



The Book Of Acts

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Preface

The Book of Acts, often referred to as the Acts of the Apostles, is a profound narrative that chronicles the early church's journey and the spread of the gospel following the ascension of Jesus Christ. This booklet, comprised of 28 lesson outlines, aims to provide a comprehensive study guide for believers and students of the Bible, highlighting the pivotal events, teachings, and transformative moments within this significant New Testament book.

Acts is a dynamic testament to the power of the Holy Spirit, the resilience of the early Christians, and the expansion of Christianity from Jerusalem to the far reaches of the Roman Empire. Through the meticulous work of Luke, the author, we witness the fulfillment of the Great Commission, the establishment of the church, and the relentless missionary journeys of Paul and other apostles. Each chapter is a testament to the unwavering faith, courage, and perseverance of those who played a vital role in laying the foundation for Christianity as we know it today.

This booklet is structured to facilitate an in-depth understanding of each chapter of Acts, providing detailed outlines, summaries, key points, questions, and practical applications. It serves as a valuable resource for personal study, group discussions, or teaching settings, guiding readers to delve deeper into the rich historical and spiritual insights of the early church's experiences.

The lesson outlines are designed to encourage reflection, foster spiritual growth, and inspire a greater commitment to living out the principles demonstrated by the early believers. By studying the Book of Acts, we not only gain historical knowledge but also draw inspiration to embody the same fervor and dedication in our own spiritual journeys.

As we embark on this study, may you be encouraged by the faith and fortitude of the early Christians and be inspired to carry forward the mission of spreading the gospel with the same passion and purpose. Let the Book of Acts ignite a renewed sense of mission and empowerment in your walk with Christ, as you witness the transformative power of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the apostles and the early church.

May this booklet be a tool that enriches your understanding, deepens your faith, and equips you to continue the legacy of the apostles in your own context, bearing witness to the truth and love of Jesus Christ in a world that needs His message more than ever.

1. Introduction To The Book Of Acts

- 1) Luke, the physician (**Colossians 4:14**), is traditionally attributed as the author (**Acts 1:1-3** \diamond **Luke 1:1-4**).
- 2) The book is believed to have been written around A.D. 62-63.

- 1) The Acts of the Apostles chronicles the early history of the Christian Church (cp. Acts 1:8).
- 2) Emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit and the spread of the Gospel.

- 1) Acts is a sequel to the Gospel of Luke, continuing the narrative (Acts 1:1-3 \diamond Luke 1:1-4).
- 2) Both books likely written by Luke and addressed to Theophilus.

- 1) Command to wait for the promised Holy Spirit in Jerusalem (**Acts 1:4-5**).
- 2) The disciples' question about the restoration of the kingdom (**Acts 1:6-7**).

- 1) Jesus ascends into heaven, witnessed by the disciples (**Acts 1:9-11**).
- 2) Angels assure the disciples of Jesus' return (**Acts 1:10-11**).

- 1) The replacement of Judas Iscariot as an apostle (**Acts 1:21-26**).
- 2) Matthias is chosen to fill the vacancy (**Acts 1:26**).

- 1) Descent of the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues (Acts 2:1-4).
- 2) Peter's sermon and the conversion of thousands (Acts 2:14-41).

- 1) Devotion to apostolic teaching and fellowship (**Acts 2:42**).
- 2) Miracles and signs performed by the apostles (**Acts 2:43**).

- 1) Peter and John before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:1-22).
- 2) The community's care for one another (Acts 4:32-37).

- 1) The deceit of Ananias and Sapphira (**Acts 5:1-11**).
- 2) Fear and respect for God within the early Church (**Acts 5:11-16**).

e. Apostles' imprisonment and release:

- 1) The arrest and miraculous release of the apostles (**Acts 5:17-25**).
- 2) The apostles' bold proclamation and adherence to God's commands (**Acts 5:27-32**).

f. Appointment of seven “deacons”:

- 1) The need for distribution to widows and the selection of seven men (**Acts 6:1-6**).
- 2) Stephen's ministry and his subsequent arrest (**Acts 6:8-15**).

4. Persecution And Expansion Of The Church (Acts 7:1-12:25)

a. Stephen's martyrdom:

- 1) Stephen's defense and accusation of the Jewish leaders (**Acts 7:1-53**).
- 2) His martyrdom and the scattering of the disciples (**Acts 7:54-8:1**).

b. Philip's ministry:

- 1) Philip's activities in Samaria, including Simon the Sorcerer (**Acts 8:4-25**).
- 2) The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch (**Acts 8:26-40**).

C. Saul's conversion:

1. Saul's persecution of the early Christians (**Acts 9:1-2**).
2. His encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus (**Acts 9:3-9**).

D. Peter's ministry:

1. Peter's vision and the conversion of Cornelius (**Acts 10:1-48**).
2. The acceptance of Gentiles into the Church (**Acts 11:1-18**).

E. Herod's persecution:

1. Herod's imprisonment of Peter and James' martyrdom (**Acts 12:1-4**).
2. Peter's miraculous escape from prison (**Acts 12:5-17**).

F. Death of Herod:

1. Herod's death due to his arrogance and rejection of God (**Acts 12:20-23**).
2. The continued growth and spread of the Church (**Acts 12:25**).

5. Paul's Missionary Journeys (Acts 13:1-20:38)

A. First missionary journey:

1. Paul and Barnabas sent out from Antioch (**Acts 13:1-3**).
2. Ministry in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe (**Acts 13:4-14:28**).
3. Return to Antioch, reporting the conversion of the Gentiles (**Acts 14:27-28**).

B. Council at Jerusalem:

1. Debate over circumcision and Gentile believers (**Acts 15:1-21**).
2. The decision to allow Gentiles into the church without circumcision (**Acts 15:22-35**).
3. Paul and Barnabas part ways over John Mark (**Acts 15:36-41**).

C. Second and third missionary journeys:

1. Timothy joins Paul, vision of the Macedonian call (**Acts 16:1-10**).
2. Ministry in various cities, including Corinth and Ephesus (**Acts 16:1-19:41**).
3. Paul's farewell speech to the Ephesian elders (**Acts 20:17-38**).

6. Paul's Arrest And Trials (Acts 21:1-28:31)

A. Paul's journey to Jerusalem:

1. Paul's determination to go to Jerusalem despite warnings (**Acts 21:1-16**).
2. Arrival in Jerusalem and arrest in the temple (**Acts 21:17-36**).

B. Trials before roman authorities:

1. Paul's defense before the Jewish council (**Acts 22:1-30**).
2. Roman tribune intervenes, leading to Paul's appearance before Felix (**Acts 23:1-24:27**).
3. Paul's defense before Felix and Festus (**Acts 24:1-25**).

C. Paul's appeal to Caesar and journey to Rome:

1. Paul's appeal to Caesar (**Acts 25:9-12**).
2. Paul's journey to Rome, including the shipwreck (**Acts 27-28:15**).

D. Paul's ministry in Rome:

1. Paul's arrival in Rome and interaction with Jewish leaders (**Acts 28:16-24**).
2. Paul's continued preaching while under house arrest (**Acts 28:30-31**).

Applications:

1. **Embrace The Empowerment Of The Holy Spirit:** Actively seek the empowerment of the Holy Spirit, through the Word, in your life. Allow the Spirit to guide, empower, and lead you in your daily walk with Christ, through the Word. Cultivate a life of dependence on the Holy Spirit for wisdom, courage, and spiritual insight. This, of course, is done when we walk according to the word that the Spirit has revealed.
2. **Be Open To Divine Course Corrections:** Like Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus, be open to divine course corrections in your life. God may have plans for you that differ from your own. Remain flexible and obedient to the leading of the Holy Spirit, even if it means adjusting your plans and priorities to align with God's purposes. The correction and leading of the Spirit does not come in a miraculous way as it did with Saul, but through hearing (from the pulpit) and studying God's word.
3. **Engage In Bold Witnessing And Discipleship:** Actively engage in sharing the Gospel and discipling others. Take inspiration from the bold witnessing of the early apostles, particularly Peter and Paul. Look for opportunities to share your faith with others, and invest time in nurturing the spiritual growth of those around you. Consider forming or participating in small groups for mutual encouragement and discipleship.

