus, say His love and salvation, and said "I will follow". Well these everyday people did mighty works, and the power that flowed through them, is the same power available for us today, and thus why today's study is so vital for each and every one of us today – "How do we get this same power for our lives today, how can we be baptized with the Holy Spirit, and have the Acts of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Not a Mystery

Well let's start at verse one and see, and what I hope you see is that this baptism is not some high, lofty, unattainable thing; nor is it some mysterious thing, but it is something God wants for you today, and every day.

Paul at Ephesus

(Acts 19:1 NKJV) **And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples**

Life Intertwined / Raise them up – Kick them Out / 2 Tim 2 / School of Discipleship

Here is the intertwining of life as we see Apollos raised up by God to go to Corinth to fill the void that was left by Paul who had been there for 18 months. I as a Pastor am always looking to raise men up, so that I might kick them out to go out and further the Gospel. I am always looking to raise men up from within, to build this body up from within. I pray today that I am training up my replacement because if the Lord should tarry, I will need to pass the baton on to another brother in the Lord and say, "you take it from here", and finish well, finish strong. Paul told his young protégé Timothy to train up men who can teach so that they may teach others. I am excited about this round of men in the "School of Discipleship and Ministry" as we 8 or so men committed to going through and finishing the course. I hope to see an equal response on the woman side of the house (hint, hint).

2 Timothy 2:2 (NKJV) *And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*

Verse 1.....that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples

3rd Journey

Paul is on his 3rd missionary journey now. Paul traveled through present-day Turkey and came to one of the major cities in the region—the city of Ephesus

Back in Ephesus – the Lord Wills

Paul is now back in Ephesus, that place they didn't want him to leave but he had to because he felt a need to be in Jerusalem for one of the Feast; Paul said if the Lord wills I'll be back, and we see that it is the Lord's will to bring him back to Ephesus. Paul will end up staying here for 3 years (Acts 20:31).

(Acts 18:20 NKJV) When they asked him to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent,

(Acts 18:21 NKJV) but took leave of them, saying, "I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing." And he sailed from Ephesus.

(Acts 20:31 NKJV) "Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

(Acts 19:2 NKJV) he said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" So they said to him, "We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."

(Acts 19:3 NKJV) And he said to them, "Into what then were you baptized?" So they said, "Into John's baptism."

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

(Acts 19:5 NKJV) When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

(Acts 19:6 NKJV) And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied.

(Acts 19:7 NKJV) Now the men were about twelve in all.

Theological Argued

This is a passage of Scripture that is theologically argued over; as some say this means they were never saved, and then got saved after Paul expounded on the life of Jesus. Some say this isn't talking about salvation, but is talking about the baptism of the Holy Spirit for the empowerment of service (the gifts of the Holy Spirit – Day of Pentecost – Acts 2). Others will argue that you can believe in Jesus, but that doesn't necessarily mean the Holy Spirit comes into your heart and takes up residence. The debate rages because words used such as (disciples – see they are followers), and believed (believed what I ask), and of course "baptism".

Overview 5 Verbs

Let's have an overview of the five verbs that are used in regards to the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and then we will be sure, that we are sure. Four are singular, meaning it happens once and once only, then a fifth that is repetitive, in that it can happen over and over again.

(Singular Use)

Indwelt by the Spirit, living in us (Rom 8:9) – bottom line is that if you are not indwelt by the Holy Spirit you are not saved.

Romans 8:9 (KJV) ⁹But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

Born of the Spirit into the family (John 3:6) – you have to be born into the family of God, you can't join. You are only born once physically, and you are only born once spiritually.

John 3:6 (KJV) ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Baptized of the Spirit into the body (1 Cor 12:13) – Baptism (means immersion) and this verse is the believer being immersed into the Body of Christ, becoming one with Him.

1 Corinthians 12:13 (KJV) ¹³For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Sealed by the Spirit unto redemption (Eph 1:13; 4:30) – sealed means “was a mark of ownership”, “earnest” a down payment (v14). The guarantee comes after a person trusts and believes in Christ, and God the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, takes up residence within that person’s body – to let you know that you know, He is with you to the ends of the earth, and He will never leave you nor forsake you, and He can’t because He is in you.

Ephesians 1:13-14 (KJV) ¹³*In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.*

Ephesians 4:30 (KJV) ³⁰*And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.*

Bottom Line

Bottom line, all these things happen once, and they are the same thing – only with different meaning, and that is God taking up residence within a person at the moment they asked and received Jesus Christ to be their Lord and Savior.

1 Corinthians 3:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶*Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*

(Frequent)

Then there is the fifth verb, and that is something can happen (and should we will see before our study is done) frequently.

Filling by the Spirit (Eph 5:18) – the Greek verb is a “continual action”.

Ephesians 5:18 (KJV) ¹⁸*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit:*

John’s Baptism not enough for Salvation

Back to the debate about our passage today, and here to me is the real simple point – and that is that the baptism of John is not enough to save a person; the knowing the need for a Savior is not enough, a person needs to personally meet the Savior who died and rose again (cross & resurrection) and ask Him (Jesus) to come into their heart (indwelling of the Holy Spirit – 1 Cor 3:16, and the 4 singular use verbs above – Indwelt, Born, Baptized, and Sealed).

(Matthew 3:1 NKJV) *In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea,*

(Matthew 3:2 NKJV) *and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"*

(Matthew 3:3 NKJV) *For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.'"*

Verse 18:25 - though he knew only the baptism of John –

John the Baptist taught three great truths:

1. Forgiveness of sins (only) on the basis of repentance.
2. Expression through baptism – burying the old selfish man
3. One was coming who complete their salvation – the Promised Messiah

But John’s message had 3 things missing as he was only the forerunner to Jesus Christ:

1. Cross.
2. Resurrection.
3. Holy Spirit’s baptism.

Argument is Mute – for we have the Rest of the Story

So to the argument and theological debating is of no value to me for we have the whole story (the rest of the story). We here living today know the whole Gospel, and that is to repent of our sins (turn from them), lay them all on Jesus for we could not wipe our own sins away, we needed a Savior, and then open a pathway for Christ to walk into our heart. So we here in 2009 have the rest of the story, these men may or may not have confused, but we are surely not.

Because we have Rest of Story – Know Hell Real – Do Something / Need Power

And, because we have the rest of the story, we know the end of the story, and we know that those who do not receive Jesus Christ will enter eternity in the place of torment, hell, and we need to do something about it. And to do something about, we need the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to overflow out of us unto the people around us, so that we might reach them and they

hear the words of God, that we might be God's love letter to them. We could never do that or be that, without the baptism (dunamis – power) of God Himself pouring forth from us unto them (Acts 1:8).

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

Could Argue – or Look Around – Lord Fill Me / Let's not Talk about Holy Spirit – Let's Get

We could argue about doctrine as so many people want to do, or we can look out at the world around us and say, Lord fill me, I need the empowering to reach this world around me, Lord I need the empowering just to reach inside my very own home. Let us not talk about the Holy Spirit, but let us get the Holy Spirit, or better yet let the Holy Spirit get hold of us.

We need to get on Knees – Fill Me to Overflowing / Gush Forth Torrents / Love not Theology

We need to get on our knees and be saying Lord Jesus fill me with your Holy Spirit, overflow my heart Lord Jesus in a way that I have never known before in my life. We should be saying Lord Jesus my wife is not saved, my husband is not saved, my kids are not saved, my neighbors, my parents, my classmates – and I am powerless in and of myself Lord Jesus, so please let the Holy Spirit gush forth from my inner-most being like torrents of living waters, Lord let your love and your power be a reality in my life, not some theological position, but a real experience with the Person of the Holy Spirit.

How can we have this? / to Understand How – Look at How Jesus did It / Well see is Attain

How? How can we have this empowerment in our lives today? Christian anytime you want to understand a "how" in your Christian walk, just go and look at "how" Jesus did it; Jesus' earthly life, is our earthly example. How and what Jesus did, unlocks all the how and what's of our Christian experience. Jesus unlocks any mystery, He makes everything so clear, and this baptism of the Holy Spirit seems so lofty, it seems so mysterious, but when we look at it through the life of Jesus, it becomes so clear, so simple, and best of all (hear me Christian) – so attainable for every person in this room today.

Virgin Birth – Indwelling is Done

Now Jesus was God, He was born of the Spirit through the virgin conception, so the Spirit of God dwelling in Him is done, just like it is for all of us here today who have received Him as Lord and Savior.

(Matthew 1:20 (NKJV) ²⁰But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit.

How about Empowering? / Doctrine of Kenos – Jesus Emptied Himself – but not of Deity

But what about this "empowering" this baptism of the Holy Spirit to be a witness and to glorify God? It wasn't because He was God, and that is how He did all His mighty works from miracles, to opening hard hearts, no not at all. In Philippians 2, it says that Jesus made Himself of no reputation. The word used here for reputation is "kenoo" it means to make empty. Jesus emptied Himself. Here we stand on Holy Ground. This is one of the most profound, most important theological Scriptures in the Bible (it called the doctrine of Kenos). We have already know that Jesus is God, so what did He empty Himself of, not His Deity. He obviously stepped down from the throne and the recognition He deserves, and took the role of a servant, to do the will of the Father. He didn't come and assume the title President, CEO, or Emperor.

(Philippians 2:5 NKJV) Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,

(Philippians 2:6 NKJV) who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,

(Philippians 2:7 NKJV) but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.

(Philippians 2:8 NKJV) And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

3 things only God can Be / Jesus did not Exercise them Freely – Limited Himself

Look at the three things that only God can do. Be Omnipresent (all present), Omniscient (all knowing), and Omnipotent (all-powerful). Jesus did not exercise these freely when He became a man, He allowed Himself to be limited, just as man is. Let's look at how He limited Himself:

Omnipresent (all present):

Jesus was flesh and blood, He bled, and He could only be one place at any given time.

(John 11:21 KJV) Then said Martha unto Jesus, Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died.

Omniscient (all knowing):

As God, He still knew all, yet He would seek the Father in prayer for guidance and strength.

Jesus said He didn't even know when the earth would pass away.

(Mark 13:31 KJV) Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

(Mark 13:32 KJV) But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.

He stayed in contact with the Father, so He would do the will of the Father, not His will. To do so **He sought the Father in prayer.**

(Matthew 26:36 KJV) Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.

(Mark 6:46 KJV) And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.

Omnipotent (all-powerful):

Jesus never would use His divine power for His own needs. I can't explain it, but even though He had the power of the universe coursing through His veins, He would not use it (not even to turn rocks into bread in His 40 days of wilderness testing. First, if He didn't empty Himself of these things, then He could not relate to us in terms of temptation, cause if He had all this power to use freely, then these temptations in His fleshly body would truly not be temptations, would they? Secondly (and most specific point in our study today) every need that He had, He had to seek the provision from the Father.

Matthew 4:3-4 (NKJV) ³Now when the tempter came to Him, he said, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." ⁴But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'

Jesus looked to Heaven for each Miracle / When we know Kenos – Miracle examples to Us

When Jesus performed miracles, he looked to heaven and did so by the empowering of the Holy Spirit. Why is this so important, cause it means everything Jesus did (the feeding of the 5000, walking on water, water to wine) He did not do them because of His own power, but through His connection to the Father. We can read the miracles and say so what, that's Jesus – He's God. But when we know the "Doctrine of Kenosis" here in Philippians 2, His miracles take on a whole new meaning. It means that everything Jesus did as a man was through His personal contact with the Father, and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. The miracles and strengths of Jesus now become examples to me. I therefore have the same opportunity for empowering as Jesus did. Special things can happen through me. And any temptation that comes my way, I know that I have all the power to overcome it, just like Jesus did. God is all the willing to exercise the same power in and through me as he exercised it through Jesus. Jesus was a man just as me, and everything He did, I can do to if I am lead and directed by the Father. These are real examples for me.

Here are some Examples

Look at all the examples of Jesus, through His personal contact with the Father, are any of these your need or desire in another person's life?

Healings:

Centurions Servant (Matthew 8:5)

Peter's Mother-in-Law (Matthew 8:14)

Woman with the Issue of Blood (Matthew 9:20)

Salvation:

Zacchaeus (Luke 19)

Mary called Magdalene (Luke 8)

Provisions

Feeding of the 5000 (Matthew 14:13)

Temple Tax in the Fish's Mouth (Matthew 17:24)

Ungodly Forces at Work

Freeing the Demon Possessed Man in Gergesenes (Matt 8)

Freeing Demon Possessed Man at Synagogue (Mark 1:23)

Escape from Hostility

Pushing Jesus to edge of Cliff (Luke 4:30)

Calming of the Storms

Stilling the Storm (Matthew 8:23)

Walking on Water (Matthew 14:25)

Changing a bad Situation

Turning Water into Wine (John 2:1)

All through Contact with Father / CAN YOU TALK – Have all that Jesus Has / Pwr in Prayer

All these things, Jesus did through His personal contact with the Father. *All these things, Jesus did through His personal contact with the Father.* Christian, can you talk? Then you have all that Jesus had. Jesus' mighty works, both in His personal life and His public ministry, simply came by talking with His Heavenly Father. His power came through prayer. But even saying that word prayer can change something simple into something mysterious, lofty, and unattainable. Prayer is simply conversation, prayer is simply talking, and when Jesus talked to His Father – mighty things happened; people when we talk to our Heavenly Father, I will guarantee that mighty things will happen. Prayer is not something mysterious, lofty, or unattainable – it is simply talking with the Father; therefore for the rest of this message I will not use the word prayer, I will use the word "conversation with the Father".

Prayer = Conversation / Baptism = Presence / All Jesus works – called Father to involved

Prayer is simply "conversations with the Lord". The Baptism of Holy Spirit upon salvation is the God taking up presence in your very being. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit for the "empowering work in the ministry" is "the presence of God in the work". Jesus emptied Himself, so in all His works He had to call upon God to get involved in the work. God was present for the work. The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is simply "the presence of the Lord", and whatever God is present in will be powerful.

- Do you feel powerless in what is happening in your children's spiritual walk? Bring the presence of the Lord before them.
- Are there ungodly, maybe even demonic, influences coming against your children? Bring the presence before them.
- Is your marriage struggling? Bring the presence of the Lord into it.
- Is there hostility coming against you? Bring the presence of the Lord upon it.
- Are there storms raging in your life? Bring the presence of the Lord into it.
- Are there sick amongst you? Bring the presence of the Lord to them.
- Are there unsaved loved ones in your life? Bring the presence of the Lord to them.
- Are there lacking provisions in your cupboard? Bring the presence of the Lord to them.

Baptism is Presence of Lord / Want to see Change? – All these things Jesus did Contact

And here is the beauty and simplicity of it all; the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is simply “the presence of the Lord”. Talk with God, and God is presence. Oh I want to be baptized with the Holy Spirit so there will be power in my life you may say, I want to see changes to these things that are breaking my heart, *All these things, Jesus did through His personal contact with the Father.* Christian, can you talk? Then you have all that Jesus had. Christian bring the presence of God into all these things.

My Temple – House of Prayer / Jesus lived example – Lifestyle of Prayer – Mighty Works

Jesus said my House (Temple) shall be called a “House of Prayer (conversation); Christian we are the Temple of God, therefore we should be House of Prayer (conversation). Jesus lived and exemplified a “lifestyle of prayer (conversation)” with the Heavenly Father, and did mighty works upon this earth. When we are living a “lifestyle of prayer (conversation)” with the Father, mighty works will be wrought in our lives.

Matthew 21:13 (NKJV) ¹³And He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you have made it a ‘den of thieves.’”

1 Corinthians 3:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?

Let’s help each Other – Corporate Prayer / Power Pact / Fuel Personal Prayer

And let’s help each other by having “corporate prayer (conversations with the Father)” together. As iron sharpens iron, as hot coals keep each other red hot, let’s make a power pact. When I need to use my cordless drill to do some work around the house I go get the power pack off the battery charger. Well let’s go together to get some power, and let’s make a “power pact” that we will corporately unite in prayer (conversations with the Father) to bring this power, and maintain this power, in our lives. Prayerfully our corporate prayer (conversations with the Father) will fuel our personal prayer (conversations with the Father), and our personal prayer (conversations with the Father) will fuel our corporate prayer (conversations with the Father), and we will live a lifestyle of prayer (conversations with the Father), and we will be continually filled with the Holy Spirit because we will continually be in His presence.

Proverbs 27:17 (NKJV) ¹⁷ As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.

Hebrews 10:24 (NKJV) ²⁴And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,

2 Chronicles 7:14-16 (NKJV) ¹⁴if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. ¹⁵Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer made in this place. ¹⁶For now I have chosen and sanctified this house, that My name may be there forever; and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually.

Easy to get Distracted – lose Forward Momentum / Help keep each other on Track

I think it is easy to get distracted, get busy, and then lose that forward moment that we once had in our personal prayer (conversations with the Father); the beauty of the corporate prayer (conversations with the Father) will always bring us back into focus as we stir each other up to get back on track.

This Prayer Discipline – Develop Lifestyle of Prayer – Presence of God / Baptized

This type of prayer (conversations with the Father) discipline will develop a Lifestyle of Prayer (conversations with the Father) in our everyday lives, which is the continual close presence of the Lord in our lives, and when God Himself is all over your life in that close and intimate personal way, you are baptized (immersed, overflowing) with the Spirit of God for the work in your life internally and for the work of the Kingdom externally.

Bask in Presence – He is Near (just spoke) / Share with Someone – Like God Himself Speak

When we bask in the presence of the Lord, when we know He is near, because we just spoke to Him, and then the opportunity comes to speak to someone, it is like you start to share and it is like the Lord God is pouring out from you unto that person. That is the overflowing, that is the Holy Spirit gushing forth from my inner-most being like torrents of living waters. When it happens

so many times the person is totally absorbed and hanging on every word because it is really God who is speaking to them, not you – you are just the vessel that carries the Lord from spot to spot. That is how hard-hearts are softened, and how closed-minds are opened. We seen it with Jesus, we read about through our study in Acts, the Holy Spirit flowing through people who are personally and intimately in contact with Him.

Baptism – no Mystery – It is the Presence of God

This baptism isn't mysterious and unattainable, it is simply the presence of God in your life, overflowing from your life, and all you need to do is spend time with Him, and have conversations with Him.

Not Easy – Taken by Violence

But it isn't easy - in Matthew 11:12, Jesus said the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and is taken by force. In the original Greek language, this can be translated two ways. It could mean that the kingdom of heaven is being attacked by violent men—for indeed it was. John was in prison, and he was about to be beheaded. Herod had killed perhaps thousands of babies in his drive to murder the Christ Child. Bloodshed and violence abounded as the kingdom emerged, so it could be that this verse speaks of the kingdom of heaven suffering violence by enemies trying to overtake it with force. Or, it could be rendered another way with equal accuracy. That is, that the kingdom of heaven is taken by men who are aggressively, enthusiastically pressing in and laying hold. It is not for those who just sit back apathetically and say, "ok, whatever will be will be." Rather, it is taken by those who, with fervency in prayer, an exercise of faith, and an expenditure of energy lay hold of the promises of God violently and aggressively. The word here for violence means to press into, to seize aggressively.. So in both meanings of this verse find illustration in John the Baptist.

(Matthew 11:12 NKJV) "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.

(Luke 16:16 NKJV) "The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it.

Christianity – not Easy / Peace & Ease / Look at Cross - Violent

Christianity is not easy, it never will be easy, and you and I will live a life of defeat and frustration, questions and doubt, if somehow we think it should be easy, that is a lie from the pit to discourage you. That somehow we should live in a time of peace environment. Christianity is not easy, and if you ever think that it is, than go to the heart of Christianity, and that is the cross. Jesus says the kingdom of heaven is taken by violence. The cross has been romanticized, we make jewelry out of it, but the cross was violent. There is nothing romantic about the beating Jesus took, the scourging, the nailing, the 6 hours of suffering on that Hill in Palestine, it was pure violence. Romantic in His love for you and His love for me, but nothing romantic about the physical part of the cross, it was pure violence. Jesus did a full-on frontal assault on sin and death; He overtook them by force, by violence. He bled out every drop of His Divine blood, as that spear pierced His side, His blood poured out upon the earth, blood upon the battlefield, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and is taken by violence. Christianity is not easy, never has, never will, don't look for or expect times of peace. As long as our King is at war, then so too will we be. The earth is not a playground, it is a war zone. Jesus in the ordination sermon there in chapter 10 said to us, pick up your cross and follow me. Get ready for war!

(Matthew 10:38 NKJV) "And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

(Matthew 10:39 NKJV) "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it.

It's Yours – All needed - Conversation

The baptism of the Holy Spirit, the presence of God, it is ours, all we have to do is conversate (pray) with the Lord

Mighty Works in Ephesus

Acts 19:8-20

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

3rd Journey / Mighty Works – Even Mighty Miracles / Just Great stories of Great God

We continue to follow the Apostle Paul on his 3rd missionary journey; he is currently in Ephesus and God is doing a mighty work through him, and we will even see God doing mighty miracles to go along with the mighty works that are happening in Ephesus. I greatly enjoy our passage today because it is just some great stories that make me see a great God.

(Acts 19:1 NKJV) *And it happened, while Apollos was at Corinth, that Paul, having passed through the upper regions, came to Ephesus. And finding some disciples*

(Acts 19:8 NKJV) **And he went into the synagogue and spoke boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the things of the kingdom of God.**

Record no Riot / 3 Months – People Open / When Last Time You – Stay Longer

Here is a record for Paul as he makes 3 months in a synagogue without a riot starting; but we will read in verse 21 all good things must come to an end as the money makers out in the city had enough of Paul's recession causing ways as people quit buying statues to idols and turned to the One True and Living God. But back to our story here, Paul is in the synagogue reasoning with the Jews for three months and there is no riot, and that is because they were open to hearing the things of the Lord, in fact so open that when Paul said he had to go to Jerusalem they begged him to stay. Can I challenge us all there today? When was the last time you begged the Lord to stay, to not go but to tell you more, to fellowship a little longer with you. Paul will write the Ephesians Epistle (to this church in Ephesus), and it has been called the Swiss Alps of the New Testament as the Lord takes us into the heavenlies; and I believe the altitude was only because of the attitude – they wanted to go higher. Chapters 1-3 in Ephesians is what God has done for us, and chapters 4-6 is our response to all that He has done. The challenge in the Book of Ephesians (if we want to go higher), is how open are we

- to be sexually pure (that includes our thought life) – Eph 5:3
- to let no corrupt word precede from our mouth – Eph 5:4
- for wives to let your husband lead – Eph 5:22
- for husbands to love our wives – Eph 5:25
- for children to be obedient to your parents – Eph 6:1

(Acts 18:20 NKJV) *When they asked him to stay a longer time with them, he did not consent,*

(Acts 18:21 NKJV) *but took leave of them, saying, "I must by all means keep this coming feast in Jerusalem; but I will return again to you, God willing." And he sailed from Ephesus.*

Ephesians 1:3 (NKJV) ³*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,*

Lord stay Longer / Love Wife – My thought Life

Lord, would you stay a little longer, I want to go higher in this area or that area; Lord I want to love my wife more today, I want her to feel it and know it, would you stay and could we talk about you changing my heart, changing my mind, changing the way I've been treating her. Oh Lord would

you stay a little longer so we can talk about my thought life, I want it to be totally pure and pleasing to you.

(Acts 19:9 NKJV) But when some were hardened and did not believe, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.

(Acts 19:10 NKJV) And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

Early Church Name / Great Compliment

So we see the name the early church was giving; and how I like it and love it, they were called “The Way”. What a great compliment as they were identified with “THE WAY, the Truth, and the Life.”

John 14:6 (NKJV) ⁶Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

There should be a Way that is Different about Us

You know Christian; – there should be a “way” about us that is different from the rest of the world. The way we talk, the way we joke, the way we help, the way our marriages are, the way our kids are raised, the way we work, the way we handle our money. If our way isn’t that much different from the world’s way – Oh Lord please stay a little longer, let’s talk, let’s go higher.

Paul rented Building / Workday Pattern (7-11, heat of day, 4-9) / Paul had Long Days

Verse 9 - he departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus - Historical writings say there was a “**school of Tyrannus**”, and Paul must have rented it and used it to teach the Word of God. History tells us that the pattern of a workday in Ephesus was as follows: People worked from seven to eleven o’clock in the morning, took a break during the heat of the day from eleven to four o’clock in the afternoon, and went back to work from four to nine o’clock at night. Taking advantage of this schedule, Paul held classes during the afternoon, when the building used by Tyrannus, the philosopher, was vacant. I’m so impressed with the servant’s heart and mentality of Paul. Not only did he support himself in ministry by making tents, he used his time off to teach about the things of the kingdom.

Mid Day Prayer Time

I know we all pray throughout the day, but there is much fruit to be had to just take a mid-day break, have 10 minutes (or more) in prayer, read a verse and chew on it, to just help give us a boost to get through the rest of the day, to reenergize us, to rebaseline the day and put things back (or keep things on) track.

Psalms 55:16-17 (NKJV) ¹⁶ As for me, I will call upon God, And the Lord shall save me. ¹⁷ Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, And He shall hear my voice.

Asia – Turkey / Gospel in 2 Years / 7 Churches of Revelation

Verse 10 - so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks - This isn’t all of Asia, but it is the area we would call Turkey – and that is totally amazing that through one man’s ministry all of Turkey heard the Gospel. So in two years, the whole Gospel was spread through Turkey. This would be the establishment of the 7 Churches of Revelation.

Miracles Glorifying Christ

(Acts 19:11 NKJV) Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul,

(Acts 19:12 NKJV) so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out of them.

Unusual Miracles

Very important to note that the miracles are called unusual (or another translation – special), meaning these aren’t you run-of-the-mill everyday miracles, if miracles aren’t mighty enough as is, but these were something over other types of miracles. So the Holy Spirit is saying what you are reading is very special, and don’t worry if you can’t do the same.

Handkerchiefs – Sweatbands / Not magical Powers / 3 Reason I see

The handkerchiefs spoken of here were actually the sweatbands Paul wore around his forehead when he labored as a tentmaker. The aprons were the leather aprons of a blacksmith so the nail they were trying to puncture through that piece of cloth would not puncture them. Why were Paul's sweatbands and aprons used for healing? Certainly it was not because they had any magical power in and of themselves, but I see 3 things God was doing by using them.

1.) The Infinite God

One, just real simple, God is showing that He is an infinite God, He can't be put in a box, and if chooses to heal using sweatbands, He can, because He is God.

2.) Finite Man

Secondly, I see God recognizing that although His is infinite, we are finite, and that many times people need something physical to help trigger their faith. Just as there was nothing powerful about Paul's sweatbands, there was nothing powerful about the hem of Jesus' garment, but it was enough to release the faith within that woman who had been hemorrhaging for 12 years. **Luke 8:43-44 (NKJV)** ⁴³Now a woman, having a flow of blood for twelve years, who had spent all her livelihood on physicians and could not be healed by any, ⁴⁴came from behind and touched the border of His garment. And immediately her flow of blood stopped.

God, reaches down to finite man and says I'll give you something you can touch to help release the faith that is in you so you can reach up to me the infinite God. We see that in two New Testament principles:

- Laying on of Hands - when we lay hands on people to pray for them to be filled with the Spirit, or to ordain them for ministry, there's nothing magical, mystical, or miraculous about the act in and of itself. Rather, the laying on of hands simply provides a point of contact for the person who needs to be filled or who desires to be used, as it triggers his faith and unlocks his ability to believe.
- The anointing of oil, spoken of in James 5, is another example of something material being used spiritually. As with the laying on of hands, there is nothing supernatural or particularly special about oil. But as a picture of the Spirit, it is a physical illustration the Lord has graciously given to us as a point of contact to release faith.

Acts 28:8 (NKJV) ⁸And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him.

James 5:14 (NKJV) ¹⁴Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

3.) The Infinite God using a Finite Man

All around us we see people who are miserable—depressed, discouraged and defeated; hurting, helpless, and hopeless—like the people in Ephesus who were diseased in body and demonized in spirit. I believe the reason sweatbands and aprons are particularly mentioned by the Spirit and recorded for us to study is that they were proofs of Paul's love for the people to whom he ministered. You see, six days a week, Paul sewed tents from seven to eleven o'clock in the morning, taught the Word from eleven to four o'clock in the afternoon and sewed tents again from four to nine o'clock in the evening. It was an exhausting schedule, yet Paul did this for over two years in Ephesus in order to support himself in ministry. Thus, his aprons and sweatbands were saturated not only with the sweat of his brow, but with his love for the people. So, too, the people in our homes, in our church families, and in our communities who are distressed, discouraged, and defeated are greatly helped and their misery alleviated to a tremendous degree whenever we are willing to love them practically. For Paul, that meant sewing tents and teaching in the afternoon. For you, it might mean making a pie, making a phone call, or mowing a lawn; taking someone out to lunch, fixing a washing machine, or chopping a cord of wood. In the past week, what have you done to help someone else? What have you done to practically say, "You're loved" to someone who's discouraged, defeated, or depressed? I do this, you say to them, in the Name of Jesus, who loves you and wants to bless you physically today, so you will see and know His

love for you is real – He is thinking about you. Why will people know He is thinking about them, because everybody is always thinking of themselves, and when you don't think about you first, people will say – that is so different from the rest of the world, maybe it is this Jesus who makes them do what they do. *You become a Point-of-Contact to someone, as you take God out of the box they put Him in (saying He doesn't care, He is distant) and you make Him real and personal in their life. You take the Infinite God, and make Him touchable to a finite man.*

(Acts 19:13 NKJV) Then some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, "We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches."

(Acts 19:14 NKJV) Also there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, who did so.

(Acts 19:15 NKJV) And the evil spirit answered and said, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?"

(Acts 19:16 NKJV) Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

Used Jesus as a Formula / But saw real Power

These Jews weren't believers. They were using the name of Jesus merely as a formula to exorcise demons. But let's give them credit for this, they knew where real power came from, they maybe recognized it more so than believers did.

Bar Burned Down Story

I am reminded of the story told that years ago, a man came into a small town in the Bible belt and wanted to open the first tavern. Upset by this, the local Christians called a prayer meeting. "Lord," they begged, "don't let this happen." The man built his tavern anyway, but the Christians kept praying. The tavern was demolished by lightning the first week it was open. The owner, knowing the Christians had been praying, hired a lawyer and sued them for destroying his business. The Christians, in turn, hired a lawyer, saying, "We had nothing to do with the lightning that struck your tavern." Now, isn't that curious? The tavern owner had more faith in the power of prayer than did the believers.

Different words for Know / Demons recognize Authority of Jesus

The word here for "know" is two different Greek words. Jesus I know (ginōskō) means a deep, instinctive, innate knowledge. These demons are saying, from where we come from, Jesus is known, Jesus is recognized for His authority. Interestingly, while men through the centuries have debated Jesus' identity, the demons have no such doubts. They say they know (epistamai) Paul, and that in essence is saying - "Paul I am acquainted with." The evil spirit knew Paul was in the neighborhood and recognized the works he was doing.

These Things Real Today / Pastor's Conference Story

These things are still real today. The demonic realm is all around us. I remember one of the Calvary Chapel Pastor's telling a story of a Pastor's Conference going on up at the Twin Peaks Retreat Center, and a local Pastor knowing the conference was going on came to seek help about a about a local young girl being demon possessed. That mountain area in California was called "magic mountain" because there was so much psychedelics drug use in that area, thus opening many people up to demon possession The word came to Pastor Chuck via a slip of paper as he was teaching, he immediately pointed to (Malcolm Wild, Greg Laurie, Raul Ries, Jeff Johnson, and Mike Macintosh). When they showed up, this little girl was growling and groaning in the church sanctuary; Mike Macintosh confronts her face to face and this little girl kicks him in the groin and drops him to the floor. Raul Ries (who is world master in martial arts) puts her in a bear-hug from behind, and she starts shaking and twisting, and Raul is just like hanging on for dear life. They finally pin her to the ground, and just then Jeff Johnson's wife shows up and the demon inside this little girl looks at her and names all three of her kids and says when I leave here I'm going down the mountain to get your kids. They finally get the girl that was within here to come to the surface, Malcolm and Kay Smith lead this girl to the Lord, she prays the sinner prayer, and then her body just goes limp. Just then Pastor Chuck come in as he was done with

his teaching, he helps the girl up, puts his arms around her, and says ok now here are the things you need to do to grow as a Christian. Everybody is all disheveled, torn clothing, messed up hair, and sweat dripping from their body – going oh great now you finally showed up ☺

(Acts 19:17 NKJV) This became known both to all Jews and Greeks dwelling in Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

Spiritual Center

So God is glorified through this mighty work. Mind you Ephesus is loaded up with thousands of idols, they had the Temple of Diana, and people came here from all over for a “spiritual journey”. Ephesus was the major city of Asia Minor, it was the banking center for that region of the world. Ephesus had the Temple to Diana, and it was considered one of the seven wonders of the world; it was 425 foot long, 220 feet wide, and was made completely of marble. It had 127 completely white marble pillars that were 60 feet high that held up the ceiling. People came from all over the world to worship at the Temple of Diana. Well God takes the opportunity to show the True and Living God, and people responded when they heard this story of the demons saying they know who Jesus is.

(Acts 19:18 NKJV) And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds.

(Acts 19:19 NKJV) Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all. And they counted up the value of them, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver.

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

50K Days Wages / People Changed when heard – Repentance looks like Something

A day's wage was about a piece of silver, so they are burning 50,000 days wage. What we clearly see here is that there is a change that is going on as the Word of God was going forth. When people get saved, there should be some type of change in your life. Repentance isn't just a word, repentance looks like something; there is some type of change that happens (you can see it, feel it, touch it). If you've given your life to Christ, and your family and friends can't see some kind of change in your life, you should do some spiritual inventory in your life. And that repentance is daily, we need to be taking inventory every day of our lives and repent (turn away) from any and all things that are not of the Lord. Let me just add here as I feel led to address, Christian “time and distance” does not equal repentance. Just because it has been some time since that “thing”, or you have moved away from those people you have offended or hurt, that does not equal repentance. You must repent, you must confess your wrong before God, and that person for repentance to be whole – for repentance can be very humbling, but there is great power in being humbled before a holy God

2 Corinthians 13:5 (NKJV) ⁵Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.

1 Thessalonians 5:21-22 (NKJV) ²¹Test all things; hold fast what is good. ²²Abstain from every form of evil.

James 4:7-10 (NKJV) ⁷Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. ⁸Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

They destroyed anything draw them Back / We need to Burn Bridges / Repentance Looks

Now these were books on the occult. These books were weapons of Satan's warfare. These people were destroying anything that could draw them back into that old life, and that is what repentance looks like. We need to burn the bridges to anything that can draw us away from the Lord. Listen, you'll survive without the internet, burn it, disconnect it, if it is drawing you away from the Lord. The same goes for cable, your job, your hobbies, your recreation activities, relationships – repentance looks like something, it is not just a philosophy.

These were Entries / Ouija Boards, Horoscopes / If involved Denounce and Close Entry

Again, these were books on the occult, these books were weapons of Satan's warfare; these books were entries into the person's life. "Entries" are no laughing matter (don't be deceived and think they are for entertainment): Ouija boards, tarot cards, horoscopes, Dungeon and Dragons. One of my close friends son committed suicide, and the dad (my friend who is a Pastor of a large church now) says he knows it is because he son was so involved in the Dungeon and Dragons game. If you have been or are involved in it, come after service and let's denounce them, and close any type of entries.

Satan Prince of Air

Satan is the "prince and power of the air" and I always liken that to he being a radio, and people turning the dial to tune into his station – and he has plenty of stations as we see so many entry points for him to come and influence a person. He has 66.5, the lust of the flesh station, 66.4 the lust of the eyes station, 66.3 the pride of life station, he has his specialty stations such as 66.2 the pornography station and 66.1 the drug and alcohol station – but all come under the master broadcasting network station of 66.6 – precious saints, pull the plug!

Ephesians 2:1-3 (NKJV) ¹And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ²in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

1 John 2:15-17 (NKJV) ¹⁵Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

Destroy Them – Don't Pass them on / My Music Library

Also, take the example given here in Acts 19, and destroy them; don't pass them on to other people so they may have them, but destroy them. I remember the Lord moving in my heart, and I had some music that I considered ungodly (and I won't name the musicians so as to not start a debate – but it was what I believed in my heart was not glorifying to God), and I knew it had to go from my home, but I struggled so hard about just throwing it in the trash. I wanted to give it away to friends at work, or on the softball team, because I thought it a waste to take something I spent money for and just throw it away. Beloved, just throw it away, just throw it away! These folks in Ephesus didn't pass it on to the many idol worshippers they knew, they burned it, they trashed it, they didn't help promote it – so may you do the same if that is where you are at today.

Drugs & Alcohol – Another Entry Point

Let me add, another entry are is drugs. In the New Testament you will see the word "sorcery" used, but find the original Greek word is "pharmakeia", where we get our word for pharmacy, or drugs. They used the word because people would take drugs opened themselves up to the demonic realm.

Galatians 5:19-21 (NKJV) ¹⁹Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, ²⁰idolatry, sorcery (pharmakeia), hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, ²¹envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

You Teens – Music / Satan the Worship Leader

I also want to take the opportunity to again say, especially to you teens and young adults, be careful to what kind of music you are listening to. Your ears are an entry gate, and if you are allowing that gate to let in an influence that is anti-God, anti-Christianity, words that are anti-biblical, those things come in and they will find themselves a home to dwell and grow in. Don't buy the lie, "I don't even listen to the words – just the beat, the rhythm." I'll tell you that is a lie right from the pit of hell, because anything that goes into you – is in you, period. Before Satan fell he was a worship leader, and music has great power, whether that be worship music, satanically influenced music.

Ezekiel 28:13 (NKJV) ¹³ You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The sardius, topaz, and diamond, Beryl, onyx, and jasper, Sapphire, turquoise, and emerald with gold. **The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes** Was prepared for you on the day you were created.

When did Word Prevail – When Burned their Junk / You Burned-out

Verse 20 - So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed - When did the Word of God grow and prevail? When the believers burned their junk. If you're burned-out with Bible study, prayer, or meditation—chances are it's because you need to burn something up. When my appetite is dull, when I'm not interested in spiritual things the way I once was, when I find worship a drudge or a discipline—inevitably I say, "Father, search me and show me the junk in my life that has caused my appetite for You to be diminished." And you know what? He does. I've been there a thousand times. Whenever my appetite for the meat of the Word diminishes, invariably it's because I'm filling up on the junk food of the world. I'm not talking about blatant sin, but rather empty calories for my mind, Twinkies for my spirit. But when I finally say, "Enough of that," my appetite for the Word returns.

Need Help – Go to the Garden

Need help, maybe you need a point-of-contact like the people we read about today, but you need not touch a sweatband or leather apron, but go to a Garden. Go to the Garden of Gethsemane, and there you will see One who loved you so intensely that Luke tells us He actually sweat blood (Luke 22:44). Why did He sweat blood? Because He was about to absorb your weaknesses, your failings, your shortcomings. He was about to pay the price for every sin I have done, am doing, or ever will do, and be separated from His heavenly Father for 6 hours for the first time ever. Go to the Garden of Gethsemane and see His sweat of blood.

Luke 22:44 (NKJV) ⁴⁴And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

Crown of Thorns

Let me take you to the Roman Praetorium, and see His sweatband of thorns. In Genesis 3, because Adam sinned, God said, "*Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee,*" (Genesis 3:17, 18). In the Person of Jesus Christ, this prophecy is seen in an entirely different dimension. You see, as the thorns and thistles—the very curse of the earth—were embedded in His brow for me, He carried upon Himself the curse of Genesis 3.

Matthew 27:27-31 (NKJV) ²⁷Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. ²⁸And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. ²⁹When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ³⁰Then they spat on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. ³¹And when they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified.

Genesis 3:17-18 (NKJV) ¹⁷Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it All the days of your life. ¹⁸ Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, And you shall eat the herb of the field.

The Cross – with no Apron

And now let's go to a hill outside of Jerusalem, but there we will see no apron, the Lord threw the apron aside (if you will), so the nails would pierce and puncture Him, blow upon blow of the hammer upon the nail – driving through the Son of God, for you and for me. The Son of Man saying come see and touch the sweat of blood from my forehead as I think of you, come touch and see the crown of thorns as I take your sin, the curse, upon myself, come see and touch the nails

Luke 23:32-34 (NKJV) ³²There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death. ³³And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. ³⁴Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots.

John 20:25 (NKJV) ²⁵The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

Communion

The Lord has given a most wonderful place of remembrance, a wonderful point-of-contact to release our faith as we remember His great love and sacrifice, the place of communion, and I invite you in to join us for communion:

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (NKJV) ²³For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; ²⁴and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, [£]“Take, eat; this is My body which is [£]broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” ²⁵In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” ²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.

Just another day at the Office

(Acts 19:21-41)

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

3rd Journey / Mighty Works – Even Mighty Miracles / Burned Junk – Word Grew

We continue to follow the Apostle Paul on his 3rd missionary journey; he is currently in Ephesus and God is doing a mighty work through him, and we will even see God doing mighty miracles to go along with the mighty works that are happening in Ephesus. We ended our last study with the "word of the Lord grew mightily" and we saw that that happened after the people burned their junk, the stuff that was keeping them from moving forward with Christ, and I hope you had a good ole bonfire burning at your place this past week.

(Acts 19:20 NKJV) *So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed.*

Due for a Riot / Another Day at the Office

Well Paul has been in Ephesus now for nearly 3 years, and he is long overdue to cause a riot, and so brings us to our passage of Scripture today. I've titled this message, "Just another day at the Office", as that saying goes; not only will Paul stir up his long overdue riot, but we will see things going on here in this passage that have not changed for 2,000 years, and are ever so present in your lives today. We will see Satan's great work of discouragement at work, we will see difficult people trying to make other people's lives miserable, we will see a confused world just going along with the flow, having no idea where the flow is really going, we will see hucksters and hoaxes, and ever so beautiful - we will see God tearing down strong holds simply by proclaiming the Truth, for it is the truth that sets people free:

John 8:32 (NKJV) *³²And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*

Outline: Just another Day at the Office (Acts 19:21-41)

1. The Power of the Purposed Heart
2. Satan's #1 Weapon – Discouragement
3. Demetrius' in our Lives – Problems or Opportunities?
4. Better than Boycotting – Evangelism
5. Wise Counsel in the midst of Zeal and Passion
6. The Confused World – just going with the Flow
7. Hucksters and Hoaxes
8. Tearing down through Building Up

The Power of the Purposed Heart

[The Riot at Ephesus](#)

(Acts 19:21 NKJV) *When these things were accomplished, 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."*

Prerequisite for Ministry / Lots of Needs – Burnout or Bitter / Passion & Energy

Verse 21 - Paul purposed in the Spirit – Paul felt a purpose, a passion, in his heart to do something (in this case to go preach in Rome). You know there are a lot of needs in the body of Christ, lots of needs in a church, in a community – but please see the prerequisite requirement for any ministry you get involved in is that it is “purposed in your heart, your spirit”. What I mean by that is that you are doing it because it is on your heart and in your heart to do it, not just because there is a need for it. If you get involved in a ministry just because there is a need, it won't be long until you either burnout or maybe even get bitter. If it is something that is a passion in your heart, you will have the energy to keep going even when times are tough, you won't get bitter when people come against you in the ministry. I have a million great ideas, I see a million needs, but I can quickly distinguish between great ideas and God's calling because when God calls me to something He gives me a passion in my heart, and (As IMPORTANT) an energy to do it. I can tell my great ideas because quickly in my spirit and heart I get this tired feeling, just the thought of doing it makes me tired, and I pretty much know it is not of the Lord because the energy to see it through is not there.

When we ask You to Serve – we not Upset / Don't feel Preserved

When we ask you here to consider helping in this ministry or that ministry, it is just an offer, don't ever feel pressured to serve, nor think we will be upset or disappointed in you for saying no; we don't want you to do anything unless you feel it is God's plan for you, and God's purpose for your life.

Satan's #1 Weapon – Discouragement

(Acts 19:22 NKJV) So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time.

(Acts 19:23 NKJV) And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way.

Notice – after they Left / Satan's Great Weapon – Discouragement / Easier for Junk

Notice, it is after Timothy and Erastus leave (v.22), it is after two men who “ministered to him” were gone that the commotion arose. Satan see these two leave and says now is a perfect opportunity to strike, stir up the crowd against Paul when his support has been reduced. Oh let me tell you Christian I think one of Satan's greatest weapon against the Believer is “discouragement”. More powerful than lust, more powerful than pride, more powerful than power – is discouragement. If he can get the brother or sister discouraged, then he will have a much easier path to those other things. Satan may say, If I can get them discouraged, then I can get them alone, if I can get them alone then I can get them away from accountability, away from encouragement, away from the power and passion of others – and then from there I can say, go ahead pick up the remote, go ahead and click that mouse, go ahead and crack that seal, call that old friend, go visit that old spot.

Great Weapon / Application: 3 R's (Recognize – Resist – Rejoice) / Have a good Circle

Discouragement, possibly the greatest weapon Satan uses against the Believer (anyone here ever been discouraged?); application for us, from a ministry perspective, we see the vital importance of not entering any place of service if it is not purposed in our heart and spirit; and from a personal perspective – apply the 3 “R's”, recognize his ways and tactics, resist them, and rejoice in the Lord. If you have had some great friends in the Lord and they have moved away (or you have moved away), then time to invest in new relationships; and don't limit yourself to just a small circle of friends, but surround yourself with as many strong Christians as you can – we can never have enough solid believers in our lives, as we will see in our story, Paul had a great circle of friends, and a large circle of friends,

1 Peter 5:8-9 (NKJV) ^aBe sober, be vigilant; ^bbecause your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. ^cResist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

Demetrius' in our Lives – Problems or Opportunities?

(Acts 19:24 NKJV) For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Diana, brought no small profit to the craftsmen.

Making big Bucks / Plenty of Demetrius' around Today

Demetrius and the crew are making and selling little idols of Diana, and obviously they were making some big bucks off of it. Demetrius is going to stir the crowd up against Paul and the Christians, and try to bring an end of Paul's work. There never seems to be a lack of Demetrius' in our lives to try to stir things up against us, to try to stop the works of God we are trying to do. Got any Demetrius' in your life?

Name recorded for Eternity / Frightening or Prideful / Christian – God Recognizes

Verse 24 - For a certain man named Demetrius – God knows this man's name and records it for all of eternity. Luke would write the Book of Acts around 65AD (this event happened around 50AD), and you can be sure that the letter would quickly be copied and passed on as everyone would want to read this story. Imagine someone in Ephesus getting a copy of it who knew this Demetrius, they would have said hey Demetrius check it out your name is recorded in here for causing all this trouble against God's work. I think that would be rather frightening for him to see and hear that, or hey maybe not, maybe it was a banner day in that he was recognized for causing all this trouble. Here is the bottom line Christian, and that is that God recognizes and knows by name that person who is causing you trouble, and they will have to give an account for what is recorded about the things they did. By the way, if you are being a Demetrius in someone's life or a work of God, God sees!

Here's the beauty – God uses It / Uses Demetrius Authority & Influence / Australian TV

But here is the beauty of it all, and that is that God uses it all. This Demetrius must have had some type of authority or influence amongst these men in the trade, maybe he was like the Union Head; in any case he had enough influence to cause the others to get stirred. I am reminded when Billy Graham said on an interview on Australian television, "I know I'm going to heaven, not because of what I've done but because of what Christ has done for me." And the agnostic master of ceremonies of the program was so stunned by this, he went out in the streets and started asking people in a poll, "Do you think that you're going to heaven?" This agnostic became a street evangelist by just asking the question and making people think about it. We read back in verse 10 that all of Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, but now we read they have to make a decision about the Lord Jesus. Hearing is not enough, man must decide to follow or not; Lord of All, or not Lord at all. Demetrius and this situation is making people chose.

(Acts 19:10 NKJV) And this continued for two years, so that all who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

Problems as Problems or as Opportunities / God has allowed It – Chose not to Crush

Look you can view problems as problems, or you can view problems as opportunities. When someone or something comes against you, recognize that God has allowed, God has the power to crush it in its place if He so chose to, but since He hasn't - recognize that He hasn't for a purpose. You may never fully see and know what that purpose exactly was for, but recognize that at the minimum God is purposing it to do something in your life. Maybe it is to bring you to prayer (conversation) with Him, maybe a place of letting something go, maybe a place of having to fully trust Him, maybe a place of seeing how fleeting this world is and why invest so deeply in it.

If Happened – God Allowed / How do I become Better through It

If it has happened, God has allowed it. So Lord now that it has happened, how do I become better through it, I do I grow and mature deeper in my walk because of it, and how do I use it to bring you glory.

Demetrius seems like Problem – but has a Use / Stirs Paul to Move On / Raise Up Others

Demetrius seems like a problem, but in actuality he is now making people make a decision about Christ. Is Christ God, or is Diana god. This stirring will cause Paul to move on, and everywhere Paul went the Gospel increased, and this like we see with Apollos being raised up to take his place in Corinth, we know that God will raise up other to carry on the work in Ephesus – because God will never leave His church lacking, and will always meet our need.

We like Calm Seas – but not Surfers – Like the Adventure / Get your Board Out

I think we all like calm seas, but you know if you are a surfer you don't, the bigger the waves the better. If you ever look at waves, they really are beautiful; and even if you are not a surfer, watching someone surf is exciting. So next time a wave comes your way, look at it as an adventure, and your board out and ride it out.

If Happened – God Allowed / Better / Grow Deeper – More Mature

If it has happened, God has allowed it. So Lord now that it has happened, how do I become better through it, I do I grow and mature deeper in my walk because of it, and how do I use it to bring you glory.

Better than Boycotting – Evangelism

(Acts 19:25 NKJV) He called them together with the workers of similar occupation, and said: "Men, you know that we have our prosperity by this trade.

(Acts 19:26 NKJV) "Moreover you see and hear that not only at Ephesus, but throughout almost all Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away many people, saying that they are not gods which are made with hands.

(Acts 19:27 NKJV) "So not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worship."

Diana – Ugly - Multibreasted / Sent from Zeus / Meteor

The idol of the goddess Diana was unbelievably ugly. Fashioned from a chunk of black rock believed to have been sent from Zeus (which we can easily figure out must have been a meteor), she was a grotesque-looking multibreasted female. Yet people came from all over Asia to worship at the shrine of Diana, the goddess of fertility.

Enterprising Business / Priest Bless – People take Home / Big Bucks

Consequently, enterprising businessmen like Demetrius decided to go into the souvenir business, making miniature shrines, which they sold for big bucks—until Paul came to town. People would buy these idols, then go to the temple and have the temple priest bless them, then take them back home and worship them in their homes. Demetrius hardly cared about Diana, he cared about his pocket book. Hit someone in their pocketbook, and you will see where their heart is.

Welsh Revival / Taverns Closed / No Anti-alcohol Sermons Given

Interestingly, in the Welsh Revival of 1901, under the anointed ministry of Robert Murray McCheyne, so great was the revival that every tavern and pub in Wales went broke. How many anti-alcohol sermons did McCheyne deliver? None. How many tirades against taverns? Zero. People simply lost all interest in alcohol when they got touched by the Lord and filled with the Spirit. The same thing happened in Ephesus. When people got saved, the idol business dried up.

Boycotting & Lobbying Great / Lead person to Christ – 1 Less to Engage

I think boycotting is great, I think lobbying congress is great, I think rallying and picketing is great too, but just not for me; for me – I preach Christ, and every person I can lead to the Lord is one less person that will engage or support those “hot topics” (homosexuality, abortion, anti-Christian freedom of speech, and the likes). But my ultimate reason is that they may come into a personal relationship with the Savior (and be saved from the power of sin and death).

John 8:36 (NKJV) ³⁶*Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.*

Wise Counsel in the midst of Zeal and Passion

(Acts 19:28 NKJV) Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

(Acts 19:29 NKJV) So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul's travel companions.

(Acts 19:30 NKJV) And when Paul wanted to go in to the people, the disciples would not allow him.

(Acts 19:31 NKJV) Then some of the officials of Asia, who were his friends, sent to him pleading that he would not venture into the theater.

Archeological Finds / 25K

Archeological finds have unearthed theatres in Ephesus, and it may be this very theatre that is spoken of here in this passage. The theatre was huge, the theatre was 660 ft. in diameter (that is like 2 football fields), it would have held an estimated 25,000 people.

Disciples saw Danger – Paul saw Opportunity / Paul heeds Advice / Officials - Culture

Although the disciples saw danger, Paul saw an opportunity to preach. Paul will heed to their advice; so it seems Paul was all fired-up to go preach, but his friends reasoned with him that it wasn't a good idea, and Paul heeded their advice. The advice came from friends and some of these friends were official in the city (no doubt saved through the ministry of Paul). These friends knew the people, they knew the culture, and that made their counsel of great worth.

Zeal & Passion – but Listen to Wise Counsel / Zeal can be Blinding / Maybe Stoned

Listen zeal and passion is great, but it is also wise to listen to the counsel of the wise. The wise counsel that has greater knowledge about that subject, or those people, or that place is a gift from God, open up the gift. Sometimes our zeal and passion about something can lead to us not seeing things clearly. In this case if Paul would have went into the theatre, they may have stoned him to death for we will see they are so incensed that they will scream nonstop for 2 hours straight (verse 34).