These applications are designed to encourage a deeper and more practical engagement with the themes and lessons found in the introduction to the book of Acts. As you read and study, consider how these principles can be applied in your personal journey of faith.

Questions:

1. Who is traditionally believed to be the author of the book of Acts (**Acts 1:1-4**)?
2. What is the purpose and theme of the book of Acts (**Acts 1:8**)?
3. What relationship does the book of Acts have with the Gospel of Luke (**Acts 1:1-3; Luke 1:1-4**)?

4. When is the estimated date of the writing of the book of Acts (see lesson)?
5. What key event does the book of Acts begin with (**Acts 1:9-11**)?
6. What is the significance of the Day of Pentecost in Acts (**Acts 2:1-41**)?
7. Why was Matthias chosen to replace Judas Iscariot (**Acts 1:15-26**)?
8. What significant event led to the scattering of the early disciples (**Acts 7:54-8:1**)?
9. Who was the persecutor of Christians turned apostle, and what happened on the road to Damascus (**Acts 9:1-9**)?
10. What decision was made at the Council of Jerusalem, and why was it significant (**Acts 15:1-29**)?

b. Teaching on the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3b):

- 1) Teaching about the kingdom of God: During these appearances, Jesus focused on instructing His disciples about the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God was a central theme in Jesus' teachings throughout His ministry (Matthew 4:17; 6:33; 13:31-32; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 17:20-21; 18:16-17; John 18:36), and even after His resurrection, He continued to emphasize its significance. These teachings likely expanded the disciples' understanding of the *spiritual nature* and *global scope* of God's kingdom.
- 2) Strengthening the disciples' faith: The post-resurrection appearances (1 Corinthians 15:3-8) were crucial for strengthening the faith of the disciples. Seeing Jesus alive after witnessing His crucifixion and death had a profound impact on their belief in His divinity and the reality of His promises. This firsthand experience was instrumental in preparing them for the tasks and challenges that lay ahead.
- 3) A personal and collective encounter: The appearances were both personal and collective. Individuals such as Mary Magdalene (Matthew 28:1-10), Peter (1 Corinthians 15:3-8), and Thomas (John 20:24-29) had personal encounters with the risen Christ, while there were also group appearances, such as those by the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1-14) and on the mountain in Galilee (Matthew 28:16-20). These encounters reinforced the communal aspect of the disciples' relationship with Jesus and the formation of the early Christian church.
- 4) Preparing for the ascension: The period of forty days was a transitional phase, preparing the disciples for Jesus' ascension into heaven. During this time, Jesus not only reassured and equipped His followers but also laid the groundwork for the coming of the Holy Spirit, as promised in Acts 1:4-5.

Jesus' post-resurrection appearances in Acts 1:3a were a significant period during which He strengthened the faith of His disciples, continued to teach about the kingdom of God, and prepared them for their future roles in spreading the Gospel and establishing the early Christian community. These appearances played a crucial role in the foundational moments of the post-resurrection period.

3. The Command To Wait In Jerusalem (Acts 1:4-5).

In these verses, Jesus gives a crucial command to His disciples, instructing them not to depart from Jerusalem but to wait for the promise of the Holy Spirit. This directive holds profound significance, serving as a pivotal moment in the transition from Jesus' earthly ministry to the empowering of His followers for the mission ahead. Through this command, Jesus prepares His disciples for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which will equip them for the proclamation of the Gospel and the establishment of the early Christian church. The promise of the Holy Spirit, rooted in Old Testament prophecy and reaffirmed by Jesus Himself, underscores the divine plan unfolding in the early chapters of Acts. This section explores the importance of obedience to Jesus' command and the anticipation of the fulfillment of God's promises as the disciples await the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem.

a. Jesus' instruction not to depart from Jerusalem (Acts 1:4).

- 1) Context of the instruction: After Jesus' resurrection and His various post-resurrection appearances, the disciples were gathered with Him. During this time, Jesus provided crucial instructions to His followers, setting the stage for the next significant event: the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.
- 2) The specific command: Jesus instructed the disciples not to depart from Jerusalem. This command was not arbitrary but held deep significance. Jerusalem was to be the starting point for the fulfillment of the promise of the Holy Spirit, and the disciples were to remain there in anticipation of this divine *empowerment*.
- 3) Purpose of waiting: The command to stay in Jerusalem was tied to the promise of the Holy Spirit, as Jesus had mentioned in Acts 1:5. Waiting in Jerusalem was a period of anticipation and preparation for the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit, who would equip them for the mission of spreading the Gospel to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).
- 4) Fulfillment of prophecy: This instruction aligns with the prophetic promises found in the Old Testament, particularly Joel 2:28-32, which foretold the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The disciples were to await this fulfillment, and the subsequent events in Acts, particularly the Day of Pentecost, marked the realization of this prophecy.

PENTECOST

The Feast of Pentecost, also known as Shavuot in Hebrew, is a Jewish festival that originally had agricultural significance, celebrating the first fruits of the wheat harvest. Over time, it also became associated with the giving of the Torah (the Law) to Moses on Mount Sinai. Pentecost is observed 50 days (seven weeks) after the second day of Passover.

- 5) The promise of the Holy Spirit was made to the apostles (Acts 1:5). In Acts 2:1, the pronoun “they” points back to the noun “Apostles” in the previous chapter. Therefore, the apostles' obedience to Jesus' instruction fostered a sense of unity. They were together in one place, demonstrating a communal waiting and dependence on the promise of Jesus (Acts 2:1). This unity among the apostles would become essential for the early Christian community as they faced the challenges of spreading the Gospel.
- 6) Spiritual preparation: Waiting in Jerusalem served as a period of spiritual preparation. The disciples, in obedience to Jesus' command, devoted themselves to prayer (Acts 1:14), reflecting a posture of dependence and seeking God's guidance before the momentous events that would follow.

b. The Promise of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:5).

- 1) Contextualizing the promise: Jesus, in His parting instructions to the apostles, made a significant promise regarding the Holy Spirit. This promise is deeply rooted in the larger narrative of God's plan as foretold by the prophet Joel and reiterated by Jesus during His earthly ministry.
- 2) Joel's prophecy: The promise of the Holy Spirit finds its roots in the prophetic words of Joel, as stated in Joel 2:28-32. Joel envisioned a time when God would pour out His Spirit on all flesh, and this outpouring would result in various manifestations, including prophetic dreams and visions. By referring to Joel's prophecy, Jesus aligns His promise with the divine plan foretold in the Old Testament.
- 3) Jesus' promise in the gospel of John: Jesus had previously spoken about the coming of the Holy Spirit during His earthly ministry. In the Gospel of John, Jesus assured His disciples that He would send the Holy Spirit as a Helper and Comforter (John 14:16-17). He emphasized that the Spirit would dwell with them and be in them, guiding, empowering, and reminding them of His teachings.
- 4) Acts 1:5 - A confirmation: Acts 1:5 serves as a confirmation and fulfillment of Jesus' promise. Jesus had told the apostles to wait for the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem (Acts 1:4), and Acts 1:5 reiterates that this waiting is not in vain. The promise of the Holy Spirit was about to be realized, bringing divine empowerment for the mission that lay ahead.
- 5) Empowerment for the mission: The promise of the Holy Spirit is not merely a theological concept but a practical assurance of divine *empowerment* for the apostles. This empowerment would equip them for the challenges of spreading the Gospel and establishing the early Christian church.
- 6) Connecting the Old and New Testament: The promise of the Holy Spirit bridges them, fulfilling ancient prophecies and inaugurating a new era of God's interaction with His people. The apostles, recipients of this promise, would play a central role in the unfolding of God's redemptive plan.

The command to wait in Jerusalem marks a pivotal moment in Acts, signaling the transition from Jesus' ministry to empowering His followers. Instructed not to depart but to await the Holy Spirit, the disciples anticipate divine empowerment for their mission. This aligns with Old Testament prophecies, like Joel's vision, foretelling the Holy Spirit is outpouring. This promise empowers the apostles to spread the Gospel, bridging the Old and New Testaments, and establishing the early Church.