Proverbs 11:14 (NKJV) ¹⁴ Where there is no counsel, the people fall; But in the multitude of counselors there is safety.

The Confused World – just going with the Flow

(Acts 19:32 NKJV) Some therefore cried one thing and some another, for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together.

(Acts 19:33 NKJV) And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander motioned with his hand, and wanted to make his defense to the people.

(Acts 19:34 NKJV) But when they found out that he was a Jew, all with one voice cried out for about two hours, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

Saw Commotion – got Fired-up

Verse 32 - for the assembly was confused, and most of them did not know why they had come together - Didn't know why they had come, they just saw all the commotion and followed along and got themselves all fired-up. This is so much a picture of the world today; the world is just going with the flow, and all it takes is for some superstar or media network to start promoting something and people just kinda of go along with it, even though they really don't know all the facts, they really aren't that passionate about it, but they see others stirring it up and they jump on board.

Alexander – not Defending Paul

Verse 33 - And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward - Now it seems that this Alexander wasn't there to defend Paul, but the Jews; to say hey this guy isn't part of the Jewish religion, in fact we are against him and his message, so your problem isn't with the Jewish people of the town, in fact we just kicked him out of the synagogue just a little while ago ourselves.

2 Hrs – Steelers Super Bowl

Verse 34 - cried out for about two hours – two hours sounds like a long time but I can remember back as a kid when the Pittsburgh Steelers won the Super Bowl, people were just like parking their cars on the roads leading into the city because there was no place for all the traffic to park in the city. People were just like, oh well we will just park it in the middle of the street and walk from here. And you had thousands of people just walking into the city screaming and hollering, jumping up and down, and that was well over 2 hours long. Just about every time someone wins a championship (football, baseball, basketball, etc) people just get so full of emotion it is like they aren't even themselves anymore.

Rugby Story

Lots of these people don't even know why they are screaming and yelling, they are just caught up in the whole scene. I am reminded of the time when I played rugby in college. This wasn't one of my better hours of life, and I just point out that I wasn't saved at the time, and I was quite foolish; I praise Jesus that he saved a fool like me. I was playing rugby and we went on the road to play in a 12 team tournament, and if you aren't familiar with rugby it is just legalized violence. There were bumper stickers made that read, "Give Blood – Play Rugby". My joint and bones still ache when the weather is cold and rainy from all the years of playing rugby. We at this tournament, at the end there was always a rugby party that included much alcohol. And every party there was queened, the Rugby Queen; many of girls thought it quite the compliment to be queened. They would take her and put her on the shoulders of 2 players and all the other 200 rugby players would then start to sing to her. "Is she not the beautiful girl, yes she is the beautiful girl". Does she not have the beautiful eyes; yes she has the beautiful eyes. Sounds good, but then it would go to nasty, and all the way up to vulgar. Many a times by the end the girl would be in tears. Does she not have the greasy hair; yes she has the greasy hair. Does she not have the ski-slope nose; yes she has the ski-sloped nose. Well that one particular tournament right in the middle of the nasty part this young man ran in and screamed "stop", what are you doing, this is totally disrespectful, you are being rude and crude. I tell you, the place went silent, 200 men silenced. I remember when he said it, I remember in my heart immediately saying, he is right, this isn't right to do to another person. The silence seemed like forever, but it was only about 5 seconds long, and then one of the players took his beer and threw it on him, then another and another until he was soaked. He grabbed the girl and ran off at the laughter of all, considered to be humiliated by many, but I remember thinking about that over and over. I said to myself, that was a real man, he stood up to 200 rough rugby players. I remember just saying to myself, why were you going along with the crowd, you don't agree with that, that isn't who you are. Well I never joined in again, in fact that was my last season. Rugby was probably one of my best sports I ever played, in fact Semi-pro football teams tried to recruit out of the rugby league, but I turned them down along with all the other rugby teams that tried to recruit me.

The world – Just going Along

I was just a picture of the world, I was just going along with what everyone else was doing, and I never really questioned what I was doing until someone disrupted the flow. You know Christian, we are the ones who God uses to disrupt the flow in the world around us to make them think.

Hucksters and Hoaxes

(Acts 19:35 NKJV) And when the city clerk had quieted the crowd, he said: "Men of Ephesus, what man is there who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is temple guardian of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Zeus?"

City Clerk – Governing Authority

The city clerk was a governing authority in the city in authority of Rome.

Thought sent from god / Hoax or Meteorite / Mormons

Again they think it was sent from the gods; but it could have been a hoax to make money but some slick Joe's, or it might simply have been a meteorite. You know there is nothing new under the sun, and does this story not sound so familiar about some slick Joe who said he got some special tablets from an angel, and was given a psychedelic pair of glasses to help him read the tablets and give this great revelation about how Jesus Christ came to the America's and preached to the Indians, and thus the whole beginning of the Mormon religion. Here is my first question about the whole thing, and that is if the tablets were only for Joseph Smith to see (as he claims), then why didn't the angel just have tablets originally in English for him, and why go through the whole special reading glasses for him. Also, speaking of hoaxes and hucksters, Joseph Smith was arrested for being a con-man, a "snake oil" salesman (aka – selling goods that were promised to do something wonderful for a person, but the whole thing was just plain old water).

Tearing down through Building Up

(Acts 19:36 NKJV) "Therefore, since these things cannot be denied, you ought to be quiet and do nothing rashly.

(Acts 19:37 NKJV) "For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess.

(Acts 19:38 NKJV) "Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen have a case against anyone, the courts are open and there are proconsuls. Let them bring charges against one another.

(Acts 19:39 NKJV) "But if you have any other inquiry to make, it shall be determined in the lawful assembly.

(Acts 19:40 NKJV) "For we are in danger of being called in question for today's uproar, there being no reason which we may give to account for this disorderly gathering."

(Acts 19:41 NKJV) And when he had said these things, he dismissed the assembly.

Clerk – Diana not made with hands

The clerk is saying hey this guy Paul says that it is things made with human hands that are not gods, and we all know that Diana was not made with human hands but sent from Zeus in heaven.

Rome – would not stand for Civil Disobedience / Follow Laws of Rome

Romans would not tolerate civil disorder; so the clerk is reminding the people that were in danger of losing their status as a free city, unencumbered by direct Roman rule if they allowed a riot to occur and did not handle the situation in accordance to the Laws and ways of the Rome Empire.

Crowd Disperses / Not Blasting Diana

So everyone dispersed and went home, and that mainly is because most really didn't know what they were there for to start with anyways, for they were confused - they were just going along with the flow. This clerk calms the crowd by making the point that Paul and company were not blasting Diana, they were just proclaiming their God Jesus.

Satan's mastery / We get Pigeon-holed / Glean Application Here – Don't Tear – but Lift

Let me close with that Christian, that we may recognize how masterfully Satan is working in that he just gets people to go with the flow, having no idea where they are going and why they are following. And what is happening today is that he is getting the world to go along with this flow that Born-again Christians are just a bunch of hate-mongers, intolerant, judgmental, holier than thou people because we are getting pigeon-holed on a few of the worlds hot topics, and then labeled, and then silenced when we preach Christ. We can glean some good application here in that we see Paul wasn't spending time tearing down Diana, rather just preached Jesus!

1 Corinthians 2:2 (NKJV) ²For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Billy Graham in India / Be Proclaimers

Billy Graham exercised wisdom when he was in India; the journalist interviewing him said are you here to put down Hinduism, and Billy wisely said, I am not here to put anything down, I am here to lift up Jesus Christ before the people. We should be proclaimers of the truth, and let the truth tear things. Lift up Christ, and the high things will be brought low; tear down by lifting up. Lift Christ before the people, and all things will be brought low. Let's not get ourselves pigeon-holed by these set-up questions, let's talk about how wonderful Jesus Christ is, and let's talk about Him with love on our heart, a passion in our eyes, and grace on our lips.

Walls of Jericho

Dr. John Gerstang, one of the primary excavators of Jericho, noted that, when an ancient city is excavated, the walls fall inward. The walls of Jericho actually fell outward and covered an unbelievable distance. "It was as though someone from the inside was shoving the walls out," said Gerstang, calling the force an "invisible hand." That is what we need to do, we need to be blowing people up from the inside out, not attacking them from the outside, but letting God bring the walls down from the inside out – and we do that simply by presenting how awesome our God is!

Recap what we Learned & Need to Apply

9. The Power of the Purposed Heart
10. Satan's #1 Weapon – Discouragement
11. Demetrius' in our Lives – Problems or Opportunities?
12. Better than Boycotting – Evangelism
13. Wise Counsel in the midst of Zeal and Passion
14. The Confused World – just going with the Flow
15. Hucksters and Hoaxes
16. Tearing down through Building Up

Chapter 20

Overcoming Drowsiness (20:1-12)

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

3rd Journey / Leaving Ephesus

We continue to follow the Apostle Paul on his 3rd missionary journey; he has just left Ephesus after being there 3 years and will now move into Macedonia and Greece.

Journeys in Greece

(Acts 20:1 NKJV) After the uproar had ceased, Paul called the disciples to himself, embraced them, and departed to go to Macedonia.

Macedonia – modern day area of Southeast Europe right above Greece.

Saying goodbye after 3 Years / Cherish your Friends

Paul is saying goodbye to the saints he has labored for and with the last 3 years. He won't see the church again, but he will see the elders again (Acts 20:17). After 3 years of being there, no doubt a sad farewell; remember saints, cherish your friends for you never know when they will have to set sail.

Read Other Gospels for more Details

Luke's brevity requires searching details from the epistles to see all where he had gone while in Macedonia. Many visits not recorded: Albania and Former Yugoslavia (now Bosnia and Serbia) (Illyricum). Paul had dispatched Titus to Corinth, but now anxious to meet him in Troas (anxious to know what effect his first epistle had); his concern for his being overdue causes Paul to leave for Macedonia; he lands at Philippi. At length, Titus arrives, with better tidings than Paul had dared to expect (2 Cor 7:6,13). Paul writes his 2nd Epistle to Corinthians, dispatching Titus with it (2 Cor 2:12, 13; 7:5-8).

(Acts 20:2 NKJV) Now when he had gone over that region and encouraged them with many words, he came to Greece

(Acts 20:3 NKJV) and stayed three months. And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia.

Verse 2 – he came to Greece – Corinth is in Greece, and this most likely where Paul is

3 Months in Corinth – Penned Romans / Phoebe going to Rome

Verse 3 - and stayed three months - During these three months in Corinth, Paul penned the Epistle to the Romans (most likely). It would seem the Paul heard that Phoebe was on her way to Rome from Cenchreae (which is the eastern most port in Corinth), and thus felt compelled to write it and have it sent with her.

Romans 16:1-2 (NKJV) ¹I commend to you Phoebe our sister, who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, ²that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you; for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also.

Booked changed People & World / Next time Lord gives you something Small

The Book of Romans, what a mighty book, from a doctrinal standpoint and a duty standpoint. Great leaders such as Augustine, Martin Luther, and John Wesley all say that it was the reading of the Book of Romans that brought them to the place to surrender their life to Christ. The Book of Romans has changed the course of all Christianity as Martin Luther read it and upon reading it he nailed his 95 pt thesis on the door of the Catholic Church and the Protestant Reformation began. Romans Road, the beautiful and easy way to present the gospel to someone. The Book of Romans, what a great and mighty book. Please remember that next time you think some task or labor the Lord gives you is small and insignificant. Hey Phoebe, I hear you are going to Rome, could you deliver this letter for me to the Church? Sure thing Paul!

Paul probably desiring to make the Feast

Verse 3 - And when the Jews plotted against him as he was about to sail to Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia – Syria is back down there right about Israel; Paul is probably desiring to make it to one of the Spring Feasts in Israel. In the spring time ships would come into port here in Corinth to transport Jews back to the Holy Land for the Spring Feast.

Plot found Out / I think this is a Big Deal / Untouchable

Somehow, and we are not told, Paul catches wind that there is a murder plot out for him, and skips the boat ride to Syria and heads back up to Macedonia. To me this is a big deal, I want to know how Paul caught wind of this plot; was it supernaturally as He communion with God and the Lord just revealed it to him? Was it a loose-lip talking at the market and it was overheard by a friend of Paul? Was it Paul walking down to the dock and seeing some shady characters hanging out and Paul saying this just doesn't look right (I had 2 guys follow me in Nicaragua with burlap bags over their hands, it didn't take much for me to figure out they had clubs under there and were waiting to jump me). Whatever the case is Paul catches wind of the plot and isn't thrown overboard half to Israel in the middle of the night. As I said I think this is a big deal and I wish we got more than a verse here talking of something as powerful as this, but I think the brevity is as powerful as the story, and that is that the Lord is saying that as much of a big deal as I think it is, it is no big deal to Him, for He has our backs covered. I personally believe that I am untouchable and invincible until the Lord says otherwise. I would not worry about going to do missions in the Sudan or China if I knew that is what the Lord had called me to do - for none or nothing can touch me unless God says, "the is My Will". I might add, I don't take that as a license to be foolish, I still seek the Lord for every step that I take.

Paul Believed This / Jews in Corinth / Bitterness long Memory / Paul knew whose

Obviously Paul believed this because he went back into Greece, the place that he caused an uproar, and had many of the Jews against him, but not before two leaders of the synagogue (Crispus and Sosthenes) gave their life to the Lord. So it is several years later the Jews in this region are still incensed about Paul and the message he preaches, and lay in wait for him (for bitterness has a long memory), but Paul had no fear for he knew in whose hands his life was (Jesus Christ). Do you believe that today?

Acts 18:12-13 (NKJV) ¹²When Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him to the judgment seat, ¹³saying, "This fellow persuades men to worship God contrary to the law."

(Acts 20:4 NKJV) And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia; also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.

(Acts 20:5 NKJV) These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas.

Troas – is a seaport in in modern day Northwest Turkey

Luke has Joined / Luke a Constant Companion – there 2 Timothy / Be a Luke

The us, in verse 5, means Doctor Luke has joined Paul and company. Luke is a constant companion and friend to Paul (Remember Timothy and Erastus are gone so the Lord brings Luke – for the Lord will never leave us lacking). In Paul's last letter before his death (2 Timothy) he

writes that only Luke is with him. Luke, a precious friend until the end; in Paul's most trying time, he had a friend like Luke in his life. Luke means, "light-giving". Oh may we all be a Luke in at least one person's life; to be one though we will have to be willing to make sacrifices to be there when needed, not just when it is convenient for us, may we be a people who give light to others, especially in their darkest hours.

(Acts 19:22 NKJV) So he sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, but he himself stayed in Asia for a time.

(Acts 19:23 NKJV) And about that time there arose a great commotion about the Way.

2 Timothy 4:11 (NKJV) ¹¹Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.

Entourage is Gathered / Offering to Jerusalem / CCAAC

As Paul returned to Macedonia, he gathered an entourage to accompany him. Now one of the things going on here is that Paul is taking up a love offering for the church in Jerusalem, for the church has fallen on hard times financially as their Jewish country refuse to do business with them because they have chosen to follow Jesus and leave Judaism. So it is very likely, each one of these men was carrying money raised from his own fellowship. Thus, for the purpose of safety as well as of accountability and unanimity, they made the journey together. Financial accountability in the ministry is huge, thus why we go to such great lengths to remain transparent and accountable with our finances here at CCAAC (how we do that is explained each year at our annual Business Meeting).

1 Corinthians 16:1-4 (NKJV) ¹Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: ²On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come. ³And when I come, whomever you approve by your letters I will send to bear your gift to Jerusalem. ⁴But if it is fitting that I go also, they will go with me.

(Acts 20:6 NKJV) But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days.

Sailed 5 Days – 1 Day / Sometimes Smooth – sometimes Rough / Keep Sailing

As the entourage headed for Jerusalem, they sailed from Philippi to Troas in five days. This intrigues me, because in Acts 16:11 we read they made the same journey going the other direction in only one day. So, too, sometimes, in our journeying, we experience seasons of smooth sailing. Other times, it's tough going. Some of you may be in rough waters right now. Take heart: It doesn't mean you're out of the Lord's will. Be like Paul, and just keep sailing, enjoy the waves.

Acts 16:11 (NKJV) ¹¹Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis,

Seems Paul wanted to be in Jerusalem / Now Plan B / What do you do with Plan B

It seems that Paul wanted to be in Jerusalem for Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, but it just didn't work out for him, so now he sets his sights on making it there in time for Pentecost (which is 50 days later). Ok "Plan A" didn't work out, so on to "Plan B"; Christian, how do you handle things when "Plan A" doesn't quite work out the way you had hoped and planned? Do you get upset with God, do you get discouraged, do you want to just quit and give up?

(Acts 20:16 NKJV) For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.

Ministering at Troas

(Acts 20:7 NKJV) Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.

1st Day was Sunday / Worship Saturday or Sunday – Yes / Some say Mark – Driving Nails

The first day of the week was Sunday, so we see here the early Church meeting on Sundays; lots of people make a big deal on whether the Church should worship on Saturday or Sunday. When people ask me if I worship on Saturday or Sunday, my answer to them is "both", and Monday through Friday too. There are even groups that say if you worship on Sunday rather than

Saturday, that is the “mark-of-the-beast” (now for those people they are just totally out there, and trying to reason with them is like trying to drive nails with your head – yea it hurts. So just keep loving them and praying for them).

Begin Sundown – 5 Hours / Thought I talked Long

Verse 7c - spoke to them and continued his message until midnight – So if the day begins around sundown (based on Jewish calendar – this would be Saturday night our Calendar), and Paul spoke until midnight, this message was about 5-6 hours long. I originally wanted to title this message, “And you thought I talk for a long time.”

Paul has Something on Heart – Not see Again / Paul same heart as Ours

Verse 7a - Paul, ready to depart the next day – Paul has something on his heart; what was on his heart were these very people. We can see Paul’s heart here, he was leaving the next day, and these words would be the last words for quite some time (until his epistles started to circulate). May we have a heart for people like Paul did, and may we have the word of the Lord to give them. Paul is not different than us today, he wasn’t given a different heart by the Lord than we are giving (gifting yes, heart no); Paul had a heart for the people, because Paul gave his heart to the people. People and churches so often say, Lord give us this city, but I say to you the correct plea to the Lord is “Lord give me, give us, to this city and to these people”. God will honor that plea of your heart, for He is always looking for more Paul’s, people with a heart for people.

Paul raises Eutychus – so 12 hrs

Actually, as we finish our text today we will see Paul raise a young man from the dead, and then everyone goes back upstairs and has a fellowship dinner, and then when that was over Paul starts preaching again until daybreak – that is like a 12 hour sermon! Don’t no one ever say that I am long-winded ☺

(Acts 20:8 NKJV) There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together.

Lamps = heat & oxygen / Accusations / Love think Worse / Pastor at Liquor Store

Lots of lamps would mean lots of heat and less oxygen. One of the reasons that they had many lamps is so that those who were peeking in on them would see clearly all that was going on. You see the early church was accused of cannibalism, why because they said they were partaking of communion. They were accused of having sexual gatherings because they said they had “agape (love) feasts”. So people just love to say those Christians are weird (hmm – glad things have changed today, they don’t think us weird anymore do they?). People stay fit today by jumping to conclusions and dodging responsibility. People love to think the worst about people. Heard a story about a woman calling her order into the liquor store, orders a case of whiskey for a big party she was having that night, but she accidentally hit the wrong speed-dial on her phone and called her church. The man that answers was the pastor, and she says I need a case of whiskey delivered by 6pm tonight. The pastor recognized her voice and says, this is Pastor Jones, and the woman got upset and said, Pastor Jones what are you doing at the liquor store. People love to jump to conclusion.

Me teaching Sunday School

When I was teaching Sunday school when I first got saved, the Children’s Pastor called me into his office and said, we got a call from one of the members and they are upset that they saw you (one of the Sunday School teachers) at a Bikini Contest at the local pub. Is that true? I said no, not even close. He said I know, but I had to ask. Then I of course asked, so how did they happen to see me there? And the Pastor smiled, oh I asked them the same if that makes you feel any better. People love to jump to conclusions.

(Acts 20:9 NKJV) And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep; and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead.

Name means Fortunate

Eutychus, whose name means “fortunate,” is very fortunate that it is Paul who was preaching, and Paul who had the gift of healing.

Dr. Luke / Imagine Death Certificate / Beef & Unbelief

Verse 9 - and was taken up dead – Dr. Luke is writing, and gives medical proclamation, Dead-on-Arrival, now where is my pen to fill out the death certificate, cause of death? Long preaching! Charles Spurgeon wasn't in favor of Sunday afternoon services because he said people were filled with “beef and unbelief” and couldn't stay awake.

30 foot / Bounce – Broken Bones

Three stories is about thirty feet, so that is quite the fall. So Eutychus is sitting in the windowsill, so when he fell he would have fallen out backwards and landed on his back most likely, then on the impact his head bouncing off the pavement (ouch). They say that when someone falls from heights such as this, they actually don't die on first impact; I say first impact because what happens is that the body bounces after it hits. So the first impact bones are breaking and shattering (especially ribs), and the body bounces, and then as it hits again all the broken bone pieces pierce the vital organs and that is what causes death (isn't this a great message for Mother's Day?). So when Dr. Luke says that he is dead, he is dead!

Sleeping in Church Hazardous to Health / It's Ok – Lord knows / Talked to Samuel

Let it be noted to all that sleeping in church may be hazardous to your health. Hey, may you know my heart, I'd rather you sleep here than any other place on Sunday. I know that drowsiness can come upon us physically for various reasons, and when it does it ok; maybe you've worked a long hard week, maybe the baby kept ya up all night, maybe you just couldn't get into a deep sleep, for whatever the reason just know that God loves you and He understands where you are at and why you are there, and He will still meet with you, even if you are fading in and out. Remember Samuel? He fell asleep in the temple and the Lord spoke to him three times—even as he slept!” (see 1 Samuel 3).

Here are a Couple Spiritual Reasons people Sleep

Why Eutychus fell asleep we do not know, but I would like to give you a couple spiritual reasons (apart from the physical) that I have experienced personally, or seen practically of why people get drowsy at church.

Only Place think of Word / If called to Teach Tomorrow / SCAPE Suits

Release - If church is the only place you vocally express your belief in Jesus Christ, the only place wherein you seriously think about the Word, you will begin to doze in your pew. On the other hand, if you really believe you will be called upon to practice what you hear preached, you will remain wide-eyed and on the edge of your seat. If you knew today you would be expected tomorrow to share this passage with some guys at work, your family, some kids on your campus, or some cultists at your door—you would have pencil and paper in hand, an alert mind, and an eager heart. You would say, *“If I'm going to give this out, I better get it down.”* I remember when I was at the Space Center, just a day or so before launch we had to load the satellite with fuel, now this wasn't gasoline but a substance called hydrazine. We had to wear these specially made suits that were splash resistant to the hydrazine because it would eat your skin away, and we had to wear special breathing apparatus because another name we had for hydrazine was “3 steps”, because if you breathed it into your lungs, you would die on your third step, and the door was 6 steps away. Amazing thing, when we were in training on how to use our equipment the day before we were to suit up and load up, there was not a person in that room sleeping, for we tomorrow all our training would be used to get us home.

Dead Sea – Galilee / Find a place to Give it Out

In Israel, there are two major bodies of water, both fed by the Jordan River: the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. While the Sea of Galilee teems with life, not even single-celled beings can

survive in the Dead Sea. Why? Because, although the Jordan River flows into both, it only flows out of the Sea of Galilee. Thus, the Dead Sea is devoid of life because there's input but no outflow. You and I will either be like the Sea of Galilee, giving out the Word, and teeming with life as a result—or we will be like the Dead Sea, taking in but, because we don't give out, dozing in the back row. Find a place to give out what you are taking in, and you find you won't be prone to sleepiness.

Guy Visiting – 12yr old Preaching

I'll never forget this one guy who had come to visit here, he visited twice but just wasn't into the teaching. I'll never forget the last time he came, I taught like 60 minutes, and I couldn't help but see him those last 20 minutes, it was like he was in pain. He was squeezing his head, wringing his hands; it was like I could read his mind and he was saying, "shut up already, would you please stop", if you haven't struck oil in 20 minutes stop boring. I was teaching out of Revelation chapter 2, the church of Thyatira, and it is an amazing picture of the Universal Church today, churches with their priestly practices, churches that continually put Christ back on the cross (Thyatira means "continual sacrifice"), churches that worship Mary and believe that when you take communion you are actually eating the literal body of Jesus (called Transubstantiation); it was a deep study, and the amazing thing about it was that my 12 year sat through the study, and the next day entered into a conversation with a relative, and was able to repeat all the major points of that study and totally blew the relative away. Christian find someone and somewhere to give out what you take in, and your Bible studies won't be prone to sleepiness.

Started in Front – Moved to back / People start Pulling Away

Reversal - now, while it is possible that a drowsy Eutychus may have moved to the back row and sat near the window in order to stay awake, over the years, I've seen many people who, although at one time, were in the front row and excited about Bible study, start moving toward the back and gradually lose all interest in the things of the Lord. Believers are like automobiles, folks. When we start to miss, we eventually stop running altogether. When people start pulling away from Bible study, from prayer, from Communion, from corporate expression, they weaken their walk without exception. "Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together," said the writer to the Hebrews (see Hebrews 10:25). Those who do so are in danger of experiencing what happened to Eutychus: moving toward the back, then falling out altogether.

Hebrews 10:25 (NKJV) ²⁵not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

(Acts 20:10 NKJV) But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing him said, "Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him."

(Acts 20:11 NKJV) Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed.

(Acts 20:12 NKJV) And they brought the young man in alive, and they were not a little comforted.

Greek Implies Dead

The Greek implies that he was raised from the dead, not just unconscious.

Fall on – Not happy Camper

But Paul went down, fell on him - It is good that Eutychus is dead, because if he wasn't when Paul fell on him after he fell 30 feet, Eutychus would not have been a happy camper.

Seen in Scriptures

Paul's approach of falling on this young lad is the same thing that:

- Elijah, dead son of woman of Sarepta (1 Kgs 17:21);
- Elisha, dead son of Shunammite (2 Kgs 4:34);
- Jesus, (Mk 5:39; Lk 8:52).

Eutychus experienced Resurrection power / More likely to See it if There

Eutychus, experienced the resurrection power, and all that were there saw it too. You are much more likely to see or experience the resurrection power when you are amongst the body of believers.

Notice Personal Application – Brother falls – Come to Him – Embrace Him

Notice also some personal application we can glean from Paul when a brother falls, and that is that Paul didn't come down on him, but came down to him; and when he got to him he embraced him. Just a little tid-bit next time one of your brothers or sisters fall, that we might not come down on them, but we might come to them, embrace them, and like Paul – restore them, refresh them, and lift them back to their feet and bring them back into the fellowship.

How Minister / 2 Kings 4

How are you to minister to him? Our text gives the answer. We read that Paul didn't come down on Eutychus, but went down to Eutychus. I believe the account in 2 Kings chapter 4 sheds light on the reason Paul did this....

Elisha stayed at Shunammite House / Child died / She goes to Elisha

Because Elisha the prophet had been lovingly tended by a Shunammite woman who had prepared a room in her house for him to stay whenever he passed through the area, Elisha promised her that, although she was barren and her husband was old, she would bear a son. Sure enough, she conceived and gave birth to a son. A few years later, while working with his dad in the field, the child fell down, crying, "My head, my head." The father ordered servants to take the boy to his mother, but, although she put his head on her lap and comforted him, he died. The Shunammite woman then took her son's body into a room to prepare him not for burial, but for a miracle. "Saddle up the donkey," she ordered her servants. "We're going to get Elisha." Finding the prophet at Mount Carmel (the man of God is always on the mountain), she grabbed him by the feet and said, "You deceived me, Elisha. You allowed this son to come into our family, and now he's dead."

Elisha sends servant – Lay Staff / She wants Elisha There / Nothing Happened Servant

Elisha responded by ordering his servant, Gehazi, to take his staff and lay it upon the boy. But that wasn't enough for the wise and wonderful Shunammite woman. "I'm not going back, Elisha," she said, "until you come with me." So while Gehazi took the staff and went quickly, Elisha and the Shunammite woman followed a little more slowly. When Gehazi reached the woman's home, he laid the staff on the boy, but nothing happened.

**** Elisha lays on Boy / Mouth – Eye - Hand**

When Elisha arrived, however, he himself lay on the boy—mouth to mouth, eye to eye, hand to hand. And as he did so, Elisha felt warmth in the boy's body.

Mom & Dad / Let's call the Church – Lay Rod – Preach / None bring Life

Mom, Dad, fellow brother, minister, sister - when someone has fallen off the third story because of his own spiritual lethargy or apathy, the tendency is for you and me to say, "Let's call the church and get the staff on the job," or, "Let's send the rod of rigidity. Let's preach at him." But, as Gehazi found, neither will bring life, it will just further make them dead.

Key – Go Hand, Mouth, Eye / Love Unconditionally / Can't do if not Refreshed Self

The key is for us to be like Elisha—to go hand to hand, mouth to mouth, eye to eye—to do what Paul did: to embrace the person and say, "I love you unconditionally. I care about you. I'm here for you. I will stand by you." I might note, you can do that yourself when you've been refreshed and blessed by the Word yourself whether it be your individual devotion, or the corporate time here that we call church. You'll find the man of God up on the mountain. Get filled with the presence, power, and love of God (like is here) and when you go back out of here to your homes, your workplace, your neighborhoods, you will look into the faces of people, you speak mouth to

mouth with them, you will give them a hand practically – and watch what happens to those people, they will come to life.

It is Love Guys / Go Hand – Mouth - Eyes

It's love, gang, not delegation or doctrine that will bring about resurrection. We need to go hand to hand, mouth to mouth, eye to eye with folks who have fallen. And what will happen? Like Elisha, we'll feel some warmth, sense a stirring, hear some sneezing (a clearing of the system), see an opening of the eye—and finally they will sit up.

Been Drowsy – Don't give up, give out

If you've been somewhat spiritually drowsy, don't give up, but give out – give out what you've taken in today, on Wednesdays, in your private time – giving out is a key to being drawn to the word, prayer, and fellowship.

Maybe say – Sounds Great / No one done that for Me

You might be saying, "That sounds great, but you don't understand my situation. No one has ever even sent his staff to me, much less pressed in to me personally. How can I do for someone else that which has never been done for me?"

There is The One / Hands to Cross / Mouth of Love / Eyes

"Oh, but there is One," I answer, "who came and pressed in to you in a way we cannot even begin to understand. God Himself came down not on you, but came down to you in the Person of Jesus Christ. His hands were pressed to the Cross for you and me. His mouth cried, "Father forgive them." His blood, sweat, and tear-filled eyes said, "I love you." Therefore, it is His love that motivates us to love others (2 Corinthians 5:14). In His love may you find the Eutychuses—those who were once doing well, but who moved to the back and fell off the ledge—and come down not on them, but to them.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (NKJV) ¹⁴For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; ¹⁵and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.

May God grant us to be Ministers of the Resurrection / Touch lives this Week

May God grant us the grace to be ministers of resurrection. May He give us opportunity to touch lives this week. May He use us greatly.

2 Kings 4 (NKJV)

⁹Now it happened one day that Elisha went to Shunem, where there was a notable woman, and she persuaded him to eat some food. So it was, as often as he passed by, he would turn in there to eat some food.

⁹And she said to her husband, "Look now, I know that this is a holy man of God, who passes by us regularly.

¹⁰Please, let us make a small upper room on the wall; and let us put a bed for him there, and a table and a chair and a lampstand; so it will be, whenever he comes to us, he can turn in there."

¹¹And it happened one day that he came there, and he turned in to the upper room and lay down there.

¹²Then he said to Gehazi his servant, "Call this Shunammite woman." When he had called her, she stood before him.

¹³And he said to him, "Say now to her, 'Look, you have been concerned for us with all this care. What can I do for you? Do you want me to speak on your behalf to the king or to the commander of the army?'" She answered, "I dwell among my own people."

¹⁴So he said, "What then is to be done for her?" And Gehazi answered, "Actually, she has no son, and her husband is old."

¹⁵So he said, "Call her." When he had called her, she stood in the doorway.

¹⁶Then he said, "About this time next year you shall embrace a son." And she said, "No, my lord. Man of God, do not lie to your maidservant!"

¹⁷But the woman conceived, and bore a son when the appointed time had come, of which Elisha had told her.

¹⁸And the child grew. Now it happened one day that he went out to his father, to the reapers.

¹⁹And he said to his father, "My head, my head!" So he said to a servant, "Carry him to his mother."

²⁰When he had taken him and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and then died.

²¹And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, shut the door upon him, and went out.

²²Then she called to her husband, and said, "Please send me one of the young men and one of the donkeys, that I may run to the man of God and come back."

²³So he said, "Why are you going to him today? It is neither the New Moon nor the Sabbath." And she said, "It is well."

²⁴Then she saddled a donkey, and said to her servant, "Drive, and go forward; do not slacken the pace for me unless I tell you."

²⁵And so she departed, and went to the man of God at Mount Carmel. So it was, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to his servant Gehazi, "Look, the Shunammite woman!

²⁶Please run now to meet her, and say to her, 'Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?'" And she answered, "*It is well.*"

²⁷Now when she came to the man of God at the hill, she caught him by the feet, but Gehazi came near to push her away. But the man of God said, "Let her alone; for her soul *is* in deep distress, and the Lord has hidden *it* from me, and has not told me."

²⁸So she said, "Did I ask a son of my lord? Did I not say, 'Do not deceive me?'"

²⁹Then he said to Gehazi, "Get yourself ready, and take my staff in your hand, and be on your way. If you meet anyone, do not greet him; and if anyone greets you, do not answer him; but lay my staff on the face of the child."

³⁰And the mother of the child said, "As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you." So he arose and followed her.

³¹Now Gehazi went on ahead of them, and laid the staff on the face of the child; but *there was* neither voice nor hearing. Therefore he went back to meet him, and told him, saying, "The child has not awakened."

³²When Elisha came into the house, there was the child, lying dead on his bed.

³³He went in therefore, shut the door behind the two of them, and prayed to the Lord.

³⁴And he went up and lay on the child, and put his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands; and he stretched himself out on the child, and the flesh of the child became warm.

³⁵He returned and walked back and forth in the house, and again went up and stretched himself out on him; then the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.

³⁶And he called Gehazi and said, "Call this Shunammite woman." So he called her. And when she came in to him, he said, "Pick up your son."

³⁷So she went in, fell at his feet, and bowed to the ground; then she picked up her son and went out.

None of These Things Shall Move Me

Acts 20:13-38

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Still 3rd Journey – But shift towards 4th / Chains – Rome / House Arrest / Knows Trouble

Although we are still on Paul's 3rd Missionary Journey, we now begin to shift into what I call Paul's 4th Missionary Journey, even though that journey will not come with the free-will to go where he pleases, rather it will come with chains and prisons. Before it is all over, he will end up in house-arrest in Rome awaiting his trial (his appeal) before Caesar (where the Book of Acts ends): he will go to Rome as part of the legal case that was brought against him by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem (as we will study in the weeks to come). In our study today, Paul knows that trouble waits for him in Jerusalem, as the Holy Spirit has imparted foreknowledge to him (20:22-23), but Paul will move ahead unwavering, steeled in his mind, this is the will of God for my life.

(Acts 20:22 NKJV) *"And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,*

(Acts 20:23 NKJV) *"except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.*

Knows Trouble Awaits – but is Unmoved / Study in Weeks Coming – Man Poured Out

Paul knows trouble lies in Jerusalem for him, but he is unmoved nor fearful of what is to come; rather we will read of him facing them head-on, with passion and power. Our studies in the weeks to come will be a study on a man who is poured out for and to the One he believes and trusts in, Jesus Christ.

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

We can see Today – Why faced Troubles with Peace & Confidence / How about You

I believe today we can see why Paul could face a troubled future with such confidence and peace, and that is because he has a peace and a confidence in all he has done in the past. How about you here today? Can you face a troubled tomorrow with peace and confidence as Paul could? You can and will if you have a peace and confidence in your today and yesterday. Tomorrow is not the time to get ready for tomorrow; prepare for tomorrow today. Don't worry about tomorrow, today – but prepare for tomorrow today.

Outline: None of these things shall Move Me (Acts 20:13-38)

- Paul had Confidence in God's Will
- Paul had Completion in his Ministry
- Paul had Courage through Confidence
- Paul had Coverage for his Ministry

Paul had Confidence in God's Will

Knows it God Will because it Came / Spirit Testified / Like Jesus – Jer where Crown Is

Paul will have peace and confidence in the trials and troubles to come because he knows it is God's will for his life. He knows that if it comes, it only comes because God has allowed it to

come, and thus it is God's will for Paul's life and the purposes and plans of God. As we have already read, the Holy Spirit has testified to Paul the trials that await him, and we see Paul cannot be moved to the left, or the right, he isn't meandering in Asia trying to delay what awaits him in Jerusalem, rather we see him setting his face like flint to Jerusalem, being unmoved, if anything he seems to be saying, "full speed ahead". Oh how Paul is so much like the One he proclaims, as Jesus would be his example as Jesus could not be moved but pressed on to Jerusalem despite the promise of pain, He went full speed ahead, because Jerusalem was where the final victory would be won, as Jesus would capture His crowning Jewel, you and me. Oh Christian how much Jesus loves and adores you.

(Acts 20:22 NKJV) "And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,

(Acts 20:23 NKJV) "except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.

Luke 9:51 (NKJV) ⁵¹Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem,

From Troas to Miletus

(Acts 20:13 NKJV) Then we went ahead to the ship and sailed to Assos, there intending to take Paul on board; for so he had given orders, intending himself to go on foot.

25 mile Journey / Time to Think things Out

Paul let the team sail while he made the twenty-five-mile journey on foot. Headed toward Jerusalem where he knew he would encounter great difficulty, Paul had many things to think through, sort out, and pray about. Perhaps that's why he said, "Boys, you sail. I'm walking. Pick me up on the other side." I can't tell you how wonderful it is, and how important for me it has become, to walk. Oftentimes, when I kneel and pray, I find myself "resting in the Lord" a little too literally. Jesus told us to watch and pray (Mark 13:33)—and I find praying while walking brings that about in a very practical way.

(Acts 20:14 NKJV) And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene.

(Acts 20:15 NKJV) We sailed from there, and the next day came opposite Chios. The following day we arrived at Samos and stayed at Trogyllium. The next day we came to Miletus.

(Acts 20:16 NKJV) For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost.

Plan A didn't Work Out / Blessed are the Flexible / Paul Trusted

Although Paul had planned to be in Jerusalem for Passover, when it didn't work out that way, rather than getting upset or uptight, he simply said, "I'll try to make it for Pentecost." Blessed are the flexible, for they shall not break! That was Paul's mentality. You don't sense a tension in his personality. Rather, he seemed to be wonderfully flexible as he trusted the Lord to work all things out perfectly.

No Details – to every Detail / A Word in the Details – Meaning of Cities

In last week's study we saw Paul going from Ephesus to Macedonia in just one verse. As I had mentioned we needed to read through other epistles (such as Corinthians) to find out that he had gone to several other places there in Eastern Europe that he had stayed at for extended periods of time. Well in our text today we get a whole bunch of details of cities he went through, only staying a day or two, as he worked his way towards Jerusalem. That detail caught my eye, and I had to wonder why. I don't want to over-spiritualize, but I believe God has given a word through this detail. It seems that God gives a word to Paul (and us) through these cities, a word of comfort, a word of encouragement, and a word for Paul (and us) to keep pressing towards the prize, the high calling of God, for there is a great reward at the end, on the other side of the trials and trouble. Look at the cities and the meaning of their names.

- Assos – means approaching

- Mitylene – means “mutilated”, which means injury with irreparable damage.
- Chios – means “snowy”, which means abounding in snow cover, immaculate, spotless, clean and fresh.
- Samos – means “sandy bluff”, which means bold, a nearly perpendicular front.
- Trogyllium – means “cache”, which means a hidden place, wealth of treasure, a stockpile of ammunition.
- Miletus – means “pure white, fine wool”.
- Jerusalem – means “double peace”.

Philippians 3:12-14 (KJV) ¹²Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. ¹³Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, ¹⁴I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Read them as a Sentence

If you put those words together in a running sentence you see a wonderful message for all who suffer in the name of Jesus Christ. Paul (Christian), you are approaching irreparable injury for My Name sake, but there awaits you at the end and through it all an immaculate and spotless, bold and strong, hiding place that is a hidden treasure, a stockpile of ammunition for the battle, and it (better said – He) is pure white, of fine wool (the very description of Jesus given in Revelation 1:14) who will not just give you peace, but double peace. May we seize these promises for ourselves today, may we believe them true for our trials and troubles in this present world, so we too may be unmoved, that we might press ahead to claim the prize. And as we press ahead in the trials and trouble, may we know that we Jesus, who is unmovable and mighty, providing a hiding place, and all the ammunition we need for the battle, and that He will provide double peace.

Revelation 1:13-15 (KJV) ¹³And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. ¹⁴His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; ¹⁵And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters.

Paul’s Confidence – provides him Courage

The words of the Holy Spirit to Paul gave him confidence that this was the will of God for him, and that confidence gave him courage to press on. So too will be the same for us if we believe these things to be true for our lives personally. I’m in this place because it is the will of God, now therefore I will press ahead.

Paul had Completion in his Ministry

Now see – Paul poured himself Out / Sweated w/ hands – Declared whole Counsel / Can Go

Now we will see that Paul will say that he has poured himself out for and to the people. Paul has sweated for the people as he toiled and sweated making tents, and then taught the word free of charge. Paul will also declare that he has declared the whole counsel of God to these people. Paul can go on to trials and chains, because he has given these people all that they need for life, and that is Jesus Christ.

Hey Parents – Rank the Following / Paul given Salvation & Maturity / May we Comp Ministry

Hey moms and dads, if you were to be honest with yourselves, how would you rank the following in order that you invest in your children (salvation, spiritual growth, education, ease and comfort of life, extra-curricular activities). Paul can go on and leave these people because he has given them number one and two, salvation and spiritual maturity. May that be our story mothers and fathers, that we die (if that be tomorrow), we have completed our ministry to our kids by bringing them to salvation, and grown them in spiritual maturity and that if we leave, we know they have their need, because they will have Jesus.

(Acts 20:26 NKJV) "Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.

(Acts 20:27 NKJV) "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

[The Ephesian Elder Exhorted](#)

(Acts 20:17 NKJV) From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church.

Elders = Bishops & Pastors / Great Pastor's Conf Here

When you're reading through the New Testament, keep in mind that "elder," "pastor," and "bishop" are all interchangeable terms describing the same position. The Greek word translated "elder" doesn't speak of chronological years, but of spiritual maturity. Hey if you wish you could go to a Pastor's Conference, well here it is, I want to invite you all right now to what I think is the richest pastors' conference ever convened—when here on the island of Miletus, Paul called for the pastors and elders from Ephesus. Knowing he was headed for imprisonment, and, ultimately, eternity, Paul called the elders together to give them final instruction and exhortation about ministry and service. Thus, besides the teachings of our Lord Jesus in the Upper Room the night before His crucifixion, this is perhaps the richest text dealing with ministry in the entire New Testament.

(Acts 20:18 NKJV) And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you,

(Acts 20:19 NKJV) "serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews;

Serving = Slave / Paul gave up all Rights / Serve Lord – not People

The word here for "serving" is "slaving". Paul had given up all his personal rights and became a slave for Christ. How was Paul able to continue in ministry even when people threw rocks at him? By serving the Lord rather than serving people. If you're in ministry to serve people, you might last for a year, or ten, or fifteen—but you'll burn out eventually because oftentimes, like Paul, all you'll receive from those you serve will be stones and beatings. If, however, you are in ministry not to serve people or to satisfy some innate need within you, but to serve the Lord because of what He did for you—you will endure through good times and bad times, through the spring, summer, fall, and winter seasons of your life.

Take the "First Day" / Parents teach it to Kids

Beloved, if you can get a first day in your life take it. If you get to start a new job, go to a new school, move to a new neighborhood, whatever it might be, take the blessing of "first day" and start it off where there is no doubt about who you are and what you are about. Go in there and from the very beginning let people know you serve and follow Jesus Christ. Give people salutation in the Lord (hey God bless you man), ask them what can I pray for you about as they share their stories of life with you. Let them know what you are all about, and two things will happen, they will know where to go when they have their life event, and they won't ask you to partake in anything that is displeasing to the Lord. You may get invited to happy hour, but it won't be uncomfortable or unexpected when you say no thanks. Parents teach this concept to your kids, as they will have more "first days" than you will.

(Acts 20:20 NKJV) "how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house,

School of Tyrannus / Home Fellowships

Publically in the "School of Tyrannus", and house to house as that is where they held Home Fellowships.

(Acts 20:21 NKJV) "testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Greek Structure – Single Article – Linked Together / Impossible to Please God

In the Greek structure, there is what is called a “single article” which means that repentance and faith are linked together. So without repentance, there is no faith regardless of what people think. In Hebrews it says that without “faith” it is impossible to please God; therefore if “repentance” and faith are linked and together, we can also say then that without “repentance” it is impossible to please God. Repentance means to turn away from (change one’s mind), and in order to turn away from something, there has to be something to turn to, and that is the faith in Christ. But there is no talking of the faith without the demonstration of its reality (the repentance – the turning away from). A person cannot proclaim Jesus as Lord and continue to live in unrepentant habitual sin. God says let those who name the name of the Lord depart from sin. I as a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ will never give the assurance of eternal salvation to anyone who is living in unrepentant sin, for without repentance it is impossible to please God. The Bible says “let a man examine himself to see if he is in the faith”.

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

Hebrews 11:6 (NKJV) ⁶But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

2 Timothy 2:19 (NKJV) ¹⁹Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

2 Corinthians 13:5-6 (NKJV) ⁵Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified. ⁶But I trust that you will know that we are not disqualified.

God help Ministers that don't preach Repentance

God help any minister or ministry that doesn't teach repentance. Paul preached his whole lifetime repentance toward God and faith towards the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul poured self Out – Has Confidence he can Leave Now

So Paul has poured himself out completely for these people, and now has the confidence that he can leave because he has completed his ministry with them. May we have the same confidence in our lives.

Paul had Courage through Confidence

Courage through Confidence / Here – Holy Spirit Testifies

As we had said, Paul had courage through his confidence that all the trials and troubles before him were the will of God. So here we will read the Holy Spirit testifying to Paul as such.

(Acts 20:22 NKJV) "And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,

(Acts 20:23 NKJV) "except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.

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

Paul's Secret – didn't Count Life Dear / When Do – Self Absorbed / Each has Course

Here is Paul's secret on how he can say none of these things shall move me, and that is that he didn't count his life dear to himself. When we count our life dear to self, then self become the first and forefront of every thought and action we take – how will this affect me, will it be well for me. The Apostle Paul would say in 2nd Timothy, that he has finished his course (and everyone of us has a course as Psalm 139 says all our days are written out before we are born,). Each of us has a course that God has set before us to finish, and we will be rewarded at the finish line on how we ran and finished the course. Did we pick up our cross and follow Him, did we deny our lives and

live for Him? If we seek to save our life we will lose it, if we lose our lives we will find it. Are we really willing to live in this life for the eternal, or are we living for the here and now?

2 Timothy 4:6-7 (NKJV) ⁶For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. ⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

Psalms 139:15-16 (NIV) ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, ¹⁶your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

Psalms 139:15-16 (TMSG) ¹⁵You know me inside and out, you know every bone in my body; You know exactly how I was made, bit by bit, how I was sculpted from nothing into something. ¹⁶Like an open book, you watched me grow from conception to birth; all the stages of my life were spread out before you, The days of my life all prepared before I'd even lived one day.

Matthew 16:24-25 (NKJV) ²⁴Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. ²⁵For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

Paul a Slave – we Look around at Others & they Influence Us

Paul says that he is a slave to Jesus. As we look around this world we can see others living for self, and all they can get, and we can become influenced by that (and I am also talking in the church too); we can be influenced to think that is what life is all about. We talk about our kids being under the influence of their peers, but as adults are we much different than they are, are we being influenced by the peers of the world around us to live for today, and enter into eternity when it comes? Or are we living for eternity today just as Paul did, not counting his life dear?

Nothing Moved Paul – Didn't Count Life Dear

None of these things move me, because he didn't count his life dear to himself.

God Sets Course to give us Purpose in Life / Not just Meandering / Love & Death

God sets a course before us to give us a purpose in life. We won't live just meandering and drifting along to the end, but that we have a purpose in life every day. Our life has a purpose; we have a reason to live.

- God changes our heart and puts love in them so that we might love others.
- He changes our mind about death in that we see it as just a passing through and won't hold on so tightly or get all wrapped up in this world.

Parallel of Moses & Paul / Educated – Prepared / Considered Rubbish – Press High Calling

This Paul is something, he was totally sold out and poured out. Someday I am going to write a book, and it is going to be the parallels of Old Testament men and woman with their New Testament counterparts, and Paul is the NT Moses. Paul was schooled and prepared by the best the world had to offer, as too was Moses. Yet like Moses, Paul will walk away from it all, count it all rubbish, that he might press on to the high calling and purposes that God had planned for him before the foundation of the world. Hebrews 11 speaks the faith of Moses, and verse 26 of Hebrews is a verse not only for every pastor, but for every teacher:

Hebrews 11:24-28 (NKJV) ²⁴By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, ²⁶esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures ²in Egypt; for he looked to the reward. ²⁷By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. ²⁸By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

May we quit Reading about Others

Oh may we not be a people who only read about such things, but may we be a people who live them. May we quit reading books and stories about other people's great faith and Christian life, but may we be a people who lives them.

(Acts 20:25 NKJV) "And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more.

(Acts 20:26 NKJV) "Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.

(Acts 20:27 NKJV) "For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.

Quoting Ezekiel / Temptation to Skip / Bible written in Perfect Proportion

Verse 26 - that I am innocent of the blood of all men – “I’m free from the blood of all men,” said Paul. This refers to Ezekiel 3:18, wherein the Lord said, “Ezekiel, I’ve given you the message to tell My people to believe in Me and walk with Me. If you don’t tell them, Ezekiel, their blood will be upon you.” Paul echoed this principle when he said, “I have not shunned any part of the counsel of God. I have delivered His entire message to you.” The temptation for teachers, parents, and Christian workers is to share only certain topics or subjects. I understand that. Certainly, there are parts of the Bible I would rather not teach and issues with which I would rather not deal. But we need to have the full counsel of God. That is why I believe it is necessary for Christians to know the Bible from cover to cover, and for churches to go through the Bible from Genesis to Revelation—not skipping over any part, but dealing with every book, studying every chapter. I don’t want to leave anything out. Like Paul, I want to be able to say, “To the best of my ability, by Your grace, Lord, I’ve declared Your full counsel—even those things I would rather not have preached or talked about. If it was in Your Word, Lord—we dealt with it.” Because the Bible is written in such a way that it contains the perfect proportion of encouragement and exhortation, I encourage you to get involved in a church or a Bible study that studies the entire Word systematically. I’m convinced the way to spiritual maturity and health is to study the Bible book by book, chapter by chapter.

Ezekiel 3:18-19 (NKJV) ¹⁸When I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand. ¹⁹Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.

16 Years - 1500 Sq Miles – 12K of Travel / Paul can move on – because Completed Ministry

Paul had now preached the gospel for about 16 years, to an area that covered 1500 square miles, had travel over 5500 miles by land, and over 6700 miles by sea, totally over 12,200 miles. Paul again confirming that he has completed his ministry and can move on in confidence that he has done all that he could do.

Paul had Coverage for his Ministry

Paul Unmovable: Confident Will of God – Courage through Confidence - Completed

Paul is unmovable, he can go into the trials and troubles because he has confidence that this is the will of God for His life, he confidence that he has completed his ministry, and he has courage through his confidence because the Holy Spirit has testified and confirmed all these things to him. And now, we will see that Paul has confidence because he has coverage for his ministry, these people that he is leaving behind. Not only has Paul not shun to declare the whole counsel of God to them, but he has raised up mature Christians to carry the work forward from here. Parents, again, may we not only pour ourselves out to bring our kids to salvation and maturity, but we must equip them for the ministry to our grandkids,

(Acts 20:28 NKJV) "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Self 1st – Others Second / Living Epistles / Warning – Cultivate Personal Devotion

Paul tells them to take heed to self first, and then unto others. We have to be living epistles before we can be speaking epistles. We have to be alive before we can speak. I must also add, make sure you’re cultivating a personal devotional life—that you’re a man or a woman of prayer. Make sure you’re one who is engaged in consistent communion with the Lord personally. Take heed to yourself. Here is a great danger: When you get involved in Christian service, you can find yourself serving the Lord and doing the work of the Lord at the expense of your own personal walk with the Lord. True ministry is the overflow of what is taking place in your life personally,

secretly, intimately. So take heed to yourself. Make sure you are personally cultivating a walk with the Lord.

2 Corinthians 3:2-3 (NKJV) ²You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; ³clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.

Look at Price of Church – purchased with Blood / Share with JW

Also, look at the price of the church; it is priceless, as it was purchased with the blood of Christ. Use this verse with your Jehovah's Witness friends who doubt the divinity of Jesus Christ. It is irrefutable that if God purchased the church with His own blood, then Jesus—the One who gave His blood—must be God.

(Acts 20:29 NKJV) "For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.

(Acts 20:30 NKJV) "Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.

I can Relate to Pain in Paul's Heart /

I can easily relate to the pain in Paul's heart as I know how my heart would be ripped out to know that if I was to leave this fellowship after all these years how painful that would be, but then to know that savage wolves were then going to come upon you, and I would not be here to fight with and for you, my heart would be pained at the thought of it.

Not only Outside – But Inside / Selfish Gain / 2 Signs: Tear Down – Build Up

Not only will wolves come from the outside, but covert operation will happen from within. They will speak perverse things; perverse means to distort and twist in order to turn one aside. Men from within will look to draw men away from the fellowship to come after and follow them. Men do this today seeking selfish gain; some do it for money, but most do it for pride, they want an audience to hear them speak, they want the place of being asked "what should I do", so that they may feel lifted up and spiritual. Here is two real easy ways to see where their heart truly is; one is that they speak covertly about the leadership, trying to diminish their leadership so that their leadership may be lifted up. That goes against the Romans 15 that says do not lay a charge against another man's servant. And secondly, when they say follow me, not him, they are building on another man's foundation, and that goes against Romans 14.

Romans 14:4 (NKJV) ⁴Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

Romans 15:20 (NKJV) ²⁰And so I have made it my aim to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man's foundation,

Paul not Afraid to Name by Name / If you Do – Better be Sure

Now, Paul isn't afraid to name by name certain false teachers (6 in total). So we see there is a place to call them out by name and identify them before all that these are false teachers. All I say is that you better be sure that you are sure, so you are sure that you are not laying a charge against another man's servant (and that servant's Master is God). I see a lot of very publicized Pastor's who are getting slammed by Christians, and to me I steer clear of entering into those things until they have clearly made statements that are heretical. I can see them teetering, but until they fall, I will remain silent, and as I remain silent I am praying that they will come back to where they first started their ministry at, the pure Gospel of Christ.

No fewer than six false teachers from Ephesus: Hymeneus (1 Tim 1:20); Alexander (1 Tim 1:20); Phygellus (2 Tim 1:15); Hermogenes (2 Tim 1:15); Philetus (2 Tim 2:17); and Diotrephes (3 John 9).

(Acts 20:31 NKJV) "Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears.

(Acts 20:32 NKJV) "So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

We must Teach – Love & Warn / Fattened up for Kill

We must teach the people, we must love the people, and we must also warn the people. Failure to warn people of the dangers, and only to teach and love them, is only to fatten them up for the kill.

God gives us Inheritance to Pass On / This Church stays strong – but only 40 yrs / Parents

God gives us an inheritance, and we are to pass our inheritance along. This church will stay strong in Paul's lifetime, these elders seem to fulfill the charge Paul has given them; but sadly in only 30-40 years Jesus will write this church and say you have left your first love. The charge we give our kids, we must implore with all we have we have that they do the same, that they pass their inheritance unto their kids.

(Revelation 2:4 NKJV) "Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love.

(Revelation 2:5 NKJV) "Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place; unless you repent.

Great in Rooting out False teachers / but failed in Passing Inheritance

The Church in Ephesus did great in rooting out the false teachers and apostles, but they failed in passing the inheritance on.

(Revelation 2:2 NKJV) "I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars;

Paul going to give more Heed to self in Next Verses / Example what is to Pour Out

Paul has told them to take heed to the flock, and now he is going to tell more detail of them to take heed to themselves. Paul's detail is merely recapping the example he lived and set while he was amongst them for 3 years. We finish this passage out with Paul giving these elders the example of what it is to pour yourself out for others:

(Acts 20:33 NKJV) "I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel.

(Acts 20:34 NKJV) "Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me.

False teacher want Free Ride

The false teachers don't want to work, they want the people to work for them. Paul is giving these elders the living example in himself, and that is for these elders to give themselves to the work of the Lord at whatever the cost.

(Acts 20:35 NKJV) "I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Won't find Statement in Gospels

Just as interesting note here, you won't find this statement in the Gospels. As John closed his Gospel out, he said not all was written:

John 21:25 (NKJV) ²⁵And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.

Much more than Financial

I believe Paul is speaking much more than just financial giving, but our blood, sweat, and tears for those God puts into our lives (saved and unsaved).

(Acts 20:36 NKJV) And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

(Acts 20:37 NKJV) Then they all wept freely, and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him,

(Acts 20:38 NKJV) sorrowing most of all for the words which he spoke, that they would see his face no more. And they accompanied him to the ship.

Finished Message with Tears & Prayers

Paul finished his message, and with tears and prayer, he went on his way.

Paul could Leave – for Poured his Life Out

Paul could leave, because he knew he poured out his life.

Moses laid hands on Joshua – Paul on You

Speaking of the Moses – Paul parallel; Moses would lay hands upon Joshua, and say you take them from here, take them into the Promised land, the land flowing with milk and honey; and here we see Paul doing the same with these Ephesians leaders. But I believe today for all who heard and received this message spoken, that God is doing the same as He is laying hands upon you and I and saying ok now, you take it from here. Lead them, take them into the place of blessings that I have prepared for them, all the spiritual blessings that are in heavenly places, take them into the victorious Christian life.

Ephesians 1:3 (NKJV) ³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

Outline: None of these things shall Move Me

- Paul had Confidence in God's Will
- Paul had Completion in his Ministry
- Paul had Courage through Confidence
- Paul had Coverage for his Ministry

Chapter 21

Hospitality and Spirituality (Acts 21:1-10)

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Still 3rd Journey – But shift towards 4th / Chains – Rome / House Arrest / Knows Trouble

Although we are still on Paul's 3rd Missionary Journey, we now begin to shift into what I call Paul's 4th Missionary Journey, even though that journey will not come with the free-will to go where he pleases, rather it will come with chains and prisons. Before it is all over, he will end up in house-arrest in Rome awaiting his trial (his appeal) before Caesar (where the Book of Acts ends): he will go to Rome as part of the legal case that was brought against him by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem (as we will study in the weeks to come). In our study today, Paul knows that trouble waits for him in Jerusalem, as the Holy Spirit has imparted foreknowledge to him (20:22-23), but Paul is moving ahead unwavering, steeled in his mind, this is the will of God for my life.

(Acts 20:22 NKJV) *"And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,*

(Acts 20:23 NKJV) *"except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.*

Knows Trouble Awaits – but is Unmoved / Study in Weeks Coming – Man Poured Out

Paul knows trouble lies in Jerusalem for him, but he is unmoved nor fearful of what is to come; rather we will read of him facing them head-on, with passion and power. Our studies in the weeks to come will be a study on a man who is poured out for and to the One he believes and trusts in, Jesus Christ. As we studied last week, Paul can move on ahead because he has faithfully completed his mission and ministry that the Lord had placed before him (outline below); the question for us last week was, can we face trials and troubles as Paul did with such confidence because we have done the same?

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

Outline: None of these things shall Move Me (Acts 20:13-38)

- Paul had Confidence in God's Will
- Paul had Completion in his Ministry
- Paul had Courage through Confidence
- Paul had Coverage for his Ministry

Next Study / This Study: Hospitality & Spirituality

In our passages next week we will see the uprising against Paul in Jerusalem by the Jews, but in our 10 verses today as Paul finishes off his return trip to Jerusalem, we will see the Lord ministering to Paul, refreshing him, and blessing him through a host of people who open their heart, and open their home to him. Again, a great passage for us today to glean for our life, to have a life, and that more abundant life (John 10:10). We will see the principles and blessings of hospitality (and the encouragement that come through it), and we will see the dynamic linking of spirituality that comes through hospitality.

[Warnings to Paul on the Journey to Jerusalem](#)

(Acts 21:1 NKJV) Now it came to pass, that when we had departed from them and set sail, running a straight course we came to Cos, the following day to Rhodes, and from there to Patara.

(Acts 21:2 NKJV) And finding a ship sailing over to Phoenicia, we went aboard and set sail.

Group of 9 / Carrying Love Offering

So we know this traveling group is at least Paul, Luke, and the 7 representatives of the Churches that joined him back in chapter 20, verse 4. These men were carrying an offering to the financially troubled believers in Jerusalem. So we have at least nine here in this traveling group. *(Acts 20:4 NKJV) And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia; also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.*

400 miles – Non-stop

About a 400 mile sea trip from Patara to Phoenicia. This was a straight shot without having to stop at each port like they have been doing. So Paul is like me, who hates having to stop at every stop like you do when you take the Metro into Washington DC.

(Acts 21:3 NKJV) When we had sighted Cyprus, we passed it on the left, sailed to Syria, and landed at Tyre; for there the ship was to unload her cargo.

(Acts 21:4 NKJV) And finding disciples, we stayed there seven days. They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem.

Tyre part of Phoenicia

Tyre is part of Phoenicia. There the cargo was unloaded.

Finding – Diligently Search / No Vacation / Find Fellowship when Vacation

The Greek word translated “finding” is a powerful one that means Paul was “diligently searching out, and looking for” disciples. The only other usage in the NT of this word was when the wise men set out to find the Babe of Bethlehem. So during this unexpected break, others might have said, “What a great opportunity for a vacation.” Not Paul. He said, “I want to be with the brothers. I desire fellowship.” There’s a misconception among believers that, when they’re out of town on vacation or business, it’s a good time to take a break from church. But then they wonder why they end up fighting on their vacation, why they’re angry with their family, why things don’t work out right. When you are traveling or vacationing, find a fellowship to attend. God will honor you, and you’ll be amazed to find special brothers and sisters wherever you go. So just like the wise men, just like Paul, we will be a wise man or woman of God to search out fellowship when we are on the road. I should also add that anyone of you considering moving for new employment, search out if there will be a place of fellowship before you take the job offer and move your family there.

Wonderful to Travel & meet other Christians / Do world Missions / Friends Foreign Place

Isn’t it a wonderful thing to travel, and meet Christians along the way. There just seems to be immediate kindred of spirit because you have found each other. Oh if you get the opportunity, take the opportunity to do world missions. How sweet it is to find and meet believers in a far away land. I can remember my mission trips to the former Soviet Union, the walls had only come down a few years earlier and excited they were to meet other Christians. How great it is to find other believers when you go on business travel or vacation, because there you are in a foreign place, all of sudden enjoying a familiar spirit. It is a wonderful thing to find other believers when you are way from home, and vice-versa for them. I can remember staying up until 2 and 3 in the morning talking with my new brothers in Christ when I was in Russia and the Ukraine, it seemed like 4 hours would just blink away as the conversation and fellowship was so sweet.

Through Spirit – don't Go

Verse 4 - They told Paul through the Spirit not to go up to Jerusalem – So here is an interesting thing, the Spirit testified to Paul there was trouble in Jerusalem (20:22-24), but here these disciples “through the Spirit” say don't go to Jerusalem. More on that in our next study.

(Acts 20:22 NKJV) "And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,

(Acts 20:23 NKJV) "except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.

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

(Acts 21:5 NKJV) When we had come to the end of those days, we departed and went on our way; and they all accompanied us, with wives and children, till we were out of the city. And we knelt down on the shore and prayed.

(Acts 21:6 NKJV) When we had taken our leave of one another, we boarded the ship, and they returned home.

Only 7 days – Beautiful Bond / Something about Paul / Be an Encourager

Only knowing Paul 7 days, yet they all have this beautiful bond and all the families come to say goodbye. There was something about Paul that people were drawn to, that they loved to be around him. I think it is simple and clear, Paul radiated Christ, and he was an encourager.

People not only need it, but love to be – encouraged. May we be a people that are encouragers to others, may we speak words that lift up the brethren and refresh them. May we be a people that when we leave, people can't wait for us to come back, that they miss us while we are gone.

Timothy took the example of Paul, and may we do the same.

1 Thessalonians 3:2 (NKJV) ²and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith,

Something about the People

There is also something about the people, and that is that they deeply desired the fellowship. These people are standing all alone; they are not respected or embraced because of their beliefs in this new religion. They didn't have what we have today and that is the acceptance of Christianity. There also wasn't a “First Baptist Church of Tyre”, a 2nd Baptist Church of Tyre”, Paul had to go diligently searching to find them. These people cherished their fellowship because all they had was each other. How exciting it must have been for them to hear all of Paul's stories of all that God was doing.

Witness to all Watching On / Next time at Denny's

Verse 5 - And we knelt down on the shore and prayed – Imagine all the workers on the shore getting the cargo loaded on the ship, and they look over and see all these people praying, what a witness that was. So too, it's a witness whenever you pray before your meal at Denny's or McDonald's. Don't be ashamed. Like the believers in the early church, you can witness even through prayer.

Returning Home – After Phoebe Left / Memories Relived – Energized – Ignited / Same Here

Verse 6 - and they returned home – Speaking of being an encourager, that is our sister Phoebe from Kenya. We miss her, she is so sweet. And speaking of returning home, how sweet a time of fellowship me and Renee had when we would “return home” after spending time with Phoebe from Kenya. We would just sit on the couch and talk about, bring back up, all the moments we had spent with Phoebe. We would say, wow what a story about this, what a story about that; we were energized by her visit, and prayer was just flowing through us. I can imagine these families going back home and doing the same about Paul. Cherish those moments when you can get them folks, for they are few and far between.

Couple that Prays

Verse 5 - And we knelt down on the shore and prayed – Let me say a word about couples praying together before moving on. Praying with their wives is one of the last things some men do. Why? Perhaps it's because prayer places them in a position of dependence upon God and husbands

may not want their wives to see them in a dependent situation. Yet my wife says this about us praying together: "I feel closer to you when we pray together, than at any other time. For me, praying together is the most intimate thing we do." Kneeling beside the bed, holding hands, lifting up our praise and requests, and entering into God's presence may indeed be the most intimate thing any of us ever does with our spouse. It is part of God's design, because spiritual intimacy is another vital part of marriage. When a couple's body, soul, and spirit are in harmony with one another and with their Creator, physical intimacy becomes reminiscent of Paradise, and love returns to Eden. If your marriage is lacking intimacy, go to the prayer chamber and watch what happens.

(Acts 21:7 NKJV) And when we had finished our voyage from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, greeted the brethren, and stayed with them one day.

(Acts 21:8 NKJV) On the next day we who were Paul's companions departed and came to Caesarea, and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, and stayed with him.

(Acts 21:9 NKJV) Now this man had four virgin daughters who prophesied.

(Acts 21:10 NKJV) And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.

Paul & Company stop at Phillip's / House of Hospitality & Spirituality

Heading south from Turkey on their way to Jerusalem, Paul and his entourage stopped at Caesarea to hang out with Philip and his family. This doesn't surprise me, for, according to our text, Philip's was a house of hospitality and spirituality. Even though there were four daughters and perhaps cramped quarters, Paul and his company (at least 9 of them) enjoyed being there.

20 Years Earlier / Paul behind Stoning of Stephen – Caused Stephen to Move / Now Knock

About twenty some years earlier, Philip's colleague, Stephen—another one of the original seven deacons—was martyred, his death unleashing great persecution in the church. Who was the one behind the stoning of Stephen? Who was the one who voted for it in the Sanhedrin? Who was the one who held the coats of those who threw the rocks? Paul. Paul was the one who, in a very real sense, brought about the death of Stephen. Paul was the one who caused the persecution of the church, which drove Philip to Caesarea. And Paul was the one who was knocking on Philip's door. Thus, I wonder what Paul and Philip said when they first encountered each other face-to-face. I imagine they embraced each other, realizing that which was behind them was buried beneath the blood of Calvary.

To hear that Conversation

Oh to hear the conversation between these two.

Philip – Dedicated Worker – Dynamic Preacher – Now Devoted Father

Philip was a dedicated worker in the church (Acts 6), a dynamic preacher in the world (Acts 8), and now a devoted father in the home.

Amazing 4 Girls / Probably 16

What an amazing 4 girls. In the day and culture of this writing, most girls were married by the age of 16; so these girls would be somewhere around that age. These are young woman.

House of Hospitality & Spirituality / Lord – What can I apply to My Family

This house was a house of hospitality and spirituality. There is much to be gleaned and gained from looking at this family. We talk so much about family values; well here is a valued family, a family so valuable to the kingdom of God. Let's slow down here today and look at this family, and ask the Lord, "what can I apply from this family to my family." Let's look at their "Hospitality" and then their "Spirituality".

The Hospitality of Philip's Family

Phillip opens Home / Gives up Comfort – takes in Expense / Igor’s Parents

Phillip opens his home up to this group of at least 9, and I’m sure it must have been tight quarters, but none the less Phillip host them, maybe even giving up his own bedroom. In those days if you had guests you feed them too. So Phillip gives up comfort and convenience, and absorbs added expenses to bless God’s people. I remember when I was in Russia in 1993, and we came into a town to host a 4 day Seminar on the “Inductive Bible Study Method”. I remember we showed up, Igor’s mother greeted us, showed us our rooms, took us in the kitchen made us dinner, then picked up her suitcase and said goodbye. They gave us their whole apartment for those 4 days, as they went and stayed with family. And every day she came home from her job at lunch, prepared dinner, and had it waiting for us when we got home. I pray the blessings of the Lord upon her.

Believers – given to Hospitality / May Entertain Angels

Romans 12 teaches that one of the components in the life of the believer is hospitality. We are to be men and women of hospitality—not out of obligation, but out of opportunity. Why? Because the writer to the Hebrews would later tell us to let brotherly love continue and be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unaware (Hebrews 13:2).

Romans 12:9-13 (NKJV) ⁹Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. ¹⁰Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; ¹¹not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹²rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; ¹³distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.

Hebrews 13:1-2 (NKJV) ¹Let brotherly love continue. ²Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels.

Angels? – Ask Abraham / 2 Angels and Jesus (a Christophany)

Open your home. Open your heart. Be hospitable. Why? Not only because the Word demands it, but because there’s a blessing in it: You will entertain angels unaware. What does that mean?

Ask Abraham. In Genesis 18, we see him sitting in front of his tent. Seeing three men in the distance walking toward him, Abraham went out to greet them, saying, “Let me fix a meal for you and give refreshment to you,” little realizing that the group of strangers was actually two angels and Jesus Himself in a Christophany—an appearance of Christ before He came to earth as the Babe of Bethlehem.

Genesis 18:1-2 (NKJV) ¹Then the Lord appeared to him by ²the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. ²So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground,

Jesus said – Taking care of Me / Word Angel (Messenger) – Message Lord Gives / I’m not Hearing Anything / Hospital – Bind up & Patch

Jesus would later say, “When you take care of someone who’s naked and poor, someone who’s hurting and troubled, someone who’s in jail, someone who’s not doing well—when you do that to the least of My brethren, you’re doing it to Me. When you reach out in hospitality and open your heart and your home to people who are hurting, you’re doing it to Me.” (see Matthew 25:40).

The word “angel,” or *aggelos* in Greek, means “messenger.” You’ll be surprised, amazed, and blown away by the messages the Lord will give you when you open the doors of your home and heart, and show hospitality to people. Conversely, when folks say, “I’m not hearing anything from the Lord,” sometimes I wonder when the last time was they opened their home to a stranger. The word “hospitality” has embedded within its meaning the word we use for hospital—that is, a place to bind up, patch up, lift up folks who are hurting, bruised, or wounded. Hospitality includes not only the people we might like to be around, or the people we enjoy being with—but also those who are “strangers” to us.

Matthew 25:40 (NKJV) ⁴⁰And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’

Maybe Say – Don’t have Home / 1 Peter – to People Scattered / Don’t need house

You might be saying, “I don’t have a home of my own. I’m a teenager,” or “I’m homeless.” Check out what Peter said in 1 Peter 4:9, when he exhorted believers who had been scattered throughout all of the world—homeless quite literally because of persecution—to show hospitality.

You see, you don't need a house to show hospitality. You can show hospitality at school by sitting with the person who sits alone in the cafeteria, by reaching out to the person who's hurting at work, by spending a moment or two with the person who's discouraged in the supermarket. And if you do, because you'll be entertaining angels unaware, you'll be surprised at how the Lord will bless you, the things He'll show you, the honors He'll give you—just as He did to Abraham.

1 Peter 4:7-10 (NKJV) *⁷But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers. ⁸And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."⁹ Be hospitable to one another without grumbling. ¹⁰As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.*

Want the Gift? Just Ask

Hospitality is not my gift you may say, well then ask for it.

1 John 3:22-23 (NKJV) *²²And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. ²³And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.*

Phillip's family was hospitable, and they were spiritual.

The Spirituality in Philip's Family

Daughters Pure / Caesarea – dominated by Gentiles / Beach Town

Notice first the purity of Philip's daughters. Dominated by Gentiles, Caesarea was a wicked, hedonistic beach town. Yet Philip's daughters were singled out as being pure—as being virgins.

Parents – Stress Purity / Go on Offensive / Kids it is Worth It

How vital it is in these days that we stress within our families the importance and the blessing of purity. Parents, go on the offensive; don't waiver and let them watch those shows, because you don't want to be the fuddy-duddy parents. You singles youth, it is worth it, stay pure regardless of the pressure the world is throwing at you.

Why so Tough / So you can Take a Stand – the 144K in Tribulation / Not Curse - Opportunity

Kids often say, "If sex is so dangerous, why didn't the Lord just give us a switch that couldn't be turned on until we're married? Why do we have to wrestle with this issue from the time we're teenagers all the way until we get married?" In Revelation 14, we read of 144,000 who do not take the mark of the Beast during the Tribulation period. Instead, they take a stand for the Lord, walk with the Lord, and are used by the Lord. Revelation 14:4 says, "These are they which are not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." Teenager, single brother, single sister—you might be saying, "Yeah, if I was part of the 144,000, I'd make a stand, too." Well, here's your chance! Every one of you who is single has the unique opportunity to follow the Lamb in the tribulation you're in right now—with society flashing messages of compromise to you and with kids who are flaunting the fact they're no longer virgins all around you (at an FCA rally we had, 90% of the kids said they didn't want to graduate HS as virgins). You can say, "I will follow the Lamb. Like Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego, I will not bow to the passions that burn within me. I will stand tough. I will stand strong." Then, your single state becomes not a curse, but rather an opportunity for you to demonstrate your love for, and your commitment to, the Lord. Follow the Lamb, and I guarantee you will not say, "I wish I would have messed around. I wish I had picked up some sexually transmitted disease. I wish I had had an abortion or two. I wish I would have given myself to this guy and lost part of my soul to that one." I have yet to talk to one person who has said, "I really regret being a virgin when I got married." But I have talked to hundreds of couples who have said, "I regret compromising my virginity—because even in my marriage, I'm suffering the effects." Youth, stand firm, holdfast, and you can sing a song that no one else can!

Revelation 14:1-5 (NKJV) *¹Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, ²having His Father's name written on their foreheads. ³And I heard a voice from heaven, like the voice of many waters, and like the voice of loud thunder. And I heard the sound of harpists playing their harps. ⁴They sang as it were a new song before the throne, before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no one could learn that song except the hundred and forty-four thousand who were redeemed from the earth. ⁵These are the ones who were not*

defiled with women, for they are virgins. These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were ²redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb. ⁵And in their mouth was found no deceit, for they are without fault before the throne of God.

Parents not Just No – But Why / Sin Forbidden / Maime and Kill / Phillip to be Commended

Mom and Dad, it's not enough to tell our kids to "Just Say No." We've got to tell them why. We must remind them that sin is not bad because it's forbidden—but that sin is forbidden because it's bad. Sin hurts, maims, and destroys. Sin will strip and rob us of what could have been and of what God wants us to be. Truly, Philip is to be commended. In a seacoast city and in a carnal culture, he was able to teach his daughters the importance of being pure.

Not Only Purity – Devoted / Singularly Devoted to God

Notice not only the purity of Philip's daughters, but also the piety of his daughters. Paul makes it clear in 1 Corinthians 7:34 that the word "virgin" not only meant sexual purity but spiritual piety (set apart, reverence and devotion to God). You see, the married woman must constantly factor the care of her husband and family into her life. But the virgin can live a life of unparalleled piety, caring only about the things of the Lord. Philip's daughters were not self-righteous prudes, but young women who were singularly devoted to God.

1 Corinthians 7:34-35 (NKJV) ³⁴There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world—how she may please her husband. ³⁵And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction.

Notice their Power / Prophecy - Words to Build Up / Not Arguing / George Marky in Ukraine

Notice, finally, the power of Philip's daughters. "I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy..." said the Lord (Joel 2:28). First Corinthians 14 tells us that prophecy consists of words of edification to build up, words of exhortation to stir up, and words of comfort to cheer up. Philip's daughters were women who were not gossiping, arguing, and fighting—but building up, stirring up, and cheering up. I met this modern day family when I was in the Ukraine in 1995, a pastor and his family, but his kids totaled 9. He had older kids, teens and young adults, all pure, and all Spirit filled. I remember interviewing them for a magazine article I use to write, and I asked them if they missed the States, and each one said "no". They loved being missionaries and presenting Christ to the people of the Ukraine. They were pure, they were devoted, and they were powerful.

Joel 2:28-29 (NKJV) ²⁸ "And it shall come to pass afterward That I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. ²⁹ And also on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.

1 Corinthians 14:3-4 (NKJV) ³But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. ⁴He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church.

Parents – tell your Kids about Holy Spirit / Power for Today and Now

Parents, talk to you kids about the Holy Spirit. The works of the Holy Spirit in their lives to live obedient lives to the Word of God; the power of the Holy Spirit to work the works of God. Tell them the Holy Spirit is for them now, not some yet future thing, but an immediate availability today.

Good for you Phillip – how work for Me / Connection Hospitality & Spirituality

"Good for Philip," you say. "But how does his story help me in my situation with my family?" There's a connection between the hospitality of Philip's house and the spirituality in Philip's house that I don't want you to miss. I think hospitality teaches your kids a very real and practical application of spirituality.

Not 1st Time hear Phillip / Acts 6 serving tables – Acts 8 Preaching / He sought the Kingdom

Also, I want you to see mom and dad's, this isn't the first time we hear of Philip in the Book of Acts. In chapter 6, he was a dedicated worker in the church. In chapter 8, he was a dynamic preacher in the world. Here in chapter 21, he is a devoted father in the home—not by focusing on

his family, but by seeking first the kingdom. Mom and Dad, seek first the kingdom. Make spiritual life priority. Establish family devotions. Get your kids plugged into church and a youth group. Open your own heart and home to those in need of hospitality. Seek first the kingdom of God, and, like Philip, you'll see your family walk in purity, piety, and power.

Acts 6:2-4 (NKJV) ²Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. ³Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; ⁴but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

Acts 8:4-8 (NKJV) ⁴Therefore those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word. ⁵Then Philip went down to ⁶the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. ⁶And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. ⁷For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. ⁸And there was great joy in that city.

Coming Home (Paul returns to Jerusalem)

Acts 21:10-40

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

3rd Journey Over / Today to Jerusalem / Trouble will not Move Paul / Life not Dear

Paul has finished his 3rd missionary journey, and in our study today Paul will come back to Jerusalem (Paul is coming Home). Paul knows that trouble awaits him in Jerusalem, back home, but he presses on ahead because he feels that this is God's will for his life, and no danger or trouble will keep him from being in God's will. I would say to all here today, the most dangerous place to be is outside of God's will, no matter how safe and comfortable it may be. The key to Paul's life is that he doesn't count his life dear, he lives for Jesus, he has a light touch on the things of this world, and has his eyes fixed on the prize – heaven and the things of Jesus.

Sometimes home is the most troubling place in our life; so we can glean a lot from Paul, and his example of not counting our life dear, willing to die to ourselves for the greater cause of others.

(Acts 20:22 NKJV) "And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,

(Acts 20:23 NKJV) "except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.

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

Outline Acts 21:10-40:

- At the End of the Day - We Must be Sure that we are Sure
- Standing Beside our Friend (Protection – Provision – Promotion)
- God Leaves out the Details
- The Cross will always be Offensive
- The Middle Wall – How high is It?
- There is no Power in Fitting In
- Looking into the Palm of God's Hand

Before all Over – Rome / World's in Collision

Today will begin the trouble, and before it is all over in several more chapters, Paul will be sent to Rome to stand before Caesar Nero (even though we don't get that account in the Book of Acts). There are two world's on a collision course as God will send His champion of the kingdom, the Apostle Paul, to face Satan's champion of the earth at that time, Caesar Nero, and the two will square off and we here 2000 years have been given the account to study and learn from for our own spiritual growth.

At Phillip's House

So Paul, Luke, and the 7 Elders are with Paul right now at Phillip's house in Caesarea, no doubt being encouraged and refreshed in the fellowship in that home with Phillip and his 4 virgin daughters who all prophesied, and I can only imagine the move of the Spirit in that home amongst a house full of people excited and sold-out for Jesus.

(Acts 21:10 NKJV) And as we stayed many days, a certain prophet named Agabus came down from Judea.

(Acts 21:11 NKJV) When he had come to us, he took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet, and said, "Thus says the Holy Spirit, 'So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'"

Reminds me of Ezekiel (lay on Side) – Jeremiah (Underwear)

Rough and rugged individuals, prophets like Agabus tended to do amazing things that jarred people into attentiveness. Ezekiel lay on his side for days in order to deliver a message to God's people (Ezekiel 4:4–9). Many days after the Lord told Jeremiah to put his underwear under a rock on the Euphrates River, He told him to dig it up, put it on, and walk through the city, saying, "You people are like this underwear" (see Jeremiah 13:1–11). And here, Agabus used Paul's belt to deliver an illustrated sermon.

Agabus from Chp 11 – Famine / Agabus' words come to Pass

Paul knows Agabus from chapter 11 if you recall that story. Agabus, signified by the spirit that there would be great famine throughout all the world (this famine was historically recorded by the way, which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar). So Paul knows that Agabus is a true prophet and the words that he speaks do come to pass.

(Acts 11:27 NKJV) And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch.

(Acts 11:28 NKJV) Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar.

Agabus doesn't say – don't Go / Paul not Moved

Agabus doesn't say don't go to Jerusalem, only he says these things are going to happen, so he is just confirming what Paul already knows. And, as we will see, Paul shall not be moved.

(Acts 21:12 NKJV) Now when we heard these things, both we and those from that place pleaded with him not to go up to Jerusalem.

(Acts 21:13 NKJV) Then Paul answered, "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

(Acts 21:14 NKJV) So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, "The will of the Lord be done."

At the End of the Day - We Must be Sure that we are Sure

Confirming & Swaying / Not 100% Sure / At End of Day – You must be Sure

So some are confirming what is to come for Paul, other are trying to sway him to avoid what is coming, but Paul sets his face like flint to go head-on into what is going to happen. I really can't (with 100% confidence) tell you exactly why through the Spirit some said don't go, and the Spirit testifying to Paul what is to come. But what I can tell you with full assurance is that you need to know what it is that God is asking you to do, regardless of the voices and counsel from others. At the end of the day you have to be sure, this is what God wants me to do, and I will not be moved to the left or right by what others may say. I can tell you personally that when I left my job at the Space Center to go to Bible College, I was sure that that is what God called me to do. But I can also tell you that I had several people tell me, I feel in my spirit that this is not what God's will is for you.

Word is Starting – Counsel Good / End of Day – You know Exactly

Obviously the Word is the starting point, does this align with the word? Is there wisdom in the multitude of counsel, yes! But at the end of the day, you need to know exactly what God is asking you to do, and then do it, and don't be moved to the left or right by anything.

Paul not Persuaded / Romans 8 – what Paul is Persuaded

Paul could not be persuaded, but he has already told us how he is persuaded (for he has already written the book of Romans), and that is that he is persuaded (solid and sure) that nothing shall separate him from the Love of the Lord (both him giving his love to the Lord, and the Lord giving His love to Paul). If you are persuaded by this love as Paul was, then you will not be persuaded (unsure and timid) by anything that comes against you in this world. I know my Redeemer lives, and He lives for Me!

Romans 8:37-39 (NKJV) ³⁷Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. ³⁸For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

If Paul Heeded – Mission Journey More / No time to Write Prison Epistles

If Paul had heeded their advice to not go to Jerusalem, to not come to his end, imagine what he could have went on to do. Consider that missionary journeys 1-3 Paul had preached the gospel for about 16 years, to an area that covered 1500 square miles, had travel over 5500 miles by land, and over 6700 miles by sea, totally over 12,200 miles. Just imagine if he could have had 16 more years, 3 more missionary journeys, how many lives would have been affected. But, imagine the time and energy that consumed him doing so; working 8 hours a day making tents, and probably preaching and teaching another 8, not much time to do anything else, including – writing what we call today “the Prison Epistles”, or the wealth of spiritual treasures that are found in those books (Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, Phillipians). How much impact those epistles have given to the entire world for these last 2,000 years?

Paul Urged to Make Peace (Nazirite Vow)

(Acts 21:15 NKJV) And after those days we packed and went up to Jerusalem.

The 9 of Them

Paul, Luke, and the seven:

(Acts 20:4 NKJV) And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia; also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.

Standing Beside our Friend (Protection – Provision – Promotion)

Shared - Ceased Arguing – Started Traveling

“We’ve shared our hearts,” said the brothers. “And now the will of the Lord be done,” they said as they ceased arguing and started traveling.

They knew what Coming – But Continued with him / Moment of Crisis

Although they had been told repeatedly that Paul would be beaten and imprisoned in Jerusalem, Paul’s traveling companions continued on with him. They would not leave Paul in his moment of crisis. During times of suffering, true friends stick close together to provide comfort and assistance.

Proverbs 17:17 (NKJV) ¹⁷ A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity.

3 Blessing for Doing So

Please note three blessings the Lord bestowed upon those who stood by and with Paul:

Protection. Throughout the Book of Acts, Paul’s friends went through storms at sea, riots in cities, and all kinds of challenges. But they were protected in them all.

Provision. Paul’s great passion was to go to Rome. These men went with him, although not exactly as they planned. He went as a prisoner. Nonetheless, the journey was all-expenses-paid!

Promotion. What would have happened if Luke, who was in this group, had said, “Paul, you’re stubborn. You’re bullheaded. You’re not listening to our advice. Go ahead and go to Jerusalem—

but count me out. I'll just hang out here at the beach and date one of Philip's daughters"? He would not have become the author of the Book of Acts.

Barnabas – Great Man / Suggest – lost Something / My Advice

Unlike these friends who traveled with Paul, after a dispute with him over John Mark, Barnabas parted company with Paul (Acts 15:39). While Barnabas is a great man and a wonderful example in so many ways, following his split with Paul, he is never again seen in Scripture. I suggest Barnabas lost something by demanding his own way. And I wonder how many brothers and sisters miss out on what God could have done in and through their lives had they not bailed out and said, "If my advice isn't being heeded, if I don't get my way, I'm pulling back; I'm getting out."

Wives – Remember Sarah / Protection – Provision - Promotion

Wives, you may not like the decision your husband is making. He's not hearing what you're saying. He's not following your suggestions. And perhaps you're tempted to say, "I've had it. See you later." Before you do, consider Sarah. "When Abimelech sees you," her husband, Abraham—the man of faith, the friend of God—said, "he's going to want you in his harem—and he'll kill me to get to you. Protect me, Sarah. Tell him I'm your brother" (see Genesis 20). Abraham made a decision; Sarah carried the baggage of his decision—and what happened? Like Paul's friends, Sarah was given protection when the Lord spoke to Abimelech, saying, "You touch her, you're dead" (see Genesis 20:3); provision when Abimelech offered Abraham great riches for her sake (see Genesis 21:16); and promotion when she was singled out in the New Testament as the quintessential example of a good wife (1 Peter 3:6).

1 Peter 3:5-6 (NKJV) ⁵For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, ⁶as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror.

(Acts 21:16 NKJV) Also some of the disciples from Caesarea went with us and brought with them a certain Mnason of Cyprus, an early disciple, with whom we were to lodge.

Mnason – Early Disciple / Pentecost? Cross? / 20-25yrs Later still Walking / Cruise-Control

Mnason was an early disciple; how early we do not know. Was he at Pentecost, or earlier than that – like he walked with Christ, we do not know, but it is pointed out to us that he is an early disciple. What I like about that statement is that it is some 20-25 year later and he is still walking with the Lord, he is still serving the Lord, he is still being used by the Lord. Christian, don't set your cruise-control; may we be a people that always has our foot on the pedal and hands upon the wheel, that we are continually and actively involved in what the Lord is doing, and where the Lord is working. Salvation is only the beginning of this "Great Adventure", but sadly for too many Christians it is the beginning and the end.

(Acts 21:17 NKJV) And when we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

(Acts 21:18 NKJV) On the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.

(Acts 21:19 NKJV) When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

Detail by Detail / Prison Doors – Stoning – Riots – Church Plants - \$\$\$ / Not Enough

Paul gives details, and imagine all those details. My what we have read over the last few months. Prison doors miraculously opening, escaping riots, stoning, death threats and plots, thousands being saved, churches being planted, pastors being raised up, and love emanating from the Gentiles to the Jewish believers by way of this financial offering. But next we will read, wow that was great Paul, but you need to do more.

(Acts 21:20 NKJV) And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the law;

(Acts 21:21 NKJV) "but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.

Not So – Already written Church in Corinth

Now Paul did not say these things, in fact he had already written the church in Corinth and Rome and had said the following:

(regarding circumcision) – circumcision is nothing – but the keeping the commandments

(regarding customs) – one esteems one day higher than another – don't judge another

1 Corinthians 7:19 (NKJV) ¹⁹*Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but keeping the commandments of God is what matters.*

Romans 14:5-6 (NKJV) ⁵*One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.* ⁶*He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks.*

(Acts 21:22 NKJV) "What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come.

(Acts 21:23 NKJV) "Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow.

(Acts 21:24 NKJV) "Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law.

(Acts 21:25 NKJV) "But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality."

Christians in Jerusalem – Still adhere to Rituals / Paul don't Offend – Make Friends

Although the Christians in Jerusalem were believers in Jesus, they still adhered to the rituals and ceremonies of Judaism. Thus, the leaders of the church said to Paul, "Because the Christians in this community have heard you tell people they don't have to circumcise their children, observe the rituals, or attend the festivals, they will be offended when they see you. To show them you can be trusted, here's what you need to do...."

Sadly – Jerusalem Elders influenced by People / Not other way

Here is a sad statement and demonstration, and that is that the elders are being influenced by the people, rather than influencing the people on the basis of the Word of God. And secondly, these are the elders, but they are not giving Paul opportunity to clarify the situation.

Thermometer - Thermostat

Every one of us is in one of two categories: conformer or transformer. Right now you're either trying to figure out what she's wearing, what he's driving, or how you can fit in and be cool — or, like J.B. Phillips, you're saying, 'I don't care what the world is doing. I'm not going to let it squeeze me into its mold.' Are you a thermometer — adjusting to the temperature of the culture, or are you a thermostat — changing the climate of the culture? If you are a conformer, a thermometer, here's the problem: You're in for perpetual frustration because by the time you take the temperature and figure out what's hot, by the time you change your look, or buy the car, or redo your house — the world will have moved on, leaving you out of style. Truly, this is a great mystery to a lot of Christians. They try to make their ministries relatable by analyzing what the world is doing in order to emulate it. But by the time they figure it out and implement it, the world has moved on. That's why Christians are known for being out of style

God Leaves out the Details

7yrs Jer Decree / Not Full Details – How deep did they Go / I appreciate that / Patient

It is about 7 years since the Jerusalem decree (Acts 15:1-31) that James just recapped for us in verse 25, but the Believing Jews in Jerusalem did not feel that applied to them. Even though the leaders admitted in that decree that they couldn't keep the yoke (burden) of keeping all these rules and performing all these rituals. Now the Holy Spirit doesn't give us very much detail to all that is going on in Jerusalem with these Jewish Believers; like were they still making animal sacrifices for their sin (even though Jesus was the end of the sacrificial system)? Were they still keeping the Sabbath, even though Jesus was the fulfillment of the Sabbath? Were they still keeping the dietary laws? You know I really appreciate that about the Lord, and that is that He isn't giving us all their details of these Believers shortcomings and maybe even sins; He is concealing that from us. I appreciate that about the Lord that He conceals so many of my sins and shortcomings from men. I don't have to live in the continually reminder that everyone knows all my faults and failings. I appreciate how patient and kind He is to me while I am growing and maturing in Him. I appreciate how He waited for me to "get it", just like He doing with these early Believers in Jerusalem. Hey you guys just aren't getting it, it is 20 years later, and you still haven't "got it", but that is ok for someday you will, and I'll keep working and waiting. How often we are in such a hurry to see other people "get-it", when that very thing took us years and years to "get-it"; but now that we have gotten-it, we expect everyone else to get-it, and get-it now.

Acts 15:8-11 (NKJV) ⁸So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, ⁹and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. ¹⁰Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

¹¹But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus ^cChrist we shall be saved in the same manner as they."

Hebrews 10:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Hebrews 4:9-11 (NKJV) ⁹There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.

¹⁰For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. ¹¹Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.

Book Hebrews – Quit being a Hebrew / OT reveals New Covenant / Igor & Olga

The Book of Hebrews was written to the Hebrews about quit being Hebrews. If you read the Book of Hebrews it is pulling tons of reference from the Old Testament concerning the "New Covenant", where it isn't based on man's work, but God's work, and that is His work upon the cross. Over and over in the OT God reveals what the New Covenant will be, and so these Believers in Jerusalem had what they needed in the Scriptures, so waiting for the Book of Hebrews was the issue here. Along with the Scriptures, is the Holy Spirit teaching. I know when I first got saved I would quote Scriptures that I had never read; I would quote them as this is how I am going to live, I believe this is what God would have me live, and then it would be sometime later I'd read that passage and say, wow I didn't even know it existed. I can remember for like two years when I first got saved saying, you know what I'm just going to seek first the Kingdom of God, and just trust He will take care of all the other stuff in my life. It took me two years to read up to Matthew 6:33. My friends Igor and Olga in Russia are a great example of this, they were living together (unmarried), they heard an American street preaching one night and gave their life to the Lord right there on the street. They went home that night, lived as they always had, and then the next morning they looked at each other and said, this just doesn't feel right; I still love you and want to be with you, but something doesn't feel right anymore. So they booked on down to the street searched out that evangelist and said, we need to talk to you. He of course told them, it is the Holy Spirit in you testifying to His will for your life, and of sin and righteousness. He then showed them in the Scriptures what God said about what they were doing. So that day Igor moved out until they were married. You see God will testify to man what His will and ways are, even if they don't have all the Word at their disposal. God is working on these believers in Jerusalem, and they will "get-it", it is just going to take some time.

Psalms 110:4 (NKJV) ⁴ The Lord has sworn And will not relent, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."

Psalms 40:6-8 (NKJV) ⁶ Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; My ears You have opened. Burnt offering and sin offering You did not require. ⁷ Then I said, "Behold, I come; In the scroll of the book it is written of me. ⁸ I delight to do Your will, O my God, And Your law is within my heart."

Jeremiah 31:31-34 (NKJV) ³¹“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—

³²not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, ³³though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ³⁴No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

Matthew 6:33 (NKJV) ³³But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

John 14:26 (NKJV) ²⁶But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

Nazarite Vow / Grow Hair – No wine – no Grapes – nothing Dead / Dedicated time to Lord

Verse 23 - We have four men who have taken a vow - Four men had taken a Nazarite vow. That is, they had let their hair grow long; they drank no wine; they ate no grapes or raisins; they didn't touch anything dead; and they devoted themselves for a period of time to singular dedication to God. At the end of their vow, they would go into the temple, spend seven days worshipping God, cut off their hair, burn it, and give offerings and sacrifices to God. It was all part of the prescribed process of purification following a time of separation (Numbers 6).

Because had take Time off – They ask Paul to foot the Bill (12 animals)

Because those who took a Nazarite vow had to take time off work to carry out the procedures at the conclusion and because the sacrifices required were costly (like 3 animals per man), it was customary for wealthy men to sponsor them. The church in Jerusalem, the brothers in Jerusalem asked him to foot the bill for the four men. “We’re not putting this trip on Gentiles, Paul. But supporting these men in their vow would be a wonderful way for you to relate to the Jewish believers here in Jerusalem who still subscribe to the rituals of Judaism.”

The Cross will always be Offensive

Paul do this – And Soften the Critics / Cross is Offense

Paul do this, and then your words won't be so offensive to the Believing Jews, and the Unbelieving Jews. You know what, it is never going to happen, because the Cross of Jesus Christ is offensive. The Cross of Jesus Christ represents first and foremost – “Death”. The cross was used to kill people, every person that went to the cross, died! It was not a form of discipline and correction, and after a few hours you were let down; no every person that went to the cross, went there to die. The cross for the people we read about today, and for the people alive in this room today, speaks of death to oneself. Jesus said pick up the cross (die to yourself), and follow Him.

1 Corinthians 1:18-19 (NKJV) ¹⁸For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.”

Galatians 5:11-12 (NKJV) ¹¹And I, brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased. ¹²I could wish that those who trouble you would even cut themselves off!

Matthew 16:24-25 (NKJV) ²⁴Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. ²⁵For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.

If you Share apart from Cross – You Share Nothing / Life comes from Death

If you try to share your faith apart from the cross, then you are sharing nothing. You can't speak of eternal life, apart from the cross, for the cross is center of the salvation message. You can't speak of life and that more abundant life as a follower of Christ, without the cross, because dying to one's self is the only way to the claim all the promises of God.

(Acts 21:26 NKJV) Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them.

Paul o Desperate / Paul becomes all Things

Paul, wanting so desperately to be effective in Jerusalem, perhaps said, "If this is a way to make them listen, I'll do it. I'll cut my hair. I'll purify myself. I'll go through the sacrificial rituals even though I know they've already been fulfilled in Christ." Exhibiting a great deal of grace and flexibility, Paul would later write, "To the Jew I became a Jew that I might win some" (see 1 Corinthians 9:20); and, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18). So here, even though he was not a believer in rituals and regulations, Paul said, "Okay, if that's what you guys want, I'll do it."

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 (NKJV) ¹⁹For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; ²⁰and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the ^εlaw, that I might win those who are under the law; ²¹to those who are without law, as without law (not being without ^εlaw toward God, but under ^εlaw toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; ²²to the weak I became ^εas weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. ²³Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you.

Romans 12:18 (NKJV) ¹⁸If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

For me – Weddings – Party's – Church / Let every man's Conscience be True

I know for me personally I've gone to a wedding where I wasn't in agreement with their lifestyle (but I was glad to give them their wedding gift, it is the same gift I give every time, A Bible and a Couples Devotional book). I've gone to kids birthday parties where I wasn't in agreement with their parents choices on the beverage menu; but I leave before people get too silly, but not before I get to ask people "how's things been going for you", hoping for a door of opportunity to plant or water. I've celebrated Christmas with those who have no conscience thought of who the Christ of Christmas is. I say let every man be true to his conscience, go or stay as the Lord leads you.

As for Nazarite Vow

As for the Nazarite vow, hey I know there have been times where I have dedicated myself to not watch television for a week so I can just spend that time in prayer. I have taken a whole month and said every Tuesday I will fast so I can set apart that time unto the Lord. So I am not going to make a big deal about this vow they have taken, nor with vows people make today, I just say let every man's conscience be true. (of course I am not in agreement with making a sin offering – that was part of the Nazarite vow).

(Acts 21:27 NKJV) Now when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews from Asia, seeing him in the temple, stirred up the whole crowd and laid hands on him,

(Acts 21:28 NKJV) crying out, "Men of Israel, help! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against the people, the law, and this place; and furthermore he also brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place."

(Acts 21:29 NKJV) (For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian with him in the city, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.)

(Acts 21:30 NKJV) And all the city was disturbed; and the people ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the temple; and immediately the doors were shut.

(Acts 21:31 NKJV) Now as they were seeking to kill him, news came to the commander of the garrison that all Jerusalem was in an uproar.

Sign – No Gentiles / Erroneously Assumed Paul's guest were Gentiles

Although anyone could go into the outer courtyard of the temple, beyond that, there was a sign reading: "Any Gentile entering in will be put to death." It was absolutely forbidden for Gentiles to go past the outer court. Paul had come into the city with some Gentile believers, and the Jews erroneously assumed they were the men who were in the temple with him.

Temple Divided / The Sign

Now the Temple area was divided up, and there was the Holy of Holies, where only the High Priest could go into once a year (it was where the Ark of the Covenant remained). Then there was the Holy place, where male Jews were permitted, then there was the court of woman where both male and female Jews could enter, and then outside of that was the "Court of the Gentiles", where all non-Jews were permitted to come. There was sign on the entrance into the Court of Woman that said any gentile passing beyond this point would be killed. The Romans, even though they had taken away capital punishment from the Jews, allowed this one exception, and that was to let them enact capital punishment on any non-Jew going beyond the Court of the Gentiles

Written in Latin & Greek (the sign read at the wall):

No foreigner may enter within the barricade that surrounds the temple and enclosure, anyone who is caught doing so will have himself to blame for his ensuing death.

The Middle Wall – How high is It?

Book of Ephesians

No doubt Paul was thinking of this when he wrote Ephesians:

Ephesians 2:14-18 (NKJV) ¹⁴For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, ¹⁵having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

¹⁷And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. ¹⁸For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

Interesting Note – Muslim's have one of these Stones

Just an interesting note (as I read an article – but could not confirm this), one of the stones from the temple area is now part of the Muslim area of the current Temple Mount, and it has one of these original stones outside of a mosque. I am not at war with a Muslim (which means follower of Allah), and I pray that they will someday see that the middle wall has been torn down, and that the Blood of Jesus Christ, His demonstration of how much He loves them, will be seen and applied to their hearts that they may be called Sons of God, the One True God, Jesus Christ.

I Celebrate the Separation Torn Down / No Middle Man – Not Distant – Outstretched Arms

As for me personally, how I celebrate and ever so thankful that the wall of separation has been torn down. I remember how distant God was to me as I had to go to that wall as a child and sit behind a veil and ask a man to make things right for me because of my sin. Oh the freedom and joy when the wall came down, when I met Jesus personally and saw that there is no wall, no man, that can keep me from Him; that He not a distant impersonal God, but a here and now God who so deeply wanted to intimate fellowship and communion (which means oneness) with Him. If you are today, may you know the wall has been torn down, and His outstretched arms are waiting for you to enter into to be held, to be loved.

However, friend if you have never received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, then there is a wall that separates you from Him, and that is your sin. He has the wrecking ball ready to destroy that wall (it is the Cross), but you must personally ask Him to forgive your sin, and you must repent (turn away) from your sin, and God will come and destroy that wall, and you may enter into a person relationship with Him, just as I have and many others sitting around you today.

Isaiah 59:1-2 (NKJV) ¹ Behold, the Lord'S hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. ² But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.

Habakkuk 1:13 (NKJV) ¹³ You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, And cannot look on wickedness. Why do You look on those who deal treacherously, And hold Your tongue when the wicked devours A person more righteous than he?

Sad Today when Christians put Up Signs – KEEP OUT

How sad today when Christians put up signs today that keep people out. Signs such as “unloving, cold, distant, even mean”, because that person hasn’t given their life to Christ. How sad it is to me when I’ve been challenged by Christians about ministering to the people up in the inner-city. The sign outside the Temple in our story today are still displayed today, big and bold, cold as stone, and it breaks my heart when Christians treat others as second-class people.

(Acts 21:32 NKJV) He immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down to them.

And when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

(Acts 21:33 NKJV) Then the commander came near and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and he asked who he was and what he had done.

(Acts 21:34 NKJV) And some among the multitude cried one thing and some another. So when he could not ascertain the truth because of the tumult, he commanded him to be taken into the barracks.

(Acts 21:35 NKJV) When he reached the stairs, he had to be carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob.

(Acts 21:36 NKJV) For the multitude of the people followed after, crying out, "Away with him!"

Revival or Riot

Wherever Paul went, one of two things happened: either a revival or a riot. This time it was a riot.

Doors shut Long time Ago / Don't Strive

Verse 30 - and immediately the doors were shut - Oh, Paul, the doors were shut long ago—you just didn’t see it, dear brother. I am sorry to say there have been times more than once when, like Paul, I have been determined to enter closed doors. You know what happened? I got a smashed nose and a headache from running into them. “Oh, I just want to do this so badly. I’m called to it. I feel good about it. It’s on my heart,” we say. But is the Lord opening the door? Are we flowing—or are we striving? Perhaps this incident was the reason Paul would later write to Timothy, “The servant of the Lord must not strive” (2 Timothy 2:24).

NW Corner Antonia Fortress

On the northwest corner of the temple mount sat the Fortress Antonia from which Roman soldiers could look down upon the temple to make sure nothing was out of order. When they saw the entire city running toward the temple, they headed there as well.

There is no Power in Fitting In

Hey – Where the Jerusalem Believers (James?) /There is no Power in Fitting In

Here’s the question: Where were the Jerusalem believers? Paul had come bringing an offering for them. He had shown flexibility in doing what they asked of him, even though it wasn’t his conviction—and now he was getting beat up as a result. Where was the church when Paul was in trouble? Nowhere to be found. There is no power in “fitting in”, and so there was no power in them to change this situation. Christian, don’t look to fit in, for it is powerless. There is only one place of power, and that is in Jesus Christ.