4. The Ascension (Acts 1:6-12).

The narrative shifts to the Mount of Olives, a significant location where Jesus' earthly ministry reaches its climax. Here, the disciples gather with Jesus, expressing their anticipation for the restoration of Israel's kingdom. Jesus redirects their focus, emphasizing a kingdom empowered by the Holy Spirit, setting the stage for a global mission. The scene transitions to Jesus' ascension into heaven, witnessed by the disciples, marking the conclusion of His earthly ministry. Two angels reassure the disciples, affirming Jesus' eventual return. The disciples obediently return to Jerusalem, demonstrating unity and communal waiting as they anticipate the fulfillment of Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit. These events on the Mount of Olives and the subsequent return to Jerusalem set the stage for the transformative events leading to the fulfillment of God's promises.

a. Gathering on the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:6-8).

- 1) Context of the gathering: The disciples gathered with Jesus on the Mount of Olives, a significant location in the events of Jesus' life. This mountain overlooks Jerusalem and holds symbolic importance in biblical narratives.

- 2) Disciples' question about the kingdom: The disciples, anticipating the restoration of the kingdom to Israel, asked Jesus if this was the time. Their question reflected a common expectation of a political and earthly kingdom, but Jesus redirected their focus to a different kind of kingdom – the kingdom empowered by the Holy Spirit.
- 3) Jesus' response and promise of the Holy Spirit: In response to the disciples' question, Jesus explained that the timing of God's kingdom was not for them to know. Instead, He directed their attention to the imminent arrival of the Holy Spirit, who would empower them to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. This redirection marked a shift from a nationalistic perspective to a global mission empowered by the Spirit.

b. Jesus' ascension into heaven (Acts 1:9-11).

- 1) The ascension event: Acts 1:9-11 narrates the momentous event of Jesus' ascension into heaven. As the disciples watched, Jesus was lifted up, and a cloud took Him out of their sight. This event marked the conclusion of Jesus' earthly ministry and His return to the heavenly realm.
- 2) Two men in white apparel: As the disciples were gazing upward, two men in white apparel (angels) appeared and addressed them. They assured the disciples that Jesus, who was taken up into heaven, would return in the same way they saw Him go. This angelic message provided hope and anticipation for the disciples regarding the future return of Jesus.
- 3) Theological significance: The ascension is a crucial aspect of Christian theology, signifying the exaltation of Jesus to the right hand of God. It emphasizes Jesus' authority and role as the exalted Lord. The promise of His return also instills hope in believers, anticipating the fulfillment of God's ultimate plan.

c. Return to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:12).

- 1) Obedience to Jesus' instructions: Following the ascension, the disciples returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives. This act demonstrated their obedience to Jesus' instructions to wait in Jerusalem for the promised Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4).
- 2) Unity and communal waiting: The return to Jerusalem reinforced the sense of unity among the disciples. They continued to wait together for the fulfillment of Jesus' promise, engaging in communal prayer and dependence on God's plan (Acts 1:14).
- 3) Preparation for Pentecost: The return to Jerusalem marked the disciples' preparation for the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Little did they know that the waiting period would lead to a transformative encounter with the Holy Spirit, empowering them for the mission ahead.



The narrative unfolds against the backdrop of the Mount of Olives, a significant location in Jesus' life. Here, the disciples gather with Jesus, expressing their anticipation for the restoration of Israel's kingdom. Jesus redirects their focus towards a kingdom empowered by the Holy Spirit, marking a shift from a nationalistic perspective to a global mission. The scene transitions to Jesus' ascension into heaven, witnessed by the disciples, symbolizing the conclusion of His earthly ministry. Two angels reassure the disciples of Jesus' eventual return, emphasizing the theological significance of His ascension. The disciples obediently return to Jerusalem, demonstrating unity and communal waiting as they anticipate the fulfillment of Jesus' promise of the Holy Spirit. These events set the stage for the transformative encounter with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, empowering them for the mission ahead.

5. The Selection Of Matthias (Acts 1:13-26).

In this passage, the narrative focuses on the selection of Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot among the twelve apostles. The scene unfolds in the upper room in Jerusalem, where disciples gather in unity and devotion to prayer. Recognizing the vacancy left by Judas, Peter proposes the need to fill his position, aligning with Old Testament prophecy and emphasizing the importance of maintaining the integrity of the apostolic group. The process of selection involves nominating two candidates, Joseph called Barsabbas (Justus) and Matthias, and seeking God's guidance through prayer and the casting of lots. Matthias is ultimately chosen and numbered with the eleven apostles, ensuring the continuity and completeness of the apostolic ministry. This section highlights the disciples' commitment to fulfilling scripture and maintaining the foundational structure of the early Christian community.

a. The apostles' return to the upper room (Acts 1:13-14).

- 1) The upper room context: After Jesus' ascension, the apostles returned to the upper room in Jerusalem. This room had been the setting for the Last Supper and other significant events in Jesus' ministry.
- 2) List of Apostles: Acts 1:13 provides a list of the apostles present, emphasizing their unity and continuity. The list includes Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James.
- 3) Devotion to Prayer: Acts 1:14 highlights the unity of the apostles in prayer and supplication. Their return to the upper room was not merely a physical return but a spiritual one, emphasizing their commitment to seeking God's guidance and empowerment before the significant events that would follow.

b. Peter's proposal to replace Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:15-20).

- 1) Numbering of disciples: The number of disciples at this point was about 120, and Peter recognized the need to address the vacancy left by Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus.
- 2) Fulfillment of prophecy: Peter, drawing from the Psalms (Psalms 69:25; 109:8), proposed that they select someone to take the place of Judas. This proposal emphasized their commitment to fulfilling the scriptures and maintaining the integrity of the apostolic group.
- 3) Qualifications for the replacement: Peter outlined specific qualifications for the replacement, emphasizing that the individual should have been with them from the beginning of Jesus' ministry until His ascension. This stressed the importance of firsthand witness and intimate knowledge of Jesus' teachings.

c. Matthias chosen to replace Judas (Acts 1:21-26).

- 1) Narrowing the candidates: The apostles nominated two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (Justus) and Matthias, as potential replacements. They then prayed, seeking God's guidance in making the right choice.
- 2) Casting lots: The method of casting lots was used to determine God's choice between the two candidates. While this method may seem unusual today, it was a common practice in the Old Testament and was seen as a way to seek divine guidance (Proverbs 16:33; Leviticus 16:8; Joshua 18:6; 1 Samuel 14:41-42; Nehemiah 10:34).
- 3) Matthias chosen: The lot fell to Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles. Matthias became the twelfth apostle, filling the vacancy left by Judas Iscariot. This act demonstrated the apostles' commitment to maintaining the integrity and continuity of the apostolic ministry.

The focus here is on the selection of Matthias to fill the vacancy among the apostles left by Judas Iscariot. The scene unfolds in the upper room in Jerusalem, where the disciples gather in unity and devotion to prayer. Recognizing the need to maintain the integrity of the apostolic group, Peter proposes the selection process, aligning it with Old Testament prophecy. After nominating two candidates, Matthias and Joseph called Barsabbas (Justus), and seeking God's guidance through prayer and casting lots, Matthias is chosen to fill the position. This decision highlights the apostles' commitment to fulfilling scripture and preserving the foundational structure of the early Christian community, ensuring the continuity and completeness of the apostolic ministry.

Summary:

1. **Post-Resurrection Appearances (Acts 1:1-3):** The chapter opens with Luke addressing Theophilus, recounting the events after Jesus' resurrection. Jesus presents Himself alive to the apostles, providing "many infallible proofs" over forty days. He speaks about the kingdom of God.
2. **The Command To Wait In Jerusalem (Acts 1:4-8):** Jesus instructs the apostles not to depart from Jerusalem but to wait for the promise of the Holy Spirit. He ascends into heaven, leaving the apostles with a mission to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.
3. **Gathering On The Mount Of Olives And Ascension (Acts 1:9-11):** The apostles witness Jesus' ascension into heaven from the Mount of Olives. Two angels appear, assuring them of Jesus' return in the same manner. This event marks the conclusion of Jesus' earthly ministry.