Away with Him

About whom else did the crowd say, “Away with Him”? About another Radical who said, “It’s not outward religion that matters—it’s inward righteousness”; about One who reduced everything to great simplicity when He said, “Love God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength, and love your neighbor as yourself” (see Matthew 22:37–39). “Away with Him,” they said concerning Jesus. And, “Away with him,” they’re saying concerning Paul, champion of His grace.

Paul wanted to be Conformed to Image of Christ / Never be conformed Going with Flow

Paul said he wanted to be conformed into Christ image, and Paul you were. Christian, you’ll never be conformed by going with the flow.

Philippians 3:10-11 (NKJV) ¹⁰that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, ¹¹if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Addressing the Jerusalem Mob

(Acts 21:37 NKJV) Then as Paul was about to be led into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I speak to you?" He replied, "Can you speak Greek?"

(Acts 21:38 NKJV) "Are you not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a rebellion and led the four thousand assassins out into the wilderness?"

(Acts 21:39 NKJV) But Paul said, "I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city; and I implore you, permit me to speak to the people."

(Acts 21:40 NKJV) So when he had given him permission, Paul stood on the stairs and motioned with his hand to the people. And when there was a great silence, he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, saying,

AD 54 - Dagger-Bearer

In the year A.D. 54, an Egyptian, whose name meant "dagger-bearer," led men to the wilderness to launch a revolt against Rome. Here in Acts, the captain, thinking Paul was this same Egyptian terrorist, was taken aback when Paul started speaking Greek. "You speak Greek?" he said. "I thought you were an Egyptian."

Paul Gutsy / Here is my Opportunity

Paul was a gutsy guy. Here, the Jews were out to kill him—yet he still wanted to speak to them. Paul must have thought, This is my opportunity! Virtually the entire city is here. This is the moment I've been waiting for twenty years! I'm convinced Paul was sure there would be a great revival among his brothers. Suffice it to say, however, his sermon was not the best-received sermon ever preached, as we'll see in chapter 22.

Looking into the Palm of God's Hand

Earth is Spinning / So is Your Life

Paul knew trouble was waiting for him in Jerusalem, but he would count it all worth it if he could reach his countrymen; unfortunately that is not how it will play out. Maybe Paul was saying I only mean well, my heart is to do good, why are things unfolding like this, it seems things are spinning out of control. Christian have you ever felt this way, seems like things are just spinning out of control, and I trying hard, everything I do I mean for good, yet it seems like things are spinning out of control. I want you to see today whose hands you are in, just like Paul, your life is in His hands, and He is in control. The same hands that hold you, are also holding this universe together, a universe where the earth is spinning on its axis 1,000 miles per hour. It is also traveling 67,000 miles per hour around the sun. The sun is moving in an orbit within our galaxy at 385,000 mph. And our galaxy (one of the slowest-moving galaxies known to man) is moving across the universe at 1,350,000, miles per hour. If God can hold the universe together at such speeds as this, He can hold your life together, just trust the hands that are holding you.

Isaiah 49:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶ See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; Your walls are continually before Me.

Recap what we Learned

Outline Acts 21:10-40:

- At the End of the Day - We Must be Sure that we are Sure
- Standing Beside our Friend (Protection – Provision – Promotion)
- God Leaves out the Details
- The Cross will always be Offensive
- The Middle Wall – How high is It?
- There is no Power in Fitting In
- Looking into the Palm of God's Hand

Chapter 22

Paul's defense before his Countryman at the Temple (part 1) (22:1-14)

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Knew Trouble – not Moved / Accused bringing non-Jews / Riot Begins – Guards Intercede

Paul knew trouble awaited him in Jerusalem but he could not be moved, he felt this was the will of God in his life, and he pressed on to Jerusalem and trouble found him. We pick up our study today in chapter 22, we left off with a riot at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem as the devout Jews had thought they seen Paul bringing non-Jews into the Temple, (which was strictly forbidden – it carried the death penalty as we studied last week). It is funny how that we read that they didn't care about killing the men that were with Paul, just Paul. We can clearly see a bias in play here. So trouble begins, they want to kill Paul, the Roman guard intercedes and saves Paul, and we pick up the story with Paul requesting to speak to the hostile crowd.

(Acts 20:22 NKJV) "And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,

(Acts 20:23 NKJV) "except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.

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

Paul Passionate / Heaven is Great

Paul was passionate in what he believed, he loved his Countryman and wanted them to have what he had, the personal daily experience of the intimate and loving God. Paul wanted them to enjoy Christ now, and into eternity, Paul wanted them to have eternal life with God. Paul wanted them to be with him in heaven. Heaven is going to be great, and here are just 10 reasons why heaven will be great to just put us in perspective of why Paul had the passion to proclaim the gospel as he did, and we should too:

Heaven will be Great because:

1. Jesus is there.
2. You'll be there.
3. We will be getting new bodies as we cast off these old tents
4. There will be no more tears and no more sorrow.
5. There will be no more cancer, handicaps, and no more death....
6. There will be no more Satan to endure
7. There will be no more of our flesh to fight
8. There will be no more world to distract us.
9. There will be no more war, no more famine, earthquakes, terrorist.....
10. And, there will be no more goodbyes.

Heaven is going to be great. Heaven will be great because of what is there, and because of what isn't there.

(Acts 22:1 NKJV) "Brethren and fathers, hear my defense before you now."

Fathers – Paul gives Respect / Our War Veterans

Verse 1 - and fathers – By the way, just a note, I like how Paul singles out “fathers” the old generation, the grey hair and grey beard men he was speaking to. I like how Paul gives them respect. May we who are younger, always give respect to those who are older. And I throw out for your consideration, if you ever pass an elderly man wearing some type of military ball cap that says something like “1st Infantry Korean War”, or “still a marine”, know in your heart they wear that cap in pride, they were proud to serve, and I challenge you to stop and shake their hands and say, “thank you for serving this Country, thank you for the freedoms I enjoy today”, and you will have blessed their day beyond measure, and wait until you feel how good it feels in your own heart. Our older generation today, male and female, deserves the same respect Paul gives these men today.

Defense – Apologetics / Christian – can you Defend / Basics – what is Gospel / 1 Peter 3

The Greek word translated “defense” is apologia, from which we get our word “apologetics.” Theologically, “apologetics” means defending the faith—giving reason and rationale for the things we believe. Christian, I pose to you this question, if you were called right now to come stand before a crowd, could you defend your faith (at its central core – the Gospel) ? If you were asked, why should I follow Jesus Christ as you do, what is the Gospel? Could you answer? Take a moment to think that out, role play in your mind. Can you, could you, would you? If you can't, then plan and purpose in your mind that you will think this through until you are able. This is not a suggestion; it is a command of God to be able to do so. If you need help, we are more than willing to help, and you'll be equipped within one hour.

(1 Peter 3:15 NKJV) But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear;

Message cut Short / Not OT Prophecy – but Personal Testimony / Can't Argue your Story

Now we don't know what Paul's whole message was going to be because the crowd is going to cut him off we will see. But what we will read and see is that Paul's message was neither a teaching on Old Testament prophecy nor an exposition of temple typology. No, Paul's “apology” was his own testimony. And this encourages me greatly—because even I can give my own testimony. The most powerful defense you have is your own testimony. People can argue with anything you say theologically or philosophically. But they cannot argue with what the Lord has done for you personally. “Who is this Jesus?” asked the Pharisees of the blind man whom Jesus had healed. “All I know is this,” he answered. “Once I was blind and now I see”

John 9:25 (NKJV) ²⁵He answered and said, “Whether He is a sinner or not I do not know. One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see.”

Ask: Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How / There – you have a Testimony

For everyone here today I want you to ask yourself the - Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How – of your personal testimony.

- **Who** – told you about Jesus? Was it a person, were you reading, was it a revelation in your heart?
- **What** – was going on in your life at that time? Were you going through a hard time such as a divorce, a personal failure, illness, etc. Were you seeking to understand more about who Jesus was and you started going to church and/or researching. Was there a feeling of emptiness or that there had to be more?
- **When** – did you make a decision to follow Jesus. Can you remember the moment, even though you may not necessarily remember the date?
- **Where** – were you when you made that decision? What State, what location (a church, your bedroom, a friend's house)?
- **Why** – did you decide this was the right thing to do? Why did it make sense, why did you decide I am going to follow Christ?
- **How** – did you do it? Did you pray to ask Jesus to come into your heart, did you just believe it and start to live it, did you go forward at a Crusade?

I know you were thinking these points to yourself as I asked, and you remembered specifics about each question (ah I remember I was going through a divorce, I was so low, and Joe came and invited me to church, and the Pastor presented the gospel and I responded). Beloved, there is your testimony, now go out and share it.

But maybe you Don't have a W-H / Settle it Today

But maybe you are here today and you didn't have specifics on any of those points, couldn't really put a clear thought on any of those questions, then just maybe that is because you do not actually have a testimony, you never have made a clear and purposefully decision to give you life to Jesus Christ. If that is where you are at today, then lets settle this today, once and for all, that today is your Who, your what, your when, your where, your why, and your how.

The Gospel

John 3:16-17 (NKJV) ¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. You my friend are perishing, even right now at this very moment, as the word "perish" means "to put away with entirely", as you sin separates you from the Holy God. The structure of this sentence in the original Greek language is written that it is saying that the individual is performing the action, not God, it is the individual that is separating and putting himself away from God by his own actions.

The Problem:

Isaiah 59:1-2 (NKJV) ¹ Behold, the Lord'S hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. ² But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.

Romans 3:23 (NKJV) ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

The Penalty

Romans 6:23 (NKJV) ²³For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Provision

Romans 5:8 (NKJV) ⁸But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Man's Responsibility:

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

Romans 10:9-10 (NKJV) ⁹that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

(Acts 22:2 NKJV) And when they heard that he spoke to them in the Hebrew language, they kept all the more silent. Then he said:

Spoke Greek & Hebrew / Speak their Language / Have Thick Skin / Let Speak Freely - Piano

Paul spoke to the centurion in Greek, but he addressed his countrymen in Hebrew. Why? Because although the Jews understood Greek, Hebrew was the language they learned from birth. Therefore, Paul used their mother tongue to speak to their hearts. Let every man's conscience be true, and what I am about to say is what I know is true for me, but it may not be for you, and that is that when I am speaking to someone about Christ, wherever that may be, at work or on the streets, I speak in that person's language. I don't use the "Christian tongue", I don't use theological words or lofty speech, I just speak in real simple terms. I speak in words they understand, I don't ask them if they have been "washed in the Blood", "been to Calvary's Cross", "been robed in righteousness" – because to an unbeliever that is like, what are you talking about? Also, I put on thick-skin when I am witnessing, I don't let vulgarities upset me. If they say, "oh excuse me", I always say back to them, "please speak freely". Because I want them to speak freely to me, to open up to me what is on their heart, rather than have them worrying about a vulgarity slipping out. Last week I helped a brother move a piano. I think it was 600 pounds

when we started, but at the end of the move it was up to 1,000. We invite the lady to come to church, and then she asked “are you the Pastor”, then she said “I am glad I wasn’t cussing in front of you”; I said friend, “when I first lifted that piano, I am glad I didn’t cuss in front of you.” I just let people speak freely, so we can freely speak. I speak in their language (minus the cuss words), so they can understand what I am saying.

(Acts 22:3 NKJV) "I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' law, and was zealous toward God as you all are today.

1 Sentence – Grab their Heart / Hellenistic – Jerusalem / Be Relatable – Your Struggles

In one sentence Paul grabs the heart of every Jew. He grabs the Hellenistic Jews that were not born in Jerusalem (Jews with a Greek background), because Tarsus was a city in Asia Minor (present-day Turkey). But although I was born in Tarsus, I was raised in Jerusalem, and now he has become relatable to the Jews of Jerusalem. Paul has their attention. It is good to be relatable to people. Listen to them, let them speak, get to know their background as Paul did. If you have something relatable to them, let them know. Let them know you aren’t coming at them, but coming to them. Let them know, yep I too once struggled with that, or my parents were like that too, or I was divorced and I know how that affected me, or I too had an abortion. Listen to them, hear them, get to know them.

Gamaliel – Greatest Rabbi / Leave it Alone – Die or Live / 20 Years Later – No Fad

One of the greatest rabbis in Hebrew history, Gamaliel was respected by all Jews—Hebrews and Hellenists alike. They called Gamaliel “The glory of the Torah”, and Paul was personally instructed by him. Paul references Gamaliel, who had himself said about the Jesus movement, just leave it alone and see if it dies on its own, but if it is of God you don’t want to be fighting against God. Well Paul is really making a powerful statement here because it 20-25 years later and Christianity is growing by the day, and it has life and an abundance at that. This isn’t no fad, it is 20 years later and picking up speed everyday; hey anyone here go disco dancing last night wearing a white suit with bellbottom pants, and a black shirt with a huge collar? Anybody pet their pet rock? Anyone going home to play with their hula-hoop, or turn on their lava lamp? Fads just don’t last, and thus each person should investigate why has this endured this long.

Acts 5:38-39 (NKJV) ³⁸And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; ³⁹but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it—lest you even be found to fight against God.”

(Acts 22:4 NKJV) "I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women,

(Acts 22:5 NKJV) "as also the high priest bears me witness, and all the council of the elders, from whom I also received letters to the brethren, and went to Damascus to bring in chains even those who were there to Jerusalem to be punished.

Did he Point / Their Silence kept them Listening

Verse 5 - as also the high priest bears me witness – I wonder if Paul pointed at him when he said this. The high priest nor the elders interrupt nor deny his statement. Their silence locks the people in even more. So Paul will continue on retelling his story of how he met Jesus.

There is Something about this Way / No trouble finding Them

“The Way” was a phrase that referred to believers. Paul use to travel high and low to find the believers and to persecute them. What I like is that Paul didn’t have no problem finding them. There was something about them, they had a “Way” about them that they stood out and Paul could find them. I’ve said it before, but it is worth repeating, and that is the most dreadful words you can hear from someone is “Oh I didn’t know you were a Christian”. Ahh, stick a knife in me, cook an egg off my embarrassed burnt red face.

Paul 100mph / Not a New Personality / Use Your Personality / Be like Paul – use for Him

Paul persecuted this “Way” high and low, he was willing to go to the ends of the earth to find them and drag them in. Paul went 100mph searching them out in his zeal. How interesting to see that is the same way he was when he got saved. He went to the ends of the earth to deliver himself to the people, to deliver the gospel message, to proclaim the righteousness of Christ. One hundred miles per hour, that was Saul to Paul. You know a lot of people after they get saved are shocked to see that they still have the same personality; they think that should have changed too; some people think God should have changed your personality too because they aren’t too crazy about it. Your personality is who you are, take the personality God has given you, now use it for His glory. Be like Paul and use your personality to bring him glory; don’t use your personality as an excuse to run and hide (oh my personality isn’t very funny, or bold, or outgoing) – God will show you how to use your personality for His glory, but you must ask Him how.

(Acts 22:6 NKJV) "Now it happened, as I journeyed and came near Damascus at about noon, suddenly a great light from heaven shone around me.

(Acts 22:7 NKJV) "And I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'

Actually persecuting Jesus / Remember that next time you Speak / Jesus feels your Sting

Just an important note, Paul has been persecuting Christians, but Jesus says why are you persecuting Me? Christian, when you hurt another brother or sister with your words or action, you are doing it on to Jesus Christ. Be wary of that next time you lay hurtful words on your brother or sister in Christ. Paul thought he was well justified in his action, and so often people say “well it needed to be said”. I say be careful Christian, be very careful.

(Acts 22:8 NKJV) "So I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.'

(Acts 22:9 NKJV) "And those who were with me indeed saw the light and were afraid, but they did not hear the voice of Him who spoke to me.

Not a Contradiction / Heard a Voice but not understand the Words

In Acts 9:7, we read, “And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.” Here in his testimony, however, Paul said, “They heard not the voice of him that spake to me.” Is this a contradiction? No. The Greek usage in 9:7 indicates the men with Paul heard a noise. But here in 22:9, Paul used the Greek word “*phonea*” to indicate that the men with him heard no words.

Acts 9:7 (NKJV) ⁷And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one.

(Acts 22:10 NKJV) "So I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Arise and go into Damascus, and there you will be told all things which are appointed for you to do.'

Truly know when Someone Saved / Ask

You’ll always know when someone’s truly saved because, like Paul, he’ll say,

- “Lord, what do You want me to do?
- What do You want from me?
- What do You want for me?
- What do You want to do in and through me?”

Christian, these are good questions on a regular, if not daily basis. When was the last time you asked Him, “what is it that you want me to do?”.

Probably not Next Step Paul Expected / Back to Jerusalem – Prison – Gamaliel

Paul go to Damascus and wait might not have been exactly what Paul thought was a logical “next”. Paul may have thought that going back to Jerusalem and preaching was the next place to go, or back to the prisons and set free everyone he had imprisoned, or to go tell Gamaliel; but God says go to Damascus and wait. Sometimes we think that miniscule next step is so small and

insignificant that it is really optional if we have to do it or not. Paul, go to Damascus and wait for Me there.

I Learned to ask Regularly / Is there something left Undone

You know what I have learned to ask the Lord on a regular basis (in addition to what do you want me to do)? I say Lord, is there something I've missed, is there something you have asked of me that I just didn't get it and then just didn't do it; and then after I ask, I sit silently and listen for His voice to answer me:

- Did you want me to do something in the ministry or my family that I didn't hear (or ignored) and thus didn't do?
- Is there something (a sin) you called for me to repent of which I didn't do (ah it's just a little sin, in fact it really isn't a sin at all, it is kind of in the grey area? Remember time and distance doesn't equal repentance. Just because the subject is no longer spoken of, or you haven't seen that person for quite some times, that doesn't mean that the issue is settled or over.
- Was there forgiveness that I was to extend that bitterness has blocked?

I ask, and then I wait, so I can be sure that there isn't unfinished business between He and I that would keep me from moving onward and upward in His high calling.

(Acts 22:11 NKJV) "And since I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of those who were with me, I came into Damascus.

Jesus outshines the Noon Day Sun

The Light of Jesus out-shinned the high noon sun of the Mid-East, and I've been there and I can tell you that it is bright. It will be that Light of Christ that will illuminate heaven for us. But we need not wait until heaven to enjoy His Light as He will illuminate your heart today. What a promise today, the brilliance of God shining upon us today.

Revelation 21:23 (NKJV) ²³The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine ^εin it, for the ^εglory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.

Paul never would see the same Again

May we be blinded as Paul was, for Paul became blinded to the stuff of this world, for he was never the same after this day, he never saw the same again from this day. Paul says I count it all junk the things of this world. Christian, let it go, or equally said, don't let it keep you. Oh to see the radiance of His glory today, shining brighter than the noon sun, Jesus the righteous One.

Philippians 3:8 (KJV) ⁸Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

(Acts 22:12 NKJV) "Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there,

(Acts 22:13 NKJV) "came to me; and he stood and said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that same hour I looked up at him.

(Acts 22:14 NKJV) "Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth.

Imagine hearing those Words – Brother Saul / Your Greatest Sermon / What do I Say?

Verse 13 - 'Brother Saul - What those words must have sounded like coming through the darkness, "Brother Saul". One of the greatest sermons you'll ever preach to the beloved who has blown it terribly (Saul making widows and orphans) is to come alongside of them and call them brother, call them sister. You are still part of the family, you are still dear to God's heart, He will never leave you nor forsake you, especially in your darkest hour. You may say I don't know what to say to that person that has fallen, or is hurting (personal issues that are no fault of their own), I am afraid to go. Beloved, if you only say "brother", you have said a volume of a sermon. Brother, sister, we are family and I am here to go this with you.

Last seen Jesus – Next Ananias / Head then the Body / I see Jesus in You / Sermon Love

Verse 13 - receive your sight - Ananias says “receive your sight” and the first thing Saul sees is him. The last thing Paul saw before he was blinded was the Person of Christ. The first thing he saw when he received his sight was a disciple of Christ. He saw the Head first—and then the body. So, too, although I’ve seen the Lord through a glass darkly, I’ve seen His body very clearly. I see the reality of Jesus in you, His body, and I see it ever so clearly when a brother or sister comes in my darkest hour, my hardest times, my loneliest moments. Preach a sermon of love my brothers and sisters, let them look into your eyes through their tear soaked eyes and see eyes of love, eyes that care, eyes that cared enough to come, and then speak a powerful sermon, call them family. What will you say next, don’t worry, you’ll see how well it goes from there, because of how well it started.

Paul Chosen – So are You

Verse 14 - 'The God of our fathers has chosen - Paul you are a chosen vessel, is where we pick up next week, but for today know that you too were chosen by God.

My Prayer for You / Hope you got that Today

Verse 14 - that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth - That is my prayer for each of you—that you might know His will, see His face, and hear His voice

Recap what we learned today:

- To be ready to give a Defense – Apologetics
- To be ready to give our Testimony (Who, what, when, where, why, how)
- To know Him as Lord and Savior
- Ask Him – what do you want for me to do next?
- That we may never see the same again.
- Preach Great Sermons daily – Brother Saul

Paul's defense before his Countryman at the Temple

(part 2) (22:14-30)

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Knew Trouble – not Moved / Accused bringing non-Jews / Riot Begins – Guards Intercede

This week we continue and finish our study of chapter 22 on Paul's defense before his Countryman at the Temple. Paul knew trouble awaited him in Jerusalem but he could not be moved (20:24), he felt this was the will of God in his life, and he pressed on to Jerusalem and trouble found him. A riot broke out at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem as the devout Jews had thought they seen Paul bringing non-Jews into the Temple, (which was strictly forbidden – it carried the death penalty as we have studied). It is funny how that we read that they didn't care about killing the men that were with Paul, just Paul. We can clearly see a bias in play here. So trouble begins, they want to kill Paul, the Roman guard intercedes and saves Paul, Paul then requests to speak to the hostile crowd, he starts by retelling personal testimony of meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus.

(Acts 20:22 NKJV) *"And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,*

(Acts 20:23 NKJV) *"except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.*

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

Damascus is Speaking

Paul tells the story of his personal testimony, his personal encounter with Jesus Christ, and the life changing power that comes with the personal encounter with God. That testimony is still being told, and lives are still be changed. There was a the 77 minute docu-drama film created called "Damascus". It tells the story of Saul of Tarsus — a religious extremist and persecutor of the Church in the first century — who had a vision of Jesus Christ on the road to the Syrian capital and not only became a follower of Jesus but became the Apostle Paul, arguably the most famous of the early Church fathers and author of nearly half the books of the New Testament. The film was produced by Arab Christians. It was filmed on location in Damascus and other historic locations in Syria. The film has been endorsed by President Bashar al-Assad and premiered in Assad's personal theater in Damascus in March (with over 1,000 businessman and politicians in attendance. The film has also been endorsed by Protestant and Catholic leaders, and premiered at the Vatican in May. The film is also known in the region as, Damascus Is Speaking. The Joshua Fund was asked to raise \$300,000 to produce 300,000 copies of the film on DVD. The DVDs will distributed in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the Holy Land. The DVDs are currently being produced and readied for distribution. God is doing a great work there in Damascus – in our very day. Damascus is speaking still today, and I pray it will speak to your heart today.

Blinded by Brilliance of Jesus / Ananias comes to him / Pick up Verse 12

Paul (Saul) was blinded by the brilliance of the Light Jesus which outshined the noonday sun of the Mideast that day on the road to Damascus. He was blinded for 3 days, and then the Lord sends his servant Ananias to come and speak to Paul through the darkness. Let's pick it up in verse 12 for context, and remember it is Paul who is speaking.

(Acts 22:12 NKJV) "Then a certain Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good testimony with all the Jews who dwelt there,
(Acts 22:13 NKJV) "came to me; and he stood and said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight.' And at that same hour I looked up at him.
(Acts 22:14 NKJV) "Then he said, 'The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth.

My prayer for You / Know – See - Hear

Verse 14 - that you should know His will, and see the Just One, and hear the voice of His mouth -
This is my prayer for each of you today - that you might know His will, see His face, and hear His voice. .

- **Know His Will for You** - His will is for you, He always wants what is best for you.
- **See the Just One** - He wants you to see Him, to see that He is an intimate and personal God,
- **Hear His Voice** - He wants to speak to you, He wants you to hear His words of love for you. He wants you to hear how much He adores you, how much He is for you, how much He is before you – so close that you can see Him, the Just One.

Paul Chosen – You are Chosen

Verse 14 - 'The God of our fathers has chosen you - Paul you are a chosen vessel. For everyone here today who has received Jesus Christ, you to have been chosen by Him. (Note: although the Greek Words are not the same in Acts as it is in the following verses, the idea and context carry the same meaning – selected and called out by God for salvation and His ministry).

Ephesians 1:4-6 (NKJV) ⁴just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, ⁵having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

1 Peter 2:4 (NKJV) ⁴Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious,

1 Peter 2:9-10 (NKJV) ⁹But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

Chosen – has a Deep Meaning / Salvation & to put into Hand

The word “chosen” used here in the Greek has a very deep meaning.

Chosen (procheirizō)

- 1) to put into the hand, to deliver into the hands
- 2) to take into one's hands
- 3) to set before one's self, to prostrate, to determine
- 4) to choose, to appoint
 - for one's use
 - for one's salvation

Salvation – Absolutely / Hand – God has Placed you in Hand / Mood – Indicative - Fact

We look at the definition of this word and apply it to mean we were chosen for salvation, and that is exactly and absolutely true (PTL). However, I want you to see and know that all the other definitions are equally absolute and true. God has taken you and placed you into His hand; He has set you before Him. And, let it be known clearly in your heart the “mood” of this statement. In the Greek language, based on the grammatical structure of the sentence, you can get the “mood” of what is being said. In our English language you can only get the mood if you are hearing it being spoken. The “mood” of this of this phrase in the “indicative mood”, which means - *The indicative mood is a simple statement of fact. If an action really occurs or has occurred or will occur, it will be rendered in the indicative mood.* Christian, it is a fact, it is a done deal, you have been placed into His hands.

Tense – Aorist – No regard to Time / Past – yuck, Present – Devo, Future - Perform

And, to even make it sweeter, “tense” of this phrase is in the “aorist tense”; and that means “the concept of the verb is considered without regard for past, present, or future time”. When did God choose you? Past – in your yuckiest sin. Present – right now regardless of how good or bad your morning devotion was. Future – regardless of how well you “perform” tomorrow. You have been chosen, and it is a fact, and it is a done deal.

When Chosen – God took all that came with It / Baggage – Failings / Still work Needed

Beloved get this, when God chose you, He took everything that came with you. He took all your past, present, and future sins. He took your personality, He took all the baggage that you may be carrying, He took all your failing (past, present, and yet future), He took it all when He took you. He knew there was still yet work to be done. He knew that people would talk poorly about the people He has chosen because they have yet to be made perfect, He was and is willing to take the pain in His heart when we fail, and people say “some Christian huh”.

College Bonfire / They are not Mine

I am reminded of a story - it was a college campus, and one of the Christian leaders organized a bonfire. The purpose of the bonfire was to burn your old sins. They were going to build this big fire, sing some worship songs, have some personal testimonies, and then everybody who had something they wanted to break free from was to throw it into the fire. The testimonies were from people who were in bondage to some type of sin but God set them free. One man told of how God set him free from drugs, and then he took his bag of drug paraphernalia and tossed it into the fire. The whole group started cheering and jumping. Another student cleared out his liquor cabinet and threw it all in the fire, again everybody started yelling and cheering. Well there was one man who wanted to be there so he could throw what he was in bondage to into the fire. But at the last minute he had to drive 200 miles home for a family emergency. Not wanting to miss the opportunity to purge his life of what had snared him he called his best friend and asked him for help. His best friend just happened to be the Starting Quarterback at the University, and was extremely popular. He told his friend that underneath his bed was a box, and if he would throw it in the fire for him. His friend obliged. When he showed up at the bonfire, eyes quickly turned towards him, as he opened the box his heart sank for inside the box was dozens of Playboy magazines. He took a handful of them and threw them into the fire. Everybody started to yell and cheer, he threw another and another, and everybody yelled even louder for him. But every throw he yelled back, "they're not mine, they're not mine."

Never Once did Jesus say – Not Mine / They are Mine / Mood – Indicative - Fact

Never once when Jesus hung on the cross did He yell "they're not mine, they're not mine." Today He says of you “Mine”. He will always say, "They are mine, They are mine." Never once has He ever said, they are not Mine, rather every heartbeat said they are Mine, chosen. - *The indicative mood is a simple statement of fact. If an action really occurs or has occurred or will occur, it will be rendered in the indicative mood.*

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV) ²¹For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

If here Today – Never Asked Jesus – Why? / What possible Reason

If you are here today and have never ask Jesus into your life to become your Lord and Savior, I have to ask you the question, “why?”, “why wait?”, what could possibly be a good reason to wait based on all that we have just studied.

The Gospel

Friend, please hear the Good News - *John 3:16-17 (NKJV)* ¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. You my friend are perishing, even right now at this very moment, as the word “perish” means “to put away with entirely”, as you sin separates you from the Holy God. The structure of this sentence in the original Greek language is written that it is saying that

the individual is performing the action, not God, it is the individual that is separating and putting himself away from God by his own actions.

The Problem:

Isaiah 59:1-2 (NKJV) ¹ Behold, the Lord'S hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. ² But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.

Romans 3:23 (NKJV) ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

The Penalty

Romans 6:23 (NKJV) ²³For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Provision

Romans 5:8 (NKJV) ⁸But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Man's Responsibility:

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

Romans 10:9-10 (NKJV) ⁹that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Now – for those who have Received Him / Lord & Savior – dynamically Linked

For those who have received Him and asked Him to be your Lord and Savior, let us never forget the Lord and Savior and dynamically linked, to make Him Savior is to make Him Lord, the two must go together. First He is Savior that saves us from our sin, and then He becomes Lord, which means “master” of our lives. His Word is to be our will.

Luke 2:11 (NKJV) ¹¹For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.

We are in His Hand / Instruments like Paul / Mower – Car – Computer / Are You Allowing

We are in His hand, we are to be instruments in His hand, just as He called Paul to be. This past Monday morning I took into my hands a lawnmower and I was able to cut the grass and turn a shabby overgrown piece of ground into a beautiful tending garden. I then put into my hands an automobile and travel great distances in a short time as I arrived at work. At work I put into my hands a computer that did tremendous processing and accomplished great deeds for me that allowed me to provide wonderfully for my family. All these things in my hand were merely instruments that allowed me to do great things in them. The question for each person here today is, are we allowing ourselves to be instruments in His hands so He may go great things that He desires. Beloved, there is a response to such love as He gives us, there should be a natural response of love and obedience to the One who would never say, “they aren't Mine”.

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

(Acts 22:16 NKJV) 'And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.'

Seen & Heard / Stories seem odd to World / The more we tell – the more natural

Verse 15 - be His witness to all men of what you have seen and heard - Paul you have seen Jesus, tell people what you have seen and tell them what you have heard. May we be a people too that are telling people what we have seen and heard. Tell them what you saw Jesus do last week, tell them the things He has told you. I think the non-believing world finds Christian stories odd, and mostly unbelievable because they hear so few of them. They hear so few of them, that when they do hear them they seem to be extreme. Sadly we save the praise reports for the church circles and prayer meetings. Imagine if all believers everywhere made it part of our daily conversations with the unbelieving world about the great things we have seen and heard God do. I talked this week to a family whose child is caught up in an addiction; I told them I know the power of God because He had gave victory in my life over the partying life, I told them about a

man I had met who walked away from a crack cocaine addiction, I told them of a girl I know who did the same, all of them by the power of Jesus Christ. Imagine if there were other Christians who were overhearing (which I don't know if there was) came over and said, let me tell you what I have seen and heard on the subject too, man how even more powerful the conversation would have been. Christian, make it a habit to tell people (believers – and unbelievers too) all that you are “SEEING” God do, and all that you are “HEARING” God say – and it will produce powerful results.

Baptism – doesn't Wash / Sign of Changed Life / No Altar Call / Imagine the News

Verse 16 - Arise and be baptized - Baptism doesn't wash your sins away, it is merely a sign of a changed lives. In the New Testament, there is no altar calls (that didn't come about until around the 1600's); a person's public profession was baptism. Paul made a public profession before all the people, and imagine the news of that traveling back to Jerusalem to the other religious leaders, that news would have blown them away.

Paul heads to Jerusalem

So Paul after his Damascus experience later heads back to Jerusalem (verse 17).

(Acts 22:17 NKJV) "Now it happened, when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I was in a trance

(Acts 22:18 NKJV) "and saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me.'

(Acts 22:19 NKJV) "So I said, 'Lord, they know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believe on You.

(Acts 22:20 NKJV) 'And when the blood of Your martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him.'

Get Out – But my Talents & Background

“Get out of Jerusalem,” the Lord said. What did Paul say? “But, Lord, my background and my talents, my training and my gifts fit perfectly with these people.” And what did the Lord say? “Split, Paul. This isn't what I want for you.”

Paul Argues / 2 Things – You will Lose – You are Wrong / Your Word – My Will

Paul argues with the Lord. Here are two things you can be sure of if you argue with the Lord, and that is that one, you are wrong, and two, you will lose the argument for He will outlast you. It is better for you to agree and obey, and say “Your Word is my Will”.

(Acts 22:21 NKJV) "Then He said to me, 'Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles.'"

(Acts 22:22 NKJV) And they listened to him until this word, and then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he is not fit to live!"

(Acts 22:23 NKJV) Then, as they cried out and tore off their clothes and threw dust into the air,

Listened until Gentile Word / Blasphemy / Sadly – Elite / Called to draw people to God

The Jews listened to Paul—until he said the word “Gentile.” Blasphemy!” cried the Jews. “How dare Paul say that God sent him to the Gentiles. Everyone knows Gentiles are good for nothing but to keep hell hot.” Sadly the Jews had turned their relationship with God inward, and missed that God had called them to be the Light of the Salvation to draw all men to himself.

Throw dust – because no Rocks

The only reason they are throwing dust in the air is because there are no rocks at the Temple. It was fortunate there were no rocks on the temple mount, for had there been, Paul would most likely have been stoned on the spot.

(Acts 22:24 NKJV) the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, and said that he should be examined under scourging, so that he might know why they shouted so against him.

Paul Speaking Hebrew – Roman Guard had no Idea / So Scourge him

Paul was speaking in Hebrew, so the commander had no idea what Paul was saying and thus had no idea why the people freaked out as they did so he says lets get to the bottom of this and scourge this guy so we can know for sure what we are dealing with.

Scourging Cruel / Easier hits with Confessions – Accomplices / Jesus increased Blows

Scourging was a cruel yet very effective way to interrogate someone. The accused would be bound and beaten with the flagellum (which was a whip that had embedded chards of pottery and bones) until he either confessed or died (and they would die because of the excessive blood loss). The person would receive up to 40 lashes (if anyone was actually counting). They would lighten the beating up the more the person talked, or they would increase the beating the less the person talked, thus when they scourged Jesus they would have increased the blows harder and harder each time because Jesus had no guilt to confess for He was the innocent Lamb of God who came and traded places with, and traded places with me, so that we might not be separated from the Holy, Perfect, and Pure God because of our sin which impurity and He cannot look upon it. If Jesus opened His mouth then it would have only been to tell the Roman's who was involved in this crime, who they needed to go after to kill or imprison. Jesus opened not His mouth because He would not drop the dime on you or me, He would take all 40 lashes, each one getting worse and worse, because He wasn't going to give us up, He wouldn't implicate us. It is truly amazing that Jesus even survived the scourging – He is a man's man.

Isaiah 53:7 (NKJV)⁷ He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, And as a sheep before its shearers is silent, So He opened not His mouth.

Never Once – Not Mine

Never once has He ever said, they are not Mine.

Burning the Hard Drives /

One day I was talking to a guy who maintains "information security"; in that he makes sure that classified information does slip into our enemies hands; so I asked him hey what do you do with all these computers when they have reached the end of their lives, how do you protect the secret information that is on them. He said what they do is that they pull all the hard drives out of the computers, they load them all into a box and drive up to the Steel Mill that they have an agreement with for service. They escort the box with all these hard drives that contain all these secrets that could hurt and destroy this County, and they escort the box personally all the way to the shoot that slopes into the molten-hot steel maker. They say it is quite the sight as in one split second as soon as those hard drives hit the molten-lave steel they are burned up instantly. That is your sin, stored on the hard drive, and in one instant, the moment you said "forgive" those sins were consumed by His Holy Refiners fire and your sin has no record and no trace. Just another interesting note, the security guys told me they use to go up to Bethlehem Steel at Sparrows Point across the bridge, but if you haven't heard that was sold to a Russian Steel Company – so the Government says negative on using them anymore, we only burn American Secrets in American Steel Plants. So too it is with your sin as Satan has no access to your record of sin, as the Lord sees to that your sin is only handled and burned within the family.

Hebrews 10:15-17 (NKJV)¹⁵But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before,

¹⁶"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them,"¹⁷then He adds, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

Again, if you have never given your life to the Lord, what is it that you could possibly be waiting for?

Paul's Roman Citizenship

(Acts 22:25 NKJV) And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who stood by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman, and uncondemned?"

(Acts 22:26 NKJV) When the centurion heard that, he went and told the commander, saying, "Take care what you do, for this man is a Roman."

Offense to Scourge Roman

It was a jailable offense to even bind a Roman citizen without following proper legal procedures and a capital offense to scourge him without doing so. Claudius Lysias was on thin ice.

Should Christians stand up Civil Rights or use Court System

Sometimes people ask, "Should a Christian stand up for his civil rights or use the legal system?" Paul's example tells me that when dealing with the world, sometimes it's appropriate and very necessary to do so. Surely in the litigation-mad world in which we live, this has been taken to an extreme. But I believe there are times when it is valid. Now, when dealing with believers, we are told very clearly that we are not to take them to trial. The issue should be dealt with by the church. And, if you can't find a godly church or person to mediate the situation, the Scriptures say to you just to eat the loss (Matthew 18:15 / 1 Corinthians 6). Now back to our story here, yes there are clearly times when Christians can use their Civil rights and/or the legal system; Paul had used his legal right back in Phillippi after he was wrongly imprisoned there (Acts 16:36-40). *Matthew 18:15-16 (NKJV)* ¹⁵Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. ¹⁶But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.'

1 Corinthians 6:1-2 (NKJV) ¹Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? ²Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?

(Acts 22:27 NKJV) Then the commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" He said, "Yes."

(Acts 22:28 NKJV) The commander answered, "With a large sum I obtained this citizenship." And Paul said, "But I was born a citizen."

(Acts 22:29 NKJV) Then immediately those who were about to examine him withdrew from him; and the commander was also afraid after he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.

Wife of Emperor idea how to raise Money

The wife of Emperor Claudius encouraged him to raise money for their personal treasury by selling Roman citizenships. Claudius Lysias was one who took advantage of that practice.

The Sanhedrin Divided

(Acts 22:30 NKJV) The next day, because he wanted to know for certain why he was accused by the Jews, he released him from his bonds, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down and set him before them.

Pick up here next Time

Pick up here next week. Unable to examine Paul by scourging, yet still wanting to get to the bottom of the issue, Claudius Lysias decided to bring Paul before the Jewish Supreme Court—the Sanhedrin.

Recap:

- Damascus is Speaking – the power of your Testimony
- You are Chosen – Jesus says "They are Mine"
- Why Wait – the Gospel saves NOW!
- We are Instruments in His hands
- Let us say, "Your Word – is my Will"
- The hard drive has been Burned – Live in Freedom
- It is ok to use the Civil System for our rights.

Chapter 23

Paul before the Sanhedrin Council (Acts 23:1-5)

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Knew Trouble – not Moved / Accused bringing non-Jews / Riot Begins – Guards Intercede

This week we continue Paul's defense before his Countryman at the Temple. Paul knew trouble awaited him in Jerusalem but he could not be moved (20:24), he felt this was the will of God in his life, and he pressed on to Jerusalem and trouble found him. A riot broke out at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem as the devout Jews had thought they seen Paul bringing non-Jews into the Temple, (which was strictly forbidden – it carried the death penalty as we have studied). It is funny how that we read that they didn't care about killing the men that were with Paul, just Paul. We can clearly see a bias in play here. So trouble begins, they want to kill Paul, the Roman guard intercedes and saves Paul, Paul then requests to speak to the hostile crowd, he starts by retelling his personal testimony of meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus and all was going well until he said God said to give the Gentiles the good news, and then the people went crazy because they wouldn't accept that God would put the Gentiles as equal with the Jews.

(Acts 20:22 NKJV) *"And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,*

(Acts 20:23 NKJV) *"except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.*

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

Guard wanted to get to Truth / Can't Beat Paul / So takes before the Jewish Council

The Roman guard wanting to get to the bottom of why Paul's speech would upset the Jews as it did decided he would scourge Paul to get to the bottom of the truth. But Paul said hey, I'm a Roman and you can't beat a Roman citizen for that is punishable by death. So unable to examine Paul by scourging, yet still wanting to get to the bottom of the issue, the Roman guard Claudius Lysias decided to bring Paul before the Jewish Supreme Court—the Sanhedrin to see if he had broken any Jewish laws; and that there is where we pick up our story.

(Acts 22:30 NKJV) **The next day, because he wanted to know for certain why he was accused by the Jews, he released him from his bonds, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down and set him before them.**

(Acts 23:1 NKJV) **Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."**

Gentiles not allowed in Jewish Council / Claudius brings all to his Turf

Gentile officers were never permitted to participate in the deliberations of the Jewish Sanhedrin. Claudius Lysias had been appointed by Caesar and was responsible for the protection of any person who claimed to be a citizen of Rome. Therefore, he commanded the Jewish rulers to appear before him where he could not be excluded. So basically Claudius was bringing everyone together on his turf so he could stay in control.

Made of 70 & HP / Paul says Brethren / How many Faces Knew Paul – Same for You

Verse 1 - Men and brethren - The Sanhedrin council was made up of 70 religious leaders and the High Priest, and they had supreme rule over the Jewish religion. Customarily, members of the Sanhedrin were addressed as “fathers.” Referring to them as “brethren” implies that before his conversion, Paul had himself been a member of this body. I wonder how many faces Paul had recognized, and how many recognized him. These 70 would have been a close-knit group, and I wonder how many had been close friends with Paul, they knew each other’s families, had broke bread together many times. No doubt many would have had a hard time looking him in the face. Maybe you have experienced that yourself after you gave your life to the Lord, and as you went back and see friends and family who were so close to you, and now they have a hard time looking you in the eyes because of what you believe and how you live. It is ok, God says “Be of Good Cheer”, I stand beside you, and I love to look into your eyes (we’ll cover that in a few verses).

(Acts 23:11 NKJV) But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome."

Struggle between pride & Repentance / John 3:19

Now Paul stands before them, and there is the struggle of pride and repentance. If I agree (they would think) then I must give all this up, if I disagree I will continue in my life of ease and comfort, and the great respect and honor the people give me as I walk by. People don’t want to come to the Light because they don’t want to turn from their sin.

John 3:19-21 (NKJV) ¹⁹And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. ²¹But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

5th Time to hear Gospel

This will be the 5th time that the Sanhedrin council will be given the opportunity by God to hear the Gospel.

1. The first time was when Jesus was brought before them (Luke 22).
2. The second was when Peter and John were brought before them (Acts 4).
3. The third time was when the 12 were brought before them (Acts 5).
4. The fourth time was when Stephen was brought before them and they saw his face glowing like an angel (Acts 7).
5. And here is the fifth time with Paul (Acts 23).

What love God has for Nation / 10 Years Destruction – Blood to ankle / Leaders – Missed It

What love God has for people, as 5 times the Lord presents the opportunity to receive Him. This will be the last time we have recorded, and sadly it is only about 10 years before the Roman Army (Titus and the 10th Legion) will come into Jerusalem and utterly destroy the city and the Temple, and many of these men will be killed. They say the blood flowed through Jerusalem like a river that is how many Jews were killed by the Roman Army. Josephus the Jewish historian records that 1.1 million Jews would be killed and 97,000 would be sold into slavery. How much God loves Israel, how many times He gave them opportunity to repent and receive, yet they continually refused. These leaders were looked upon by the people to be the experts to tell them when the Messiah would come and who He would be; but they missed it, and thus many of the people missed Him too. Parents, our children are looking to us to lead them to the Savior, show them which God to follow. We have as great a responsibility to our kids as these Sanhedrin had.

Have Bad Memory / Whole Life – Heat Stroke / Reference to Temple Law

Verse 1 - I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day – It has been said the only way to have a good conscience is to have a bad memory; if Paul was talking about his whole life, then the heat must have been getting to him because Paul was a widow and orphan maker before he met Christ on the road to Damascus. Maybe Paul is was more specifically speaking about honoring the Temple, and obeying all the rules pertaining to the Temple, and very specifically that he did not now or ever before defile the Temple by bringing Gentiles into the

Temple area (for that is why he is here and being accused of doing). The high priest isn't in agreement we will see and will have him smacked for saying such a thing.

Side Note – Conscience bothering You / Confess & Repent / Ask Forgiveness / Bad Mem

Just a side note, maybe your conscience is bothering you about something you really have done that you know is wrong – then today, right now at this very moment, confess it and repent of it, turn to the Lord and move on from it. If you need to ask for forgiveness from someone, then go do today. It has been said the only way to have a good conscience is to have a bad memory; so move on and let your memory forget it, and don't dwell on it anymore.

Psalms 51:10 (NKJV)¹⁰ Create in me a clean heart, O God, And renew a steadfast spirit within me.

1 John 1:8-9 (NKJV)⁹If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Psalms 103:12 (NKJV)¹² As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.

(Acts 23:2 NKJV) And the high priest Ananias commanded those who stood by him to strike him on the mouth.

(Acts 23:3 NKJV) Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! For you sit to judge me according to the law, and do you command me to be struck contrary to the law?"

Slapping Paul – Violates Mosaic Law

Ananias doesn't dig Paul's statement about his pure conscience and has him slapped. "How dare you judge me," said Paul to Ananias, "when you're violating the law yourself." You see, according to Deuteronomy 25, it was absolutely forbidden for a man to be smitten without due process of law. And if smitten, he was to be smitten on the back, not on the mouth. Ananias was to know and uphold the law, and yet he himself is guilty of violating it.

Deuteronomy 25:1-2 (NKJV)¹"If there is a dispute between men, and they come to court, that the judges may judge them, and they justify the righteous and condemn the wicked, ²then it shall be, if the wicked man deserves to be beaten, that the judge will cause him to lie down and be beaten in his presence, according to his guilt, with a certain number of blows.

Ananias – Multi-millionaire / Sacrifices – Money Changers

A multimillionaire by today's standards, Ananias was one of the worst high priests in the history of Israel. He knew people in low places. He had worked out a deal with the priests so that animals brought to the temple for sacrifice would conveniently be found flawed upon inspection.

"Can't use this one," the priest would say. "This sheep is blemished. But this is your lucky day.

We just happen to have some sheep over here you could purchase."

"Really?" the relieved supplicant would say. "How much?"

"Well, they're a little pricy—but they're worth it," the priest would answer. "They've already been preapproved."

Along with that scam, he also had a deal going on with the money changers. So if you came from out of town and you had your Roman coin, they would say hey you can't use the currency here at the temple, we only accept "American Express" here. So they would have to change their coin from Roman to the Temple coin, and the exchange rate was horrendous, in order to buy the sacrifices.

Josephus Says (threshing floor) / Talmud Says (priest's sacrifices)

Here is what the Historian Josephus says about him: a glutton, tyrant, bigot and murderer. He defrauded impoverished priests of tithes and sent paid servants to the threshing floors to steal corn, any who resisted were bludgeoned to death. The Talmud speaks of his horrible conduct that when what remained of the sacrifices was suppose to go to the priests (according to the Law of Moses) that Ananias would send his people to take the remains for his purposes and leave the priest and their family starving.

Gouging the People / Josephus – dragged from sewer & Assassinated

He was ripping people off through such deals, Ananias gouged the people and pocketed huge amounts of money, and the people knew it. No wonder that, after serving twelve years as high priest, he was assassinated by his own countrymen; according to Josephus – Ananias was dragged from a sewer in which he was hiding and killed by an assassin's dagger during the Jewish revolt against the Romans.

Whitewashed – Graves – Unclean / Bag of Bones

Verse 3 - you whitewashed wall - If you were in Israel at this time, making your way to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover, for example, it would have been very important that on your way you didn't accidentally become ceremonially unclean by stepping on or brushing against a grave or sepulcher. Consequently, graves and sepulchers were painted white to warn people of the dead bones within (one reason was to make sure you weren't ceremonially unclean and could buy a sacrifice). Thus, in calling Ananias a "whited wall," Paul was actually calling him a bag of bones.

People reference to ok Harsh Responses / Example of Jesus / Jesus greatest Model

This passage is often cited by people who say there are times when it's right to respond vehemently. "Because Paul raised his voice and called Ananias a bag of bones," they say, "it's okay for me to speak my mind just as pointedly." I suggest to you, however, that although Paul does do that here—there is a higher example of Another who was struck in the mouth in the presence of a high priest. Like Paul, Jesus was struck by one who stood by the high priest. But instead of heatedly raising His voice, He humbly raised a question when He said, "If I said something wrong, correct Me. But if what I have said is true, then why are you doing this?" (see John 18:23). As excellent a model as Paul might be for us, we must always make sure our model for behavior is the Person of Jesus Christ, for He set a higher standard than any other.

John 18:19-23 (NKJV) ¹⁹The high priest then asked Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine. ²⁰Jesus answered him, "I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where [£]the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing. ²¹Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard Me what I said to them. Indeed they know what I said." ²²And when He had said these things, one of the officers who stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, "Do You answer the high priest like that?" ²³Jesus answered him, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me?"

(Acts 23:4 NKJV) And those who stood by said, "Do you revile God's high priest?"

(Acts 23:5 NKJV) Then Paul said, "I did not know, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, 'You shall not speak evil of a ruler of your people.'"

Onlookers – How dare You Paul

Those who stood by Ananias were aghast. "Do you dare to revile God's high priest?" they asked Paul.

Exodus 22:28 (NKJV) ²⁸"You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people.

Why Paul didn't Recognize

Why didn't Paul know Ananias was the high priest?

1. It could have been an oversight. Ananias may not have been wearing his high priestly regalia.
2. It could have been because Paul was out of sight. That is, because he had been away from Jerusalem for many years ministering in Asia Minor, Paul may not have been aware that Ananias had ascended to the office of high priest.
3. It could have been due to bad eyesight. Many scholars believe Paul's vision was extremely impaired as he said he writes with big letters, and the people in Corinth would have given their own eyes for him lends us to believe

Galatians 4:15 (NKJV) ¹⁵What then was the blessing you enjoyed? For I bear you witness that, if possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes and given them to me.

Galatians 6:11 (NKJV) ¹¹See with what large letters I have written to you with my own hand!

Definition of Evil

The definition of “evil” is:

G2560 - κακῶς kakōs kak-ocē Adverb from G2556; badly (physically or morally):—amiss, diseased, evil, grievously, miserably, sick, sore.

People

Excusable – No / Never know People / Story Albert Einstein

“Well, then,” you say, “since Paul didn’t know who Ananias was, it is excusable that he lashed out at him.” But isn’t that the point? We never know people like we think we do. I love the story of the German schoolteacher who clicked his heels together and bowed before each of his second- and third-grade students as they entered his classroom every morning. When asked why he did this, he said, “I don’t know which of these students might one day be a king or a chancellor. I want to respect them now because I don’t know what they’ll become.” The reason this story is known is because it was told by one of his more famous students—a man named Albert Einstein. Truly, before I call someone a bag of bones, I better realize I may not know as much about him as I think I do. I joke at work, but not really, as the older employees are retiring they are being replaced with college graduates, and I am more and more working with younger collages; I joke about being nice to them all, because I don’t know which one I will be working for in the next few years. Regardless of a person’s position, we should respect and honor them, for simply – they are created in God’s image. My heart has been grieved several times as several Christians actually have challenged me on the ministry work we do in the poor section of town; as they believe those people are where they are because of their sin; how sad, that they have no heart for a person created by God. Let us be a people who give honor and respect to all people.

1 Peter 2:17 (NKJV) ¹⁷Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

Genesis 1:26-27 (NKJV) ²⁶Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over ²all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” ²⁷So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Politically

Paul Apologizes when Realized / Paul honors the Position

But back to our story today, when he realized Ananias was the high priest, he said he would not have called him a bag of bones because the position is to be honored even if the person holding it is dishonorable. In Exodus 22 the two are tied together because to curse the ruler that God has placed over you is to curse God Himself.

Exodus 22:28 (NKJV) ²⁸You shall not revile God, nor curse a ruler of your people.

Romans 13:1 (NKJV) ¹Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God.

Honor even if didn’t Vote / Israel ask King / Our Choice – God’s Choice

We are to honor the position even if we didn’t vote for them. God said to Israel that there will come a day that you will ask for king rather than be governed by Me, and I will allow it, but it will not be good for you. So it is, God allows us to pick leaders who are not always the best for us and our County, State, and Nation. But I must say there are many a great men and woman who fear the Lord have and do sit as governing authorities trying to enact and uphold the righteous standards of God. But God, allows us to choose, and then He says; now they are My choice.

1 Samuel 8:7 (NKJV) ⁷And the Lord said to Samuel, “Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.

1 Peter / Nero on the Throne / Peter says – Honor Them

Therefore, it is up to us not to criticize and complain, but to take heed to Peter’s words.

Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king (1 Peter 2:17). “That was easy for Peter,” you say. “In his day, those in positions of authority had character.” Really? When Peter wrote these words, Caesar Nero was on the throne. Caesar Nero was the man who rode naked in his chariot, shrieking at the top of his lungs in demonic laughter while he watched over one thousand Christians who had been dipped in wax, ignited as human candles to light his

garden. What did Peter say to do about Nero? He didn't say to impeach him, sign petitions about him, or rebel against him. He said to honor him.

1 Peter 2:13-17 (NKJV) ¹³Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, ¹⁴or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. ¹⁵For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men—¹⁶as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. ¹⁷Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king.

Time attacking – Time Praying / Diminish next Statement / Try This – Biblical Discussion

We can be a people that spend so much time attacking our leaders, than we do praying for them. Prayer matters, it really does, God hears prayer. I believe with all my heart that at the moment I am asking God to pound on the President's heart and say "I love you" that it is happening. God is honoring my prayer request while at the same time not violating his free-choice. I can do more for the king and my Country by praying for him that I will complaining and bashing him. Now am I saying that we are to agree with them? Absolutely not, voicing disagreement is different from ripping and tearing; it is a fine line so be careful. And here is a most important piece of information, and that is if you are talking to a non-believer who you disagree with on the moral issues, and you come off as sounding like you are attacking and being critical of that leader, you diminish if not totally wipe-out your next statement. If you attack the leader, and then try to point out the moral wrong, that person is most likely not even going to hear what you have to say next because they are still thinking about your attack, or they are so turned off by you they aren't even listening to what you are saying but thinking of their counter-attack. Say things like, "I know this leader believes what they are doing is best for all, but struggle with what they are doing because it is contrary to what God says in the Bible". Hopefully and prayerfully it will lead you to a biblical discussion, because the fact of the matter is, that conversation you have will not be changing the world – so try to change the person, and the world will be changed as people are changed.

James 4:1-3 (NKJV) ¹Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? ²You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. ³Yet you do not have because you do not ask. ⁴You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

Deuteronomy

Just a side note, did you know and could you imagine if this was the way it was today, but every king of Israel was required to hand-write the first 5 books of the Old Testament, and then he was to read it daily. Wow, imagine how that would change the thoughts of the President.

Deuteronomy 17:18-20 (NKJV) ¹⁸Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. ¹⁹And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, ²⁰that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel.

Pastorally

Pray for a New Pastor

Our respect for the leaders applies not only politically, but also pastorally. We are not to be a people who speak against God's pastors. We are not to lay a charge against God's servants. If you want a new pastor pray for the one you got, and you will have a new pastor. Don't diminish your pastor before another, for you will be diminishing the leadership of him before that person who needs a leader; and secondly, you will diminish him before yourself, and the fact you speak poorly about him is proof that you are not as spiritually mature as you think you are because you are violating the Word of God.

Romans 14:4 (NKJV) Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.

1 Timothy 5:17 (NKJV) ¹⁷Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.

News Article

Peter Drucker, the late leadership guru, said that the four hardest jobs in America (and not necessarily in order, he added) are: president of the United States, a university chancellor, a hospital CEO, and a church pastor. Note: Business weekly

wrote an article on Peter Drucker and said he was the man who invented Management – that is how highly esteemed he is. I personally do not know what his relationship with Jesus Christ is.

Jimmy Draper, former president of the Lifeway Research Group, notes that for every 20 people who go into the pastorate only one retires from the ministry. Can you name any other profession where there is a 95 percent drop-off rate? Most don't make it to retirement in the ministry because they are either fired, have a moral failure or just burned out and give up.

Pastors have the second-highest divorce rate of any profession. 48% of them think their job is detrimental to their family's well-being. Another 46% will experience a burnout or a depression that will make them leave the ministry. 70 % say their self-esteem is lower now than when they started their position.

Parenting

Promised blessing / Dad a bag of bones – Chosen by God for You / Pray for your Parents

This applies not only politically, pastorally, but also parentally. Kids, you are told to honor your parents (Exodus 20:12 – the only command that comes with a promised blessing). “Oh, but they're such idiots,” you say. “My dad's a bag of bones, and my mom's out of it. They don't relate to me, and I can't understand them.” Listen, if you are living at home, the word to you is to honor your parents. Why? Because of all the billions of parents throughout history who have peopled this planet, God chose your mom and dad as the ones to work on your life in a unique way. The only command that comes with a blessing. Kids, pray for you parents, and God will give you a special insight and revelation to all that they are doing for you.

Exodus 20:12 (NKJV) ¹² *“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.*

Partnering

Wives honor your Husbands

This applies not only politically, pastorally, parentally, but also partnering. The same is true in marriage, always give honor to your spouse with your speech. Ephesians 5 says wives are to reverence their husbands (Ephesians 5:33). Sarah called Abraham Lord. But men, the word is clear we are to honor or wives (1 Peter 3:7).

Ephesians 5:22-24 (NKJV) ²²*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.*

²³*For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. ²⁴Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.*

Esther 1:20 (NKJV) ²⁰*When the king's decree which he will make is proclaimed throughout all his empire (for it is great), all wives will honor their husbands, both great and small.”*

1 Peter 3:5-7 (NKJV) ⁵*For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, ⁶as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror. ⁷Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.*

Never diminish Spouse / Complain against God / Open door for Satan – Opp Sex

We should never say anything negative about our spouse, for in so doing we are complaining against God, for He is the one that gave us our spouse. Secondly, we can never leave the door open to anyone that our marriage isn't on solid ground, because Satan will take that and use that; he will put into another person's mind, hmm so there is trouble there, maybe I can bring comfort (to the other sex) and then a relationship starts that should not have – it is a very dangerous place to be. Husbands and wives, don't even make jokes about wife that can be misinterpreted to mean there is trouble in the home.

Privately Too / No Responses bring much Peace / Man-Card

Give respect to the spouse, not only publically, but privately in the home. Guard your tongue, bite it if you have to, and you will see a wonderfully blessing in your home. You know you don't have to respond to every comment. Sometimes it is better to just be silent, let the moment pass, and many times (actually the majority of the time) you will see a no response was the best response, because a response would have just made matters worse. That no response or gentle response brings so much peace into your marriage. I was watching a Hallmark movie with Renee some time back; I know men and I ask that you do not remove my “man-card” for doing so. I promise to go out today and buy an expensive power tool that I really don't need, and I'll start a project

around the home that I will get half way through and then leave unfinished for the next 3-6 months, just please don't take my "man-card" away. But I watched this man of God in this movie, and every response through the whole movie he either gave a gentle response or no response to sharp word spoken by his wife. I said this is just a movie, for no one can truly do that in real life; but I purposed to continually respond gently or not to respond to all things with all people in the family. It really has brought a new level of peace into our home. I really don't need to say something every time the milk is left out (I just put it away). I don't need to say something every time the remote is lost, or lights are left on. Try some no responses, you'll be blessed.

So – Lord allowed these Situation

So, we must realize the Lord has allowed us to be in the situation we're in—be it politically, parentally, or martially—for our good and His glory. Therefore, we are not to revile. We are not to reject. We are to realize He is sovereign and in control. Then we can say,

- “Lord, if You're allowing this politician to be elected to fulfill Your purpose nationally and prophetically—so be it.”
- This is my Church, and I will build it up.
- “If You're allowing these people to parent me, even though I may not understand them presently—I will honor them.”
- “If You're allowing my husband or wife to shape me for eternity—Thy will be done.”

My prayer for you, precious people, is that during these days you will not be uptight or stressed-out, cynical or caustic—but that in the midst of political, parental, or marital turmoil, you will remember that the God who sits on the circle of the earth is still in complete control and is at work to do a wondrous work in your life.

Recap Our Study (Acts 23:1-5)

God in His Love is continually calling Out (5 times to the Sanhedrin Council)

- Jesus is always our Perfect Example
- Honor the Position
 - People
 - Politically
 - Pastorally
 - Parentally
 - Partnering

Be of Good Cheer (23:6-11)

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Knew Trouble – not Moved / Accused bringing non-Jews / Riot Begins – Guards Intercede

This week we continue Paul's defense before his Countryman at the Temple. Paul knew trouble awaited him in Jerusalem but he could not be moved (20:24), he felt this was the will of God in his life, and he pressed on to Jerusalem and trouble found him. A riot broke out at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem as the devout Jews had thought they seen Paul bringing non-Jews into the Temple, (which was strictly forbidden – it carried the death penalty as we have studied). It is funny how that we read that they didn't care about killing the men that were with Paul, just Paul. We can clearly see a bias in play here. So trouble begins, they want to kill Paul, the Roman guard intercedes and saves Paul, Paul then requests to speak to the hostile crowd, he starts by retelling his personal testimony of meeting Jesus on the road to Damascus and all was going well until he said God said to give the Gentiles the good news, and then the people went crazy because they wouldn't accept that God would put the Gentiles as equal with the Jews.

(Acts 20:22 NKJV) *"And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,*

(Acts 20:23 NKJV) *"except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.*

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

Guard wanted to get to Truth / Can't Beat Paul / So takes before the Jewish Council

The Roman guard wanting to get to the bottom of why Paul's speech would upset the Jews as it did decided he would scourge Paul to get to the bottom of the truth. But Paul said hey, I'm a Roman and you can't beat a Roman citizen for that is punishable by death. So unable to examine Paul by scourging, yet still wanting to get to the bottom of the issue, the Roman guard Claudius Lysias decided to bring Paul before the Jewish Supreme Court—the Sanhedrin to see if he had broken any Jewish laws; and that there is where we pick up our story with Paul and this Supreme Jewish Council.

(Acts 23:6 NKJV) **But when Paul perceived that 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; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!"**

(Acts 23:7 NKJV) **And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided.**

(Acts 23:8 NKJV) **For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection; and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both.**

2 parties / Supernatural & Natural

Looking at the crowd, Paul saw two parties in the room: the Pharisees, who believed in the supernatural—and the Sadducees, who didn't.

Paul not here because Resurrection – but Gentiles

I want you to see something here, and that is that Paul is saying he was being judged on his position about the resurrection, but really this whole thing started because he was accused of bringing Gentiles into the Temple. Paul sees it for what it is; he sees it isn't the Gentiles you are

upset with about me because if you were, they would be standing here too and you would be ready to stone them. The bottom line is you are upset that I preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and Him resurrected.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (NKJV) ³For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,

Don't Get Pigeon-Holed

Saints, don't get pigeon-holed by the world, they ask those question like, "so what do you think about (and you fill in the blank). We need discernment from God to ask Him why the person is asking this, but you and I know that many times it is just a set-up question to try to make us look like intolerant hate-mongers. When I get that discernment that this is a set-up, my response is this, "that is a hot-topic, a sensitive issue in our society today, we all should be concerned with what God says, would you like to read a few Scriptures with me?". Now that is my softer answer, but my other answer is, "who cares what I think, I didn't create you, I didn't die for you, nor will it be me that a person stands before on judgment day, let's see what the Word of God has to say."

(Acts 23:9 NKJV) Then there arose a loud outcry. And the scribes of the Pharisees' party arose and protested, saying, "We find no evil in this man; but if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him, let us not fight against God."

(Acts 23:10 NKJV) Now when there arose a great dissension, the commander, fearing lest Paul might be pulled to pieces by them, commanded the soldiers to go down and take him by force from among them, and bring him into the barracks.

Immediately Split in 2

When Paul said the word "resurrection," the Sanhedrin was immediately split in two. "If he saw someone resurrected or an angel—we have no problem with that," said the Pharisees. But, of course, the Resurrection presented a major problem for the Sadducees.

Claudius rescues him Again

So a great dissension arises, riot number 3 for Paul in 1.5 days, here's Claudius Lysias again—rescuing Paul from being ripped to pieces by the Jews.

(Acts 23:11 NKJV) But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome."

Reflecting on Events / Appease James – Steps / Feast Pentecost / Preach / Sleepers

As Paul reflected on the events that led to his being held in protective custody, he must have thought, "I went into the temple to try to appease James and the other brothers—and a riot broke out. I shared my testimony on the steps of the Fortress—and people wanted to kill me. I came into the Sanhedrin—and created tumult and turmoil. I failed. All this is going on during the Feast of Pentecost, there is probably 2 million plus people in Jerusalem at this time, the Temple Mount would have been jammed packed with probably close to 100,000 people (my guess on how many could be there at one time); Paul probably thought this is it, this is what I have waited for, this is my chance to reach my Countryman. But things didn't go as Paul had hoped, as a riot broke out before he could preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and Him resurrected. I'll be honest, as I'm honest with myself, I know I've taught some real sleepers here from time to time. There are times when I'm only half-way through saying to myself, oh please let the fire alarm go off. I don't pray for the Rapture because I don't want to go out on such a low note. I'll go home and say oh that was terrible, I am so sorry Lord, I feel like I let you down. A little while back a had a family member come visit, and as soon as the sermon was over they just took off and rushed home. I said to Janet, wow was my sermon that bad? And she said, "no worse than any other Sunday".

Ways of Darkness

Darkness comes upon us in many ways in our lives:

- The darkness and discouragement of our failures.
- The darkness and fear of an illness.
- The darkness and loneliness of relationships gone bad.
- The darkness and unknown of a job loss or financial situation.
- The darkness and anxiety of where is my child at (physically, emotionally, and/or spiritually).
- The darkness and pressure of what seems like the world coming against you.

Outline

Whatever your dark time may be, the Lord wants us to see 4 things when we sit in the darkness.

God wants us to see in our Darkest Times:

- **God's Timing in the Darkness**
- **God's Location in the Darkness**
- **God's Words in the Darkness**
- **God's Commission in the Darkness**

1.) God's Timing in the Darkness

(Acts 23:11 NKJV) **But the following night** the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome."

Jesus Appearing to Paul

Jesus appeared to Paul 4 times at this point (6 times total):

1. On the road to Damascus (Acts 9)
2. When he was in Jerusalem early after getting saved, God said get out they won't receive you here. (Acts 22)
3. The Lord appeared to Paul in Corinth (go into the city for I have many people there). (Acts 18)
4. Now here in Acts 23

The Lord will appear before Paul 2 more times:

1. When the ship is going down on the way to Rome. (Acts 27)
2. In 2 Timothy Paul said the Lord Stood by him when he stood before Nero. (2 Tim 4:17)

Perfect Timing each Time / Sometimes waits to Speak Specifically – As I Sort Through

The Lord's timing of His appearing to His people is always perfect, Paul can attest to that. God is always present; He promises to never leave us nor forsake us, but what I want to point out to you today is that although He is always present, He may not always speak immediately (IN REGARDS to that very specific issue we are dealing with – for He is always ready to speak and fellowship with you about His love and relationship with you). In our text it says "the following night" – is when the Lord spoke to Paul. I've experience in my life personally that sometimes it is some time later before the Lord speaks to me in some of my hard situations. I believe the Lord does this because He is giving us time to think things through, get down to what is the core issue at heart, process all the information that has come in, before he speaks to us very specifically about the issue. I think if we are honest we would admit that if He always spoke immediately, as soon as we heard we would be ok, cool, I guess now I can go cruise the web or watch that movie. **Hebrews 13:5-6 (NKJV)** ⁵Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."⁶ So we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"⁷

Paul – Plenty Time to Think / Sort Through / I'm in Prison – no Way Out – Not I Thought

Paul would have plenty of time to think back of all the people who told him not to go to Jerusalem; he would have had time to think back on Agabas binding his hands with Paul's own belt and saying here is what will happen to you in Jerusalem. Paul would have had plenty of time think

back about 100,000 people on the Temple Mount and not being able to proclaim the whole gospel. He would have had plenty of time to rethink every face of every one of the 70 members of the Sanhedrin. But it is now a whole day later, the following night that the Lord appears and speaks to Paul and I believe God will do that as He thinks best so we can think all the way through our thoughts, and come to the conclusion "I'm in prison, I'm in darkness, and I don't know of any way out of this in my own strength and intellect. So far all the ways I thought it would haven't been. I'm sitting in total darkness on this matter!

Frequently – most Real - when most Dark / Light of World / Strike a Match

Frequently, He becomes most real to us when we're in the midst of darkness—when we're discouraged and defeated, when things appear hopeless. Why? Didn't Jesus say He was the Light of the World (John 8:12)? If I strike a match in a well-lit room, it won't be noticed at all. But if I strike a match in a pitch-black room, it will be seen very readily. The same is true of the Lord. I have found He is seen most clearly by me when things are pretty dark. When things go fine, I get caught up in everything around me, and I'm not always tuned in to the Lord. It's in the night, when I'm wondering, Lord, am I doing anything right at all? Is there any hope in this situation? that is when I see the Lord most clearly, for, as the Light of the World, the darker the situation, the brighter He shines.

John 8:12 (NKJV) ¹²Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

2.) God's Location in the Darkness

(Acts 23:11 NKJV) But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome."

Notice Location – Right Next / Couldn't see – but Knew

Notice God's location in the darkness, right next to Paul. It was pitch dark, Paul probably couldn't see Jesus, but he would know it was Jesus; I can't necessarily see you, but your presence is undeniable.

Def of Stood / Beautiful Picture

This word "stood" means

- 1) to place at, place upon, place over
 - o to stand by, be present
 - o to stand over one, place one's self above

I like that picture, Paul is he sitting on the floor, is he laying on the floor? I don't know but I see a beautiful picture of the Lord here. If Paul is standing, I picture the Lord standing next to him with His hand on Paul's shoulder – speaking a thousands words without saying anything at all, "it's ok Paul, you are not alone I am here with you. If he is sitting or laying I see the Lord looking at him Paul with such eyes of love, "oh my Paul, how I love you my son". So too it is when you are hurting and in your darkest moments the Lord standing over you, catching your tears, looking on you with love, it's ok, it's ok My child".

Psalms 56:8 (NKJV) ⁸ You number my wanderings; Put my tears into Your bottle; Are they not in Your book?

Come Upon - Rain

This word also means:

- 1) to come upon
 - a) of rain

And I see another beautiful picture here too as the Lord comes upon Paul like a rain. How refreshing it is in the parched hot and dry summer, and then a fresh rain falls upon us – we say oh how refreshing it is. Paul feeling dry and parched, and then the Lord comes upon Him like a fresh rain and Paul is revived by His presence.

Our Promise in Every Trial – Himself / Compound Names – Psalm 23

In all our trials God promises one thing's for sure, and that is that He promises us – Himself. In that darkness God reveals Himself to us in a special way. Throughout the OT God uses compound names of Himself to describe to us more clearly His nature and heart; I've found 8 compound names for God through the OT (8 is the number for new beginning if you like to play with the numerology aspect of the Bible). Interestingly, I find all 8 of those aspects in one of the psalms, and it not by coincidence I think that it is Psalm 23, that psalm for the darkest times

- ***The Lord is my Shepherd*** (Jehovah-Rohi: God my Shepherd)
- ***I shall not want*** (Jehovah-Jireh: the Lord my Provider)
- ***He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters.*** (Jehovah-Shalom: God my Peace)
- ***He restores my soul*** (Jehovah-Rapha: The Lord my Healer)
- ***He guides me in paths of righteousness For His name's sake*** (Jehovah-Tsidkenu: The Lord my Righteousness)
- ***Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.*** (Jehovah-Shammah: God who is there, the ever-present One)
- ***Your rod and your staff, they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.*** (Jehovah-Nissi: The Lord my Banner of victory)
- ***You anoint my head with oil. My cup overflows. Surely goodness and love with follow me all the days of my life. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*** (Jehovah-M'Kaddesh: The Lord who Sanctifies, set's us apart)

Psalms 23:1-6 (NKJV) ¹ The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. ² He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. ³ He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. ⁴ Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. ⁵ You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. ⁶ Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the Lord Forever.

In the Psalms 23 times – Stand & Rain / Winter Tree

In the Psalm 23 times of our lives, the Lord will stand by us in the darkness, refresh us as a rain shower in the midst of a drought, and reveals His nature ever so clearly to us. I'm sure you have noticed this yourself, and that is in the winter I'll be driving down the highway and look through all the leave less trees and say, hey I never knew that was back there (a home, or business, or park), I've never seen that before. We never seen it before because the leaves of spring and summer have been blocking that from our sight, but when the winter comes and the trees are barren, we can see things we had never seen before. And so it is true in the dark, cold, wintery times of our lives it is when we see the Lord and the things of the Lord in ways we have never seen before.

Ever feel it is Too Dark – Remember Moses @ Rephidim / Joshua – Aaron & Hur

If you ever feel it is too dark, your sin your failure, your circumstances that seem hopeless and helpless, I want you to remember the story of Moses. Moses had taken Aaron and Hur up on the mountain at Rephidim, where he instructed his protégée, Joshua, to lead the Israelite troops into battle against the Amalekites. Joshua obeyed, while Moses stayed upon the mountain with the rod of God in his hands. As long as Moses held up the rod, the Israelites were victorious. But whenever his arms got heavy and began to fall, the Amalekites took control. Finally, Aaron stood on one side of him, and Hur stood on the other, and together they propped up Moses' arms, and Israel won the battle (Exodus 17). While this story has wonderful application concerning the importance of prevailing prayer, there's something else I want you to see here. That is, every time Joshua looked back and could see three men on the hill—one in the middle holding up the rod

with outstretched hands—he knew he would be victorious in battle. So, too, on another hill, called Calvary, another Man's hands were outstretched between two men (Matthew 27:38). And, like Joshua, as long as I see His hands on the Cross and understand that even if my motives are mixed, even if my vision is fuzzy, even if I'm not exactly where I should be—I can engage in battle, I can keep going, I can be of good cheer, knowing He has provided His blood to cleanse me. I can look to the mountain and see One who does not fail, One whose hands have never fallen, One who paid the price completely. And as long as I see Him, even when I do fail, and even if I am failing, even when darkness has surrounded me, I can still see through the darkness to those that are lifted up for me and to me.

Exodus 17:12-13 (NKJV) ¹²But Moses' hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. ¹³So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

3.) God's Words in the Darkness

(Acts 23:11 NKJV) But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome."

Paul pretty Rejected – no Fruit / But Notice – God's answer exact to Paul's Struggle

I imagine Paul is pretty rejected at this very moment, thinking to himself, there's no fruit, no headway whatsoever." But notice - that's precisely when the Lord came to him, saying, "I have seen you witness for Me. Be of good cheer, Paul. You're doing more than you think." Paul was fretting about the testimony he gave, because that is what the Lord addresses about him being bummed out.

Notice God looks at Results Differently / Bring Christ to Men – not Men to Christ

Notice how Jesus looks at results a little differently than we do. The Lord is well pleased with Paul's witness because Jerusalem will be leveled in less than 10 years and God was for the 5th time giving these leaders opportunity to receive Him. Christian, our responsibility is to bring Christ to men, not men to Christ. We only introduce them to Christ, what they choose to do thereafter is up to them.

5th Time Be of Good Cheer Used / Hearing those Words from Brother or Pastor /

This is the 5th time this phrase has been used in the New Testament, and each time it has been spoken by Jesus. Hearing those words from your spouse, that special brother or sister in the Lord, or from a pastor is all well and good, but when you hear these words from Jesus Himself, there is a whole new life behind them for He is the Way the Truth and the Life. Imagine the these hearers as they heard the voice of the One who created them in this darkest moments:

- **Mathew 9:2 The Paralytic brought by his friends:**
- *(Matthew 9:2 NKJV) Then behold, they brought to Him a paralytic lying on a bed. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you."*
- **Matthew 9:22 – Woman with issue of blood for 12 years**
- *(Matthew 9:22 NKJV) But Jesus turned around, and when He saw her He said, "Be of good cheer, daughter; your faith has made you well." And the woman was made well from that hour.*
- **Matthew 14:26 - When the disciples were in the storm and Jesus came walking on the water to them:**
- *(Matthew 14:26 NKJV) And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear.*
- *(Matthew 14:27 NKJV) But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."*
- **John 16:33 – When Jesus said He is returning to the Father but will send you the Holy Spirit:**
- *John 16:33 (NKJV) ³³These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you ^εwill have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."*
-

- **Acts 23:11 - Here when Paul was in Prison:**
- (Acts 23:11 NKJV) *But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome."*

Jesus says in all Situation – be not afraid – not lose hope – I am Here

Jesus is saying in all these situations (and to us today), do not be afraid, do not be discouraged, do not lose hope, do not lose faith, for I am here.

Each able by Enabler / Only he who says Lord my Strength

Each of these people were able to perform what they were told to do, by the Person who told them to do it. Only he who can say "The Lord is the strength of my life" can say, "Of whom shall I be afraid?"

Psalms 27:1 (NKJV) ¹ The Lord is my light and my salvation; Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; Of whom shall I be afraid?

Hebrews 13:5-6 (NKJV) ⁵Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."⁶ So we may boldly say: "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"⁷

Def Cheer

This word "cheer" means, to have courage or confidence. Jesus said to Paul, be of good courage. Courage is almost a contradiction in terms. It means a strong desire to live taking the form of a readiness to die.

One man with courage makes a majority. —Andrew Jackson

Courage is fear holding on a minute longer. —George S. Patton

Jesus Comes – Jesus Goes – Jesus Sends / Doesn't Care the Problem

Notice with the paralytic and the woman they came to Jesus; Jesus says bring your problem to Me. But the disciples in the storm, the disciples fearful when He ascends into heaven, and Paul in the prison, Jesus says you can't come to Me so I will come to you. God doesn't care what the problem is either – for He is there for every problem and concern that you have. There is a powerful message in the picture of the woman with the issue of blood, for when she touched Jesus that would have made Him unclean, had to burn the clothes, but Jesus doesn't say don't touch Me, rather "touch Me" Be of good cheer DAUGHTER, My child!

1 Peter 5:6-7 (NKJV) ⁶Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, ⁷casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

Hear words Friends – Hear from Jesus / Jesus speak exact Word at Exact Moment

Be of Good Cheer - hearing those words from your spouse, that special brother or sister in the Lord, or from a pastor is all well and good, but when you hear these words from Jesus Himself, there is a whole new life behind them for He is the Way the Truth and the Life. Jesus will speak the exact word you need to hear at the exact moment it will be most powerful to you.

- I can't even get off the floor I am so down (I feel paralyzed) – be of good cheer He says to you (right word at the right time)..
- When will this ever end, it feels like years – be of good cheer He says to you (right word at the right time)..
- Help me I'm sinking – be of good cheer He says to you (right word at the right time).
- Lord where are you - be of good cheer He says to you (right word at the right time).

Today's Application

The whole application of today's study for you is this – will you say "accept" His Word of encouragement. Will you say, this is the Word of the Lord for me in this situation and I will get up, and move on in boldness, power, faith believing that God is with Me today, and tomorrow.

The editor of Parade magazine, Walter Anderson, has written a book called Courage Is a Three Letter Word. His message is clear and simple. Real courage means saying "yes" to life instead of backing down when we face adversity. He says that courage is acting with fear, not without it. Furthermore, in a recent interview in the Grand Rapids Press, he said, "Of all the successful people I've known and written about in the book, it's not just that they've learned to live with anxiety or to cope with anxiety, they've learned to live better because of anxiety."

Great News – don't have to Wait for this Word / Open the Word – He will Speak / Read Till

Here is the greatest news for you today, and that is that you do not have to wait to hear this Word, for it is there before twenty-four-seven to speak to you. Lord, I need to speak to you! Open the word, pick a book, start to read, and you will hear "right word – right time". Beloved, may I say, read the Word until the Word speaks directly to your situation, don't rush the moment.

What a Privilege – China Bibles

And what a privilege we have in our lives to have this word so readily available. I heard this story awhile back about a pastor in China:

Peter Xu sent three men every month by train to the depository contacts to bring back about 1,000 Bibles per trip for his growing house church movement. One month the three men were discovered with their Bible load by the local police of the depository city. The police threw the 1,000 Project Pearl Bibles into the cesspool of the public latrine and the three men were interrogated and jailed for the weekend. Monday they were released and commanded to return straight home and never return. Instead they waited inside the latrine until darkness fell. Then they climbed down into the filthy cesspool of human waste carefully retrieving each of the foul smelling books. They washed them off under the local water tap and carried them home. There they dried them out, sprayed them with perfume and circulated them through the network. Such was the hunger and importance of every copy of God's Word.

How far you Go

How far would you go to get the Word of God?

Side Note – Psalm 117 – Right in Middle

Just another side note, just a little interesting note, and that is that the middle of the King James Bible, is Psalm 117, which just happens to be the shortest chapter in the whole Bible. Want to impress someone tell them I love to study the Bible, in fact I have some chapters fully memorized (just leave out the part that Psalm 117 is only 2 verses). Chapters created by man, but here is a nice message to man, next time you are right in the middle of darkness, here is the middle of the Bible. Right in the middle, in the middle of it all, God is faithful! MATH: 1189 chapters in English KJV, so 594 (Genesis 1 – Psalms 116), Psalm 117, 594 (Psalm 118 – Revelation 22) = 1189.

Psalm 117 (Holman Bible Translation)¹ Praise the LORD, all nations! Glorify Him, all peoples!² For great is His faithful love to us; the LORD's faithfulness endures forever ³Hallelujah!

4.) God's Commission in the Darkness

(Acts 23:11 NKJV) But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, [so you must also bear witness at Rome.](#)"

Root of Stand

The root of that word "stood" means:

- to make firm, fix establish
- to cause a person or a thing to keep his or its place
- to stand, be kept intact (of family, a kingdom), to escape in safety
- to establish a thing, cause it to stand

God speaks to Establish / Trial Long way to Go – 5 Years / Word – not Details

The Lord speaks to Paul a word of encouragement and strength, so that he is fully established in his current situation, and will have the strength for see through it. This is the darkest night of Paul's life, and his trial is far from over. He is to spend two years in prison in Caesarea; and then when he arrives in Rome, he is to spend another three years. Paul has a 5 year trial he is going to be in, but the Lord meets Him here in the beginning to give Him a word to stand on not just for tonight (be of good cheer – you testified of me today), but a word for the next 5 years (so must you bear witness at Rome). Paul had no idea how long it would take, but he knew it would come to pass. And remember this, God gives us a word, but necessarily the details behind that word.

God speaks for the Moment – Follow-up for Future

So too it is with the Lord as He gives us a word for the moment, and then follows it up with a word for the future. I love how and when the Lord does that, He speaks a word to calm me and give me a peace for the moment, but then speaks another word to encourage and strength me for what is still yet future. Christian, tune your ear to Him, and He will speak a word for today, and a word for tomorrow.

Jeremiah 29:11-13 (NKJV) ¹¹For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. ¹²Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. ¹³And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

Courage

*Have plenty of courage. God is stronger than the devil. We are on the winning side.
John Jay Chapman (1862–1933)*

Recap

God wants us to see in our Darkest Times:

- **God's Timing in the Darkness**
- **God's Location in the Darkness**
- **God's Words in the Darkness**
- **God's Commission in the Darkness**

Escaping Bitterness – Paul’s Escape from Jerusalem (Acts 23:12-35)

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Knew Trouble – not Moved / Accused bringing non-Jews / Riot Begins – Guards Intercede

Paul knew trouble awaited him in Jerusalem but he was convinced this was where he needed to go. Once there trouble found him, the religious leaders accused him of bringing Gentiles into the Temple (but that wasn't true for they were actually Jewish Christians). So the Jews wanted to kill Paul for doing that, but before they could the Roman guards keeping order in Jerusalem rescued Paul. The Jews want to press charges against Paul so they may be granted the right to kill him, and so for the next chapters to follow we will follow Paul through his hearings and proceedings before Civil and Religious leaders.

(Acts 20:22 NKJV) *"And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,*

(Acts 20:23 NKJV) *"except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.*

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

Paul – Drink Offering / No Record of Bitterness / 5yrs – No Apostles / No Prayer

Finishing our chapter today the Apostle Paul will be taken out Jerusalem in the darkness for there are dozens of people who are bitter and angry at Paul, and as we will see want him dead before the day is over. Paul, a servant of the Most High God, a man who poured his whole life out for the Lord and people; Paul refusing to take the easy route, willingly going into strife and contentions, battle lines and harm's way. Paul, pouring himself out as a drink offering, and yet being trampled underfoot by the very people he reaches out to. Yet, we read no record of bitterness in the life and ministry of Paul; no bitterness against the Jewish leaders that he once had such close fellowship with, no bitterness against the men that will lay in wait to kill him (as we will read today), and no bitterness towards his fellow apostles. Have you ever considered through this whole ordeal that Paul will face, 5 years of imprisonment, there is no mention of Peter or James coming to him. There is no mention of James (whose idea it was for him to take these 4 men to the Temple which started this whole tumult) coming to try to defend him. Why didn't James come to the Roman guard or religious leaders and say hey, I can testify to you that those 4 men with Paul at the Temple were not Gentiles but Jews. Hey, how about this one, no mention of prayer for Paul either; when Peter and John were imprisoned for preaching at the Temple, the church organizes a prayer meeting; Paul gets thrown in prison and there is no mention of any prayer meeting for him. I would imagine that it could have been very easy for Paul to become bitter about all these things, bitter towards the people he was trying to help, bitter towards the people who were trying to hurt him, and bitter towards the people who were suppose to be his friends. But, we don't read a story of a life of bitterness, but of sweetness. The opposite of bitterness (sourness) is sweetness. All these things against Paul, yet no bitterness; all the wrongs done to him, yet no bitterness. I think we get bitter for much less in our lives today, and we live with it for years, only to let it rob us, taking away sweetness and replacing it with a sourness.

2 Timothy 4:6-7 (NKJV) *⁶For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.*

⁷I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

I Pray Today – Freedom for You

The title of today's message is "Escaping Bitterness" as Paul escapes a bitter situation, and I pray today that if there is any root of bitterness in your life, something present, something from your past that has taken root in your life, that today you will hear the word of the Lord, and today take your steps to freedom from the bitterness, and enjoy the sweetness of forgiving and forgetting.

Hebrews 12:14-15 (NKJV) ¹⁴*Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:*

¹⁵*looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;*

The Plot Against Paul

(Acts 23:11 NKJV) But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome."

(Acts 23:12 NKJV) And when it was day, some of the Jews banded together and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.

(Acts 23:13 NKJV) Now there were more than forty who had formed this conspiracy.

Be of Cheer – next line 40 want to kill Him

Well Jesus appears to Paul, says be of good cheer, and the next line we read – and there are 40 men plotting to kill Paul.

Max is 4-6 Hours

Being that these are men making this oath, Paul was expected to be dead within the next 4-6 hours because no man can make it longer than 6 hours between meals, so this is a serious threat going here anytime men refrain from eating. I'm at my crankiest when I've missed a meal.

Paul's Life in Danger from Beginning

Paul's life had been in danger from the very beginning of his ministry,

- When he witnessed for Christ in Damascus (Acts 9:22-25).
- During his first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion, the Hellenistic Jews tried to kill him (Acts 9:29).
- The Jews drove him out of Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13:50-51)
- and threatened to stone him in Iconium (Acts 14:5).
- Paul was stoned in Lystra (Acts 14:19-20);
- and in Corinth, the Jews tried to get him arrested (Acts 18:12-17).
- In Ephesus, the Jews had a plot to kill him (Acts 20:19),
- and they even planned to kill him at sea (Acts 20:3).

All Been There – Can't Pray / Lift Holy Hands

Christian have you ever been in that place that you are tired of fighting, tired of the battle, just want and wish for the rest. Ever come to that place where you just can't even pray anymore. The thought of prayer almost hurts because you don't even want to think and talk about it anymore – even with God. Christian, here is what I do, I get a piece of paper and write down the things I need prayer for or need to pray about, and then I look at that piece of paper and pray very short and very concise prayers for each of those several points. I find a wonderful thing happen as I pray, as short as they are, I find a releasing of the burden from heart as I am casting all my cares upon Him. Sometimes I find I am so tired, so burden with that something, that the thought of praying (for an extended period of time) just sinks me lower; so, pray short, pray specific, and don't feel like a failure for doing so (as Satan will whisper his lies in your ear), pray short and pray specific, and you'll see the Lord work in those prayers.

1 Timothy 2:8 (NKJV) ⁸*I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;*

1 Peter 5:6-7 (NKJV) ⁶*Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,*
⁷*casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.*

(Acts 23:14 NKJV) They came to the chief priests and elders, and said, "We have bound ourselves under a great oath that we will eat nothing until we have killed Paul.

(Acts 23:15 NKJV) "Now you, therefore, together with the council, suggest to the commander that he be brought down to you tomorrow, as though you were going to make further inquiries concerning him; but we are ready to kill him before he comes near."

High Priest in It / Miss the God Factor in Life of Believers

So the High Priest Ananias joins the plan which is no surprise as we studied just how corrupt and wretched he was of a man. So it seems they have a great plan but they miss the whole God factor in the lives of His children.

(Acts 23:16 NKJV) So when Paul's sister's son heard of their ambush, he went and entered the barracks and told Paul.

Paul Married / Had Sister & Nephew

To be a Sanhedrin, you had to be married, thus why we make the assumption that Paul was married. We know also based on this verse that Paul had at least one sister, and one nephew.

How Nephew Heard – don't Know / Coincidence – Divine Design / Mopping - Gossip

How this all transpired we do not know, it is only speculation that we can do. But somehow this nephew of Paul overhears the whole plot. It is a coincidence if you believe in them, or you can believe it was by divine design. I just love to think of how that came about. Maybe Paul's nephew was mopping the floor at the hall these guys were meeting at, and no one knew that he just happened to be related to Paul. Maybe Paul's sister was gossiping with another woman whose husband was one of these 40 men, after all a secret is something you tell one person at a time, and Paul's nephew overheard that conversation. Whatever the case was, God placed this young boy in the exact place and the perfect moment.

Augustine

Augustine said:

Trust the past to the mercy of God, the present to His love, and the future to His providence.

God works Supernaturally in Natural Ways / This boy Strategically Placed

God works through the natural ways as well as the super-natural ways. We here are reading what appears natural, but oh how far from it is. God strategically places this little boy to overhear this conversation

Read this Story this Week

I Read a story this week; a woman from New Castle, PA was in one of the Carolinas. On her way home, she stopped to rest. As she was going back to her car, she noticed a young serviceman sitting on a bench crying his heart out. She sat down beside him and asked him what the trouble was. He told her that he was on leave and was trying to get back to Akron to the hospital to be with his wife who was in labor. He had just learned that the delivery was not going well and that there was a chance that mother and baby might die. His bus had been canceled and he didn't know what to do. The woman offered to take him as far as Pittsburgh where he could catch a bus to Akron. He accepted the offer with gratitude. After they had been on the road for awhile, she decided to drive him all the way home and to go visit relatives in the Akron area. She was close to them and did not need to call them first. In fact, she even had a key to their house on her key ring. She dropped the soldier off at the hospital and drove to the house of her relatives. No one answered the doorbell but she noticed that their car was in the garage, so she used her key and let herself in. The smell of gas in the house was overwhelming. She ran to the kitchen where she discovered that all of the gas jets were turned on as high as they could be. She turned them off, opened the windows, called 911 and went upstairs where she discovered the entire family almost unconscious in their beds. The rescue squad got everyone out of the house even though they were too weak even to walk. They were all taken to the hospital where they were treated and

eventually recovered. They discovered that the grandmother had gone into the kitchen thinking that all of the gas jets were on, and had carefully turned them "off". Coincidence? Or Divine Design?

Exciting to look for God's working in the Natural / I Personally Believe – No Coincidences

It is exciting to look for God's working and moving in the natural ways. It is exciting when we look back at something and realize that God did something supernaturally right in the midst what seemed like every day. I personally believe that God is so intimately involved in our everyday life (hairs on head – sparrow falling to ground), that nothing is ever "chance", a coincidence, but a divine arrangement by God. If I can keep that in my mind, it will affect how I interact with each person that comes across my path. I will see God co-laboring with me in the workplace. I will see even when things don't go as I think they should, that He has allowed it.

Matthew 10:29-31 (NKJV) ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will. ³⁰But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.

Very Freeing – Seeing God Allowed It / Car or Work

I must add, it is one of the most freeing things in our lives when we look at bad things and realize that God has allowed them to come against us. It brings me a peace when my car breaks down so I can witness to the mechanic (you allowed it Lord), or maybe I had a lousy day at work to remind me that this earth isn't where it is at.

God in this Moment – Then He was in last Moment / God Allowed It

If God strategically placed this young boy here, we can clearly see God is working in the situation. If God is working at this very moment, then it also means that He was working at the last moment too – He allowed the whole things at the Temple to unfold. The Lord could have given Paul the flu an hour before his trip to the Temple with the 4 men and they whole things would have never happened. In regards to our theme today (escaping bitterness) I've come to remind myself every time someone hurts me or my family with their words or actions – *that God allowed it to happened* (not that He made it happen – but He did allow it to happen). I can just say about the situation, oh well God could have crushed them like a bug if He wanted to, but He didn't. He allowed it, and therefore I would do well to accept and embrace that rather than get angry and bitter about it. I can look at the situation and say God may want to be expanding my spiritual maturity, teaching me how to be patient, loving, or forgiving. God may be trying to teach that person something and has chosen to use me to be a part of that. Or, as hard as this may be, but I may actually be wrong and God is trying to show me my error (slim chance but ya never know).

If No Coincidences – God Allowed It – Can Live Every Moment in Spirit / Pray this Week

If there are no coincidences, and we realize God has allowed it, then we can live every moment and every situation in the Spirit, saying Lord you are here with me, you are working in this situation and in me. We can say "I'm choosing to live in supernatural right now, regardless of how natural this appears". I pray you live life this week in the awareness that God is working in the everyday of your life. And, when bad things happen, when people hurt you, know the Lord wants to take and use that for greater things.

(Acts 23:17 NKJV) Then Paul called one of the centurions to him and said, "Take this young man to the commander, for he has something to tell him."

(Acts 23:18 NKJV) So he took him and brought him to the commander and said, "Paul the prisoner called me to him and asked me to bring this young man to you. He has something to say to you."

(Acts 23:19 NKJV) Then the commander took him by the hand, went aside and asked privately, "What is it that you have to tell me?"

Movie Stuff – What a Beautiful Picture / Think Claudius heart is Moved – Divine Moment

This is movie stuff here, one of those Hallmark movies (not that I watch those). Imagine this rough and tough Roman Tribune, who at that time rose to his rank by proving himself in war, and

here he is taking this young boy by the hand and saying what is it that your uncle wants you to tell me. I hope to meet Claudius in heaven; he seems like a wonderful man. I think God was working on his heart through all this. It may have seemed like just another day at the fort, the Jews complaining about something, just seemed so natural – but God was doing something supernatural in Claudius' life. God very well may have let all this come about just so Paul would meet Claudius – and maybe He is doing the same in your personal situation.

(Acts 23:20 NKJV) And he said, "The Jews have agreed to ask that you bring Paul down to the council tomorrow, as though they were going to inquire more fully about him.

(Acts 23:21 NKJV) "But do not yield to them, for more than forty of them lie in wait for him, men who have bound themselves by an oath that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him; and now they are ready, waiting for the promise from you."

God gives Word (Going to Rome) – then puts Pieces Together / We just go w/Flow

So the Lord working in supernatural ways in natural ways; I'm glad to see and read such things as this because it shows me that God is moving the natural pieces around me to fulfill His divine will for my life. We can rest in that; God gives us a word like He did Paul (*Paul I'm sending you to Rome*), and we can trust that He will see that through whether we see supernatural happenings or just everyday happenings. When we believe that then we can just rest in the Lord and know He will get us there and that He will bring it to pass. So step out in faith to His Word, and then go along with the flow as He gets you there.

(Acts 23:11 NKJV) But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome."

Paul Sent to Felix

(Acts 23:22 NKJV) So the commander let the young man depart, and commanded him, "Tell no one that you have revealed these things to me."

(Acts 23:23 NKJV) And he called for two centurions, saying, "Prepare two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen, and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at the third hour of the night;

(Acts 23:24 NKJV) "and provide mounts to set Paul on, and bring him safely to Felix the governor."

470 – 9pm

470 armed guards leaving at 9pm. Claudius is taking no chances, outnumbering 10:1.

(Acts 23:25 NKJV) He wrote a letter in the following manner:

(Acts 23:26 NKJV) Claudius Lysias, to the most excellent governor Felix: Greetings.

Roman law

Roman law required a subordinate officer to send a written statement of the case with a prisoner when he referred the case to his superior.

Governor Felix / a Former Slave – a Bitter Man / God give him Paul as Example

Felix governed Judea from a.d. 52 to 60. Governor Felix was once a slave, he was the only slave in Roman history to become a governor, Felix was a cruel character who received his appointment because his brother, Pallos, was a friend of Caesar Nero. Of Felix, the brilliant Roman historian, Tacitus, said, "*He exercises the powers of a king with the character of a slave*" for although he was in power as governor, Felix retained a slave's mentality of getting back at the world for all the abuses it had heaped upon him, Felix was a very bitter man, and God will bring before him Paul, who if anyone had the right to be bitter it was Paul, yet not live in bitterness but sweetness and victory.

(Acts 23:27 NKJV) This man was seized by the Jews and was about to be killed by them. Coming with the troops I rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman.

Conveniently leaves out Pieces / God know the Whole Story

It's funny how Claudius Lysias conveniently forgot to mention he had Paul bound and was ready to beat him. In fact he first thought Paul was an Egyptian before he realized he was a Roman. Although Claudius leaves some truths out of his record, the record we read today has the full account, and the full light of truth. I don't necessarily say that to you about the people who are spreading half truths about you, but more so that we would know that God records the whole story, and the whole truth, and we deceive ourselves if we try to tell a story about someone and we leave out some of the pieces that shed bad light upon us.

(Acts 23:28 NKJV) And when I wanted to know the reason they accused him, I brought him before their council.

(Acts 23:29 NKJV) I found out that he was accused concerning questions of their law, but had nothing charged against him deserving of death or chains.

Something with Religious Law

This has something to do with their religious laws and practices.

Official Statements – Christians not Criminals

Acts 23:29 is another of Luke's "official statements" from Roman officials, proving that Christians were not considered criminals.

- The officials in Philippi had almost apologized to Paul (Acts 16:35-40),
- and Gallio in Corinth had refused to try him (Acts 18:14-15).
- In Ephesus, the town clerk told 25,000 people that the Christians were innocent of any crime (Acts 19:40),
- and now the Roman captain from the temple fortress was writing the same thing.
- Later, Festus (Acts 25:24-25) and Herod Agrippa (Acts 26:31-32) would also affirm that Paul should have been set free.
- Even the Jewish leaders in Rome had to confess that they had had no official news against Paul (Acts 28:21).

(Acts 23:30 NKJV) And when it was told me that the Jews lay in wait for the man, I sent him immediately to you, and also commanded his accusers to state before you the charges against him. Farewell.

Sending to You – Paul is your Problem Now

"I'm sending Paul to you, Felix," wrote Claudius Lysias. "Let his accusers come and present their case to you. You're the governor. Now Paul's your problem."

(Acts 23:31 NKJV) Then the soldiers, as they were commanded, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris.

(Acts 23:32 NKJV) The next day they left the horsemen to go on with him, and returned to the barracks.

(Acts 23:33 NKJV) When they came to Caesarea and had delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him.

35 miles from Jerusalem – 30 more to Caesarea

Antipatris is about 35 miles from Jerusalem, and all 470 made it there over night. Antipatris, was a way of a winding downhill road where an ambush would have been disastrous. Antipatris was used by the Romans as a relay station for their troops. The rest of the journey was over open plain where there was no need for a large number of soldiers. It would still be another 30 miles from Antipatris to Caesarea but the Roman commander figured that the further from Jerusalem the less the chance of an attack, and he left only the 70 horseman to finish getting Paul to Caesarea.

I Wonder where the 40 were / Imagine clubs – see 470

I wonder were these 40 guys were. Imagine if they were laying in wait with their little clubs and knives all fired up to do their deed, and then they see 470 Roman soldiers armed to the teeth – shh be quiet or they'll hear us, but I can't, that is my stomach growing; I would think their first thought would be, man this was a stupid idea; second thought would be, MacDavid's anyone?

Evil Plan – yet Paul doesn't pray for Fire / They Paul just 20 years Later

These men had an evil plan to destroy Paul, yet there is no mention of Paul asking God to bring fire down from heaven. Why? I believe Paul seen these men as he once was. These men, are Paul just 20 years later. They were zealous, but without knowledge. They thought what they were doing was the right thing, just like Paul did when he gave the nod for the stoning of Stephen, they really thought they were doing God's will.

Christian – can you Forgive / Root is Ignorance / A Key to Escaping Bitterness

Christian, can you forgive people for making the same sin you yourself were once guilty of? In all sin against you, the root of it all is at least ignorance. Even if the person who hurts you is a Christian, their violation is ignorance of the Word and Will of God. Their actions prove their ignorance and spiritual immaturity. A key to personally escaping bitterness is to remember that you too were spiritually immature in the Lord, and/or not even saved.

2 Hardest things You'll Do / Ask and Give Forgiveness /

Christian, Two of the hardest things you will ever do in your Christian walk; to ask for forgiveness, and to give forgiveness. As hard as it is to say I am wrong, please forgive me; it seems so much harder to forgive some who has deeply hurt us. Satan continually tries to get us to hate, than to forgive.

Make Forgiveness Part Everyday Prayer / Don't dwell on Them – But God's Power to Forgive

Make forgiving – part of your everyday prayer life. Don't dwell on the hurt they caused you, but dwell on God giving you the power to forgive.

Matthew 6:9-13 (NKJV)

⁹In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

¹⁰Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.

¹¹Give us this day our daily bread.

¹²And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.

¹³And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one. [£]For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Never More like Jesus / Jesus on the Cross

Christian, you will never be more like Jesus than when you forgive someone. Jesus said "forgive them Father for they know not what they do". Lord they do this in ignorance, Father I pray they will see, I pray through all this their eyes will be open. It is amazing all that followed after those words, and Jesus still didn't come down from the cross to set things straight. They cast lots for His clothing, the religious rulers mocked Him saying you saved other, now save yourself, um hmm, can't do it can ya! Everyone gets a laugh at Jesus' expense; hey have some sour wine, only been sitting out in the sun for a week. Hey get a sign and put it over His head, be a great photo with the headline of the newspaper tomorrow – 3 criminals crucified yesterday.

Luke 23:33-39 (NKJV) ³³And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. ³⁴Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots. ³⁵And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God."

³⁶The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine, ³⁷and saying, "If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself." ³⁸And an inscription also was [£]written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. ³⁹Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, [£]"If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us."

Never More like Jesus / Forgive – even if Don't Ask / Bitterness sucks Sweetness Out

You will never be more like Jesus than when you forgive – EVEN if they don't ask you for forgiveness (like many of the people who stood at the cross that day – they never asked for

forgiveness and made Him their Lord and Savior – and they will be judged for their actions). Why forgive, because if you don't bitterness will suck all the sweetness out of your life, and you will be left sour, and it will affect every area of your life, because it is impossible to keep it from spilling over to the other areas. Jesus remained sweet even when they will trying to fill Him with sour wine.

Hebrews 12:14-15 (NKJV) ¹⁴*Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:*

¹⁵*looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;*

How Forgive – They don't Ask / Sad shallow Life / Forgive – not invite for Dinner

I'm often asked, how can I forgive someone who hasn't repented? I always say, their failure to ask for forgiveness is a sign of their shallowness; and they are living a sad, sad shallow life, and they will never reach the maturity and depth God desires for their life. I'm saying forgive them, so bitterness doesn't take root in your life, I'm not saying invite them over for dinner so they can hurt you some more. Seek the Lord specifically on how He wants you to interface with them in the future. And, understand forgiveness from the theological standpoint, and that is that there is forgiveness positionally and relationally; just as it is with our relationship with our Heavenly Father, we can apply that to our relationships one with another. Positionally we are forgiven of all our sins, past-present-future, God says He will remember them no more (Heb 10:17), so no matter our sin we will positionally always be His child. However, as in ever relationship, when we offend the other, the relationship will always have a strain on it until that offense is dealt with; thus why the Lord commands us to confess our sin before Him, so it can be dealt (1 John 1:9).

Hebrews 10:17 (KJV) ¹⁷*And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*

Psalms 103:12 (NKJV) ¹² *As far as the east is from the west,
So far has He removed our transgressions from us.*

1 John 1:9 (NKJV) ⁹*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

The Shredder

A while back I realized that I had bitterness towards several people that hurt me and my family badly. I said I forgive them, but in the depth of my heart I still had a deep resentment against them. It was easy to see it and realize it because I could see the sourness within me, the robbing of the sweetness. So, I said Lord I need to just sit with you and deal with this right now. So I got a piece of paper out, wrote their names on it, and said Lord what they did they did in ignorance, saved and unsaved, they don't know you, or they don't know your ways, and thus they did what they did, or they are just shallow Christians, I pray now give me the power to forgive. Then I took that piece of paper, and sent it through my paper shredder.