4. **Return To The Upper Room And Unity In Prayer (Acts 1:12-14):** The apostles return to the upper room in Jerusalem, emphasizing their unity and continuity. They list the names of the apostles present, and with one accord, they devote themselves to prayer and supplication, awaiting the promised Holy Spirit.
5. **Peter's Proposal And Matthias Chosen (Acts 1:15-26):** Peter addresses the issue of Judas Iscariot's vacancy, proposing the selection of a replacement. The qualifications for the replacement are outlined, and Matthias is chosen by casting lots. This act demonstrates the apostles' commitment to maintaining the integrity and continuity of the apostolic ministry.

This chapter sets the stage for the unfolding events in the book of Acts, emphasizing the transition from the earthly ministry of Jesus to the empowerment of the apostles by the Holy Spirit for the expansion of the Gospel.

Applications:

1. **Embrace The Power Of Prayer And Unity (Acts 1:14):** Acts 1 emphasizes the importance of the apostles' unity in prayer while waiting for the Holy Spirit. Believers today can apply this by recognizing the power of communal prayer in the life of the Church. Regular gatherings for prayer can foster unity, strengthen faith, and prepare individuals and communities for the work of the Holy Spirit.
2. **Commitment To God's Mission (Acts 1:8):** Jesus' commission to the apostles in Acts 1:8 challenges believers to embrace the mission of spreading the Gospel (Mark 16:15-16). This involves being witnesses not only in familiar surroundings but also in neighboring areas and even to the ends of the earth. Christians today can apply this by actively participating in local and global mission efforts, sharing the love and teachings of Jesus with others.
3. **Trusting God's Sovereignty In Decision-Making (Acts 1:26):** The apostles' method of casting lots, seeking God's guidance in making decisions, might seem unusual today. However, the application lies in recognizing God's sovereignty in decision-making. Believers can trust that God is actively involved in guiding and directing their paths. This does not mean relying solely on lots but seeking God's wisdom through prayer, discernment, and sometimes seeking wise counsel.

These applications encourage believers to engage in prayerful unity, actively participate in God's mission, and trust in God's guidance in decision-making, embodying the principles found in Acts Chapter 1 in their daily lives and the life of the Church.

Key Points:

1. **Promise And Ascension Of The Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4-8):** This section emphasizes the crucial role of the Holy Spirit in the life and mission of the early Church. Jesus instructs the apostles not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for the promise of the Holy Spirit. The ascension of Jesus into heaven marks the transition and sets the stage for the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit, who will enable the apostles to be effective witnesses for Christ.
2. **Commission To Be Witnesses (Acts 1:8):** Jesus gives the apostles a clear mission: to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. This commission outlines the geographical progression of the Gospel's spread and underscores the inclusive nature of the message. It serves as a foundational directive for the global expansion of Christianity.
3. **Replacement Of Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:15-26):** The process of selecting a replacement for Judas Iscariot highlights the apostles' commitment to maintaining the integrity of the twelve apostles. The criteria for the replacement, the nomination of two candidates, prayer for guidance, and the casting of lots demonstrate their dedication to God's plan and the importance of continuity in leadership.

These key points collectively set the stage for the themes that will unfold throughout the book of Acts, including the role of the Holy Spirit, the global mission of the Church, and the establishment and leadership structure of the early Christian church.

Questions:

1. What did Jesus command the apostles before His ascension (Acts 1:4)?
2. What did the apostles witness on the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:9-11)?

3. What specific mission did Jesus assign to the apostles before His ascension (**Acts 1:8**)?
4. How many apostles were gathered in the upper room, waiting for the Holy Spirit (**Acts 1:15**)?
5. What did Peter propose to address the vacancy left by Judas Iscariot (**Acts 1:15-20**)?
6. What qualifications were required for someone to replace Judas Iscariot(**Acts 1:21-22**)?
7. How was the choice made between the two nominated candidates to replace Judas (**Acts 1:23-26**)?
8. What was the method used to seek God's guidance in making decisions in the Old Testament (**Acts 1:26; Proverbs 16:33**)?
9. Where did the apostles return after witnessing Jesus' ascension (**Acts 1:13**)?
10. What were the apostles doing in the upper room while waiting for the Holy Spirit (**Acts 1:14**)?

1. The Day Of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13).

a. The descent of the Holy Spirit:

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³ The events of Pentecost in Acts 2, where the disciples spoke in tongues empowered by the Holy Spirit, contrast sharply with the confusion of tongues at the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11. At Pentecost, speaking in tongues signifies empowerment for the universal mission of the church, fostering unity in diversity and overcoming the barriers of language to spread the gospel globally. This manifestation of the Holy Spirit marks a reversal of the curse of Babel, where humanity's pride and rebellion led to division and disunity. In contrast, the confusion of tongues at Babel serves as a symbol of divine judgment against human arrogance and disobedience, resulting in fragmentation and hindrance to communication. Thus, while Pentecost represents God's redemptive work and empowerment for mission, Babel illustrates the consequences of human rebellion and the limitations of human efforts apart from God.

b. The reaction of the multitude:

- 1) The crowds in Jerusalem consisted of Jews from various nations (Acts 2:5). It is likely that they came from different regions across the Roman Empire - Parthia, Media, Elam, Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Libya, Cyrene, Rome, Crete, and Arabia, etc. The Jewish diaspora⁴ had spread Jewish communities throughout these regions, and Pentecost attracted pilgrims from diverse backgrounds to Jerusalem to celebrate the festival.
- 2) They were astonished at hearing the apostles speak in their own languages (Acts 2:6-8). The astonishment of the crowd stemmed from the miraculous nature of the apostles speaking in languages that were native to the listeners but foreign to the speakers. This phenomenon was extraordinary and defied natural explanation, causing amazement and confusion among the listeners. The ability of the apostles to communicate the mighty works of God in languages that the diverse crowd understood demonstrated the supernatural empowerment of the Holy Spirit and underscored the universal nature of the Gospel message. It also indicated God's intention to reach people from every nation and language group with His message of salvation.
- 3) Some mock, thinking the apostles are drunk (Acts 2:13). Possible reasons for mockery:
 - a) Unusual behavior: The disciples, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, were exhibiting behaviors that seemed unconventional and unfamiliar. This could include speaking in languages they did not naturally know and possibly expressions of joy or awe.
 - b) Stereotype of intoxication: The observers may have associated the disciples' behavior with that of individuals who are intoxicated. Drunkenness can lead to erratic speech and uninhibited actions, and the crowd might have drawn a parallel between the disciples' actions and the behavior of those who have consumed alcohol.
- 4) Peter's response to the mockers (Acts 2:14-15). Peter responds to the mockers by standing up with the other apostles and addressing the crowd. He refutes the accusation of drunkenness by explaining that it is only nine in the morning, too early for such behavior. Peter seizes the opportunity to explain the significance of what is happening, indicating that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as prophesied by Joel, is the cause of the extraordinary events they are witnessing.

The passage describes the events of the Day of Pentecost, marking the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles. This significant event occurred during the Jewish festival of Pentecost, fifty days after Passover. The apostles were gathered together in Jerusalem, likely in the upper room, as instructed by Jesus. Suddenly, they experienced the manifestation of the Holy Spirit through a sound like rushing wind and divided tongues of fire resting on each of them. They were filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in languages unknown to them but understood by the diverse crowd of Jews from various nations who had gathered in Jerusalem for Pentecost. This miraculous phenomenon astounded the crowd, leading some to mock the apostles, accusing them of drunkenness. Peter, seizing the opportunity, addressed the crowd, explaining that it was too early for such behavior and attributing the extraordinary events to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, as prophesied by Joel.

2. Peter's Sermon On The Day Of Pentecost (Acts 2:14-41).

Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost unfolds with a compelling narrative, starting with his refutation of accusations of drunkenness and an invocation of Joel's prophecy concerning the Spirit is outpouring. He then boldly proclaims Jesus as Lord and Christ, elucidating His crucifixion and resurrection, bolstered by David's prophecy. Stirred by Peter's words, the crowd seeks guidance, prompting Peter to call for repentance and baptism, leading to the immersion of about 3,000 individuals. This pivotal sermon marks a cornerstone moment in the early church, emphasizing the significance of repentance, baptism, and faith in Jesus Christ for salvation.

a. Peter addresses the crowd:

- 1) He dispels the notion of drunkenness (Acts 2:15).

⁴ The Jewish diaspora refers to the dispersion or scattering of the Jewish people outside their ancestral homeland, particularly after the Babylonian Exile in the 6th century BCE. This dispersion continued over centuries due to various factors such as conquests, forced migrations, voluntary migrations, and economic opportunities. Jewish communities formed in various regions across the Mediterranean, Middle East, Europe, and later, other parts of the world. Despite living outside of Israel, Jewish communities maintained religious and cultural traditions, often contributing to the societies in which they settled. The *diaspora* has played a significant role in shaping Jewish identity and history.

2) He quotes the prophet Joel regarding the outpouring of the Spirit (**Acts 2:16-21**).

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out My Spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The Sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of Yahweh come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of Yahweh shall be delivered: for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as Yahweh hath said, and in the remnant whom Yahweh shall call” (**Joel 2:28-32**).

- a) Reference to Joel's prophecy: Peter begins by connecting the events of Pentecost with the prophecy of Joel. He affirms that what the crowd is witnessing is a fulfillment of what the prophet Joel had foretold.
- b) Last days and the outpouring of the Spirit: Peter quotes Joel's prophecy about God pouring out His Spirit in the last days. This outpouring is not limited to a select few but is intended for “all flesh,” signifying a universal aspect where people of all backgrounds will experience the influence of the Spirit.
- c) Manifestations of the Spirit is outpouring:
 - Prophesying: Both sons and daughters, young and old, will prophesy; this points to a broad inclusion of people in the work of proclaiming God's message.
 - Visions and dreams: There will be a heightened spiritual awareness, with young men seeing visions and old men dreaming dreams, signifying a comprehensive communication of God's guidance.
- d) Inclusivity: Peter emphasizes the inclusive nature of this outpouring, extending to “servants” and “handmaidens.” This breaks down societal barriers, indicating that the Holy Spirit is not restricted by social status or gender.
- e) Cosmic signs: The prophecy also speaks of cosmic signs, including wonders in heaven and on earth. While some elements may be symbolic, they convey the profound and transformative nature of the Spirit's work.
- f) Salvation promise: The passage concludes with the promise that “whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved,” emphasizing the connection between the outpouring of the Spirit and the availability of salvation.
- g) Significance: Peter's quotation of Joel's prophecy underscores the theological significance of the events at Pentecost. It communicates that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is not a random occurrence but a fulfillment of God's planned work in the last days, ushering in a new era of spiritual revelation and empowerment.

3) Peter declares Jesus as Lord and Christ (**Acts 2:22-24**). Theological implications:

- a) Lordship of Jesus: Declaring Jesus as Lord acknowledges His authority, sovereignty, and divine nature. It affirms that Jesus is the rightful ruler over all aspects of life.
- b) Messiahship (Christ): The term “Christ” means Messiah or Anointed One. Peter's declaration affirms Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament.
- c) Resurrection's role: The resurrection is presented as the ultimate validation of Jesus' identity and mission. It signifies victory over sin and death and is a foundational truth in Christian faith.

b. Explanation of Jesus' death and resurrection:

- 1) Peter accuses the crowd of crucifying Jesus (**Acts 2:23**). Peter points out the human responsibility in Jesus' crucifixion. He states that the crowd “have taken” Jesus and, with “wicked hands,” have crucified and slain Him. This highlights the role of human agency and accountability.

- 2) Peter explains the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:24-32). He begins by emphasizing that although Jesus was crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men, God raised Him up, freeing Him from the agony of death. Peter asserts that death could not hold Jesus, as it was impossible for the Author of Life to be bound by death's power. He cites King David's prophecy in Psalms 16:8-11, where David spoke of the hope of the resurrection, applying it directly to Jesus. Peter argues that David, being a prophet, foresaw the resurrection of the Messiah and spoke of it with confidence. He highlights the contrast between David, who died and was buried, and Jesus, whose tomb was found empty because God raised Him from the dead. This explanation underscores the foundational belief in the resurrection of Jesus, which forms the core of Christian faith and provides hope for believers.

- 3) Peter quotes David's prophecy about the Messiah (Acts 2:25-31). Peter cites David's prophecy in Psalms 16:8-11, where David expresses confidence in God's protection even in death. Peter applies these words to Jesus, asserting that David foresaw Christ's resurrection, as evidenced by the empty tomb. This supports Peter's argument for Jesus as the promised Messiah and strengthens the Christian message.

c. Response of the crowd:

- 1) Conviction and inquiry from the crowd (Acts 2:37). Having heard the gospel and being convicted of their sin, the crowd cry out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" It is evident that these people believed the gospel, and Peter's accusation that they had crucified Jesus.
- 2) Peter's call to repentance and baptism (Acts 2:38). Peter did not tell these believers that they were now saved, nor did he tell them to say the "sinner's prayer" to be saved. Peter told these believers to:
 - a) Repent. (i) Thayer's Greek Lexicon says, "μετανοέω (metanoëó) - to change one's mind or purpose; to repent... In the New Testament, to change one's mind for the better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one's past sins." (ii) Strong's Greek Lexicon says, "μετανοέω (metanoëó) - to think differently or afterwards, i.e., reconsider; morally, to feel compunction... To repent, i.e., to feel such regret for some past action or thought as to change one's mind regarding it." These definitions highlight the idea of a change in thinking or mindset, often accompanied by remorse or regret for past actions, leading to a transformation of behavior and attitude. Repentance, in the Greek context, involves a deep internal change that influences one's actions and attitudes towards sin and righteousness.
 - b) be baptized. The word "baptize" originates from the Greek word "baptizō," which means "to immerse, to dip, or to submerge." It conveys the idea of a thorough immersion or submersion in water (see The Lexham Bible Dictionary). Peter also states the purpose of baptism: "... be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins". It is the water that washes away a person's sins, it is the blood of Jesus (Revelation 1:5; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14). It is at the point of our obedience that the blood of Jesus washes away a person's sins. Hence, Paul was told by Ananias to "... arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins..." (Acts 22:16).
- 3) About 3,000 people respond and are baptized (Acts 2:41). Those who responded were men and women (Acts 5:14; 8:12).

Psalm 16:8-11

I have set the LORD always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. ⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices; my flesh also dwells secure. ¹⁰ For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption. ¹¹ You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost begins with his dismissal of the accusation of drunkenness and his citation of Joel's prophecy regarding the outpouring of the Spirit. He then proclaims Jesus as Lord and Christ, explaining His crucifixion and resurrection, drawing from David's prophecy to support his argument. Convicted by Peter's words, the crowd seeks guidance, leading Peter to call for repentance and baptism, resulting in the baptism of about 3,000 individuals. This sermon serves as a foundational moment in the early Christian community, highlighting the importance of repentance, baptism, and faith in Jesus Christ for salvation.