Next Step - Forgetting

The next step is asking God to help you forget. Ask Him to help you not dwell on it, but to move on to the higher ground, even if that person or persons never come and ask for forgiveness. When the thought come into to you mind to hate, just as Satan wants you to do, take the thought captive immediately, and say I've lost enough already from this, I will not lose anymore.

Philippians 3:12-14 (NKJV) ¹²*Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. ¹³Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

2 Corinthians 10:4-6 (NKJV) ⁴*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, ⁵casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, ⁶and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.*

Give Forgiveness when Asked / Give Second Chances

Also, when forgiveness is asked for, sought out, give it. You see bitterness will keep you from giving second chances and then a cycle begins that never ends. That person may feel imprisoned now by their failures, and will not go on to see the sweetness that is in forgiveness, both God's and from a fellow brother.

Video – A Football Game gives Hope.

It is good to be forgiven, and it is good to forgive. When you are, and when you do, there is nothing SWEETER!

(Acts 23:34 NKJV) And when the governor had read it, he asked what province he was from. And when he understood that he was from Cilicia, (Acts 23:35 NKJV) he said, "I will hear you when your accusers also have come." And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's Praetorium.

Herod's Place - Mediterranean

Herod's judgment hall was neither a dungeon nor a prison, but rather a palace on the shore of the Mediterranean. Thus, as we'll see in chapter 24, Paul would spend two years in protective custody on the beach. So Paul has been rescued by the Romans from being killed for the umpteenth time, and now set up in house arrest at the Kings summer palace.

When I was going through hard Time

When I was going through a hard time in my life (I was unemployed for 9 months), I found it very hard to receive blessings from un-believers. In my theology at that time I didn't want to receive blessings from unbelievers because I didn't want them to think they were doing God a favor by taking care of one of His "special" kids (because I had quit my job to go to Bible College). I didn't want them taking God's glory, I didn't want them thinking they were doing "good works" and thus why they would go to heaven, but God showed me otherwise. In that time God showed me in His Word that my theology was off, as he sustained Elijah who had been on the run from King Ahab and his wicked wife Jezebel, and how the Lord sustained Elijah by a raven that was bring him food. You see a raven was an unclean bird according to the Levitical Law (Levt 11), yet that is what God chose to use to sustain Elijah (1 Kings 17).

Leviticus 11:13-15 (NKJV) ¹³And these you shall regard as an abomination among the birds; they shall not be eaten, they are an abomination: the eagle, the vulture, the buzzard, ¹⁴the kite, and the falcon after its kind; ¹⁵every raven after its kind,

1 Kings 17:1-7 (NKJV) ¹And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, "As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, except at my word."²Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, ³Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. ⁴And it will be that you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there."⁵So he went and did according to the word of the Lord, for he went and stayed by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan. ⁶The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook. ⁷And it happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.

Don't Understand All – But Know God brings Jesus before the People

I may not understand everything fully about that, but I can see one thing real clear, God used those times just like He did here with Paul to bring Jesus before the people, who otherwise may not have

Recap: Acts 23:11-35

- Pray concisely in Broken Times
- No Coincidences – All Divine Designs
- God Allowed It in your Life
- Go with the flow once His Will is Determined
- 2 of the Hardest things to do as a Christian
 - To Ask for Forgiveness
 - To Give Forgiveness
- God will use the Unsaved in your Life

Chapter 24

Paul before Felix (Procrastination – Lost Opportunities)

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Knew Trouble – not Moved / Accused bringing non-Jews / Paul before Leaders

Paul knew trouble awaited him in Jerusalem but he was convinced this was where he needed to go. Once there trouble found him, the religious leaders accused him of bringing Gentiles into the Temple (but that wasn't true for they were actually Jewish Christians). So the Jews wanted to kill Paul for doing that, but before they could the Roman guards keeping order in Jerusalem rescued Paul. The Jews want to press charges against Paul so they may be granted the right to kill him, and so for the next chapters to follow we will follow Paul through his hearings and proceedings before Civil and Religious leaders.

(Acts 20:22 NKJV) "And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,

(Acts 20:23 NKJV) "except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.

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

Paul before Felix – Governor / Jews bring fancy Lawyer / Procrastination

Today we will read of Paul who currently is in Caesarea, before Felix, the Governor of the region, and the Jews will come with their fancy lawyer to try to make their case. But really the central character in this chapter is the Governor Felix, and his wife Drusilla. We will read a story of "procrastination", of a person who has been moved by the Holy Spirit the truths of Jesus Christ and the need for Him to be Savior of your life, but they will procrastinate about what to do with him. Procrastination (pro (in favor of) – crastinate (tomorrow)); procrastinate means "in favor of tomorrow", a person knows today is available to do that thing, but says "I'm in favor of doing that tomorrow". Sadly, another definition of the word means – to delay until the opportunity is lost.

Charges against Paul

(Acts 24:1 NKJV) Now after five days Ananias the high priest came down with the elders and a certain orator named Tertullus. These gave evidence to the governor against Paul.

5 Days

Verse 1 - Now after five days - That is five days after Paul had arrived in Caesarea

Jews weak Case / Tertullus Professional Speaker / Roman Name – Triple Hardened

Verse 1 – Tertullus – The Jews go get themselves a professional speaker; that is a good indicator of how weak their case is that they hire a professional speaker to try to make a flowery speech to impress the Governor. Tertullus is a Roman name, so we see the political move here by the Jewish leaders to try to be relatable to the Roman court; and his very name means "triple hardened" which I believe the Holy Spirit is defining for us that this man is just a slicked backed hair lawyer who will go to the highest bidder, and he cares not about truth, whose right or whose wrong, he cares not whether Paul gets the death penalty, he cares only that he gets his money.

Matthew 16:26-27 (NKJV) ²⁶For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? ²⁷For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.

Ananias makes 80 mile Trip

Verse 1 - Ananias the high priest came down with the elders – They bring the big shots, the top dogs, even Ananias the high priest comes who is probably around 80 years old. So you got this 80 year old having to make a grueling 65 mile journey in the Mid-East heat to lay the charges against Paul.

They consider Paul – Major Threat / Killing Paul only hope to Silence Him

Now tell me, how much of a threat do they consider Paul? A big enough threat to hire a professional speaker and for an 80 year old to make the 65 mile journey. They hope to silence, and they know killing him is the only way, for there is no silencing a man like Paul any other way.

Richmond Petition

In a wealthy residential section of Richmond some new homeowners complained that the singing from a small Christian church nearby disturbed them. They circulated a petition to the city council. The solicitors brought it to a Jewish resident for signing. He read it and said, "Gentlemen, I cannot sign it. If I believed, as do these Christians, that my Messiah had come, I would shout it from the housetops and on every street in Richmond; and nobody could stop me." Well that is the story of the Apostle Paul, he met the Messiah Jesus Christ and from that day forward there was no stopping him, regardless of the personal cost. May that be your story.

Here comes Tertullus' Performance

So here comes Tertullus for his performance, and what a performance it will be, as he is really going to lay it on thick.

(Acts 24:2 NKJV) And when he was called upon, Tertullus began his accusation, saying: "Seeing that through you we enjoy great peace, and prosperity is being brought to this nation by your foresight,

(Acts 24:3 NKJV) "we accept it always and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.

So Peaceful – took 470 Soldiers

So peaceful was the region that it only took 470 soldiers to escort Paul out of Jerusalem.

Felix anything but Noble / Brother friends Nero / Only Slave to be Governor – Very Bitter

Felix was anything but noble, and all the Jews hated him for he was corrupt and cruel against the Jewish people. He became governor because his brother was friends with Caesar Nero. He was actually once a slave, and the historian Tacitus, said, "*He exercises the powers of a king with the character of a slave*" for although he was in power as governor, Felix retained a slave's mentality of getting back at the world for all the abuses it had heaped upon him, Felix was a very bitter man, and God will bring before him Paul, who if anyone had the right to be bitter it was Paul, yet not live in bitterness but sweetness and victory.

God's Love reaches Out – Regardless World View / God loves Felix so Much – Brings Paul

God's love reaches to all men everywhere, regardless of the world's view of them, nor of what they have done, or are currently doing. God loves Felix so much, that He will bring the Apostle Paul before him so that he may hear how precious he is before the One who created him. God feels the same way about you, and here you are today; regardless of the world's view of who you are, know the God of heaven and earth loves you deeply – He proved on the Cross of Calvary. What will Felix do about this Good News when he hears it – let's read on? What will you do?

(Acts 24:4 NKJV) "Nevertheless, not to be tedious to you any further, I beg you to hear, by your courtesy, a few words from us.

(Acts 24:5 NKJV) "For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.

Not call them Christians – tactical Move – no Messiah / Nazarenes - Armpit

To not call them “Christians” seems to be a tactical move here by the religious leaders (as their accusation was well planned out way before they got there no doubt – Tertullus is only speaking what he has been told to say); they are not going to use the word “Christ” (which means Messiah) because they don’t want to in any way get on the subject of the Messiah, because then they would have to defend that Jesus wasn’t the Messiah, and they know the only thing weaker than their case against Paul, would be their case against Jesus. So they go with the “sect of the Nazarenes” for Nazareth was known as—the hick-town, or the armpit of Israel. We still see this tactic today as people attack the followers, so they never have to get on the subject of the Leader (Christ Himself) – I always point out that Jesus said to “follow Me”, He didn’t say, “follow my people”.

John 14:6 (NKJV) ⁶Jesus said to him, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*”

(Acts 24:6 NKJV) "He even tried to profane the temple, and we seized him, and wanted to judge him according to our law.

Try some Smoke & Mirrors / Profane Temple – leave out How / No 4 People as Evidence

They try some smoke and mirrors here by saying Paul profaned the Temple, but they leave out how. They know that if they got specific about accusing Paul of bringing the 4 Gentiles up to the temple mount (which was strictly forbidden by Jewish law) they would be asked to produce the names of who they were, and they would have nothing – because Felix would ask them why they hadn’t arrested the 4 gentile men along with Paul. Not arresting the 4 men along with Paul is proof of their conspiracy towards Paul; they were waiting for some reason to attack Paul, and this was the best plan they could muster up.

(Acts 24:7 NKJV) "But the commander Lysias came by and with great violence took him out of our hands,

(Acts 24:8 NKJV) "commanding his accusers to come to you. By examining him yourself you may ascertain all these things of which we accuse him."

(Acts 24:9 NKJV) And the Jews also assented, maintaining that these things were so.

They were united in their Cause / No Civil War in Hell / We have the Keys! – Unlock

Verse 9 - And the Jews also assented, maintaining that these things were so - Those who went with Tertullus and Ananias from Jerusalem to Caesarea were all in one accord—united in their stand against Paul. As I’ve said many a times, there is no civil war in hell, Satan and his henchman are united in their cause, and that is to destroy the Kingdom of God. How sad it is to me to see all the civil wars amongst the Body of Christ, as the body attacks each other rather than uniting and attacking the kingdom of hell. Jesus says that we have the keys to the kingdom, but unfortunately God’s people continually fight over who got the key, who should hold the key, what color the key really is, what’s the key made of, is it once made – always made – or can we actually lose the key, all the bickering and debating about the key rather than unlocking and unleashing all that the key is housing (the Power of the Living God!). These men are united in their cause against Paul.

Matthew 16:18-19 (NKJV) ¹⁸And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. ¹⁹And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

Weak Case from Roman Law – so now more about Politics

Pretty weak case against Paul before Felix; from the Roman law standpoint, they have present absolutely nothing against Paul that would make Rome concerned about him. All that they are presenting is their internal Jewish Law, thus this situation is going to become more about politics than it is about the law as we will read in the remaining chapters.

BTW – Good Summary of Satan Thoughts of You

By the way, you have a pretty good summary of what Satan considers you as he fuels these charges, so he thinks of you (compared to God’s thoughts of you – Jeremiah 29:11):

Verse 5 - a plague, - you make me sick Satan says of you!

Verse 5 - a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world – you are stirring up my little world with all your integrity and morality; you are making my followers uncomfortable.

Verse 5 and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes – Oh, I'm not going to say that name Jesus, His name just drives me crazy! And you keep telling people about Him, and they are following your lead and have started to follow Him – oh how I hate you!

Verse 6 "He even tried to profane the temple – ah, I've established sanctuaries all around the world, bars to promote drunkardness, crack houses, rotten marriages, depression, pornography, and you are defiling my temple as you lead people away from them with your words of hope in Him (and I can't even speak His Name it hurts so bad when I do).

Verse 6 and we seized him, and wanted to judge him according to our law – I would love to get you into my courthouse, I'd throw the book at you and devour you (Revelation 12:10), but umm (that Name) won't let me.

Revelation 12:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰Then I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, "Now salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ have come, [for the accuser of our brethren](#), who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down.

Jeremiah 29:11 (NKJV) ¹¹For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

Paul's Defense before Felix

Now it is Paul's turn, and He will act as his own defense lawyer, and no doubt remembering those words of Jesus – that the Holy Spirit will give us the words to speak. Hey, all here who are fearful of sharing your faith because you fear saying something wrong, or making matters worse – let me just say the only thing that can make matters worse is silence, for people are perishing and many have no idea how bad a shape they are in. The world can seem grand when all is well, but put the world in the light of eternity, and this world isn't all that.

Matthew 10:18-20 (NKJV) ¹⁸You will be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. ¹⁹But when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; ²⁰for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you.

(Acts 24:10 NKJV) Then Paul, after the governor had nodded to him to speak, answered: "Inasmuch as I know that you have been for many years a judge of this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself,

Paul respects Position – doesn't insult Intelligence

Paul respects the position, but doesn't insult Felix's intelligence by saying he thinks he is great, because again Felix knew everyone hated him.

(Acts 24:11 NKJV) "because you may ascertain that it is no more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship.

(Acts 24:12 NKJV) "And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city.

(Acts 24:13 NKJV) "Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me.

Paul points out – No Proof – no 4 Men

Paul pointing out that they brought no proof of these charges, meaning where are the 4 men they said I brought to the Temple.

(Acts 24:14 NKJV) "But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.

(Acts 24:15 NKJV) "I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.

(Acts 24:16 NKJV) "This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.

(Acts 24:17 NKJV) "Now after many years I came to bring alms and offerings to my nation,

(Acts 24:18 NKJV) "in the midst of which some Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with a mob nor with tumult.

(Acts 24:19 NKJV) "They ought to have been here before you to object if they had anything against me.

(Acts 24:20 NKJV) "Or else let those who are here themselves say if they found any wrongdoing in me while I stood before the council,

(Acts 24:21 NKJV) "unless it is for this one statement which I cried out, standing among them, 'Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day.'"

You want a Confession / Follower – Believe Scriptures – Waiting Resurrection

You want a confession Paul says - "These are the things of which I am guilty," said Paul. "I'm a follower of the Way. I'm a believer in the Scriptures. I'm waiting for the Resurrection."

Paul saying he Believes Scriptures more than the Experts

Paul is saying I believe more in the Scriptures of our Jewish forefathers than these so-called religious experts are. Paul says I believe in 300 some prophecies concerning the Messiah that would come (as written by the Law and the Prophets). Paul is saying I believe:

His Birth & Lineage

- 1.) The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Micah 5:2a / Matthew 2:1-2
- 2.) The Messiah would be a descendant of David. Isaiah 9:7 / Matthew 1:1

His Environment & the World Setting

- 3.) The Messiah would be announced to his people 483 years, to the exact day, after the decree to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. Daniel 9:25 / John 12:12-13
- 4.) The Messiah would be killed before the destruction of the temple. Daniel 9:26c / Matthew 27:50-51
- 5.) The Jew's authority to administer capital punishment would be gone when the Messiah arrived. Genesis 49:10c / John 18:31

His Death

- 6.) The Messiah would be sacrificed on the same mountain where God tested Abraham. Genesis 22:14 / Luke 23:33
- 7.) The Messiah's back would be whipped. Isaiah 53:5c Matthew 27:26
- 8.) The Messiah's hands and feet would be pierced. Psalm 22:16c Matthew 27:38

A Coin in Texas

Speaking of just these 8 prophecies; the following probabilities (The Law of Compound Probability) are taken from Peter Stoner in Science Speaks (Moody Press, 1963) to show that coincidence is ruled out by the science of probability. Stoner says that by using the modern science of probability in reference to eight prophecies, 'we find that the chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled all eight prophecies is 1 in 10 to the 17th." That would be 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000. In order to help us comprehend this staggering probability, Stoner illustrates it by supposing that "we take 10 to the 17th silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep (that is a State that is 262,000 square miles, 130 million acres of farmland (that doesn't count the cities), and enough land to easily house all 25 million of its States residents. Two feet deep over 262,000 square miles - "Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes (it took me 14 hours at 70 mph to drive across the whole State from East to West), but he must then pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man."

Ray – Why always come Back to these 8 / I want you to Master them

You may ask, Ray why do you always come back to these 8 prophecies? The reason being saint is I want you to master them. If you can't memorize them then write them down, print them out, and be able to explain them to anyone that would be willing to hear you out on them.

Christian – Evolution vs Creation / Eternal God outside our Time and Dimension / Proves

Listen Christian, I tell people that I can't prove evolution is false (even though I can make some really strong points that at the end of the conversation you'll have to admit that following evolution takes a lot of faith), I can't prove to you, produce evidence, of Divine creation. But to me, the most powerfully proof/evidence that I can present of an external God entering into our time and universe, is the fulfilled prophecies of the Bible, and how amazing the yet-to-be-fulfilled prophecies are coming to together (a mark/chip to do money exchange, the revived Roman Empire, the rise of Babylon, Iran and Russia forming ties, etc – totally amazing). But to show people the past prophecies, prove the validity of this Book, that a God who is outside of our time dimension (Eternal) entered our world, and if we can convince them the inspiration of this Bible, then we can tell them – and this is what the Book says about eternal salvation, there is only one way, through Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself took the same approach by saying I speak things before they happen, to prove I am who I say I am – God!:

*Isaiah 46:9-10 (NKJV)*⁹ Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me,¹⁰ Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure.'

*Isaiah 41:21-24 (NKJV)*²¹ "Present your case," says the Lord. "Bring forth your strong reasons," says the King of Jacob.²² "Let them bring forth and show us what will happen; Let them show the former things, what they were, That we may consider them, And know the latter end of them; Or declare to us things to come."²³ Show the things that are to come hereafter, That we may know that you are gods; Yes, do good or do evil, That we may be dismayed and see it together.²⁴ Indeed you are nothing, And your work is nothing; He who chooses you is an abomination.

*Isaiah 48:1-5 (NKJV)*¹ "Hear this, O house of Jacob, Who are called by the name of Israel, And have come forth from the wellsprings of Judah; Who swear by the name of the Lord, And make mention of the God of Israel, But not in truth or in righteousness;² For they call themselves after the holy city, And lean on the God of Israel;

The Lord of hosts is His name:³ "I have declared the former things from the beginning; They went forth from My mouth, and I caused them to hear it. Suddenly I did them, and they came to pass."⁴ Because I knew that you were obstinate, And your neck was an iron sinew, And your brow bronze,⁵ Even from the beginning I have declared it to you; Before it came to pass I proclaimed it to you, Lest you should say, 'My idol has done them, And my carved image and my molded image Have commanded them.'

*John 14:27-29 (NKJV)*²⁷Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.²⁸You have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming back to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father is greater than I.²⁹"And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe.

OT foretold Specific Prophecies – & the Resurrection of the Dead

The same Scriptures that foretold very specific events in the history of mankind, also clearly speaks about the resurrection of the dead, Paul says he believes in it because it too was foretold in the Old Testament passages. Here are a few below. So clearly the resurrection is seen in the Old Testament.:

*Job 14:14-15 (NKJV)*¹⁴ If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait, Till my change comes.¹⁵ You shall call, and I will answer You; You shall desire the work of Your hands.

*Job 19:25-27 (NKJV)*²⁵ For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth;²⁶ And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God,²⁷ Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

*Psalms 16:8-11 (NKJV)*⁸ I have set the Lord always before me; Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved.⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope.¹⁰ For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.¹¹ You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

*Hebrews 11:5 (NKJV)*⁵By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him";⁶ for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

2 Kings 2:11 (NKJV) ¹¹Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

Verse 15 – Powerful Point – Resurrection of Just and Unjust

Verse 15 - I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust – Paul makes a very powerful statement and point to all who are listening, and that is that the resurrection is for the just and the unjust – and Paul can say when it comes and I stand before the Holy and Awesome God, I have hope and no worries. So, to all listeners, can they say the same?

Revelation 20:11-14 (NKJV) ¹¹Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. ¹²And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before ^εGod, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. ¹³The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. ¹⁴Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second ^εdeath.

Felix has to Respond to what just Heard / Sadly he Procrastinates

Felix now has to respond to the things he has heard, and unfortunately he will do what many people do, they will push off the matter, say I'll think about it later, but sadly for most they never do.

Felix Procrastinates

(Acts 24:22 NKJV) But when Felix heard these things, having more accurate knowledge of the Way, he adjourned the proceedings and said, "When Lysias the commander comes down, I will make a decision on your case."

(Acts 24:23 NKJV) So he commanded the centurion to keep Paul and to let him have liberty, and told him not to forbid any of his friends to provide for or visit him.

Protective Custody

"Keep him in protective custody," said Felix, "but allow him liberty and visitors."

(Acts 24:24 NKJV) And after some days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish, he sent for Paul and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.

Felix married 3 Times

History tells us that Felix was married 3 times:

- 1) To a Princess
- 2) To the Granddaughter of Anthony and Cleopatra
- 3) To Drusilla. (Daughter of Herod Agrippa), who had been the wife of another king.

Drusilla: Young & Beautiful / Married 2 times / Lineage of the Herods / Occult - Adultery

Drusilla – who ancient writing describe as beautiful, was daughter of Herod Agrippa (whom worms ate in the amphitheatre at Caesarea), great-granddaughter of Herod the Great (who ordered the slaughter of the infants when Jesus was born), and great niece of the Herod who beheaded John the Baptist—Drusilla didn't have the greatest heritage, and hers is a tragic story. Tradition has it that she was married to a Syrian prince when a magician, secretly in the employ of Felix, told her she should marry Felix. Enamored with the occult, Drusilla, at the age of nineteen, left her husband to become Felix's third wife. Because she was still married to the Syrian prince, she would thus be living in an adulterous relationship by becoming Felix's wife. Hey young girls be wary of that smooth talking man that speaks words contrary to the word of God.

Drusilla, one of the three daughters of Agrippa I (12:1-23), was born A.D. 38 and promised at a young age to Epiphanes, the son of Antiochus king of Commagene, if he would become a Jewish proselyte (Josephus Jewish Antiquities 19.354-55; 20.139-40). He refused to do so. So after the death of Agrippa I (A.D. 44), Drusilla's brother Agrippa II (Acts 25:13--26:32) gave her in marriage to Azizus, King of Emesa, a small domain on the Orontes. Azizus did consent to be circumcised. Enter Felix, whom Tacitus said indulged in "every kind of barbarity and lust" (Histories 5.9). Captivated by Drusilla's beauty, he wooed her away from Azizus with the aid of a Cyprian Jew named Atomus, who pretended to be a magician. Drusilla married Felix as much to escape the enmity of her sister Bernice, who abused her because of her

beauty, as in response to his amorous spell (Josephus Jewish Antiquities 20.139-44). Felix was thrice married (Suetonius Claudius 28). This Drusilla replaced another Drusilla, granddaughter of Antony and Cleopatra. The couple would have been known to some in Luke's Roman audience, since they repaired to Rome after Felix was removed from his procuratorship in A.D. 59.

(Acts 24:25 NKJV) Now as he reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you."

Pierced to Heart by Holy Spirit – but Pushes it Away

Verse 25 - the judgment to come - Felix comes under conviction, and becomes fearful (maybe your translation reads "he trembled". God the Holy Spirit has pierced his heart (John 16) but Felix pushes Him away because he doesn't want to change. He knows what is required of him, but pushes it away, as man always thinks that he has more time. More time? It is a lie from the pit of hell. How often does fear hide behind a busy schedule? How many have fooled themselves into thinking that by not deciding they have truly "kept all the options open" and at a convenient time in the future they will give the claims of Christ the serious attention they deserve?

John 16:8-11 (NKJV) ⁸And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: ⁹of sin, because they do not believe in Me; ¹⁰of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; ¹¹of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged.

The Meeting in Hell

I am reminded of the story about a meeting in hell. Satan called his four leading demons together and commanded them to think up a new lie that would trap more souls.

"I have it!" one demon said. "I'll go to earth and tell people there is no God."

"It will never work," said Satan. "People can look around them and see that there is a God."

"I'll go and tell them there is no heaven!" suggested a second demon, but Satan rejected that idea. "Everybody knows there is life after death and they want to go to heaven."

"Let's tell them there is no hell!" said a third demon.

"No, conscience tells them their sins will be judged," said the devil. "We need a better lie than that."

Quietly, the fourth demon spoke. "I think I've solved your problem," he said. "I'll go to earth and tell everybody *there is no hurry*."

The best time to trust Jesus Christ is—*now!*

And the best time to tell others the Good News of the Gospel is—*now!*

If you Here Today / Today is Acceptable Day

If you are here today, don't make the mistake Felix made, don't procrastinate, there isn't time, for you know not what tomorrow brings, thus why the Scriptures say TODAY is the acceptable time.

2 Corinthians 6:2 (NKJV) ²For He says: "*In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you.*"² Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

For the Believer / Do that Something Today / Make His Word – Your Will

If you are a Believer in Christ, and God has spoken to you to do something, whatever that something is – today is the day, do not put it off in favor of tomorrow. Has He told you to repent of something, to forgive someone, to seek forgiveness, to call someone? Do it today without hesitation. Make His Word, your Will.

Righteousness / The Sweetness of Paul / You can be Righteous – In spite of Self

Verse 25 - Now as he reasoned about righteousness - Oh the word Paul would have shared with them. The sweetness of Paul, as he was not fighting here for his life or freedom, but the life and freedom of Felix and Drusilla. Paul reasoned with Felix and Drusilla concerning the nature of righteousness – that they could have righteousness through Christ in spite of their past and current sin (2 Cor 5:21). Felix and Drusilla were not righteous. Their life was filthy, their history diabolical. They were not liked by the people they ruled and were not trusted by even their own household of slaves, servants, and companions. But Paul must have told them that if any man be in Christ he is a new creature. Old things pass away; all things become new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

“Felix, Drusilla, you can have a new beginning. You can become righteous in Christ Jesus,” Paul must have said.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV) ²¹*For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJV) ¹⁷*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*

Self-Control / There is a Power Available – Eph 1:19

Verse 25 - self-control - Paul preached to them the power that is available for self-control, which neither of these two had, and that power comes when a person asks Jesus Christ into their heart, then God sends the Helper (God Himself the Holy Spirit) to give us the power over sin. The same power that raised Christ from the dead is available to us today to overcome any sin that has power over us.

John 14:17 (NKJV) ¹⁷*the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.*

John 14:26 (NKJV) ²⁶*But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.*

Ephesians 1:19-20 (NKJV) ¹⁹*and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power* ²⁰*which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,*

(Acts 24:26 NKJV) Meanwhile he also hoped that money would be given him by Paul, that he might release him. Therefore he sent for him more often and conversed with him.

(Acts 24:27 NKJV) But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound.

Verse 25 He Trembled – Now Felix looking for worldly Gain

Back in verse 25 it said that Felix was afraid (or your translation may say “trembled”), and the word there in the Greek word for “trembled” is the same word used to describe an earthquake. In other words, Felix was literally shaking. But now time has passed and Felix isn’t trembling no more, he is not under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, he has turned his attentions back on to the things of the world (oh can I get some money out of this situation). Felix no longer sends for Paul to engage in spiritual discussion, but to attempt financial manipulation. From earthquake shaking to hmm I need to fatten my wallet. There is a word of warning in this verse, and example to all, and that is that it is possible that each time a person puts off responding to the word they become less sensitive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, all the way to the point that their heart is so hard, it is not that they won’t respond, but that they can’t:

Hebrews 3:12-15 (NKJV) ¹²*Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God;* ¹³*but exhort one another daily, while it is called “Today,” lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.* ¹⁴*For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end,* ¹⁵*while it is said: “Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.”*

2 Years Later still Procrastinating / Felix a Slave - Drusilla Young & Beauty - Paul in Chains

Verse 27 says it is two years later. Felix has been procrastinating about the things he heard for 2 years and still made no decision. Drusilla is 19 years old, beautiful, and on her 2nd marriage. Felix, born a slave and still a slave, and then there is Paul who is in chains but the only one who is free amongst them.

You Young People here Today

You young people here today I want you to see a few things about this young lady:

1. God expected her to understand these things (salvation and sin) at her young age.
2. God expected her to respond to the things she heard.

What is their End? / Felix ends in Disgrace / Drusilla Ended in Volcano

What is the end of Felix and Drusilla according to the history books - Felix was kicked out of power, called back to Rome, and replaced by Porcius Festus. Why? A riot broke out in Caesarea

between the Greeks and the Jews. When the Greeks emerged victorious, Felix vented his frustration with the Jews by ordering the Greeks to go throughout the city bludgeoning Jewish men, raping Jewish women, and plundering Jewish possessions. When Caesar heard about this, he immediately sent for Felix. Thus, Felix lived out the rest of his life in disgrace in Rome. What happened to Drusilla? Two years after this event, in Europe on a shopping spree when Mount Vesuvius exploded, she was caught in the lava of the volcano and died at the age of twenty-one. Felix and Drusilla both had an opportunity to hear the gospel, but they put off making a decision.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ

John 3:16-17 (NKJV) ¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. You my friend are perishing, even right now at this very moment, as the word “perish” means “to put away with entirely”, as you sin separates you from the Holy God. The structure of this sentence in the original Greek language is written that it is saying that the individual is performing the action, not God, it is the individual that is separating and putting himself away from God by his own actions.

The Problem:

Isaiah 59:1-2 (NKJV) ¹ Behold, the Lord'S hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. ² But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.

Romans 3:23 (NKJV) ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

The Penalty

Romans 6:23 (NKJV) ²³For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Provision

Romans 5:8 (NKJV) ⁸But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Man's Responsibility:

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

Romans 10:9-10 (NKJV) ⁹that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Chapter 25

Paul before Festus (The Significance of Insignificance)

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Knew Trouble – not Moved / Accused bringing non-Jews / Paul before Leaders

Paul knew trouble awaited him in Jerusalem but he was convinced this was where he needed to go. Once there trouble found him, the religious leaders accused him of bringing Gentiles into the Temple (but that wasn't true for they were actually Jewish Christians). So the Jews wanted to kill Paul for doing that, but before they could the Roman guards keeping order in Jerusalem rescued Paul. The Jews want to press charges against Paul so they may be granted the right to kill him, and so for the next chapters to follow we will follow Paul through his hearings and proceedings before Civil and Religious leaders.

(Acts 20:22 NKJV) "And see, now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that will happen to me there,

(Acts 20:23 NKJV) "except that the Holy Spirit testifies in every city, saying that chains and tribulations await me.

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

Last Study – Felix – big dogs / Felix Procrastinates – Numb / Disgraced – Volcano / Today

In our study last week we saw Paul before Governor Felix with all the big-dogs (including the High Priest) coming up from Jerusalem to lay charges against Paul. They want Rome to give the ok for them to stone Paul to death. The passage told us that when Paul presented Jesus Christ to Felix that he literally trembled like an earthquake, but as we read on we read the sad account of Felix procrastinating (in favor of tomorrow) about making a decision for Christ. He procrastinated so long that he became numb to the prompting and conviction of the Holy Spirit. A sad story, because after an uprising in the region which he handled poorly, Felix was removed from office in disgrace, replace with a new governor (Porcius Festus), and would have been put to death except for the interceding of his brother, Pallas, who was a close friend of Caesar Nero. Felix's wife (Drusilla) as history tells us, at the young age of 21 was killed in a volcanic explosion. Precious people please do not procrastinate (in favor of doing it tomorrow), for whatever God has called you to do, do it today! If you have not made a life decision to give your life to Jesus Christ, then make your decision today before you too grow too numb to seek Him and ask Him into your heart to be your Lord and Savior.

Protective Custody – 2 Years / Significance of Insignificance / Feel little Change – You Are

So Paul has been in protective custody now for 2 years here in Caesarea, and we pick up the story here for our study today. What stood out to me as I read this passage was the "significance of insignificance". How the little things that we consider insignificant, but how God takes them and at His predetermined time become highly significant in the lives of His people and the work of the ministry. And, on that same note, how people who the world looks upon as insignificant, not the movers and shakers of the world – God uses in profound and significant ways. So if you are joining us today, and maybe you feel you are making little changes in the world, and are insignificant in this world, I pray you will be encouraged as we look at how God works, and you a significant piece in God's plan.

Meaning Significance

Significance means – importance. I like the origin of the word that came into being in 1300AD, and it means – having force or energy. I show you this little piece of metal in my hand and it looks rather insignificant, but then I tell you that with it I can turn the ignition of my car, fire 150 horsepower of engine, that is capable of carrying me and 4 other people thousands of miles – without it all I have is a very expensive sitting area in my driveway - and all of sudden this piece of metal is very significant, it has much importance, force, and energy! I show you this little AAA battery in my hand and it looks insignificant, but I take it, place it in this recorder, record this message, that I then take and upload on the computer, which then loads it on the world-wide-web, which then has the ability to be heard all around the world, at any given time of day, and without this battery I will have nothing, and all of sudden this little battery is very significant, it has much importance, force, and energy! So too it is with our lives and the little things we are doing, and the things we really don't even see or realize God is setting up for His future purposes.

Paul Appeals to Caesar

(Acts 24:27 NKJV) But after two years Porcius Festus succeeded Felix; and Felix, wanting to do the Jews a favor, left Paul bound.

(Acts 25:1 NKJV) Now when Festus had come to the province, after three days he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem.

Felix stores up Favor / World will Leave You – Forget You / Employer – Football - Hobby

Felix leaves Paul in custody because releasing him would only do Paul a favor, and thus bring no materially or personal benefit to Felix. But if he did the Jews a favor, there was always a hope that somewhere along the way the Jews would return the favor. Maybe writing Caesar a letter saying how great a governor he was, or giving him some money. How wrong Felix was. There will be no mention of any payback for his peace offering (favor) to the Jews - only that Felix will live out his life in obscurity and disgrace according to the historians. The world will forget you quickly once you become of no value to them; I just throw that out there for anyone who is doing all these favors for their employer, or giving all their weekends to their football team, or their local hobby, or their local unsaved buddies – the world will forget you as soon as you no longer have a value to them. But the Lord, He considers you priceless, willing to die for you, thus your value will never diminish before – now that is SIGNIFICANT!

Matthew 6:19-21 (NKJV) ¹⁹*Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; ²⁰but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

Festus 70 / Rules 2 years – Dies in Office

Now when Festus took over from Felix, he was about seventy years of age. History tells us he would rule in this province for two years before dying in office, and little else is written about him.

Festus makes Political Call

Leaving the seacoast city of Caesarea (which was the Roman capital of the province), Festus went to the capital city of Israel to check on the situation and to introduce himself to the citizenry he is now governor over.

(Acts 25:2 NKJV) Then the high priest and the chief men of the Jews informed him against Paul; and they petitioned him,

(Acts 25:3 NKJV) asking a favor against him, that he would summon him to Jerusalem; while they lay in ambush along the road to kill him.

New High Priest / Change leadership – but Root of Bitterness Remained / Hi – Help Us

Now the high priest has now been changed. Ananias has died (he missed the opportunity to receive Jesus – when only 2 years ago Paul stood before him – procrastination means waiting to the point that the opportunity is lost). And thus there is a new high priest. And the other chief priests informed Festus concerning Paul. Regardless of the leadership change the root of bitterness within Paul's enemies seems to have grown deeper and deeper in the soil of their

spirits during his two-year absence. "Nice to meet you, Festus. Glad you're here," they said. "Now do us a favor: bring Paul back here to Jerusalem." Of course, their plan was not for justice. Their plan was to ambush and kill Paul.

Christian – Deal with Bitterness Today / Paul 65 miles – 2 Years / Out of Sight doesn't Heal

Christian, if you have any root of bitterness in your heart, you must deal with it now, TODAY, for time will not make it go away. It is two years later and the hatred for Paul who has been sitting in a prison 65 miles away has not waned one bit. Out of sight, out of mind, not when it comes to bitterness! How true that is isn't it? You can be having a wonderful enjoyable day doing something, but then something triggers a memory of that person who has hurt you months or years ago, and you find yourself getting all angry and bitter all over again, right there in the middle of what was a joyous moment. Bitterness will rob and destroy your joy. If you missed the study 2 weeks ago on "Escaping Bitterness" please get a copy of the message and listen to it. If you heard the message, and still have bitterness, then listen to the message again – for escaping bitterness can take a while to overcome and claim the victory. Deal with that bitterness, no matter how small and insignificant you may think it is, please realize that it is very SIGNIFICANT and even a little is enough to rob you of much.

Hebrews 12:14-15 (NKJV) ¹⁴*Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:*
¹⁵*looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;*

2 Years still want Dead / Imprisonment – Protection – Rest / IF you in Trial / 400 Yrs

So even after two years these men still want Paul dead, let's get Festus to help us set an ambush. We can see that Paul's generous "imprisonment" in Caesarea was actually a providential provision of protective custody against the murderous intentions of the Jews, as well as a "forced rest" in light of his unfailing missionary service in years past, and great tasks in the years ahead. Beloved if you are going through a trial right now, maybe feeling this is totally wasting my time – has no SIGNIFICANCE of purpose, maybe even asking the Lord where He is and why are you still where you are at, please consider this story of Paul. If Paul would have been set free at any time in this last two years, he would have been murdered. What we consider imprisoned, God considered His provision (His protection of Paul). What we consider wasted time, God considers blissful rest. I know it is hard to accept sometimes, but we see the examples throughout the Bible. Possibly the greatest is the children of Israel in 400 years of slavery; people can question how God allowed that. Well, 70 went down to Egypt with Abraham, and 2.5 million left with Moses. Abraham was loaded, he had money in the famine, but eventually the evil people around him would have over-powered his 70 to take all his wealth to ride out the famine, so God takes them to Egypt. God formed a Nation (God's incubator for a Nation – as they were protected from the enemies of the world by the mightiest military on the planet), God steeled a nation (in the fiery furnace of the bricks and mortar), and when they left Egypt – they were large enough and strong enough to withstand any enemy that would come against them in the Promised Land. So as you wait in you trial, rest. Rest that the Lord is protecting you, Rest that the Lord is strengthen you, Rest that God will move you when it is time.

(Acts 25:4 NKJV) But Festus answered that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself was going there shortly.

(Acts 25:5 NKJV) "Therefore," he said, "let those who have authority among you go down with me and accuse this man, to see if there is any fault in him."

(Acts 25:6 NKJV) And when he had remained among them more than ten days, he went down to Caesarea. And the next day, sitting on the judgment seat, he commanded Paul to be brought.

Caesarea is sea Level / Spiritually always go Up / Things of World – always Down

Although Caesarea is North of Jerusalem, you went down to Caesarea because Jerusalem was on a hill (777 meters by the way – the peak is Golgotha just by chance) and Caesarea was at sea level. Also, spiritually – you always went up to Jerusalem; and anywhere else was downhill from

there. Good analogy for the Christian, heaven is up and anything else (aka – the things of this world) is all downhill from there.

(Colossians 3:2 KJV) Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

(Colossians 3:3 KJV) For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

(Acts 25:7 NKJV) When he had come, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood about and laid many serious complaints against Paul, which they could not prove,

Travel 65 miles – still can't Prove

Paul's enemies traveled sixty-five miles to argue their case against Paul. But they still couldn't prove their charges.

(Acts 25:8 NKJV) while he answered for himself, "Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all."

(Acts 25:9 NKJV) But Festus, wanting to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and there be judged before me concerning these things?"

(Acts 25:10 NKJV) So Paul said, "I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged. To the Jews I have done no wrong, as you very well know.

(Acts 25:11 NKJV) "For if I am an offender, or have committed anything deserving of death, I do not object to dying; but if there is nothing in these things of which these men accuse me, no one can deliver me to them. I appeal to Caesar."

Paul says Innocent – lack of Evidence Proves it

Paul says I have done nothing wrong, and their lack of proof only supports that I am innocent.

Right under Roman Law / We see God's Divine Hand – Roman Citizen / Top in Jerusalem

Under Roman Law a defendant could not be moved from one court to another without his consent. It was the right of any Roman citizen who felt he was getting an unfair deal judicially to appear before Caesar. Paul was a Roman citizen thus he had these rights. Once again we see the Divine hand of God working long before Paul was even being used as an instrument of God, as God saw to it that Paul was a Roman citizen long before Paul ever had a need to be a Roman citizen. Before his conversion Paul was one of the big-dogs in Jerusalem, part of the Sanhedrin (the Jewish Supreme Court I liken them too); he had all the clout he needed in Jerusalem, and being a Roman citizen added little value to it, it was just something he had. But now here he is, and that Roman citizen is crucial not just his ministry, but his very life – for had Paul not been a Roman citizen, he would have been sent back to Jerusalem, and death would have been the sentence that would come out in the Jewish court system.

God Amazes Me / Uses Seemingly Insignificant Things / Nicaragua Balance Sheet

God amazes me how He continually does that in the life of His followers, how He uses little seemingly insignificant things that we really don't think much of, but one day He uses it greatly. Christian, don't ever underestimate what you may think as trivial, insignificant, or of little importance or use for the Kingdom sake, because you never know how the Lord will use it. Years and years ago I learned about "Financial Balance Sheets", I really didn't need them for my job, it was just something I learned and never used. Well I take a mission trip down to Nicaragua, and I'm figuring I will help build with building the orphanage for I'm somewhat a handyman, and do some street evangelism and teach some Bible studies. Well no sooner had I got there the Pastor says to me, brother things are really bad, our Stateside supporters are pulling their money back, because we can't show them where the money goes, so they fear that we are mispending the money. He said we've had to stop building the orphanage because we can't pay the laborer's or buy the material, and if we don't get some money in soon, we won't be able to feed the 150 people who come to the feeding ministry each day, nor will there be money even to keep me here. So for about one week I did nothing but follow the Pastor around and look where every possible penny was spent. I'm telling you it was the loaves and the fish principle; we would leave with 100 dollars in the pocket, go here buy this, go there and buy that, and I'd keep a tally down

to the penny (including the 25 cents he'd give each of the 3 year old street beggars – because if they didn't come home with the quota their parents set for the day they would get beat, and sometime have to stay out on the streets until midnight to make their quota – oh how blessed we are here today, even if you are currently employed); well I'd tally every penny and at the end of the day the tally sheet would be like 125 dollars paid out, even though we only had 100 in cash. I'm telling you this is a true story – it was totally miraculous. So after a week of this I build this Balance Sheet in Microsoft Excel, teaching the Assistant Pastor how to maintain it after I was gone (and had them send it to me and 2 other Finance guys every month to audit for Financial accountable) so we had a really great Product and Process at the end. The Pastor mailed it to the several people who had issues, and immediately everyone responded and said, this totally satisfies all our questions, all financial support will flow monthly as usual. Now get this, one very wealthy supporter was so pleased, he made a money transfer deposit that day of 75,000 dollars – enough to complete the orphanage. Do you know how long it takes to raise 75K from the mission field? This was truly amazing, truly one of my most productive mission trips ever. People always asks me, I'm not sure I should go on that mission trip because I don't know how I can contribute (I'm not a teacher or evangelist) – and I always just tell – go and God will use you (trust me). I'm reminded of the hairstylist that went with us to the Ukraine, she said the same to me and I said "go". We get tunnel-vision in the USA, all the missionaries hadn't had a good haircut in years, the locals got free haircuts and that means a lot when 160 a month was your total salary. She got to share the gospel and do one-on-one counseling more than all of us combined. Next time Christian, just go, take that insignificant thing (you – if you think that is what you are), and just go.

I sat in Amazement / Take that Insignificant Thing / Make List? / Put yourself in the Way

I just sat in amazement as I considered, that just happened to be the week that I was there in Nicaragua, and that little something that I considered so insignificant, became so significant. Christian we just never know how God will use little things in our lives to do great things. The question for you today is "what is that little thing that seems so insignificant that God will use in a mighty way?". Well you could make a list, which wouldn't be bad idea, but probably you wouldn't put that thing on your list, because it may seem so insignificant that it slips your mind. May I leave you with this thought for you to ponder today, and that is had I not stepped out and got involved, that little insignificant things would have remained insignificant. As I always say, you cannot make ministry happen, but you have to put yourself in a place for ministry to happen (that is not just in the mission field across the sea – but across the street). Get up, get out there, throw yourself into something and put yourself in the "way" of ministry for something to happen. Where? Doesn't matter, it is more about when? See to the when and the where will come. Get out there and get involved in something – the biggest mistake Christians make is that they are waiting for someone to ask them; you go ask, you go join, you step out.

Being on the Way / Hard guide Stationary Obj / Can't sit Around / Step Out – Start Walking

I'm reminded of the story of the servant that Abraham sent out to find a wife for Issac, and when the servant found Isaac's wife to be, Rebekah there at the well he said – "*As for me, being on the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren*". Notice that being on the way, the LORD led him. One of the most important steps in being led of the LORD is to get moving. It's hard to guide a stationary object. If you're just sitting around, it's hard to get the leading of the LORD. God leads us as we're moving. We have to step out in faith and as we step out in faith, then the LORD is able to lead us. If you're sitting waiting for the LORD to show you his leading, you will probably just sit the rest of your life. You'll probably never get any direction. Stand up! Start walking! The LORD will start leading you as you're going. To be led of the LORD, we must step out in faith.

(Genesis 24:27 NKJV) And he said, "Blessed be the LORD God of my master Abraham, who has not forsaken His mercy and His truth toward my master. As for me, being on the way, the LORD led me to the house of my master's brethren."

Walk in the Way

Walk in the way and you will end up where the Lord wants you. People often so they are searching for the Lord's will in their life. God's will in your life is for you to walk in the way. The Early Christians were called "The Way", for they walked the way of Jesus:

(John 14:6 NKJV) Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

God's will Simpler than People Think – Keep yourself in the Way

God's will is simpler than people make it out to be - keep yourself in the way, and He will lead you to the places he wants for you. Your life just becomes a progressive revelation of His will for your life.

(Acts 25:12 NKJV) Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, "You have appealed to Caesar? To Caesar you shall go!"

Paul Appeals to Caesar – who had yet made Christian Enemy of State

Paul was appealing specifically to Caesar Nero, who was later an avowed enemy of Christians. But the first five years of his reign, when he was under the influence of good men around him, Nero was regarded as a wise and just ruler. Paul had no reason at this time to believe that Nero would be anti-Christian.

To Caesar you will Go / Paul tired of Sitting Around / Witnessed everyone / Tents Repaired

"You want to go to Caesar?" said Festus. "Okay. To Caesar you'll go." I imagine Paul is more than ready to go after sitting in Caesarea for two years, as this is a man who did not know "neutral", but always "100mph with his hair on fire". He has probably witnessed to everyone in building he is being housed (he is probably staying in a room that is being used as a prison cell at Herod's palace in Caesarea), he has probably repaired every tent in the whole city for free just to give him something to do, he doesn't seem like a "hobby" type to me, so he is ready to get going.

(Acts 23:35 NKJV) he said, "I will hear you when your accusers also have come." And he commanded him to be kept in Herod's Praetorium.

Probably too Helpful / When my Mother Visits

In fact, he is probably getting himself in trouble trying to help people just for the sake of being helpful. When my mother comes for those extended visit she finds it necessary to re-arrange my cupboards for me, she thinks that will be helpful; well that's nice except it takes me two weeks to find where the coffee now is, I whack my head on the "new" space-saver that is hanging inside the closet door. So I could picture Paul "just" trying to help around Herod's palace.

Video – Porsche off the cliff

[Paul before Agrippa](#)

(Acts 25:13 NKJV) And after some days King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to greet Festus.

Agrippa king of North / Rome figurehead – puppet / Tough Place

King of Agrippa is the king of this Northern area of Israel (that included Caesarea and Jerusalem). He would have been appointed (or allowed) by Rome as that was a common practice of the Roman Empire when they would occupy a region. Rome would allow the region to have their own king, who was after their own kind, but he was really just a puppet and would do well to make sure that Rome was satisfied. It was a tough place to be in that you had the Jewish people to try to keep happy, yet at the same time never allowing the people to make waves against the Roman Empire. More a figurehead than a potent political player, Agrippa called on Festus in order to strengthen his weakened political ties to Rome.

Agrippa last of Herod's

Agrippa is the last of the Herods. The dynasty of the Herods were Edomites, he was Idumean (he came from Edom). The Edomites came from Esau, the rival brother of Jacob (whom the Jews

came from). The Romans had established the Edomites on the throne, which created a strange situation because, while they were familiar with the customs of the Jews, they were not Jewish.

- **Herod Agrippa II** is the one seen here.
- **Herod Agrippa I (Agrippa II Dad)** is the one who put the apostle James to death with a sword and imprisoned Peter hoping to kill him (but the Lord miraculously delivered Peter from prison – Acts 12).
- **Herod Antipas (Agrippa II Great-uncle)** was the one who beheaded John the Baptist when Salome danced for him.
- **Herod the Great (Agrippa II Granddad)** was the one who killed the babes in Bethlehem when Jesus was born hoping to kill the Coming King.

- **Drusilla** was his (**Agrippa II**) sister who if you recall from last week was Felix's wife.
- **Bernice** (described in literature as being a ravishing beauty) was sister of Drusilla (wife of Felix). What? If Bernice and Drusilla are sisters, and Agrippa II and Drusilla are brother and sister, then that means that Bernice was half-sister to **Agrippa II** (I think Drusilla and Bernice had the same dad but different mothers (but I'm not totally sure – it is quite confusing).

Strange Stuff / Incest – never Married / Leaves for Titus – Sneers / back to Agrippa

This is some really strange stuff going on here, this is an incest relationship. Because of this, Agrippa and Bernice were never married, but they lived together (because it was against Roman Law and Levitical Law). History tells us Bernice would eventually leave Agrippa for Titus, a Roman general who would later lead his armies to destroy Jerusalem and burn the temple. Following a short stay in Rome, however, Bernice would go back to Agrippa II because the people of Rome knew her story, and she was sneered and snickered at everywhere that she went that it eventually led her to run back to the arms of Agrippa II. (There never was anything proven as far as the incestuous relationship, but it was commonly rumored, especially around Rome. The Roman historian Tacitus makes mention that all Rome was a buzz with talk of this beautiful woman, Bernice, who was living with her brother).

Nothing New – 22 Million tuned into Soaps /

There is nothing new under the sun, this story sounds just like one of the strange plots in these daytime soap operas. According the Nielson TV ratings, last week 22 million American's were watching the daytime soap operas (which by the way every developed nation has their own daytime soap operas). Twenty-two million people daily watching stories of illicit sexual relationships that are contrary to the Word of God; Christian, don't watch them, don't get sucked into them. Remember Roman 1, those who watch such things are guilty of participating in them.

Romans 1:28-32 (NKJV) ²⁸And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; ²⁹being filled with all unrighteousness, [£]sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, ³⁰backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ³¹undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, [£]unforgiving, unmerciful; ³²who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

Overlook the Law – for common Foe / Churches joining forces with Non-Christian

Levitical Law condemned incest relationships, but everyone at the temple was willing to overlook that little issue for the sake of killing Paul. Now we still see this all around us today, sadly in the church too, and that is people who don't even like each other finding a common foe to unite against – but once that foe is defeated they each go back to hating and gossiping about each other again. But for application today, I am not in agreement with churches that join forces with other religions or groups that are not in agreement with the ways of the Lord Jesus Christ. Example, as much of a heart and labor we have for the orphans we support in Nicaragua, I would never join forces with a Muslim group, or the Mormon's, or the National Gay and Lesbian Group to "help" feed the orphans. But we do see many churches doing that today – and it sends a confusing message to those people, and that is that don't think you sin or your ways are that bad, so we can united together with you. Bad idea, let's just trust that the Lord will provide.

Leviticus 18:6 (NKJV) ⁶None of you shall approach anyone who is near of kin to him, to uncover his nakedness: I am the Lord.

(Acts 25:14 NKJV) When they had been there many days, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying: "There is a certain man left a prisoner by Felix,
(Acts 25:15 NKJV) "about whom the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, when I was in Jerusalem, asking for a judgment against him.
(Acts 25:16 NKJV) "To them I answered, 'It is not the custom of the Romans to deliver any man to destruction before the accused meets the accusers face to face, and has opportunity to answer for himself concerning the charge against him.'
(Acts 25:17 NKJV) "Therefore when they had come together, without any delay, the next day I sat on the judgment seat and commanded the man to be brought in.
(Acts 25:18 NKJV) "When the accusers stood up, they brought no accusation against him of such things as I supposed,

Festus complained – Can't find anything Wrong – no Evidence

Festus complained to Agrippa that, after hearing Paul's case in order to appease the Jews, he could find nothing wrong with Paul. The Jews made him out to be this terrible criminal, but when it came time for some evidence, that had nothing to present.