3. Life Of The Early Believers (Acts 2:42-47).

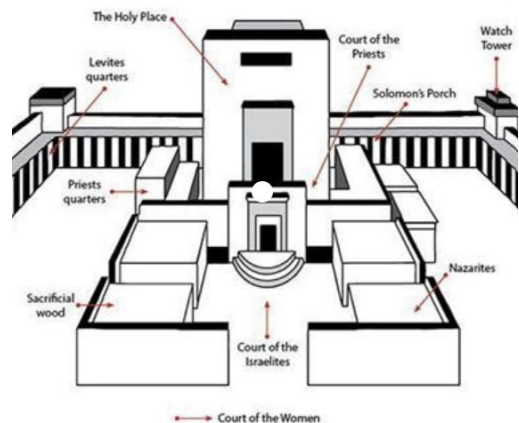
The section on the Life of the Early Believers (Acts 2:42-47) delves into the foundational practices and vibrant community dynamics of the nascent Christian movement following the Day of Pentecost. Beginning with a steadfast devotion to the apostles' teaching, the believers also embraced fellowship, the breaking of bread (including the Lord's Supper), and prayers as integral components of their spiritual life. Their collective awe and generosity were evidenced through the performance of miracles by the apostles, the communal sharing of possessions, and their ongoing worship in the temple courts, emphasizing their continuity with Jewish tradition while proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. As a result of their fervent commitment and impactful witness, the early church experienced exponential growth, with new believers being added daily, exemplifying the transformative power of faith and the fulfillment of Christ's commission to spread the gospel to all nations.

a. Devotion to apostles' teaching:

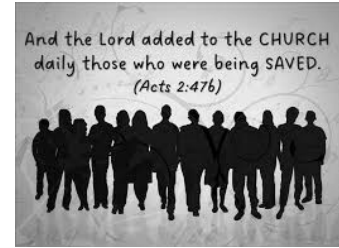
- 1) They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching (Acts 2:42). In the Great Commission, Jesus instructs His disciples to teach new disciples "to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20). This emphasizes the importance of transmitting the teachings of Jesus to subsequent generations, ensuring the continuity of faith and practice within the Church.
- 2) They devoted themselves to fellowship, and breaking of bread, and prayers (Acts 2:42):
 - a) The term "fellowship" (koinōnia) conveys the idea of sharing in common. This could refer to solely spiritual activities (e.g., prayers), but could include the sharing of resources (Acts 2:44-45).
 - b) Overall, "breaking bread" in ancient times encompassed a rich tapestry of meanings, ranging from hospitality and fellowship to spiritual communion and sustenance. It served as a potent symbol of social cohesion, religious devotion, and shared humanity. In this context it refers to the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:26-29; cp. Acts 20:7).
 - c) Prayers. Their continuing in prayers underscores the centrality of prayer in the life of the early Church.

b. A sense of awe and generosity:

- 1) Many wonders and signs performed by the apostles (Acts 2:43): After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the apostles demonstrated the power of God through miraculous signs and wonders. These supernatural manifestations served to authenticate their message and validate the truth of the Gospel they proclaimed (Mark 16:19-20; Hebrews 2:2-4). The wonders and signs, such as healing the sick or casting out demons, inspired awe and wonder among the people, drawing attention to the transformative power of God at work in the lives of believers.
- 2) Believers share possessions and care for one another (Acts 2:44-45): The early Christians exhibited a profound sense of community and generosity, sharing their possessions and resources with one another. This radical expression of communal living was rooted in their newfound faith and unity in Christ. They willingly sold their possessions and distributed the proceeds to those in need, reflecting a commitment to sacrificial love and mutual care within the church. This practice of sharing fostered deep bonds of fellowship and solidarity among believers, demonstrating the practical outworking of their faith in love and compassion.
- 3) Continued worship in the temple (Acts 2:46): The early Christians regularly gathered in Solomon's porch for their meetings (Acts 5:12). While the text does not specify their involvement in temple worship rituals, their presence in this central religious venue indicates their connection to Jewish heritage and the broader religious community. These gatherings provided opportunities for teaching, prayer, fellowship, and evangelism among both believers and non-believers. Rather than implying active participation in temple worship, their presence in the temple reflected a commitment to engaging with the Jewish community, sharing the message of Jesus, and demonstrating the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies through Christ.



- 4) The saved were added to the church (Acts 2:47): As a result of the apostles' preaching, the signs and wonders performed, and the vibrant community life characterized by fellowship and generosity, the early church experienced rapid growth. Day by day, those who were being saved were added to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:47). The growth of the church was not merely numerical but also spiritual, as individuals responded to the message of salvation, repented of their sins, and embraced faith in Jesus Christ. This expansion of the church underscored the vitality and effectiveness of the early church in fulfilling the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations.



This section illuminates the vibrant spiritual and communal life of the early church in the aftermath of Pentecost. Grounded in a steadfast commitment to the apostles' teaching, Christians engaged in fellowship, the breaking of bread (the Lord's Supper), and prayers, fostering a deep sense of unity and devotion. Their awe-inspiring generosity was demonstrated through miraculous signs, communal sharing of possessions, and ongoing worship in the temple, signifying both their continuity with Jewish tradition and their fervent proclamation of the gospel. This fervor and communal solidarity led to the exponential growth of the church, as new believers were added daily, showcasing the transformative impact of faith and the fulfillment of Christ's commission to spread His message to all nations.

Summary:

1. **The Day Of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4):** This describes the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles during the Jewish festival of Pentecost, marked by supernatural phenomena like rushing wind and tongues of fire. Apostles speak in various languages, astounding the crowd, leading to accusations of drunkenness, refuted by Peter's sermon linking events to Joel's prophecy.
2. **Peter's Sermon (Acts 2:14-36):** Peter refutes accusations, invokes Joel's prophecy, and proclaims Jesus as Lord and Christ, explaining His crucifixion and resurrection. Convicted crowd seeks guidance, prompting Peter to call for repentance and baptism, resulting in the baptism of about 3,000 individuals.
3. **Life Of The Early Believers (Acts 2:42-47):** Christians devote themselves to apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread (Lord's Supper), and prayers. Manifest awe and generosity through miracles, communal sharing, temple worship, and church growth.

This lesson highlights the foundational events of Pentecost, Peter's pivotal sermon, and the communal dynamics and practices of the early Christian community, emphasizing devotion to teaching, fellowship, and communal living, all grounded in the transformative power of faith and the proclamation of the Gospel.

Applications:

1. **Emphasizing The Importance Of Community (Acts 2:42-47):** This lesson underscores the significance of fellowship, sharing, and communal worship within the church. It prompts believers to prioritize active participation in church gatherings, small groups, and acts of generosity towards one another. By engaging in meaningful relationships and mutual support, individuals can experience spiritual growth and deepen their connection with God and fellow believers.
2. **Commitment To Teaching And Learning (Acts 2:42):** The devotion of early Christians to the apostles' teaching serves as a model for contemporary believers to prioritize learning and understanding the Scriptures. This lesson encourages Christians to engage in regular Bible study, theological education, and discipleship programs to deepen their knowledge of God's word and grow in faith. By investing in continuous learning and spiritual formation, individuals can become equipped to live out their faith and effectively share the Gospel with others.
3. **Demonstrating Radical Generosity (Acts 2:44-45):** The example of communal sharing and sacrificial giving among the early believers challenges modern Christians to cultivate a spirit of generosity and stewardship in their lives. This lesson inspires believers to share their resources, time, and talents with those in need, both within the church and beyond. By practicing radical generosity and compassionate care for others, Christians can reflect the love of Christ and contribute to the flourishing of communities, addressing societal injustices and meeting tangible needs in the name of Jesus.

These applications draw upon the timeless principles and practices demonstrated by the early Christians in Acts 2:42-47, offering practical insights for contemporary Christians. Emphasizing the importance of community underscores the value of meaningful relationships and shared spiritual experiences within the body of Christ. Likewise, a commitment to teaching and learning encourages Christians to deepen their understanding of Scripture and grow in spiritual maturity. Finally, demonstrating radical generosity reflects the selfless love of Christ and empowers believers to impact their communities through acts of compassion and service. By embracing these applications, Christians can embody the transformative power of faith and contribute to the advancement of God's kingdom on earth.

Key Points:

1. **The Day Of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13):** This chapter narrates the remarkable events of the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descends upon the apostles gathered in Jerusalem. This event is marked by supernatural manifestations, including a rushing wind and tongues of fire, and the apostles speaking in various languages, enabling them to communicate the Gospel to people from diverse backgrounds.
2. **Peter's Sermon (Acts 2:14-41):** Following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Peter delivers a powerful sermon to the gathered crowd, explaining the significance of the events unfolding before them. He connects these events to the prophecy of Joel, proclaims Jesus as Lord and Christ, and calls the people to repentance and baptism for the forgiveness of sins. Peter's sermon leads to the conversion of about 3,000 individuals who respond to his message with repentance and faith.
3. **Life Of The Early Believers (Acts 2:42-47):** This chapter provides insights into the communal life of the early Christian community in Jerusalem. These believers devote themselves to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread (likely referring to the Lord's Supper), and prayers. They demonstrate awe and generosity through miracles, communal sharing of possessions, and worship at the temple. As a result of their unity, devotion, and witness, the early church experiences significant growth both spiritually and numerically.

These key points illuminate pivotal aspects of the early church's formation and growth. The Day of Pentecost marks the dramatic outpouring of the Holy Spirit, enabling the apostles to speak in diverse languages and effectively communicate the Gospel to a multicultural audience. Peter's sermon underscores the fulfillment of prophecy in Jesus Christ and calls for repentance, leading to the conversion of thousands. Additionally, the communal life of the early believers reflects their devotion to teaching, fellowship, and sharing, resulting in spiritual vitality and numerical growth within the church.

Questions:

1. What significant event marks the beginning of the Church (Acts 2:1-13)?
2. How did the crowd react to the apostles speaking in tongues on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:6-8, 13)?
3. What Old Testament prophecy did Peter cite to explain the events of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21)?
4. According to Peter's sermon, who did he declare Jesus to be (Acts 2:36)?
5. What explanation did Peter provide for Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection (Acts 2:23-32)?
6. What was the response of the crowd to Peter's sermon (Acts 2:37)?
7. What were the two actions Peter instructed the crowd to take in response to his sermon (Acts 2:38)?
8. To what does the term "fellowship" (koinōnia) refer (Acts 2:42)?
9. How did the early Christians demonstrate their radical generosity and compassion (Acts 2:44-45)?
10. What was the result of the early believers' devotion to teaching, fellowship, and generosity (Acts 2:47)?

This section delves into the remarkable event of the miraculous healing at the Gate Beautiful. The narrative unfolds against the backdrop of the temple complex, particularly at the Gate Beautiful, known for its symbolic and communal significance. Here, the encounter between Peter, John, and the lame beggar sets the stage for a profound demonstration of divine power. As Peter and John approach the temple, they encounter a man crippled from birth, positioning himself for alms at the gate. Peter's response to the beggar's plea transcends mere charity; invoking the name of Jesus, he commands the man to rise and walk, leading to an instantaneous and complete healing. The beggar's ecstatic response serves as a testament to the transformative power of faith and the reality of divine intervention in the lives of believers, resonating with the overarching theme of restoration and spiritual awakening.

2) The lame beggar's request for alms (Acts 3:4-5). The lame beggar, positioned at the gate called Beautiful, sought alms from those entering the temple. His physical condition rendered him dependent on the charity of others for his livelihood. When he saw Peter and John about to enter the temple, he directed his plea for assistance toward them, hoping to receive financial support as was customary for him.

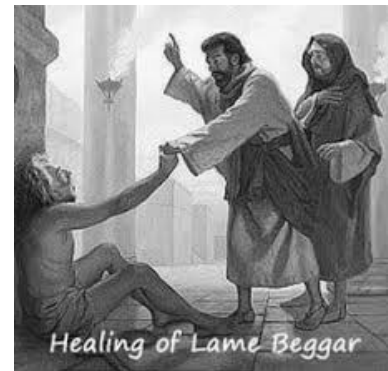
3) Peter's response to the beggar (Acts 3:6-8):

- a) Peter, along with John, directed his gaze at the beggar and addressed him directly. He commanded the beggar to look at them, indicating a moment of undivided attention and expectation. With a sense of authority and conviction, Peter declared, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk" (Acts 3:6). This response reflects Peter's recognition of the beggar's deeper need beyond material sustenance and his reliance on the power of Jesus Christ to bring about transformation. As Peter reached out to the beggar and took him by the right hand, he lifted him up, instantly restoring strength to the beggar's feet and ankles.
- b) The miraculous healing elicited an immediate response from the beggar, who leaped up, stood, and began to walk (Acts 3:7-8). This remarkable demonstration of divine power not only addressed the beggar's physical ailment but also testified to the authority and potency of Jesus' name as invoked by Peter.

c. The miraculous healing (Acts 3:6-11):

1) Peter's command to rise and walk (Acts 3:6):

- a) Upon the beggar's request for alms, Peter fixed his gaze upon him and spoke with authority, commanding him to rise and walk. This directive was not merely an offer of charity but a demonstration of the power vested in the name of Jesus Christ.
- b) By invoking Jesus' name, Peter communicated his reliance on divine intervention rather than human means to address the beggar's condition. This command underscored Peter's faith in Jesus as the source of healing and restoration.



2) The lame man's immediate healing (Acts 3:7-8):

- a) In response to Peter's command, the lame beggar experienced an instantaneous and dramatic transformation. As Peter extended his hand to help the beggar up, divine power flowed through him, enabling the beggar's muscles and joints to regain strength and functionality.
- b) The man who was previously unable to stand or walk suddenly found himself not only standing but also leaping and praising God. This immediate and complete healing testified to the miraculous nature of the encounter and affirmed the reality of divine intervention in the lives of believers.

3) The beggar's reaction and response (Acts 3:9-11):

- a) Overwhelmed by the sudden restoration of his mobility, the formerly lame beggar clung to Peter and John in amazement and gratitude. As he entered the temple courts, walking, leaping, and praising God, his joy and astonishment were evident to all who witnessed the miraculous transformation.
- b) The beggar's exuberant response served as a public testimony to the power of God and the reality of Jesus' resurrection. This encounter not only changed the beggar's physical condition but also ignited a spiritual awakening within him, leading him to glorify God and bear witness to His mighty deeds.

The miraculous healing at the Gate Beautiful serves as a powerful testament to the authority and compassion of Jesus Christ. This event not only highlights the intersection of divine power and human need but also underscores the transformative impact of encountering the risen Savior. Through Peter and John, God demonstrates His ability to bring about miraculous healing and restoration, transcending physical limitations and ushering in spiritual renewal. The beggar's instant transformation from disability to mobility stands as a vivid portrayal of the abundant life available through faith in Jesus Christ, inspiring awe and praise among witnesses. This miraculous encounter serves as a catalyst for further testimony and proclamation of the Gospel, reinforcing the foundational truth of Jesus' resurrection and its implications for believers today.

2. Peter's Sermon In Solomon's Portico

Following the miraculous healing at the Gate Beautiful, Peter seizes the attention of the astonished crowd and delivers a powerful sermon in Solomon's Portico. This sermon serves as a pivotal moment in the early Christian community, as Peter clarifies the source of the miracle and calls the crowd to repentance and restoration in Jesus Christ. Beginning with an acknowledgment of the crowd's amazement at the healing, Peter redirects their focus to the exalted name of Jesus and the necessity of faith in Him for spiritual healing. He then transitions to a passionate call to repentance, urging the crowd to turn from their sins and embrace the promise of spiritual renewal and fulfillment in Christ. Through Peter's sermon, the transformative power of the Gospel message is vividly displayed, inviting all who hear to embrace the hope and salvation found in Jesus.

a. Peter's address to the crowd:

1) The amazement of the onlookers (Acts 3:12):

- a) As Peter witnessed the astonishment and incredulity of the crowd in response to the miraculous healing of the lame beggar, he seized the opportunity to address their curiosity and draw their attention to the true source of the miraculous power they had witnessed.
- b) Aware of the profound impact of the miracle on the crowd, Peter sought to redirect their amazement toward a deeper understanding of God's divine plan and purpose.

2) Peter's clarification of the miracle's source (Acts 3:13-15):

- a) In his address to the crowd, Peter dispelled any misconceptions regarding the source of the miraculous healing, emphasizing that it was not through his own power or piety that the beggar was made whole, but through the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.
- b) By attributing the miracle directly to Jesus, Peter redirected the crowd's focus from the human agents involved in the healing to the divine authority and sovereignty of Jesus Christ. He emphasized Jesus' identity as the Holy and Righteous One, whom the crowd had rejected and handed over to be crucified, yet whom God had raised from the dead.