(Acts 25:19 NKJV) "but had some questions against him about their own religion and about a certain Jesus, who had died, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

Heart of Issue – Paul says Jesus is Alive / Road to Damascus

That was the heart of the issue. Paul's affirmation that Jesus was alive. Paul made that affirmation because he had personally met the risen Lord. He had talked with the risen Lord. And the risen Lord had talked with him. At one time Paul believed that Jesus was dead. He thought that this story of the resurrection was just so much hockum. And he was determined that he was going to stamp out this sect. And while he was on his way to Damascus to imprison those that called upon Jesus, he met the Lord personally. He said, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me? Instant conversion. Who are You, Lord, that I might serve You? I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you are persecuting. What would You have me to do, Lord? And so he met Jesus. Talked with Jesus. And on many occasions, Jesus had met Paul. Had talked with Paul. And thus Paul affirmed, Jesus is alive!

He is Alive – I know because He live in Me! / This morning – Spoke with Him

We sing that song, He lives, He lives. You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart. How do I know He lives? Well, I talked with Him this morning. And this afternoon. I've been talking with Him all day. Paul was affirming that Jesus was alive.

Heart of Gospel / Cross means nothing with Resurrection

The resurrection is the heart of the gospel! Without the resurrection there is no gospel! The cross has no power, no meaning, if Jesus did not rise from the dead. The whole Christian belief system is founded on the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

1 Peter 1 – Living Hope / Resurrection gives Hope – to leave this world & body / See Him

Peter said (1 Peter 1:3), thank God, we have been born again to a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith. This is a living hope. The resurrection, it gives us a hope for the future. I have no fear of death. I have no fear of the future. Because I have a living hope because Jesus rose from the dead. And I know to be absent from this body is to be present with the Lord. And one day my spirit is going to leave this body and I'm going to move into the building of God not made with hands that is eternal in the heavens. The living hope because of the resurrection. That's the heart of the gospel! So they were striking against the heart of the gospel. They were saying that Jesus was dead. Paul was affirming that Jesus is alive!

1 Peter 1:3-5 (NKJV) ³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

(Acts 25:20 NKJV) "And because I was uncertain of such questions, I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there be judged concerning these matters.

(Acts 25:21 NKJV) "But when Paul appealed to be reserved for the decision of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I could send him to Caesar."

Doesn't say Resurrection is Foolish

Interestingly, Festus doesn't say this resurrection stuff is pure foolishness, he actually says this should be looked into further. He doesn't say it is so foolish he is a quack and thus is guilty, but rather says this needs further examination.

Festus in Real Jam / Caesar will think Incompetent – where is Crime? / End like Felix

The reason Festus shared this information with Agrippa was because Festus was in a real jam. Festus knew Caesar would think him incompetent for sending Paul to Rome without valid accusation. Caesar would say, there is no crime, no evidence, and you allowed this Roman citizen to remain in jail even after two years and you have no charges!. But on the other side, if Festus releases Paul the Jews will hate him like they hated Felix, and cause all kinds of commotion, and if that got back to Caesar, then he would end up just like Felix did – disgraced.

(Acts 25:22 NKJV) Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I also would like to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," he said, "you shall hear him."

I'll find Something says Agrippa / Then you'll owe me

"Let me hear him," said Agrippa. "I'll find a charge you can write on your report to Caesar." Agrippa no doubt thinking to himself, if I can do this favor for Festus, then he will be well pleased with me, and I'll be in!

(Acts 25:23 NKJV) So the next day, when Agrippa and Bernice had come with great pomp, and had entered the auditorium with the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at Festus' command Paul was brought in.

Quite the Scene – All Decked Out / Paul in Prison Clothes

This must have been quite a scene with Festus in his Roman robes, and King Agrippa and Bernice with all the royal ceremony, and in comes Paul, probably in his prison clothes!

Amphitheatre – 2000 / Big Event

The "place of hearing" was most likely the amphitheatre on the beach at Caesarea. It would have been packed (holds around 2,000 people). People would have been dressed up. Soldiers would have been standing guard. Dignitaries would have been in attendance. You see, it was a real "happening" whenever there was an official hearing in this beautiful amphitheatre overlooking the Mediterranean. Please check out some of the archeological remains of this place that very-well may have been the very place Paul stood:

See pictures of Caesarea

Paul's appearance Weak / Bowed Legs – Crooked Nose – Balding – Runny Eyes /

And here was Paul. In 2 Corinthians 10, Paul described his own appearance as being physically weak. Historians verify that he was a short man with bowed legs, a long hooked nose, little hair, and runny eyes. And yet, here this "little man" commanded the attention of the entire Roman provincial capital of Caesarea.

2 Corinthians 10:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰"For his letters," they say, "are weighty and powerful, but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible."

Amazing Lord can do with Little Things / Consider Bethlehem / Where Jesus is - Happening

It's amazing what the Lord can do with a little of anything. Consider Bethlehem: a tiny, insignificant town, but the most well-known village in all of history because Jesus was in it. And where Jesus is, things happen in a big way.

Christian – you Chosen Vessel / Filled with God / Whatever doing is Significant – God There!

Christian, hear this and know this today – you are a chosen vessel of God, that makes you extremely significant and of great value to the Lord. Secondly, you are filled with the Holy Spirit of God, and where Jesus is, things happen in a big way. And let me say this – if what you are doing (regardless of how big or small) is not sin, then it is significant! You may think this little thing that I am doing has no value to the Kingdom of God, but if God is there, then it is significant.

- Oh I'm just teaching Sunday School – Significant for you have just brought God into the Sunday room.
- Oh I'm just a student on campus - Significant for you have just brought God on to the campus.
- Oh I'm just a laborer at work, I'm just a guy on the bowling league, I'm just a mother in the kitchen, I'm just fill in the blank – significant because you have just brought God there, and where Jesus is, things happen, whether we can fully see them at that moment or not.

1 Peter 2:9-10 (NKJV) ⁹But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

World's view Doesn't Matter / Paul's Looks – Apostles / Not Only Jesus with Us – what Say

It doesn't matter how the world views you (Paul not considered much to look at), nor your fellow brothers (as Paul stands alone here before them – never a mention of the Apostles trying to come to his aid), so maybe other Christians don't consider you very significant. It is not only who stands with us and in us that makes us significant, but also what we have to say (as we speak the Word of the Lord), and that is extremely significant as we have the words of life, we have the words of that "He is Alive", and that is significant!

(Acts 25:24 NKJV) And Festus said: "King Agrippa and all the men who are here present with us, you see this man about whom the whole assembly of the Jews petitioned me, both at Jerusalem and here, crying out that he was not fit to live any longer.

(Acts 25:25 NKJV) "But when I found that he had committed nothing deserving of death, and that he himself had appealed to Augustus, I decided to send him.

(Acts 25:26 NKJV) "I have nothing certain to write to my lord concerning him. Therefore I have brought him out before you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the examination has taken place I may have something to write.

(Acts 25:27 NKJV) "For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him."

Off to Cesar since Paul Appealed to him / Augustus - Name for Caesar

"I find this man has done nothing worthy of death," said Festus, "but since he has appealed to Augustus, I am required to send him." Octavius, who followed Julius Caesar, was the first Roman ruler to use the name "Caesar Augustus," or "august one." "Augustus" was a title of strength and authority, so every Caesar who followed Octavius chose to use the title "Augustus." The Augustus spoken of here was Caesar Nero. This name being simply a title meaning "majesty."

Lord – title of Deity / 1st time in Scriptures

Verse 26 - "My lord" - is not a title of honor—but of deity. This is the first time in Scripture we see Caesar deified. Caesar Nero was the first Caesar who claimed to be God.

Help me find Something Festus says

Verse 27 - "For it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner and not to specify the charges against him." "Help me to find something to write. Help me get out of this situation," pleaded Festus to Agrippa.

Next week we pick up here with:

(Acts 26:1 NKJV) Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for yourself." So Paul stretched out his hand and answered for himself:

Longest recorded Defense / Powerful

It will be the longest recorded defense Paul makes, and it is quite powerfully.

Recap (The Significance of the Insignificant):

- The World's favor is fleeting at best.
- Time and Distance do not diminish Bitterness.
- Rest in God's Protective Custody.
- Things of this world are always down compared to things of Heaven.
- Put yourself in "The Way" – and things will happen.
- Soap Opera – leave ya dirty.
- Don't unite with the ungodly – trust Lord will provide.
- Resurrection – He is Alive (talked to Him just this Morning).
- Little things become big things – because Jesus is in them.

Chapter 26

Paul before King Agrippa (still burning for Christ)

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Recap

Well Paul has been under protective custody (by the Roman government) in Caesarea now for two years; the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem wanted to kill Paul as they accused him of profaning the Temple by bringing 4 Gentiles into the area which was strictly forbidden by the Jews (but as we have studied they were not Gentiles by Jews – and thus Paul is being wrongly accused by the Jews).

5 Defenses

Luke recorded five defenses by the apostle Paul from the wrangling that led up to his journey to Rome. The longest and most detailed defense is this last one which Paul made here before King Agrippa and his sister Bernice (Acts 25:23–26:32). The other four were:

- before the people outside the temple (21:37–22:22),
- before the Sanhedrin (22:30–23:11),
- before Felix (24:1–27),
- and before Festus (25:1–12).

End chp of 25 brought before 2000 / All Dressed Up – Real Happening / Quite Scene

We finished chapter 25 with Paul being brought in before the Governor (Festus) and King Agrippa at (most likely) the amphitheatre at Caesarea. It would have been packed (holds around 2,000 people). People would have been dressed up. Soldiers would have been standing guard. Dignitaries would have been in attendance. You see, it was a real “happening” whenever there was an official hearing in this beautiful amphitheatre overlooking the Mediterranean. This must have been quite a scene with Festus in his Roman robes, and King Agrippa and Bernice with all the royal ceremony, and in comes Paul, probably in his prison clothes!

(Acts 25:23 NKJV) *So the next day, when Agrippa and Bernice had come with great pomp, and had entered the auditorium with the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at Festus' command Paul was brought in.*

Paul's right as Roman Citizen / Festus needs cause for Nero / Agrippa to Help

Paul had the right as a Roman citizen to request a hearing before Caesar; governor Festus wants to send him to Caesar so as to get rid of the problem; however he doesn't know what to tell Caesar the actual problem is and what exactly the Jews are accusing him of. So Festus has asked King Agrippa to help him figure out what the real problem is, hoping and figuring King Agrippa would understand better all the details of the Jewish religious ways. So we pick it up here with King Agrippa saying, go ahead Paul let's hear your defense against these charges.

Great Evangelism – fighting for their Life / Great Applications / Paul still Burning / You?

We will now read one of the most masterful evangelistic messages ever preached, for Paul is not fighting for his life, but the eternal lives for every hearer in this gathering. As always, we will see all kinds of other applications and learning as we go verse-by-verse. But what I also want to point out as we go through this account, and what is so amazing to me as I read this account is

how Paul, after two years of captivity, is still totally on-fire for Jesus Christ - two years of protective custody all because he preached the gospel, and Paul is still on-fire and passionate about his Lord Jesus. How about you here today, are you as on-fire today for Jesus Christ as you were say two years ago, 5 years ago, when you first saved (whether that be 2 weeks, 2 years, or 22 years)? Paul has been in protective custody for two years, but he comes before these people ablaze in Christ and for Christ, and we can glean much about keeping our fire burning for Jesus from this study today as we look at how Paul remained on-fire, we can apply those same principles to our lives. As Paul was, so are we to be, as he said follow me as I follow Christ, so there is a life example for all of us in the life of the Apostle Paul:

1 Corinthians 11:1 (NKJV) ¹Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:1 (KJV) ¹Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:1 (NIV) ¹Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

Paul's Early Life

(Acts 26:1 NKJV) Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for yourself." So Paul stretched out his hand and answered for himself:

Place Packed / Have you heard about the Way? / Expert in Town

The place is packed because everyone was talking about "The Way". Someone would ask another, "Say, have you heard this new thing about The Way?" The other would reply "Well, I have heard some things about it. It is something new going around. What's it all about?" I would imagine that even Festus and Agrippa had some sort of exchange like that. Agrippa would have said, "I've been hearing about this but I'd like to know more about it. We ought to get it from an expert." "well I hear an expert will be speaking down at the amphitheatre, so let's go check it out".

Again – what a Scene / End comes down to 2 Men

Again, this would have been quite the scene with all its pomp and circumstances, thousands of people in gathered to hear, but in the end it comes down to two men, Paul and King Agrippa.

- One of them is in purple, the other is in prison garb.
- One is on a throne, the other is in shackles.
- One wears a crown, the other is in chains.
- Agrippa is a king, but in the slavery of sin (incest relationship with his half-sister).
- Paul is a chained prisoner, rejoicing in the freedom from sin, forgiveness, and liberty in Christ.
- Agrippa is an earthly king who could not free Paul nor himself.
- Paul is an ambassador of the King who had freed him and who could free Agrippa from the damning effects of sin.

(Acts 25:23 NKJV) So the next day, when Agrippa and Bernice had come with great pomp, and had entered the auditorium with the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at Festus' command Paul was brought in.

Paul Motions – Respect / A great Hush Comes upon Crowd

Paul motions with his hand which was a sign of respect. Paul had the wonderful ability to respect the position of authority, even if the person holding it was unworthy. Paul motions with his hands and the whole place goes silent as a hush comes upon the crowd, what will this man say.

(Acts 26:2 NKJV) "I think myself happy, King Agrippa, because today I shall answer for myself before you concerning all the things of which I am accused by the Jews,

(Acts 26:3 NKJV) "especially because you are expert in all customs and questions which have to do with the Jews. Therefore I beg you to hear me patiently.

Long Sermon / Watch

Verse 3 - Therefore I beg you to hear me patiently – Settle in folks, this is going to be a long sermon Paul is telling them. Do you know what it means when a pastor before he begins his sermon takes his watch off and places it on the pulpit? ABSOLUTELY NOTHING!

Herod's knew Judaism / But sides with Titus

Verse 3 - especially because you are expert in all customs and questions which have to do with the Jews - Being half Jew and half Edomite, the Herods had a tremendous fascination with all things Jewish. They studied Judaism. They read Jewish history. They were intrigued by Jewish culture. Paul knew this. "I'm happy to talk to you, King Agrippa," he said, "because I know you understand our culture, our traditions, and our religion." Agrippa did—but when push came to shove, this same Agrippa would, in A.D. 70, join Titus in helping to destroy Jerusalem and the temple. Thus, his interest was intellectual rather than heartfelt.

(Acts 26:4 NKJV) "My manner of life from my youth, which was spent from the beginning among my own nation at Jerusalem, all the Jews know.

(Acts 26:5 NKJV) "They knew me from the first, if they were willing to testify, that according to the strictest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee.

I was over the Top – Just ask Anyone / Phil 3

Paul is saying, hey I was the Jew of Jews, over the top, ask anyone who knew me when and they will tell you that I was all about the Jewish religion.

(Philippians 3:5 NKJV) circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee;

(Philippians 3:6 NKJV) concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

(Acts 26:6 NKJV) "And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers.

From Beginning – Way development of OT & Fulfillment / Verse 22 – Moses and Prophets

From the beginning Paul is making it clear that The Way is a development and fulfillment of the Old Testament. "in verse 22 he adds to that thought by saying - *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*" (v. 22). It is not contrary to the Old Testament these things which I preach and believe Paul is declaring:

(Acts 26:22 NKJV) "Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come;

300 Prophecies – had to be Jesus

Paul says I believe in the 300 some prophecies concerning the Messiah that would come (as written by the Law and the Prophets). Paul is saying I believe the following, and only one Man who walked this earth could have fulfilled them, and that was Jesus.

His Birth & Lineage

- 1.) The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Micah 5:2a / Matthew 2:1-2
- 2.) The Messiah would be a descendant of David. Isaiah 9:7 / Matthew 1:1

His Environment & the World Setting

- 3.) The Messiah would be announced to his people 483 years, to the exact day, after the decree to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. Daniel 9:25 / John 12:12-13
- 4.) The Messiah would be killed before the destruction of the temple. Daniel 9:26c / Matthew 27:50-51
- 5.) The Jew's authority to administer capital punishment would be gone when the Messiah arrived. Genesis 49:10c / John 18:31

His Death

- 6.) The Messiah would be sacrificed on the same mountain where God tested Abraham. Genesis 22:14 / Luke 23:33
- 7.) The Messiah's back would be whipped. Isaiah 53:5c Matthew 27:26
- 8.) The Messiah's hands and feet would be pierced. Psalm 22:16c Matthew 27:38

Can't argue Prophecy – Greatest Evidence written outside of Time Domain

You can't argue the proof of the prophecies! God Himself says they prove who is God! King Agrippa I'm not making up some new story, I am declaring that the old has come to pass. Precious people, know your prophecy (past and future) – they are the greatest evidence that the Bible is inspired.

Isaiah 46:9-10 (NKJV) ⁹ Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, ¹⁰ Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done, Saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure,'

Isaiah 41:21-24 (NKJV) ²¹ "Present your case," says the Lord. "Bring forth your strong reasons," says the King of Jacob. ²² "Let them bring forth and show us what will happen; Let them show the former things, what they were, That we may consider them, And know the latter end of them; Or declare to us things to come. ²³ Show the things that are to come hereafter, That we may know that you are gods; Yes, do good or do evil, That we may be dismayed and see it together. ²⁴ Indeed you are nothing, And your work is nothing; He who chooses you is an abomination.

Key 1 – Remember the Scriptures / Dwell on Nugget – Oswald – Prophecies – Newspaper

And here is a reason that Paul after a two year trial could and would still be burning for Christ, and that is that he remembered the Scriptures, especially the prophecies. Every time I dwell on a promise of God I am refreshed (read the promises of God and just spend time mediating on one of them and see how your day is changed – look for the nugget every morning to carry with you throughout the day – and trust me you won't have to read long to find one. May I add that along with the Bible I read Oswald Chambers every morning and it never seems to fail that it is a mighty word for just what I need for that day. Also, every time I study prophecy, I am not only refreshed, but I am solidified, for I know this book is no fairytale. I study past, and future, and as I read the newspaper, watch the news, watch all these things unfolding before me, I say wow you are amazing, this book is amazing, and I see you as living and personal, before me right now. Paul remembered the scriptures, especially the prophecies, and he was able to remain burning even after two years of near isolation. I pray you will do the same my brothers and sisters.

(Acts 26:7 NKJV) "To this promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain. For this hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews.

(Acts 26:8 NKJV) "Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?"

Twelve Tribes Believed it

Verse 7 - To this promise our twelve tribes - The twelve tribes believed the Messiah would come, and they lived a life that demonstrated such a belief Paul says.

If create Heavens & Earth – Can Raise Dead / Span Universe with His Hand / Big Prob?

Verse 8 - Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead? – The OT scriptures declared the resurrection, it is nothing new, and Paul is saying hey if you believe there is a God, and you believe that God created the heavens and the earth, then surely if He has the power to do those things, He would surely have the power to raise the dead. The same is true for all believers here today in that we too can forget how mighty and powerful He is. The God who made billions of stars in the Milky Way Galaxy and millions of galaxies at least the size of the Milky Way spans the entire universe between His thumb and little finger (Isaiah 40:12). Our Father is big, gang! So tell me, how big is your problem compared to how big God is.

Isaiah 40:12 (NIV) ¹² Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, or with the breadth of his hand marked off the heavens? Who has held the dust of the earth in a basket, or weighed the mountains on the scales and the hills in a balance?

OT Scriptures declaring the resurrection:

Job 14:14-15 (NKJV) ¹⁴ If a man dies, shall he live again? All the days of my hard service I will wait, Till my change comes. ¹⁵ You shall call, and I will answer You; You shall desire the work of Your hands.

Job 19:25-27 (NKJV) ²⁵ For I know that my Redeemer lives, And He shall stand at last on the earth; ²⁶ And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, That in my flesh I shall see God, ²⁷ Whom I shall see for myself, And my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

Psalms 16:8-11 (NKJV) ⁸ I have set the Lord always before me; Because He is at my right hand I shall not be moved. ⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope. ¹⁰ For You will not leave

my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. ¹¹ You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Hebrews 11:5 (NKJV) ⁵By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him";⁶ for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

2 Kings 2:11 (NKJV) ¹¹Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

We don't Doubt Power – Just Willingness to get Involved / Look at the Cross – Gave Best

Now, do you think the God who made the vastness of the universe and the intricacies of the atom can raise the dead? It all depends on your view of God. Most of us do not doubt the power of God, but we doubt His willingness to intervene in our situations personally.

Why should He care about us? The answer lies in the Cross. "If God did not spare His only Son that we might be saved, shall He not freely give us all things pertaining to life?" asked Paul (see Romans 8:32). He will supply everything that's good for me. How do I know? Because He already gave me the very best when He gave me His Son, Christ Jesus. If God loves me that much, then I know that whatever situation I am in, God has allowed it, and will do for me and that situation what is the best. Whatever situation you are in, is significant (has much importance – see last week's study) and there is much force and energy in them – for God is in them – with and for you.

Romans 8:31-32 (NKJV) ³¹What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

³²He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

Let me Add- Power over Addiction – Bitterness – Depression / Christ in You Hope Glory

And let me add for all here today, if He has the power to create the world that He spans in His hand, and has the ability to raise the dead, then He has the ability to give you victory over that addiction, that bitterness, that depression, for Christ is in you, and that is the hope of glory.

Colossians 1:27 (NKJV) ²⁷To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: ^εwhich is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Ephesians 1:19-20 (NKJV) ¹⁹and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power ²⁰which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,

Key 2 – Keep Perspective how Big He Is / Big – Mighty – Intimate / Step Back and See

Paul remained on-fire for Christ after two years of captivity and isolation because he kept his perspective on who God is – He is Big, He is Mighty, yet He is also intimate. Christian keep the perspective of how big your God is, and to do that you have to step back from your small world that you live in, look at the universe and see He created them, yet He is so intimate He knows my name and wants to fellowship with me today. Maybe tonight if the weather permits, go sit on your porch and just stare at the stars in the sky, try to count them, and when you have a perspective of how big the universe is, and that your God created them and you, then go to bed and rest in His arms.

(Acts 26:9 NKJV) "Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

(Acts 26:10 NKJV) "This I also did in Jerusalem, and many of the saints I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I cast my vote against them.

(Acts 26:11 NKJV) "And I punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, I persecuted them even to foreign cities.

Cast Vote – member Sanhedrin

Verse 10 - I cast my vote against them – Paul casts his vote, meaning he was one of the 70 of the Sanhedrin (the Jewish Supreme Court as I like to liken them to as they made and determined Jewish law and policy). Paul's most notable consenting to death was the stoning of Stephan as he held the mobs coats so they could really get a full wind-up to throw their rocks.

Acts 7:57-60 (NKJV) ⁵⁷Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; ⁵⁸and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."
⁶⁰Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Greek – gave a small Pebble

Verse 10 - I cast my vote against them - In the Greek actually says "gave a small pebble." The point of this is that the Sanhedrin's practice was to vote with small stones. Black and white. Guilty or not guilty.

Stephen stuck with Paul / Thought so Right – yet so Wrong – Jesus made me so Right

These things stuck with Paul. The things he did to the believers, the things he did to Stephen. I thought I was so right, and found out I was so wrong Paul is saying. And most amazingly, Jesus came along and made me right, He gave me His right-standing with the Heavenly Father. Paul is building up to the fact that He will do the same for you today, everyone who hears and receives Him.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NKJV) ²¹For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Some here done Terrible Things – Still have Sorrow / You are Forgiven / Abortion

I know that there may be some here today who have done some terrible things, not just against God, but against your fellow man – maybe it was a parent, a spouse, a sibling, or just some person you hardly knew, but your eyes have been opened after being born-again, and your heart still has sorrow for that thing that you did, God wants you to know today – you are forgiven, you have been cleansed by the Blood. And I feel someone needs to hear this, and that is that you are carrying the guilt and shame of being part of an abortion, God wants you to look at Paul, and know that as He forgave Paul, so He forgives you.

Luke 23:33-34 (NKJV) ³³And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. ³⁴Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." And they divided His garments and cast lots.

If think Life Worthless – Beside not close Enough / Don't Quit / How God deals with World

Also, if there be any who thinks their life is worthless, all the pain they have caused, all the pain they are in, and it is time to end life – Jesus says I consider you of such worth that walking beside you wasn't close enough, I had to be inside of you, to have you envelop Me and I envelop you, and the two of us are one together. Don't quit, I know it is hard but continue on, for I Am with you and this is where I want you to be. Christian this world can be a rotten place, all the depravity, all the pain, all the suffering; and if it grieves you can you imagine how it grieves the Holy God. Have you ever asked or considered how it is that God doesn't live in a continual state of a sickened heart? I'll tell you why He doesn't, because you bring a smile upon His face and a leap within His heart. He looks at the world and grieves and then He looks at you and rejoices. Never fails for me after I come home from work all worn-out and sometimes upset, and then my 3 year-old Camden comes running to me as I walk in the door with that big smile of his, and immediately life is back in balance. God considers you the apple of His eye – precious and special to His heart.

Colossians 1:27 (NKJV) ²⁷To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: ^εwhich is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Psalms 17:8 (NKJV) ⁸ Keep me as the apple of Your eye; Hide me under the shadow of Your wings,

Key 3 – Remember where God Pull You / Where Pulled – What God Thinks

How did Paul remain burning for Christ after two years of near isolation? He remembered where God pulled him from, and where God placed him now, and what the Lord thinks of him (precious). Go back often to remember where God pulled you from, the things you were doing, how distant you were, how empty life was, and that will revive you, fuel your passion as you think of how good the Lord is. God is so good people, He is just good, He is so good, and He loves you!

[Paul Recounts His Conversion](#)

(Acts 26:12 NKJV) "While thus occupied, as I journeyed to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests,
(Acts 26:13 NKJV) "at midday, O king, along the road I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those who journeyed with me.
(Acts 26:14 NKJV) "And when we all had fallen to the ground, I heard a voice speaking to me and saying in the Hebrew language, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'

Damascus Road – Acts 9 & 22

Paul recounts his Damascus road experience, as we have studied in Acts 9 and 22

Goads – Running into Wall

Goads were pointy sticks that were placed between the oxen and the plow, sometimes held in the hand of the master to prod the oxen along, sometimes fastened to the plow so if the animal tried to back-kick the person steering the plow, they would fill the points and say ouch, and at some point realize every time I try to kick my master I end up the one who is hurting. Today's modern translation would be why do you keep trying to run through that wall, it only makes your head hurt.

Think it Silly bang Head – But that is same as Disobey Word

We think it silly to bang our heads against the wall, it is a sure headache to come – but disobey His word and it is the exact same result, a headache, maybe a heartache to us to follow.

(Acts 26:15 NKJV) "So I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.'

Remember That next Time

Remember that every time you hurt or talk evil of that brother or sister in the Lord, Jesus feels the sting of your words or actions

(Acts 26:16 NKJV) 'But rise and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to make you a minister and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you.

(Acts 26:17 NKJV) 'I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you,

(Acts 26:18 NKJV) 'to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.'

Under-rower / Belly of Ship / Preachers dime a Dozen – Wash Dishes & Diapers

Verse 16 - to make you a minister - The Greek word for minister means "under-rower." It's a word that described the guys in the belly of a large ship who, although they were unseen, unnoticed, and unapplauded, rowed steadily and moved the ship to its ultimate destination. Preachers are a dime a dozen, but under-rowers, now that is a whole different story. Anyone can give a speech, but go do the pile of dishes, or change the dirty diaper, that is a whole different story.

Witness – Simply shares what Seen & Heard

Verse 16 – and a witness both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I will yet reveal to you - We are not only to be ministers, but secondly, we are to be witnesses. A witness is one who goes into the courtroom and simply shares what he or she has seen. The Lord did not call you to be an attorney to argue the case, or a judge to hand down a verdict. The Lord simply called you to be a witness to tell people what He has done for you personally.

Open Eyes to Him – all God wants is to Get Hold of You / Before History Ends

Verse 18 - 'to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are

sanctified by faith in Me - All that God wants to do is get hold of a person/you, to draw them/you to Himself so that He might forgive them/you of your sin, before human history or your personal history has come to an end, then you will remain in the darkness, separated from Him for eternity in a place called hell.

Not Grabbed Hold of – then under Satan / Deceived – not Master – Captain – My way

Verse 18 - in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God -

Look and see that any person that has not be grabbed hold of by the Lord, drawn into His arms, are under the power of Satan. It is an either/or – there is no option 3. A person is either under the power of God, or under the Satan, and any man who thinks he is his own man is deceived. People who think they are masters of their own lives, captains of their own ship, they did it thier way, are fooled and foolish.

Ephesians 2:1-3 (NKJV) ¹And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, ²in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, ³among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

(Acts 26:19 NKJV) "Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,

Response to Vision . What else could I do

Beginning with verse 19, Paul tells his response to the vision that he had. "Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." The implication is, "What else could I have done. Wouldn't you have done the same thing?"

Key 4 – Must have a Vision / Aim at Nothing / Prvb 29 / Visions for all – except Walk

Here in is another key, reason that Paul was able to remaining burning for Christ even after 2 years of near isolation, and that was that he had a vision, and he never lost that vision. It has been said that if you aim at nothing, you'll most likely hit your target. Christian, we need to have a vision; *Proverbs says that without a vision the people perish* (proverbs 29:18). Many Christians have a vision for just about everything in their life except their walk with the Lord. At work I want to do this, this and this, and then in 10 years be this, and 30 years retire. Parents have visions for their children. We have visions for our sports team. We have visions for our homes and cars. But somehow we don't have visions for the things of the Lord. We can just get up every day and say, well here is another day of being saved, I'll read a couple verses, say a prayer in the car on the way to work, and if things work out I'll go to church on Sunday.

Proverbs 29:18 (KJV) ¹⁸Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.

God leaves us in Fallen World / Everyone called Witness & Minister / Dull – Lifeless / Luke 6

Christian listen, why does he leave us in a fallen world? He leaves us here to fulfill His purposes. Once you are saved, God intends to use you for his goals. God has a ministry for you in His church and a mission for you in the world. God has a calling for your life, everyone is called to be a minister and witness – and when I/we don't live up to that calling, my/our life becomes dull, incredibly ordinary, and meaningless. But when I minister and witness, a funny thing happens. I get back more than I give—which shouldn't be surprising, considering that Jesus said, "*The measure that you give out shall be meted back to you*" (see Luke 6:38). Christian, spend time with the Lord this week and seek out what is the vision he has for you in this season of your life. Paul had a vision, and that vision kept him burning, regardless how dark it was around him.

Luke 6:38 (NIV) ³⁸Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

(Acts 26:20 NKJV) "but declared first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.

Repentance Looks Like Something / 180 Degrees / Repentance Paul's Message

Again, repentance looks like something, you can see a change, not just words that were spoken. Repent means to turn from going this way, and turning 180 degrees and going another. Repentance isn't a noun (a statement), it is a verb (an action – something in motion).

- Repentance is changing one's mind.
- Regeneration is changing one's heart.
- Redemption is changing one's state—trading the kingdom of darkness and death for the kingdom of light and life.

"This was my message," said Paul.

(Acts 26:21 NKJV) "For these reasons the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me.

Message caused Problem for Paul / Still Today / Tells people not Ok

Paul says the Jews hated my message and wanted to kill me; but notice even though Paul's message continually caused problems with people (both Jews and Gentiles) – Paul never changed the message. The message of repentance is not a popular message, then, or now! The message of repentance is not a popular message because it says:

- People who think they've got it together—don't.
- People who think they're okay—aren't.
- People who think they'll make it to heaven on their own—won't.

Thankful we teach same Message – Paul, John, Jeremiah, Noah, & Jesus

I am thankful that we teach and preach the same message that Paul preached, that John the Baptist, that Jeremiah, that Noah, and that Jesus preached.

Rich Young Ruler – Sorrowful / Jesus didn't chase Down

Jesus said to that rich young man, 'You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have . . . and come, follow Me.' But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich — Here is something I have gleaned from Jesus, and that is that Jesus never tried to soften the gospel up in hopes to have people hang around to hear some more and then eventually "get-it". Jesus did not show the least concern that this rich young ruler should do what He told him, nor did Jesus make any attempt to keep this man with Him. He simply said to him, "Sell all that you have . . . and come, follow Me." Jesus knew who/what was this man's God, and He put His finger on it, and now it was time for that man to decide. Our Lord never pleaded with him; He never tried to lure him— He simply spoke the strictest words that human ears have ever heard, and then left him alone. Jesus did not go after him, but let him go. Our Lord knows perfectly well that once His word is truly heard, it will bear fruit sooner or later.

Luke 18:22-23 (NKJV)²²So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me."²³But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich.

We won't let people be Comfortable in Sin

I will not try to make people feel comfortable in their sin in hopes that I get another chance to witness to them tomorrow. Too many churches and ministers have gone that way today, and it is anything but Biblical or the Way of the Master. God's word will not return void, if people don't return, it is because their sin convicts them and they don't want to change. We never need to apologize for the gospel, in fact if we ever do, we insult the Lord by making Him out to be harsh and unloving – and that was nowhere near what the cross was.

Isaiah 55:11 (NKJV)¹¹ So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

(Acts 26:22 NKJV) "Therefore, having obtained help from God, to this day I stand, witnessing both to small and great, saying no other things than those which the prophets and Moses said would come;

(Acts 26:23 NKJV) "that the Christ would suffer, that He would be the first to rise from the dead, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles."

Paul see God's Hand – not Claudius Lysta / Story of Soldier and Spider Web

Verse 22 - Therefore, having obtained help from God – The world would say Claudius Lysta saved you from that crowd, but Paul sees the hand of God in every natural event. Paul says Claudius was a vessel that God used to help me. I read about a preacher named Frederic Nolan. Fifty men were chasing him through a hilly area of North Africa. Trapped in a canyon, he saw the mouth of a cave and scooted in. Lying at the back of the shallow cave, the exhausted Nolan knew that within ten minutes he would be discovered and killed. But as he lay there, a spider appeared and began to quickly weave a web over the cave's mouth. Twenty minutes later, when Nolan's persecutors arrived, four or five guys stopped at the opening of the cave, saw the web, and said, "He's not in there." And Frederic Nolan went on to record something in his journal that I think is wonderful: Where God is, a spider web becomes a wall. But where God isn't, a wall is like a spider web. Like Nolan, Paul knew it wasn't chance—it was God.

The Gospel – Simply / Can't preach without Resurrection

Notice that he has presented the gospel: that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, and that He rose again. Paul as always emphasized the Resurrection. Friend, we should never preach the death of Christ without also preaching about His resurrection. Paul confronts this assembly with the fact that God has intruded into the history of man and that God has done something for man. God demonstrated His love—God so loved the world that He gave His Son. The gospel is profoundly simple, yet simply profound.

Cross Reference

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (NKJV) ³For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,

Key 5 – Remember the Gospel Personally / Communion Table / Paul had no Fellowship

Paul remained burning for Christ even after two years of near isolation, because he never forgot the price that was paid for him, the price willing to be paid for him a sinner – that God was willing to suffer for him. Christian, go back to the communion table, and spend time with the Lord remembering the price that was paid. Beloved, I want you to recognize something here, and that is that for 2 years Paul had little fellowship, but he still remained strong. I suggest to you that he found the most intimate and satisfying fellowship there was, as he and the Lord communed together. Hey, maybe you don't have all the friends you would like to have, maybe the kids keep you from getting out of the house, whatever it is for this season, don't let your spirit be quenched, but receive it as a blessing to learn how to make Jesus your ultimate fellowship, the most satisfying fellowship.

Paul Presses the Gospel Hard Against King Agrippa

(Acts 26:24 NKJV) Now as he thus made his defense, Festus said with a loud voice, "Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!"

Interrupted Again

Paul never gets to finish a sermon! He is always interrupted.

We don't Chase – But never miss an Opportunity / Festus pricked on Second Round

Now although we don't go chasing people down, when the opportunity comes again, again, and again – we are to take them. Here Festus hears the story for the second. Now the first time he doesn't argue about anything he has heard, but now on this next go-around he is clearly moved to the point of being upset – Paul much learning has made you mad! Keep telling them as long as they will keep listening for you never know when the word will finally break through their intellect and reach their conscience:

Romans 2:14-16 (NKJV) ¹⁴for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) ¹⁶in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

(Acts 26:25 NKJV) But he said, "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak the words of truth and reason.

(Acts 26:26 NKJV) "For the king, before whom I also speak freely, knows these things; for I am convinced that none of these things escapes his attention, since this thing was not done in a corner.

All knew the Story of Jesus

All of Jerusalem knew the story of Jesus Christ.

(Acts 26:27 NKJV) "King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do believe."

(Acts 26:28 NKJV) Then Agrippa said to Paul, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian."

Controversial Phrase

Very controversial phrase. Many get the impression that Agrippa was almost persuaded. Other scholars feel that it is a more cynical comment than that.

Eternity wrapped up in – Almost / Parachute – Car Breaks / Almost and still Perish

Eternity is wrapped up in this word "almost". A parachute that "almost" opened won't be enough to save a person from the fall. Breaks that almost work won't save you from that wreck. Friend, do you know that you can almost be a Christian and then be lost for time and eternity? How tragic that is! "Almost" will not do. It must be all or nothing.

- Either you accept Christ or you don't accept Christ. No theologian can probe the depths of salvation and its meaning. Yet it is simple enough for ordinary folk like most of us to understand. Either you have Christ or you don't have Christ.
- Either you trust Christ or you don't trust Christ.
- Either He is your Savior or He is not your Savior.

It is one of the two. There is no such thing as a middle ground. It cannot be almost. It must be all. It is possible to believe the facts without them being meaningful to you. You may know the facts of the gospel—that Jesus died for your sins and rose again—but your relationship to these facts is the thing that is essential.

(Acts 26:29 NKJV) And Paul said, "I would to God that not only you, but also all who hear me today, might become both almost and altogether such as I am, except for these chains."

Key 6 – Evangelize / Paul had Burden for Lost / Evangelize or Fossilize / Get Involved

Paul had a burden for the lost, and thus he lived for the opportunity to share Christ, Paul was able to burn bright for Christ even after two years of near isolation, because his heart was always for the lost and the opportunity to evangelize. Christian, if you are not evangelizing than you will fossilize, for we were not made to be a Dead Sea (no outlet), but we were made to make Him known. Christian, don't say tomorrow I'll get involved, get involved today, and you will never burnout or fade away in your Christian faith, but rather you will be energized and refreshed because every time you share Christ, you share Christ (in that He is flowing through you as you speak about Him to others).

(Acts 26:30 NKJV) When he had said these things, the king stood up, as well as the governor and Bernice and those who sat with them;

(Acts 26:31 NKJV) and when they had gone aside, they talked among themselves, saying, "This man is doing nothing deserving of death or chains."

(Acts 26:32 NKJV) Then Agrippa said to Festus, "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

Governor stand up – Meeting Over

When the king and the governor stand up, that means the meeting is over.

Confer – Found Innocent Again

They confer together and Paul is found innocent but since he appealed to Rome, to Rome he must go.

True Outcome – People have been Judged / Agrippa on Edge – but Chose Bernice

But truly the ultimate outcome of this meeting isn't just Paul going on to Rome, but that Festus, Agrippa, and Bernice have been judged. Agrippa was right there, right on the edge, Paul you almost persuade me, but then gets up and walks out. Why? May I suggest to you it is because who he walked out with – Bernice, the ravishing beauty (according to the historians). Every time Agrippa is mentioned (25:13; 25:23; 26:30), he's always with Bernice. She had a hold on him. How many times I am witnessing to a brother, they are almost there, and then poof I don't hear or see them again – I always say to Renee, I bet they met a woman.

Eagle & Rodent / Sin sucks life out of You

I am reminded of the story, a bird watcher sees an eagle swooped down and grabbed a rodent in its powerful talons. Pulling it to its chest, he soared higher and higher. Suddenly, however, he no longer looked majestic, but began to flap his wings rapidly before losing altitude and crashing into a rock. Upon investigation, a naturalist observing the scene discovered that the little rodent had its teeth imbedded in the chest of the mighty eagle. Although the eagle thought he was controlling the rodent, all the while the rodent was actually draining the life from him.

People think in Control – but thing cling to – controls them – drains them

That's what happened to Agrippa, and that's what happens in life. People think, I'm controlling him, or her, or it, as they tighten their grip. But in reality, the thing they cling to is the very thing that will drain the life from them. Sin does that to you and me. It's a rat. It'll drain you and keep you from being what God knows you could be.

Key 7 – Free Yourself from Sin

Key 7 to staying on-fire for Christ, to continue to burn for Him, is to free yourself from sin, for sin will drain the life out of you, even when you think you are soaring like an eagle.

Recap of Acts 26 (Paul still Burning for Christ):

- **Key 1 – Remember the Scriptures**
- **Key 2 – Keep Perspective how Big He Is**
- **Key 3 – Remember where God Pull You**
- **Key 4 – Must have a Vision**
- **Key 5 – Remember the Gospel Personally**
- **Key 6 – Evangelize**
- **Key 7 – Free Yourself from Sin**

Chapter 27

Paul's voyage to Rome (The Storms of Life)

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

Recap – Trouble in Jerusalem / He counts it all Joy / Burden to Reach & Preach Rome

Paul has wrongly been accused by the Jews of causing trouble at the Temple in Jerusalem. We have been following his legal preceding for the last several chapters and left off with him standing before King Agrippa and the Governor Festus after 2 years of protective custody. Paul had appealed to have his case heard before Caesar Nero in Rome, and as a Roman citizen it was his right. So we pick up here in chapter 27 with Paul getting on a ship headed for Rome from Caesarea, and for Paul he counted it all joy to be in this predicament because he has a burden on his heart to preach the Gospel in Rome to the Caesar.

James 1:2 (NKJV) *"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials,*

Last Study – Everyone needs to know their Vision / Paul – What else could I Do

In our last study we made the point very strongly that every person needs to know what the Lord's vision is for their Christian life, that we are not to go through our Christian walk aimlessly, but we are to have purpose and direction. God gave the Apostle Paul a vision, and Paul told King Agrippa, what else could I do with my life except fulfill the vision the Lord had given me,

(Acts 26:19 NKJV) *"Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,*

Paul knew called to be Minister & Witness / Vision developed to Rome / 7 & 2 Years

Paul knew he was called to be a minister and witness for the gospel of Jesus Christ, and then as that vision developed God added unto it, and Paul knew in his heart he was called to bring the gospel to the heart of Rome. Seven years prior to this chapter 27 Paul had said I must see Rome. Early in his ministry, the apostle Paul knew that if he could impact Rome with the gospel, it would have ramifications throughout the known world (Acts 19). Two year prior to this chapter 27 the Lord had told Paul that he would be going to Rome to bear witness for Christ (Acts 23).

(Acts 19:21 NKJV) *When these things were accomplished, 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."*

(Acts 23:11 NKJV) *But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, "Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for Me in Jerusalem, so you must also bear witness at Rome."*

After 7 years Paul on Way – takes 7 Months / We can Get frustrated after 7 days / Shipwreck

So after seven years of that first moving on his heart to go to Rome he is finally on his way. How often if we don't see something happen in 7 days we get frustrated or dejected that God isn't moving fast enough. After three months or seven months we start to question if we really heard the voice of the Lord, if we really were called to that vision we thought He had given us. Then, when we are moving on our way towards that calling we felt impressed upon us from the Lord, and then storms and shipwreck come, and we question again if we heard Him correctly. Well in our story today we read of a man who had waited seven years to finally start moving towards the fulfilling of his heart, and then once Paul set sail for Rome it is going to take 7 months

to get there – as he leaves at the end of the summer, and will not make it to Rome until about March. So Paul is at sea or shipwrecked for about seven months.

Wonderful & Insightful Chapter / Life Lessons – Waiting - Storms – Shipwreck / Set Sail Well - what a wonderful and insightful for chapter for us today as we see life lessons in waiting upon the Lord, and also when the storms rage in our lives, even to the point we get shipwrecked. But in all cases, if we allow it, we can see God working in us, and through us. So let's set sail and read a very exciting passage of Scripture.

Paul's Voyage to Rome Begins

(Acts 27:1 NKJV) And when it was decided that we should sail to Italy, they delivered Paul and some other prisoners to one named Julius, a centurion of the Augustan Regiment.

We – Luke has Joined / Not since Acts 21 / Luke a Physician – Life / Glean from Luke

Verse 1 - And when it was decided that we should sail to Italy - So the "we" here means that Luke is with Paul. We haven't read a "we" since (Acts 21). What a friend Luke is, that he would join Paul on this trip. Luke was a physician, Luke could have had his own profitable practice, found a nice Christian girl, settled down to have a family and the house with the white picket fence – but Luke chose to go with Paul all the way, wherever that way took him, even at his own expense because he isn't included in Paul's all expenses paid Roman trip. Quite a man this Luke is, and I look forward to fellowshiping with him in heaven. But for today may we all glean from Luke. I doubt many if any of us will be called to leave all for a friend and the sake of the gospel, but we may be asked by the Lord to give up a night in front of the television and make that phone call and listen to the breaking heart of a mother whose child isn't doing well. God may call us to miss our workout to write that email to that friend who needs to hear a word of encouragement in the trials they are in. Yes, we may even have to miss that football game on television to go have lunch with that friend who is just lonely for reasons we can't even understand, but maybe after a bite to eat we will. This Luke, he is quite the man, I pray God shapes my heart like Luke's was, and that God would give me eyes to see the way Luke could see.

Other Prisoners / Death at Circus / Amusement – Entertainment / Temple of God - Screening

Verse 1 - and some other prisoners - Not all these prisoners were on their way to Rome to appeal to Cesar, in fact it is doubtful if any others were. These prisoners were on their way to Rome as guilty men, and as guilty men they would be the entertainment at the circus (coliseum) to stand against gladiators and lions – they were mere meat for the entertainment of man. They were for sheer amusement, and Rome was the headquarters for it. Amusement (musement means to think), and the "a" before it meant (not), so amusement means to "not to think". Be careful what your amusement is Christian, as we live in an amusement society with all this television, movies, and internet. The idea is to have a person not think, but it is entertainment, which means "to enter in", and although we say it means nothing to us, the fact is that it still enters into us. People say I'm just watching those shows for fun, they really don't mean anything to me. Or those songs I listen to, I really don't think of the lyrics, I just like the beat. Be careful, they are still entering in, and the question (screening) we must ask for everything we see, everything we hear is – what is entering in to me, where the Living God has taken up residence as I am the temple of God.

1 Corinthians 3:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶*Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?*

(Acts 27:2 NKJV) So, entering a ship of Adramyttium, we put to sea, meaning to sail along the coasts of Asia. Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was with us.

Aristarchus – possible Slave / Chp 19 – Col 4 / A Bondslave to Paul / Paul set him Free

Verse 2 - Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, was with us - Aristarchus – some think he may have been Paul's slave. He certainly spent a lot of time with Paul. In Chapter 19 he was the one that the mob grabbed in the whole scene; and he was also the one who was with Paul on his last visit to Jerusalem; and he is mentioned in Paul's letter to the Colossians as a very dear. Knowing the nature of Paul, had Aristarchus been Paul's slave, he wouldn't have been a slave as

we know, one that was purchased to serve, but purchased to be set free, as many of people in that day would buy slaves to set them free because their hearts believed every man should free and no one should be a slave. Paul may have purchased Aristarchus just like Jesus has purchased us, to set us free from the cruel taskmaster (for us that being Satan). And Aristarchus once set free made himself a bond slave to Paul, not wanting to go free on his own, but to be with his master willingly. And so, here we are a room full of bond slaves, that although Jesus has set us free from the cruel taskmaster Satan, we say but we do not want to separated from You, for You are a wonderful Master and we gladly and willingly give our lives to You and we will follow you wherever you go.

Acts 19:28-29 (NKJV)²⁸Now when they heard this, they were full of wrath and cried out, saying, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"²⁹So the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord, having seized Gaius and Aristarchus, Macedonians, Paul's travel companions.

Colossians 4:10 (NKJV)¹⁰Aristarchus my fellow prisoner greets you, with Mark the cousin of Barnabas (about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him),

Romans 1:1 (NKJV)¹Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God

His name means – Best ruler

Interestingly, Aristarchus name means = "the best ruler".

Matthew 20:26-28 (NKJV)²⁶Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. ²⁷And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave—²⁸just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

(Acts 27:3 NKJV) And the next day we landed at Sidon. And Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him liberty to go to his friends and receive care.

Church Here at Sidon

There was a church here at Sidon, and Paul had friends there.

Somewhere Julius took Liking to Paul / Enough to Trust with Life

Verse 3 - And Julius treated Paul kindly - Somewhere along the line this centurion Julius took a liking to Paul. Roman citizen or not, if Julius lost one prisoner he would be put to death, and he trusted Paul enough to let him go visit and fellowship with the believers. This is totally amazing to me; there was something in Paul's character and spirit that allowed this rough and tough soldier to trust him, trust him enough to put his very life at risk.

How could this Be / Paul's Vision so Real – other people Could See it To / Paul must Rome

I had to sit and just think on that for a long time, how could Julius believe in Paul the way that he did, and how could I somehow be like Paul (even if only just a thread). I believe Julius believed in Paul as he did because – Paul's vision was so real to him, that other people saw it too. Paul's vision was to be a minister and witness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and that vision pinnacled in Rome. Julius knew Paul would be back because he knew Paul wanted to be in Rome more than he did. Julius knew Paul's life was enslaved to the Jesus he spoke of, not the chains that bound his wrist and ankles. Paul's vision for Christ was so real that other people saw it. How about us here today, can we say the same? Then if not, why not start today. For me my vision is to know Jesus Christ more, and to make Him known to others, I work to pay my bills, Jesus Christ is not my hobby, but my life. What is your vision? Did you seek the Lord this past week and seek the vision that He has for you as a Christian living in a fallen world. If not, I pray you will take the opportunity to do so this week. And may I remind you, if the Devil can't make you bad, he will make you busy – thus getting at the same objective, to make you of no salt, and of no light.

(Acts 27:4 NKJV) When we had put to sea from there, we sailed under the shelter of Cyprus, because the winds were contrary.

(Acts 27:5 NKJV) And when we had sailed over the sea which is off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia.

(Acts 27:6 NKJV) There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing to Italy, and he put us on board.

(Acts 27:7 NKJV) When we had sailed slowly many days, and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, the wind not permitting us to proceed, we sailed under the shelter of Crete off Salmone.

[See Map](#)

The Various Stops / Experts say tough Sailing this time of Year

These are the various stops Paul and his company made as they worked their way up the coast, eventually crossing the Mediterranean Sea, and on to the island of Crete. The sailing experts say that sailing north at the end of the summer was extremely difficult because the winds were not favorable for sailing north.

Large ship – 276 / Carrying Grain

So they end up on a large ship, which we will see was carrying grain. We know it was a large ship because it could carry 276 people.

(Acts 27:37 NKJV) And in all we were two hundred and seventy-six persons on the ship.

(Acts 27:38 NKJV) So when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship and threw out the wheat into the sea.

Paul's Warning to the Ship's Crew

(Acts 27:8 NKJV) Passing it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea.

(Acts 27:9 NKJV) Now when much time had been spent, and sailing was now dangerous because the Fast was already over, Paul advised them,

(Acts 27:10 NKJV) saying, "Men, I perceive that this voyage will end with disaster and much loss, not only of the cargo and ship, but also our lives."

(Acts 27:11 NKJV) Nevertheless the centurion was more persuaded by the helmsman and the owner of the ship than by the things spoken by Paul.

(Acts 27:12 NKJV) And because the harbor was not suitable to winter in, the majority advised to set sail from there also, if by any means they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete opening toward the southwest and northwest, and winter there.

Fast – Day Atonement / April-Sep Good / Oct-Nov Dangerous / Dec-Mar put in Port

"The fast" referred to here was the Day of Atonement, which would have been during the first part of October—a dangerous time to be at sea, with winter storms soon approaching. The sailing experts say that sailing in that area would be safe from April – September, and in October - November – it would be dangerous, and December – March you would just put into port and wait until April. So they are pushing some dangerous grounds here to be sailing in October.

Paul says bad time to Sail / Tentmaker-Rabbi-Prisoner / Shipwrecked 3X / JAWS - OC

Paul spoke to the captain, saying, "This is a bad time to be sailing." Now, although Paul was a tentmaker by trade, a rabbi by profession, and a prisoner by decree, the fact that he had been shipwrecked three times and had spent an entire day and night in the open ocean (2 Corinthians 11:25) qualified him to be able to give advice concerning the dangers of the sea. I may not be a police officer by profession, but I've been in some pretty shady and dangerous areas in Baltimore that I could tell you wouldn't be the best place to go. Actually, Paul may have been the only one of the ship that had ever been in a ship wreck and he really knew how scary it was to be wrecked at sea (can you hear the music to JAWS?). Man if I even think something touched my leg while I in the surf down at Ocean City I am like out-of-there!

2 Corinthians 11:25 (NKJV) ²⁵Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep;

I'd stay in Fair Haven / Crew – got to get to Phoenix / Moral Port – Palm Trees / End Wreck

Now I would much rather spend the winter in a place called "Fair Havens" (verse 8), rather than risk the dangerous seas, but the owner of the ship and his crew say no way, let's at least make it up to Crete and spend the winter there. Now Fair havens may not have been able to support a large ship, nor support the physical needs of 276 men. Or, Fair Haven may have just been a boring sleepy town; the sailors are like "do you know how torturous it will be to spend the whole

winter (4 months) in Fair Haven?” Again, interestingly “Fair Haven” means “goodly (moral) port”, and Phoenix means “palm trees”. I think they didn’t want to spend the winter in Mayberry, they wanted to make it to Phoenix (Las Vegas) where there would be plenty of wine and woman. Well, carnal motivations always end in shipwreck we will see.

Note to Youth – don’t listen to Majority Vote – Go with Word of God

A note to you youth about peer pressure, please notice Julius went with the majority vote, it was 2 to go, and 1 to stay. We don’t live according to the majority of vote, those people or say yes that sound great, you should do that, but we live by the Word of God.

The Ship in the Tempest

(Acts 27:13 NKJV) When the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their desire, putting out to sea, they sailed close by Crete.

(Acts 27:14 NKJV) But not long after, a tempestuous head wind arose, called Euroclydon.

Winds softly & favorable / 65 miles / Satan whispers – come on – gives Favor / Unequal Yoke

The winds blew softly, and favorably, so they said it isn’t so bad, let’s make a run for Crete and get out of Mayberry when we can – it is only 65 miles to Crete and we can make it. The winds blew softly, like a whisper saying “come along with me, all will be well”. Satan doesn’t want Paul in Rome you know, so he whispers to these men, come along with me, the wine and the woman of Crete await for you. So he (Satan) still whispers to people today, come along with me, all will be well, no worries – engage, indulge, step forth, no harm awaits you. Things start out as a beautiful tropical day, sun upon your face, a little wind at your back, the fresh smell of the sea air – oh what a beautiful day. So Satan says, date that non-believer, enter into that business relationship with that unbeliever, get chummy with that group over there even if they don’t believe what you believe. And so a Christian set sail into those waters and all seems well, they may even question if God’s Word is a bit overbearing and legalistic.

But there is a Euroclydon Brewing – once out of Fair Haven / Always start with Whisper

But there is a “Euroclydon” a brewing once you are out of your “fair haven”. I don’t know exactly how to pronounce “Euroclydon”, all I know that is that I don’t want to be in one. This is a hurricane or typhoon those guys are in, and you can be sure they all at some point wished they would have stayed in Mayberry for the winter. Trust me Christian, those wonderful seaport callings always start with a whisper from Satan, because if he called you to them with a hurricane voice, you would say “that is a disaster waiting to happen” – but Satan calls with a whisper, and then brings the hurricane upon us once we are deep in the waters.

(Acts 27:15 NKJV) So when the ship was caught, and could not head into the wind, we let her drive.

(Acts 27:16 NKJV) And running under the shelter of an island called Clauda, we secured the skiff with difficulty.

(Acts 27:17 NKJV) When they had taken it on board, they used cables to undergird the ship; and fearing lest they should run aground on the Syrtis Sands, they struck sail and so were driven.

Sails down – so Mast not Break

Verse 17 - they struck sail - They took the sail down to avoid being grounded on a sandbar, and the extreme wind against the sail could break the mast, and then they would be dead in the water.

Wrap Ship with Rope and Cables to Reinforce / Carnival Cruise

Following the stress and strain of the storm, the crew wrapped the hull of the ship with cables and ropes in an attempt to hold it together before the waves and wind made the boards to start breaking off. So if you are ever on a Carnival Cruise and see them starting to tie cables underneath the hull, you may want to adjourn to your room for a time of prayer.

Apollo Astronaut

Reminds me of the interview with one of the Apollo astronauts and the interviewer pointed to a picture of him taken on the moon next to his lunar capsule with the earth in the background, and the interviewer said you are getting ready to get back in this capsule and start your journey back to earth 250,000 miles away – what was going through your mind at this time. The interviewer no doubt was expecting some deep philosophical response, but the astronaut answer; I was looking at the capsule thinking it was built by the lowest bidder.

Blown off 500 Miles / Long way to Recover

They will be blown off course by 500 miles. They end up almost down to Africa. That is what happens when we leave our Fair haven, we get blown off course and have 10 times the distance to go to get back to the course we truly desired in our heart. I tell all the people who compromise and date unbelievers because they are lonely, I tell them that every day you spend involved with them is a day away from being prepared in your heart to be with that godly guy or gal. God will not bring them to you if you are not going to be spiritually ready for that relationship. In fact as you go the other way spiritually, you have to make up for all the ground you lost, and then once at the point you were at, weeks, months, or years ago, you can finally start growing and moving ahead spiritually. Just don't go there, it blows you off course, and delays the destination your heart is truly desiring.

(Acts 27:18 NKJV) And because we were exceedingly tempest-tossed, the next day they lightened the ship.

(Acts 27:19 NKJV) On the third day we threw the ship's tackle overboard with our own hands.

(Acts 27:20 NKJV) Now when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small tempest beat on us, all hope that we would be saved was finally given up.

Paul & Luke serving – urgency at this Point

Paul and Luke are serving as ship hands at this point, so we can see urgency at this point – hey anyone and everyone that can help get up here and help.

Even the Veterans though Death certain

Verse 20 - All hope was lost. These veteran seamen knew they were going down.

Will last 2 weeks – no Sun / No navigation / Just tossed Up & Down / Seasick - Dramamine

We will see that it is two weeks that they do not see the sun nor the stars as they winds are just blowing them wherever the ship will go. They navigated in that day by the position of the sun, and at night to the constellation of the stars. But now for 2 weeks they just get tossed up and down, up and down, up and down. If you ever been out on the sea and are prone to seasickness, you know one of the cures is to fix your eyes on the horizon and your equilibrium has a point of reference to equalize from – well these men have no horizon, they have no Dramamine, they just bounce up and down, up and down, up and down. They have no idea where they are, 276 people no doubt blowing chow down in the hull, the odor is horrendous! For 2 weeks!

Nobody has bearings except Paul – His eyes fixed on Jesus

Nobody has any bearings, except one, Paul. Paul has his bearing because even in the darkness his eyes are still fixed on Jesus.

(Acts 27:21 NKJV) But after long abstinence from food, then Paul stood in the midst of them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me, and not have sailed from Crete and incurred this disaster and loss.

(Acts 27:22 NKJV) "And now I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship.

(Acts 27:23 NKJV) "For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve,

(Acts 27:24 NKJV) "saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.'

(Acts 27:25 NKJV) "Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me.

Paul waits to speak Correction with Instruction / Parents!

I like this, Paul waited to speak; he could have said long ago I told you that you should have listened to me; but he waited to speak until he had a word of encouragement and instruction. Good example for us that when we do bring a word of correction, to wait to bring it until after the Lord gives us a word of encouragement and instruction for them. Good word for us parents.

Only Paul has Bearings – even Darkness see Jesus / That is Us Christians / Sept 11

Nobody has any bearings, except one, Paul. Paul has his bearing because even in the darkness his eyes are still fixed on Jesus. In the midst of the turbulent world, it is us the Christians who can still keep a bearing on which way is up, which way is down, and where we are in reference to the horizon. I remember September 11th, 2001 like it was yesterday and I remember all the people asking why did this happen, what does all this mean? And I remember being able to answer why (based on the nature of radical Islam), but more so I was able to point to the horizon, Jesus Christ, and say that is what is fixed and unmovable, and tomorrow the sun will rise and He will still be seated on the throne.

Angel reminds Paul of God's Word / We need to have ears to Hear

Verse 24 - "saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you.' – The angel reminds Paul of God's promise to him. God will do the same for us in our storms but we need to make our ears open to hear Him.

Paul says – God will do His Word / Storm & Sunshine Theology / Doubt in Storm / Same

Verse 25 - "Therefore take heart, men, for I believe God that it will be just as it was told me – Paul says "take heart men", "for I believe God that it will be just as He said". Christian, your "storm theology" must be the same as your "sunshine theology". God is good, God is involved, God's hand is upon you, in the storms just as He is in the sunshine. We have a tendency to doubt in storm, question if His Word is true while in the storms, but we never question His Word in the sunshine do we? The job is good, the family is doing well, the finances are in check – all things really do work together for good for those who love God and are called according to His purposes. But it is the same word even in the storm, our storm theology needs to be the same as our sunshine theology. I don't understand all that is going on, but the Lord's Word supersedes my understanding.

Romans 8:28 (NKJV) ²⁸And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

Proverbs 3:5-6 (NKJV) ⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall [£]direct your paths.

(Acts 27:26 NKJV) "However, we must run aground on a certain island."

Because Rom 8:28 – Must be Certain Island / Church Planted – People Healed – Gospel

Because all things work together for good, they had to run aground on "a certain island", not just any island. God in the midst of the storm is going to steer the ship exactly to "a certain island" because God wants to do a "certain work" as we will see in the next chapter as a church will be established (and history says there have been believers in Christ on this island for 2000 years since this event), a man will be healed from a life-threatening fever, and many of the island people will be healed by the laying on of hands. This was just any ole island, it was "a certain island" that God had preordained before the foundations of the world that He would move in a mighty way amongst the people through this storm and shipwreck.

People on Ship – Unfortunate / People on Island – God send

To the people on the ship they may have considered the shipwrecked a most unfortunate event, but for these people on the island – they considered the shipwreck the most fortunate event of their lives. I guess it all depends how you look at a storm that determines if it is unfortunate or fortunate.

Types & Reasons for Storms

When you are in a storm, here are a few things to consider of what God may be doing:

- **Storms of correction.** - Sometimes when I'm in a place of disobedience or rebellion, the Lord will allow a storm to get me on track again.
- **Storms of perfection.** - Faith is not a pill we take, folks. It's a muscle we work. Therefore, the Lord will send me into a storm from time to time not for correction, but for perfection because the way I react to storms internally will tell me where I'm at spiritually. Storms provide unique opportunity for me to see where I'm at and to grow in my understanding that the Lord will come through at the right time, saying, "Be of good cheer. We're going to make it."
- **Storms of direction.** Knowing there was a group of people on the island of Malta in need of ministry, the Lord said, "Before you go to Rome, Paul, I'm going to allow you to be blown off course because there is something I want you to do for Me—something you never would have thought of on your own, something that wasn't part of your agenda. I have some people to whom I want to minister, so I'll allow a storm to arise, which, although it looks like it's blowing you off course, will put you in the very place I want to use you."
- **Storms of protection** – yes the storms of life can even be for protection, just ask Noah as God is judging and cleansing the world of carnality, He puts Noah in a storm on a safe boat. And so too we may never realize that the television breaking, that job loss, that issue with that person, are all storms that God puts in our lives to protect us from something bad that would have happened if we had stayed in that place.

(Acts 27:27 NKJV) Now when the fourteenth night had come, as we were driven up and down in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors sensed that they were drawing near some land.

(Acts 27:28 NKJV) And they took soundings and found it to be twenty fathoms; and when they had gone a little farther, they took soundings again and found it to be fifteen fathoms.

(Acts 27:29 NKJV) Then, fearing lest we should run aground on the rocks, they dropped four anchors from the stern, and prayed for day to come.

Knew getting Close – Anchor or hit Rocks

Perhaps hearing the crashing of waves in the distance, the sailors took a sounding and discovered the water was getting shallower. A fathom was about six feet, so they only have 90 feet of ocean underneath this big ship, so they have little room to spare for if the ship bottom out, the waves pounding against the ship will break it apart like a hammer smashing clay pot.

(Acts 27:30 NKJV) And as the sailors were seeking to escape from the ship, when they had let down the skiff into the sea, under pretense of putting out anchors from the prow,

(Acts 27:31 NKJV) Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay in the ship, you cannot be saved."

To Pretend – really making Run

Pretense means to pretend. So these men are getting into a smaller boat that was to be used to drop anchor at all four points of the ship (2 in front – 2 in back). These men are acting like they are going to secure the anchors but they really are cutting and running, trying to make it shore before the ship falls apart from all the pounding of the sea.

Paul has Discernment / Julius knows need them to work the Ship

Paul has discernment and knows what they are up to, and tells Julius that everyone must stay in the ship. Paul tells Julius that if they jump ship, that Julius will die – because it is the sailors who

know how to handle the ship, and they need to stay on-board to see to it that everyone makes it out of the storm.

Don't Jump Ship Paul says / Maybe you in long Storm – Instinct says Jump

Don't jump ship Paul says. Well maybe for you today the waves are pounding, the sea is raging, the storm clouds haven't ceased for fourteen days, maybe fourteen weeks, you think the storm is never going to end, but you think dry ground stable ground is near and you want to make a jump for it. Hear the words of Paul and the Lord to you today in the midst of your storm, don't jump ship. I know the storms get to be tough, and instincts tell you to bail out, give up, turn back. But Paul's word of admonition to his shipmates is a very important one for you and me as well.

Marriage – Parents – Purity – Loneliness / Don't Jump – or will Miss

Maybe you are saying to yourself right now "I cannot take this marriage one more day," or—"I can't take my parents one more minute". I can't take this purity, I can't take this loneliness any more. I can't take this sitting around one more day I need go find some relief on the internet or down at the bar. Christian don't jump ship now or you will miss out on all that God is doing in the storm.

Story of Jacob & Rachel

Storms come, and the temptation arises within all of us to bail out when we think we've been tricked or cheated. I share with you the story of a man who truly had reason to feel this way. His name was Jacob; and his story begins in Genesis 29. Jacob was young, single, footloose, and looking for a wife. Arriving in Pandanaram, he found a group of shepherds milling around a well. Industrious by nature, Jacob couldn't understand this—until he saw a beautiful shepherdess approaching, bringing her flock with her. Immediately, Jacob flexed his muscles, single-handedly removed the stone that covered the well, and gallantly said, "Come and water your flock." She did, he kissed her, and then cried aloud, for she had smitten his heart. When Jacob discovered that this beautiful maiden was the daughter of his uncle, he went to her father and told him he wanted to marry his daughter. Okay," said Laban. "Work for me seven years, and I'll give her to you." Jacob agreed, and the Bible says it seemed to him but a few days because of the great love he had for her.

Big Night

The big night finally came. Jacob took his beloved bride—veiled from head to toe according to Jewish tradition—back to his tent where they consummated the marriage. The next morning, when Jacob opened his eyes, he couldn't believe what he saw. It wasn't Rachel he had married—it was her older sister, Leah—whose name meant "tender-eyed" or "one who makes your eyes hurt." Jacob stormed out of the tent, found Laban, and said, "You tricked me." "I'm sorry, Jacob," his uncle said, "but we have a tradition that the older daughter must marry before the younger daughter. Therefore, it was necessary that Leah, Rachel's older sister, marry first. But I'll tell you what I'll do. Work seven more years, and I'll throw in Rachel." Now, if anyone ever had a right to say, "I got tricked. I want out," it was Jacob. "Listen, Leah," he could have said, "I realize we went through the ceremony, but I was tricked. I didn't know who you were. I'm in love with Rachel. She's the one who captured my heart. So I'm out of here."

Stays

But that's not what Jacob said. He agreed to Laban's proposal, and thereby ended up with both Leah and Rachel as his wives (this was the way it was in those days – they didn't know the teaching of Jesus – that you can't serve 2 masters). Time passed, and after a while, Leah began to have children. Rachel, who had none, said to Jacob, "Give me children, or I die." Having had three sons with Leah, Jacob knew it wasn't his fault and said to her, "Am I in the place of God? I can't do anything about this situation." "Then take my servant girl, have relations with her, and the kids will count as ours," said Rachel. And Jacob did just that. Not to be outdone, Leah—who had stopped bearing children—said, "Here, Jacob, take my servant girl, and the children she bears will count as ours." The end result from these four women were the twelve sons who became, of course, the twelve tribes of Israel. Interestingly, Rachel, the one who had said, "Give

me children or I'll die," did indeed die when she gave birth to Benjamin. Jacob buried this one, about whom he was so passionate, in Canaan.

Bury me next to Leah

Years later, Leah died, and Jacob buried her in the Promised Land, at a place called Machpelah. When, as an old man in Genesis 49, Jacob himself was about to die, he called his sons together, and, after blessing each one, said, "I am going the way of my fathers. When I die, bury me at—" Now, I would have thought he would have said, "Bury me by the love of my life. Bury me by Rachel." But that's not what he said. He said, "Bury me at Machpelah—by Leah." Why would he say that? Because at the end of his life, Jacob realized Leah was where the blessing was all along. What he thought was an unfair trick was in reality the biggest blessing in his life because from Leah—not Rachel, not Bilhah, not Zilpah—from Leah came Judah. And from the tribe of Judah came the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Jesus was birthed through Leah, the one Jacob thought he had every right to bail out on. And at the end of his life, Jacob said, "Leah was it all along. I want to be buried by her."

Genesis 49:29-31 (NKJV) ²⁹Then he charged them and said to them: "I am to be gathered to my people; bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite, ³⁰in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite as a possession for a burial place. ³¹There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife, there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife, and there I buried Leah.

Genesis 29:35 (NKJV) ³⁵And she conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Now I will praise the Lord." Therefore she called his name Judah.⁵ Then she stopped bearing.

You may Say – not who Thought you Be / Miss Blessing of birthing of Jesus in Life

Wife, you might look at the man next to you and say, "I was tricked. He's not the man I thought he would be." Husband, you might look at the woman you married and say, "She's not the passion of my life. I didn't know she would turn out this way." But if you jump ship, know this: You will miss the blessing of the birthing of Jesus in a supernatural, incredible, wonderful way because there are no tricks in the life of a child of God. Teenager, you might look at your parents and say, "I was tricked. I must have been switched at birth. God couldn't have chosen these people to raise me." But know this: You are not only their child—you are a child of the King. He, in His wisdom, hand-picked them for you. And He makes no mistakes.

Don't lower Lifeboats Either

Paul said, "If you jump ship, you'll lose your life." And the centurion, knowing how tempting it would be for the sailors to bail out, to jump ship, to give up, ordered the soldiers to cut the lines so there would be no possibility of escape. I know there are some who are saying, "I haven't jumped ship. I've only lowered a lifeboat over the side. I'll give it three more months, or two more weeks, or one more year." But if you keep an escape option open in your mind, I guarantee you will end up using it. Think about divorce—and you will end up divorced. Think about other men or other women you wish you had because you're feeling tricked by the one you're with—and inevitably, you'll bail out.

Don't Jump – Jesus will do Work / Not way of Society

Precious people, Jesus will come in a way that will blow your mind if you don't jump ship. I don't care what the sailors of society are saying about breaking commitments, bailing out, and giving up. Cut the ropes. Let the lifeboat crash in the sea below. Stay on board and, like Jacob, you'll look back and say, "Bury me by Leah. That's where the blessing was all along."

Delete the Word Divorce

Listen married couples, there is a word you need to delete from your vocabulary, and that is the word "divorce". You need to delete that from your vocabulary and thought. Once you start thinking that it is an option, you are one step closer – cut the dingy free, stay on the ship even if it looks like it is going down, going to crash upon the rocks, you stay onboard! Cut all the dingy frees - delete the emails, phone numbers, facebook friends – cut them loose so you don't even think there is another option. Stay on board, committed to navigate and get through the storm.

Why Hang in There – Jesus hung in there for You

Why should I hang in there, why should I go to such great length to save the married? Because Jesus hung in there for you, He did not jump ship when the storm raged against Him, but He took it all.

Cortez

When Cortez came to conquer the New Land, he brought all his soldiers to shore, and then he had them turn back out to sea and pointed to the 3 ships they had just arrived on, and he gave the signal to his arrow man, and they launched flaming arrows on to the decks of the ships. The ships burned and then sank to the bottom of the sea. Cortez then pointed to jungle brush and said men, there is nowhere to go, but forward to victory. Couples, burn the ships, face the battle knowing there is nowhere else to go but forward into the battle, and unto the victory.

(Acts 27:32 NKJV) Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the skiff and let it fall off.

(Acts 27:33 NKJV) And as day was about to dawn, Paul implored them all to take food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day you have waited and continued without food, and eaten nothing.

Julius Listens / Cuts ships – All in this Together

Julius listens to Paul this time, and has the small boat cut loose and fall into the sea. It is all or nothing now for the crew, and they are all in it together.

14 days of Fasting

The crew had been fasting for fourteen days—not because they were seeking God, but because they were sick to their stomachs

(Acts 27:34 NKJV) "Therefore I urge you to take nourishment, for this is for your survival, since not a hair will fall from the head of any of you."

(Acts 27:35 NKJV) And when he had said these things, he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all; and when he had broken it he began to eat.

(Acts 27:36 NKJV) Then they were all encouraged, and also took food themselves.

(Acts 27:37 NKJV) And in all we were two hundred and seventy-six persons on the ship.

Paul gives Thanks – Pure power in front of those Distraught

Paul had hope in his heart. He believed in God. And he thanked the Lord in the sight of everyone on deck. Hey Believers, when people are fearful, when they are distraught, stand in the midst of them and help them see the Horizon, help them to refocus their eyes on Jesus.

Go do Communion with Friend who is Hurting

And, don't wait for some special occasion for communion; when someone is hurting, just say hey let's get together and go back to the cross, let's do communion together, let's have a spiritual time. By doing so you will lift their spirits in the midst of the storm they are in.

(Acts 27:38 NKJV) So when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship and threw out the wheat into the sea.

Lighter ship – Higher in Water / Closer to shore – better chance to make Swim

The lighter the ship the higher in the water it will be, thus the further from the sea floor, and the closer to shore you can ram the boat, and the less they will have to swim. Fighting ten or twenty foot waves for more than a couple hundred yards, and chances of making it to shore would be slim unless you are a great swimmer – and not sure how great you'd be swimming after not eating and blowing chow for nearly two weeks,

[Shipwrecked on Malta](#)

(Acts 27:39 NKJV) When it was day, they did not recognize the land; but they observed a bay with a beach, onto which they planned to run the ship if possible.

(Acts 27:40 NKJV) And they let go the anchors and left them in the sea, meanwhile loosing the rudder ropes; and they hoisted the mainsail to the wind and made for shore.

(Acts 27:41 NKJV) But striking a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern was being broken up by the violence of the waves.

Cut ropes – Making a run for it

So they say cut the ropes, cut the anchor, full-speed ahead, gunning it in as far as they could, and they hit a sandbar and the waves start pounding the ship and it starts to break apart.

(Acts 27:42 NKJV) And the soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim away and escape.

(Acts 27:43 NKJV) But the centurion, wanting to save Paul, kept them from their purpose, and commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land, **(Acts 27:44 NKJV)** and the rest, some on boards and some on parts of the ship. And so it was that they all escaped safely to land.

Origination of Surfing

Here is origination of surfer if you ever wondered.

1 Mans Favor – 275 Survive / I Believe that for USA

Notice here, that because of God's favor on one man (Paul) all the other prisoners are blessed. The world has no idea how much blessings they receive because of the Christians around them. I personally believe the USA is blessed because of all the Christians that live on this soil and the preaching of the Gospel that is going forth, and the missionaries being sent to the outer parts of the world from the Churches of the USA. Yes, some of the prisoners will be killed once they reach Rome, but for 3 months they were given the opportunity by God to hear the greatest preacher in the whole world and receive Jesus before the fallen world fall upon them.

Recap Acts 27 (Paul's voyage to Rome)

- To be a friend like Luke
- Amusement – watch what enters in to you
- We are the Bond slaves of Jesus Christ – Rescued & Set Free
- Paul's vision was so real – other people saw it too.
- God's Word supersedes the popular Vote.
- Beware of the soft whispers of Satan
- Disobedience blows us off course
- Our Storm and Sunshine Theology must be the same.
- Remember the reasons of the Storms of Life:
 - Storms of Correction
 - Storms of Perfection
 - Storms of Direction
 - Storms of Protection
- Don't Jump Ship
- Give Thanks in front of the Distraught

Chapter 28

This is not the End of the Story!

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28

2 weeks Tossed – 500 miles – All 276 Safe / Malta - Refuge

After two weeks of being tossed around by a typhoon, blowing them 500 miles off their course, God will bring them to shore, all 276 (not one soul was lost just as Paul said God said it would be), and so they end up here on Malta (which just happens to mean – refuge, and what a refuge it will be after this whole ordeal).

How many time I've been Blown off Course / If you in Storm – Island is Jesus

How many times I feel like I have been blown off course, in a never ending storm, but how I can look up and see the hand of the Lord upon me through it all and brings me to a place of refuge in Himself (even while the storm still rages against me). I pray for anyone here today who feels they are going through a storm of life, that there is an Island of Refuge for you, that Island is Jesus the Christ, the Savior who choose the nails, who choose the shame, who finished our faith at whatever the price (even death) so that He may be seated at the right-hand of the Father and lives to make intercession on our behalf so that we may be saved to the uttermost (to be secure in the refuge).

Hebrews 12:2 (NKJV)²looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 7:25 (NKJV)²⁵Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

Always a Parallel / Psalms 107

You'll always find some parallel of a NT event in the OT, and Psalm 107 says they that go down by the sea come out praising the Lord, no doubt these men praising God, Paul's God, when they made it to shore safely.

Psalms 107:23-32 (NKJV)

²³ *Those who go down to the sea in ships, Who do business on great waters,*

²⁴ *They see the works of the Lord, And His wonders in the deep.*

²⁵ *For He commands and raises the stormy wind, Which lifts up the waves of the sea.*

²⁶ *They mount up to the heavens, They go down again to the depths; Their soul melts because of trouble.*

²⁷ *They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, And are at their wits' end.*

²⁸ *Then they cry out to the Lord in their trouble, And He brings them out of their distresses.*

²⁹ *He calms the storm, So that its waves are still.*

³⁰ *Then they are glad because they are quiet; So He guides them to their desired haven.*

³¹ *Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, And for His wonderful works to the children of men!*

³² *Let them exalt Him also in the assembly of the people, And praise Him in the company of the elders.*

May we be Same

Whether is a literal storm at sea, or a storm of life, may we give Him praise and thanks in the storms He rides out with us, and delivers us from. The Lord is Good, He is so Good to us.

[Paul's Ministry on Malta](#)

(Acts 28:1 NKJV) Now when they had escaped, they then found out that the island was called Malta.

(Acts 28:2 NKJV) And the natives showed us unusual kindness; for they kindled a fire and made us all welcome, because of the rain that was falling and because of the cold.

17 by 9

This island is about 17 miles long, and 9 miles wide.

It is November – Hypothermia / Warm Hands & Warm Hearts

We are in November, so add the drenching rain, and hypothermia could set in very soon – so loss of life could have still happened even though they escaped the sea. God sends helpers with warm hearts and warm hands (as they build a fire for these men).

(Acts 28:3 NKJV) But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand.

(Acts 28:4 NKJV) So when the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he has escaped the sea, yet justice does not allow to live."

(Acts 28:5 NKJV) But he shook off the creature into the fire and suffered no harm.

Paul a Servant – Could have Sat / Somehow Christianity has become so Self and Inward

Verse 3 - But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks - Paul, what a servant, he just can't sit still. If anyone could have said I'm just resting, serve me, it would have been Paul (he just saved all their lives, and did I mention he is an Apostle); but that is not what we read, we read Paul getting busy serving. I don't know how Christianity got to the place that it is in, but somehow so many Christians think that it is about being served. There is a time and place to be served, as God says just rest and let Me minister to you as you have some things that need healing. But some Christians never leave that state, and continually look to be served, rather than serving others. Christ in you, the hope of glory – have you ever thought what it must be like for Christ in us, when we are like, oh I'm just going to rest again today, I'm tired, it's been a long week; Christ in you, Jesus is probably like come on let's get out there and do something, let's go feed someone, let's call someone and encourage them, let's go tell people about Dad (Abba Father – He is so awesome). Christ in you, may you just let Him out and let Him move amongst the nations – and as we join along with Him, we will be touching heaven as we are changing earth. Paul, two weeks of tossing up and down, had to swim to shore and he is no young man at this point in life, and now is gathering wood to keep the others warm.

Colossians 1:27 (NKJV) ²⁷To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Viper Hibernating – not Happy of Relocation

Verse 3 - a viper came out because of the heat, and fastened on his hand - So this viper is probably hibernating in the cold season, was good and content in his wood pile, and Paul picks him up and throws him in the fire – and we can see the viper isn't pleased with the relocation assistance from Paul.

BTW – When serve – Expect Bites / Can be Various Forms / Shake off – Fire consumes

Hey by-the-way, when you serve, expect some snake bites. Those snake bites can literally be snakes, they could be some fool on a cell phone rear-ending you, they could be your family member saying – “why are you doing that” (in that condemning tone that gets under your skin), they could be some Christian will their self-centered - self-serving theology, that says “why are you doing that”. Whatever the snake bite is, expect them, and just shake it off, just shake it off. I like where this snake ends, in the fire, totally consumed – God's slap in Satan's face.

Satan hates to see you Serve – Because Christ in You / Sweat in Theology / Don't Quit

While Paul was helping people, the snake struck. And you can be sure that's when the serpent will strike you. Satan hates to see you serving and is going to do all that he can to disrupt your

service, because He knows “Christ in You” and he is greatly afraid of you putting yourself in a place where Christ (the Servant King) can pour Himself out and upon this lost and dying world; Satan is greatly afraid of what will happen to you once you see that touching heaven and changing earth is all that Jesus said that it would be, life and that more abundant – greater than any concert, football game, hobby, or what is on the television on any day! Satan hates it when you put some sweat into your theology, when you put some shoe-leather to your faith and start walking it out practically rather than just sitting and taking it all in; you can be sure he is going to bite you, but when he does just know that you are in some really good company. When you ask why is this happening to me, I’m serving others and this happens – just know it is because the Devil knows what is going to happen in you if you get the opportunity to serve. Lots of Christians quit because they say all I get is trouble when I serve, and they miss the point why the trouble comes, and that is because Satan knows what is going to happen in you once you start to serve (Christ in you – starts to flow through and out of you). So serve – push through, and remember the “why” when the snake bites.

John 10:10 (NKJV) ¹⁰The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.

Get a Vision

As we said for the last two weeks, get a vision Christian, seek the Lord until you get a vision of what He wants for your life – the big vision, and the little pieces that go along with and make up the big vision.

(Acts 28:6 NKJV) However, they were expecting that he would swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had looked for a long time and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds and said that he was a god.

What about that Person on the Remote Island?

Have you ever been sharing Christ with someone and they ask you about that person on the remote island, that if they never heard the gospel they will go to hell (referring that God is unjust and unloving – looking for their loophole). Well you can just show them this story and tell them that God will send someone to their island; He will see to it that they hear the gospel. So then you can turn the conversation back to what they need to hear, and what they need to do.

People Expecting Paul to Die / Right and Wrong in Conscience

So all these people were expecting Paul to die because in their conscience they knew the difference between right and wrong, even though they had never heard the gospel. God places that in every person hearts:

Romans 2:12-16 (NKJV) ¹²For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law ¹³(for not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; ¹⁴for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them) ¹⁶in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.

People Expecting to him to Die – Satan Too / Temple – Ambush – Storm - Snake

So all these people observing the snake bite are expecting Paul to die, and not only were the people expecting Paul to die, so was Satan. This is kind of humorous at this point, wouldn't you love to see Satan's face. Satan Failed in killing Paul at the Temple as Claudius saves Paul, Paul's nephew disrupts the ambush plan to kill Paul, Satan tries to drown Paul and that didn't work, and so now he bites him with a deadly viper, and Paul just shakes it off as a minor irritant. As Paul is, so are you, and that is immortal until the Mighty God says so – so don't be afraid to step out in faith to anything that you clearly heard God say to do (but use your God given wisdom please – for that is how He protects us)..

Satan won't Quit

But notice this also, and that is that Satan won't quit, and he never gives up. If you haven't been bitten for some time, you may want to ask why that is so.

Paul's Bitten – People Watching / Do you Curse or Continue on / Storm & Sunshine

Paul's bitten, and he shakes it off – and the people were watching. When you are bitten by the world remember that the world is watching, and they are looking for your reaction. Do you curse God or do you trust God. Paul knows he is going to Rome, visions, appearances of Christ, miraculous deliveries, and at this point a snake bite is not going to move Paul. Now if that was me, I'd be such a baby, oh Lord how could you let this happen! But Paul, he is like yea whatever. What our storm theology will determine how we react to the storms of life:

Types & Reasons for Storms

Remember last study, when you are in a storm, here are a few things to consider of what God may be doing, and whether you are in a storm, or in sunshine, God is for you:

- **Storms of correction.** - Sometimes when I'm in a place of disobedience or rebellion, the Lord will allow a storm to get me on track again.
- **Storms of perfection.** - Faith is not a pill we take, folks. It's a muscle we work. Therefore, the Lord will send me into a storm from time to time not for correction, but for perfection because the way I react to storms internally will tell me where I'm at spiritually. Storms provide unique opportunity for me to see where I'm at and to grow in my understanding that the Lord will come through at the right time, saying, "Be of good cheer. We're going to make it."
- **Storms of direction.** Knowing there was a group of people on the island of Malta in need of ministry, the Lord said, "Before you go to Rome, Paul, I'm going to allow you to be blown off course because there is something I want you to do for Me—something you never would have thought of on your own, something that wasn't part of your agenda. I have some people to whom I want to minister, so I'll allow a storm to arise, which, although it looks like it's blowing you off course, will put you in the very place I want to use you."
- **Storms of protection** – yes the storms of life can even be for protection, just ask Noah as God is judging and cleansing the world of carnality, He puts Noah in a storm on a safe boat. And so too we may never realize that the television breaking, that job loss, that issue with that person, are all storms that God puts in our lives to protect us from something bad that would have happened if we had stayed in that place.

Bible Critics / May we Club the Snakes

Hey, if you happen to read any of those books or hear those challenges that the bible is false because of this or that, you may read the challenge that this story never happened and is false because they say there are no deadly vipers on the island of Malta today. Well that is true, and do you know why, the Christians on the island as this story was passed down from person to person took great joy in killing every viper they would see (probably like – and that is for biting my brother Paul as they clubbed the viper over the head). So after only a few generations all the vipers were wiped out from that island. I see that example and say I wish we would do that today as a body of believers; clubbing all the vipers that have attacked our brothers. Getting violent with the sins that have taken one of our brothers down, whack, as we smack-down drugs, alcohol, pornography, and the likes. Things that hurt and destroy our beloved brothers and sisters let's have no tolerance for it in our lives. I sent FoxNews.com an email this week and said I don't understand how you promote yourself as the conservative value network, yet everyday on the front page of your website run racy pictures next to racy articles about sex. How does the sex life of this movie star (Monday's article) align with conservative conversation? How does celebrities caught in sex scandals launch or crush their careers align with conservative values. I told them, hey conservatives are going on your website, and then see those articles, and the thoughts and the sights start their minds going places that are not conservative – I said I know too many people who are struggling to do the right thing, but those types of images send them on a trial down the internet that is anything but conservative. We need to club all the things we know have bitten and hurt our beloved brothers and sisters.

(Acts 28:7 NKJV) In that region there was an estate of the leading citizen of the island, whose name was Publius, who received us and entertained us courteously for three days. (Acts 28:8 NKJV) And it happened that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and dysentery. Paul went in to him and prayed, and he laid his hands on him and healed him.

They gave thanks for the Storm / Lot going on – yet he Served

Pure power! How Publius and his father must have given thanks for the typhoon that shipwrecked Paul. But how about this for consideration, Publius had a lot going on at that time, his dad was sick of a fever that took the lives of many in that region, yet he would entertain strangers. Publius has no idea that Paul is who he is, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, so he isn't inviting Paul over in hopes of healing his dad. It appears he invites Paul and Luke, maybe more over to his house and are giving them food and housing, just totally blessing them, and then Publius comes in and says dad has a fever, it isn't looking good – and Paul says take me to him. So Paul goes and lays hands on him and he is healed.

Luke 6 / Reach Out – Entertain – Love on / Always Blessed Back

Luke 6, whatever you give it will be given back to you, pressed down, to overflowing. Precious people reach out, entertain, bless, love on other people – and you will always be blessed back (whether you can clearly see it or not).

Luke 6:38 (NKJV) ³⁸Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

(Acts 28:9 NKJV) So when this was done, the rest of those on the island who had diseases also came and were healed.

(Acts 28:10 NKJV) They also honored us in many ways; and when we departed, they provided such things as were necessary.

Had to be Certain Island

Had to be cast unto a certain island, not just any ole island, it had to be a certain island.

(Acts 27:26 NKJV) "However, we must run aground on a certain island."

God moves us to get us There – for Divine Meeting / Life better just going with Flow

How far will God move us to bring a divine meeting to pass? Life will flow much better if we just go with the flow that God leads us.

Paul's Arrival at Rome

(Acts 28:11 NKJV) After three months we sailed in an Alexandrian ship whose figurehead was the Twin Brothers, which had wintered at the island.

3 months – Winter Over

Three months has passed, the winter is over, and now they can set sail again for Rome.

1 Mans Favor – 275 Survive / I Believe that for USA / Missions / We Salt – Get Right

Because of God's favor on one man (Paul) all the other prisoners are blessed. The world has no idea how much blessings they receive because of the Christians around them. I personally believe the USA is blessed because of all the Christians that live on this soil and the preaching of the Gospel that is going forth, and the missionaries being sent to the outer parts of the world from the Churches of the USA. Yes, some of the prisoners will be killed once they reach Rome, but for 3 months they were given the opportunity by God to hear the greatest preacher in the whole world and receive Jesus before the fallen world fall upon them. We Christians are the salt of the earth, and God is giving many people "3 months" if you would of getting their house/life in order by being with us. But yes not all would receive the Gospel Paul preached, and end eternally separated from the Heavenly Father in Hell (and it is a real place), and instead they enjoyed the blessings that came with being around Paul, such as escaping storms, being cared for the people, being fed by Publius, but in the end they didn't acknowledge those blessings came from being around Paul, and that it was necessary to make a decision to follow Paul's God Jesus

Christ, but they didn't and now they end up in Rome, going to the circus to face gladiators and lions. So too I believe that God continues to bless the USA because of the remnant, the salt and light, of the church, but many fail to acknowledge the blessings and the Blessor!

(Acts 28:12 NKJV) And landing at Syracuse, we stayed three days.

(Acts 28:13 NKJV) From there we circled round and reached Rhegium. And after one day the south wind blew; and the next day we came to Puteoli,

Toe of Italy

They are going under the toe of Italy.

(Acts 28:14 NKJV) where we found brethren, and were invited to stay with them seven days. And so we went toward Rome.

Julius blesses Paul / Got to be Saved

They find believers in Puteoli, and Julius (God bless him) allows Paul to fellowship with them for 7 days. Julius has to be a believer at this point, I can't imagine spending 3 months with Paul on an island and not be saved.

Paul is Fellowshiping with Them / Wrote Romans about 3yrs Prior / Imagine if that Today

So Paul is fellowshiping with them, and just a reminder that Paul wrote the letter to the Romans about 3 years prior; and they would have copied that letter and had it sent to all the other churches, so Paul is well known at this point. So no doubt word is spreading that Paul had come, and they are coming to hear him preach. Could you imagine if it was today? If we were told Paul was coming to visit this church? How excited we would be, how that is all we would be talking about, and we would be telling as many people as we could – hey you got to come with us and hear this guy speak, you will be so filled and blessed if you do.

(Acts 28:15 NKJV) And from there, when the brethren heard about us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum and Three Inns. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage.

Sees them – Gives Thanks / Still Walking – Gains Strength to go On

Verse 15 - When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage – So Paul sees them, give thanks for them (they are still walking with the Lord), and Paul drew strength (took courage). Paul took courage, gained strength for what was before him yet in Rome, because he saw fruit of his ministry before his very eyes.

We can Glean – No Email – how Doing? / Paul finally Sees / We just Pour & Pray

What a word we can glean here from this example is that it has been three years approximately since Paul had written the letter to the believers in Rome, and they didn't have email in those days, so it was three years that Paul would be left wondering how they were doing spiritually, and if his letter had made an impact. So here Paul finally sees them, and he sees that it did leave it impact and he is totally encouraged by it. Christian, as we minister to people we just have to pour out and pray in, pour out and pray in, and it may be years before (if ever) that we will get to see what the impact has been on what we have labored over. Parents remember that especially, it may be years before we see fruit, but even when we don't we need to continue to pour out, and pray in!

Today 72 Study / Who from the Beginning? / Remember 1st Study? / Wife's Dinner

Today is our 72nd study in the Book of Acts. Who here has been here from the first study? I know who you are, each and every one of you and I give thanks to the Lord as I look at you still standing, still walking with the Lord. And, I take courage and comfort to continue because I see physical fruit. Now how many remember all the details of that first study? Me neither and I gave it. But the word did what it was meant to do, it sustained us for that day, it carried through another week. I don't remember what I had for dinner that night 72 weeks ago, in fact I don't

remember what I had for dinner last Wednesday either, but it did what it was meant to do, it sustained me.

No Greater Joy / You give me Strength

As John would say, I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking with the Lord. We are all in this journey called life together, and I thank you for the strength you give me because when I look at you, I see that it is all worth it.

3 John 1:3-4 (NKJV) ³For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. ⁴I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in ^ttruth.

Paul's Ministry at Rome

(Acts 28:16 NKJV) Now when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard; but Paul was permitted to dwell by himself with the soldier who guarded him.

Not Way Paul Expected – But he Remained Obedient / Al Braca – Modern day Paul

Verse 16 - Now when we came to Rome – probably not the way Paul had envisioned coming to Rome, in chains, by Paul was still obedient to the call God had upon him. Here is a story that the news outlets won't report on, but there are modern day Apostle Paul's all around us, living for Christ, and dying for Christ:

Al Braca worked as a corporate bond trader. His office was on the 105th floor of Tower One in the World Trade Center. A week after the tower was hit and collapsed, Al's body was found in the rubble. According to his wife, Jeannie, Al hated his job; he couldn't stand the environment. It was a world completely out of sync with his Christian values. But he wouldn't quit. He was convinced that God wanted him to stay there, to be a light in the darkness....The Bracas learned that Al had indeed been ministering to people during the attack. Reports trickled in from friends and acquaintances. Some people on the 105th floor had made a last call or sent e-mails to a loved one saying that "a man" was leading people in prayer. A few referred to Al by name. When Al realized that they were trapped in the building and would not be able to escape, he shared the gospel with a group of 50 co-workers and led them in prayer.

Here is the tribute his wife wrote of him:

Al was a wonderful husband, father, grandfather, and friend. He will be missed by all those who knew and loved him. He was truly a gift from God to us. His love for Jesus Christ was shared with all who came in contact with him. His greatest moments in life was when he was able to share the message hope we all have in the Lord Jesus. I know I will see him again someday, and that gives me peace. Al was truly a man who gave such great love to me and his children. I am proud to be Mrs. Al Braca. Thank you Al for 32 wonderful years together. I will love you forever.

Wonder what like Julius handing Paul Over / Lucky to meet a Paul / But we can be a Paul

Verse 16 - the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard - I wonder what it was like for Julius to hand Paul over. I think it was a little emotional for him because what could you say about Paul after spending close to 7 months with him. He saved Julius and everyone else from shipwreck and death, he healed Publius' dad, and many others on the island, he was a servant to all, and I no doubt Julius and Paul had many heart-felt conversations over all this time. I expect to see Julius in heaven personally, so I hope I am right and I look forward to meeting him. We are lucky to meet a Paul in our lives even just once for a short-time, but I thought how sweet it would be for people who meet us, that when they leave they feel in their heart, that was a wonderful. So, as we have asked ourselves many time through this study, let's live lives such that if people had spent 20 minutes with us on, that they would walk away feeling their life was made better because of it (will we be a Paul, will we be a Al Braca?). I imagine Julius' life was and could never be the same after 5 - 7 months with Paul.

(Acts 28:17 NKJV) And it came to pass after three days that Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. So when they had come together, he said to them: "Men and brethren, though I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans,

(Acts 28:18 NKJV) "who, when they had examined me, wanted to let me go, because there was no cause for putting me to death.

(Acts 28:19 NKJV) "But when the Jews spoke against it, I was compelled to appeal to Caesar, not that I had anything of which to accuse my nation.

(Acts 28:20 NKJV) "For this reason therefore I have called for you, to see you and speak with you, because for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain."

(Acts 28:21 NKJV) Then they said to him, "We neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren who came reported or spoken any evil of you."

Jews heard Nothing of Charges / Down with the Ship?

These Jews are like we haven't heard anything about you and these charges, this is all news to us. Again no email in those days, news travelled real slow. Letter were sent by ship or road, and I just wonder if the ship that was carrying Paul, was also carrying a letter from the Sanhedrin Council in Jerusalem telling the Jewish leaders in the Roman provinces about Paul and all the troubles that had with him, and how he was appealing to Caesar.

I Like when Lord does That / The truth Uninhabited

I like how the Lord does that so often, He sinks all the lies and charges against us, so we can present the truth uninhabited by the world's bias.

(Acts 28:22 NKJV) "But we desire to hear from you what you think; for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere."

Word of Jesus travelled Far & Wide / People excited to Hear about Him – but from Expert

The story of Jesus Christ travelled all through the region, and people all over have heard about Christianity and have met people who have given their lives to following Jesus Christ. So they are excited now to hear from an expert. People who are truly interested in the things of the Lord want to hear from an expert, they don't want to hear from some casual observer, they want to hear from someone who lives it and breaths it, someone whose life has been changed by it.

I Commend You who Come Week after Week / You are a Psalm 119 Person

I commend you all who come here week after week to study this Bible, not just read it and leave here unchanged. You come here and sit attentively listening to 50-60 minutes of teaching, not story, jokes, and antidotes, but the pure Word of God. You are Psalm 119 people.

Psalms 119:9-16 (NKJV)⁹ *How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word.*
¹⁰ *With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments!*¹¹ *Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.*¹² *Blessed are You, O Lord! Teach me Your statutes.*¹³ *With my lips I have declared All the judgments of Your mouth.*¹⁴ *I have rejoiced in the way of Your testimonies, As much as in all riches.*¹⁵ *I will meditate on Your precepts, And contemplate Your ways.*¹⁶ *I will delight myself in Your statutes; I will not forget Your word.*

Love to hear Stories of You Blowing People away with your Knowledge of Word

I love to hear stories about how you guys have conversations with other Christians and they are like, what, how do you know all those things, you are like some Bible machine. Continue on Christian Soldiers, your reward awaits you:

2 Timothy 2:15 (KJV)¹⁵ *Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*

(Acts 28:23 NKJV) So when they had appointed him a day, many came to him at his lodging, to whom he explained and solemnly testified of the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus from both the Law of Moses and the Prophets, from morning till evening.

Long Sermon

From morning to evening, just remember that next time I go over.

Paul takes them through Types – Shadows – Prophecies

Paul takes them through all the types and shadows of Christ in the OT. He take them through all the prophecies Jesus fulfilled. I wonder if he took them through all 300. Have I ever talked to you about these 8 prophecies concerning Christ ☺

300 Prophecies – had to be Jesus

Paul teaches them the 300 some prophecies concerning the Messiah that would come (as written by the Law and the Prophets). Paul is pointing them to the prophecies referring to the Messiah, and only one Man who walked this earth could have fulfilled them, and that was Jesus.

His Birth & Lineage

- 1.) The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Micah 5:2a / Matthew 2:1-2
- 2.) The Messiah would be a descendant of David. Isaiah 9:7 / Matthew 1:1

His Environment & the World Setting

- 3.) The Messiah would be announced to his people 483 years, to the exact day, after the decree to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. Daniel 9:25 / John 12:12-13
- 4.) The Messiah would be killed before the destruction of the temple. Daniel 9:26c / Matthew 27:50-51
- 5.) The Jew's authority to administer capital punishment would be gone when the Messiah arrived. Genesis 49:10c / John 18:31

His Death

- 6.) The Messiah would be sacrificed on the same mountain where God tested Abraham. Genesis 22:14 / Luke 23:33
- 7.) The Messiah's back would be whipped. Isaiah 53:5c Matthew 27:26
- 8.) The Messiah's hands and feet would be pierced. Psalm 22:16c Matthew 27:38

(Acts 28:24 NKJV) And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved.

Persuade – to Believe / 28 Chapters – Holy Spirit ends Here / Simply 2 Camps

Persuaded means “to believe”. Amazing how after 28 chapters the Holy Spirit ends this amazing book – some believed, some didn't. That is the two camps, simply and clearly.

Believe means:

What does believe mean, recognize, repent, and receive.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ

John 3:16-17 (NKJV) ¹⁶For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. You my friend are perishing, even right now at this very moment, as the word “perish” means “to put away with entirely”, as you sin separates you from the Holy God. The structure of this sentence in the original Greek language is written that it is saying that the individual is performing the action, not God, it is the individual that is separating and putting himself away from God by his own actions.

The Problem:

Isaiah 59:1-2 (NKJV) ¹ Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, That it cannot save; Nor His ear heavy, That it cannot hear. ² But your iniquities have separated you from your God; And your sins have hidden His face from you, So that He will not hear.

Romans 3:23 (NKJV) ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

The Penalty

Romans 6:23 (NKJV) ²³For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Provision

Romans 5:8 (NKJV) ⁸But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Man's Responsibility:

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

Romans 10:9-10 (NKJV) ⁹that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

(Acts 28:25 NKJV) So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word: "The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers,

(Acts 28:26 NKJV) "saying, 'Go to this people and say: "Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand; And seeing you will see, and not perceive;

(Acts 28:27 NKJV) For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them."

Cross Reference

Isaiah 6:9-10 (KJV) ⁹And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. ¹⁰Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

John 12:39-40 (KJV) ³⁹Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, ⁴⁰He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them.

Paul quoting Isaiah – Jesus did Too

Paul quoting Isaiah chapter 6. Interestingly it is quote in the NT seven times (the number of completion).

All things to End with – Holy Spirit ends Here / Hearing & Seeing – Turning / Today

We are closing out this wonderful book, it is the Acts of the Holy Spirit, and all the things that God the Holy Spirit could have closed out this book with, He choose to talk about people hearing, but receiving and opening their heart to Christ. Today my friend, today is the day for you to receive Jesus Christ,

2 Corinthians 6:2 (NKJV) ²For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." ³Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

(Acts 28:28 NKJV) "Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!"

(Acts 28:29 NKJV) And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves.

(Acts 28:30 NKJV) Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him,

(Acts 28:31 NKJV) preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.

2 Years Chained / Write these Epsitles / Not a Waste

For two years, chained to a guard, Paul would teach all who came to him. To know what Paul was thinking during this two-year house arrest, hear his heart in the books of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon—all written during this period of captivity (however there are some camps that believe they were written in his second imprisonment – either case, they were written from prison). Next time God limits your movement, your freedom, consider Paul – and that God wants to do the same in your life, that He is setting up tomorrow.

Luke puts Pen Down – Paul's story Continues / Released – Nero Crazy / Paul beheaded

Now, although this is where Luke, the author of Acts, put down his pen, Paul's story continued. Released from house arrest to stand before Caesar Nero, Paul witnessed powerfully for the Lord.

Nero, however, rejected Paul's message and proceeded instead to go on a rampage against Christians. Historical records verify that he lost his mind at the very time he listened to Paul and rejected the gospel. Released by Caesar because there was no legal case against him, the Book of Romans and the writings of Eusebius tell us Paul preached the gospel in Spain and Europe before he was brought back to Rome under arrest once more. This time, however, it was no longer house arrest. He was thrown into a dungeon, and church tradition says that he was beheaded. Paul – no doubting preaching to the end!

Holman Translation – Unhindered / 2000 yrs later still Going

I like the Holman Bible translation, it says “unhindered. The last word in the book of Acts is “unhindered.” And so here it is 2,000 years later a group of people are feasting on this word. May God now do the same with the Word we have heard.

Acts 28:31 (HCSB) ³¹proclaiming the kingdom of God^f and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with full boldness^f and without hindrance.

We Just spent 72 Weeks – How do we Finish such a Book – Look all we Saw

We have just spent 72 weeks of our lives studying one the greatest historical accounts in the history of the universe. How do we finish such a book, how do we end such a great study? Remember the theme, remember all that we studied?

Theme of the Book of Acts:

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

Outline of the Book of Acts:

- You Shall Receive Power: Acts 1-2
 - We have seen the day of Pentecost
- Witnesses to Me in Jerusalem: Acts 3-7
 - Peter and John's great ministry.
- Witnesses to Me in Judea and Samaria: Acts 8-12
 - The dramatic and powerful conversion of Paul (aka – Saul of Tarsus)
- Witnesses to Me to the End of the Earth: Acts 13-28
 - And then the Gospel going to the ends of the earth, the turning of the whole world upside-down.

How Finish? – We don't / It is Acts of Holy Spirit – now we Continue the Story

How do we finish such a great Book, we don't, for this Book is not the Acts of the Apostles, but the Acts of the Holy Spirit, so we don't end this story here – we leave here and go out and live it out.

To God be the Glory
Amen!