3) The importance of faith in Jesus (Acts 3:16):

- a) Building upon his clarification of the miracle's source, Peter underscored the role of faith in Jesus as the fundamental requirement for experiencing spiritual healing and restoration. He emphasized that it was through faith in the name of Jesus that the beggar had been made strong and whole.
- b) By highlighting the inseparable connection between faith and miraculous intervention, Peter challenged the crowd to recognize the transformative power of belief in Jesus Christ. This emphasis on faith served to reinforce the central message of the Gospel and invite the crowd into a personal relationship with the risen Lord, where true healing and salvation could be found.

b. Peter's call to repentance and restoration:

1) Peter's accusation and call to repentance (Acts 3:17-19):

- a) Peter, seizing the attention of the crowd following the miraculous healing, directly addressed their ignorance and the role it played in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. He pointed out that their actions were part of a broader divine plan foretold by the prophets, yet they acted in ignorance.
- b) Despite their culpability in crucifying the Messiah, Peter offered them a message of hope and redemption through repentance. He urged them to turn from their sins, repent, and seek forgiveness, emphasizing that such repentance would lead to times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord.

2) The promise of times of refreshing (Acts 3:20-21):

- a) In his call to repentance, Peter offered the crowd a vision of restoration and renewal in the coming of Jesus Christ. He spoke of "times of refreshing" that would accompany the repentance and turning to God, pointing to a future characterized by spiritual revitalization and divine favor.
- b) This promise of spiritual renewal was rooted in the prophetic expectation of the restoration of all things, signaling the fulfillment of God's redemptive purposes through the Messiah. Peter's message conveyed the hope of a transformed future for those who embraced repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

3) The prophetic fulfillment in Jesus (Acts 3:22-26):

- a) Continuing his discourse, Peter reaffirmed the prophetic role of Jesus Christ as the ultimate fulfillment of God's promises to His people. He referenced the prophecy of Moses regarding a prophet like himself whom God would raise up, emphasizing that Jesus was the fulfillment of this prophecy.
- b) Peter emphasized that all the prophets, from Samuel onward, had foretold of these days and the coming of the Messiah. He highlighted Jesus as the long-awaited fulfillment of these prophecies, proclaiming Him as the ultimate source of blessing and redemption for all who would heed His message. Peter concluded his call to repentance and restoration by inviting the crowd to participate in the blessings of the new covenant established in Jesus Christ, emphasizing that God had sent His Son to bless them by turning them from their wicked ways.

Peter's sermon stands as a powerful proclamation of the Gospel message and a call to repentance and restoration in Jesus Christ. Through his address to the astonished crowd, Peter clarifies the source of the miraculous healing and emphasizes the crucial role of faith in Jesus for spiritual healing and renewal. He invites the crowd to embrace repentance and the promise of times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, rooted in the prophetic fulfillment found in Jesus Christ. Peter's sermon serves as a testament to the transformative power of the Gospel, offering hope and redemption to all who heed its message and turn to Jesus in faith.

Summary:

1. **Miraculous Healing At The Gate Beautiful (Acts 3:1-11):** This section vividly portrays the miraculous healing of a lame beggar at the Gate Beautiful in Jerusalem. The encounter between Peter, John, and the beggar showcases the intersection of divine power and human need, highlighting the transformative impact of encountering Jesus Christ. Peter's response to the beggar's plea goes beyond mere charity, demonstrating the authority and compassion of Jesus through the restoration of the beggar's health. The immediate and complete healing of the beggar serves as a powerful testimony to the reality of divine intervention and the transformative power of faith in Jesus.
2. **Peter's Sermon In Solomon's Portico (Acts 3:12-26):** Following the miraculous healing, Peter addresses the astonished crowd in Solomon's Portico, delivering a passionate sermon that clarifies the source of the miracle and calls the listeners to repentance and restoration in Jesus Christ. Peter redirects the crowd's focus from the human agents involved in the healing to the exalted name of Jesus, emphasizing the necessity of faith in Him for spiritual healing and renewal. Through his sermon, Peter offers hope and redemption to all who heed the message of the Gospel, inviting them to accept Jesus as their Savior.

This lesson underscores the transformative power of encountering Jesus Christ, whether through miraculous healing or the proclamation of the Gospel message. The narrative highlights the inseparable connection between faith in Jesus and spiritual renewal, inviting all who hear to embrace repentance and the promise of salvation. Peter's sermon serves as a powerful testament to the authority and compassion of Jesus Christ, offering hope and redemption to all who respond in faith.

Applications:

1. **Embracing Faith In Jesus (Acts 3:16):** The lesson encourages us to deepen our faith in Jesus Christ, recognizing Him as the source of healing and restoration in our lives. Just as Peter invoked the name of Jesus to bring about miraculous transformation in the lame beggar, individuals can rely on Christ's power to overcome their own challenges and limitations. This application prompts believers to cultivate a vibrant and active faith, trusting in Jesus' ability to bring about change and renewal in every aspect of their lives.
2. **Acts Of Compassion And Service (Acts 3:6-7):** The encounter at the Gate Beautiful challenges believers to engage in acts of compassion and service towards those in need. Like Peter and John, who stopped to address the beggar's physical ailment, individuals are called to be attentive to the needs of others, both physical and spiritual. This application encourages believers to look beyond their own concerns and actively seek opportunities to extend love, kindness, and practical assistance to those who are marginalized or suffering, reflecting the compassionate heart of Christ.

3. **Proclamation Of The Gospel (Acts 3:12-26):** Peter's sermon in Solomon's Portico serves as a model for Christians in sharing the Gospel message with others. Just as Peter boldly proclaimed the truth of Jesus' resurrection and the call to repentance, we are called to confidently articulate the Good News to those around us. This application encourages us to engage in evangelism and discipleship, sharing the message of salvation and inviting others into a life-transforming relationship with Jesus Christ. By faithfully proclaiming the Gospel, we can participate in God's redemptive work and extend His invitation of grace to a world in need of hope and restoration.

These applications offer practical guidance for believers in their faith journey. Embracing faith in Jesus entails trusting in His power for personal transformation and renewal, while acts of compassion and service call believers to actively engage with the needs of others, mirroring Christ's love and kindness. Additionally, the proclamation of the Gospel emphasizes the importance of boldly sharing the Good News with others, inviting them into a life-transforming relationship with Jesus. Together, these applications encourage believers to embody the teachings of Christ through faith, compassion, and evangelism, contributing to the advancement of God's kingdom and the restoration of humanity.

Key Points:

1. **Demonstration Of Divine Power (Acts 3:6-8):** The miraculous healing of the lame beggar at the Gate Beautiful serves as a profound demonstration of divine power through the apostles Peter and John. This event showcases the authority and compassion of Jesus Christ, as invoked by Peter, in restoring the beggar's health instantaneously and completely. It underscores the reality of divine intervention in response to faith and highlights the transformative impact of encountering Jesus.
2. **Call To Repentance And Restoration (Acts 3:12-19):** Peter's sermon in Solomon's Portico delivers a compelling call to repentance and restoration in Jesus Christ. He clarifies the source of the miraculous healing, emphasizing the necessity of faith in Jesus for spiritual healing and renewal. Peter invites the crowd to turn from their sins, embrace repentance, and experience the promise of times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, rooted in the prophetic fulfillment found in Jesus Christ.
3. **Transformative Power Of The Gospel (Acts 3:26):** This lesson underscores the transformative power of the Gospel message in bringing about spiritual renewal and redemption. Through the miraculous healing and Peter's sermon, the narrative highlights the inseparable connection between faith in Jesus and the experience of abundant life. It invites listeners to embrace the hope and salvation offered through Jesus Christ.

These key points highlight the profound demonstration of divine power witnessed through the miraculous healing of the lame beggar at the Gate Beautiful, illustrating the authority and compassion of Jesus Christ as invoked by Peter and John. Peter's sermon in Solomon's Portico further emphasizes the call to repentance and restoration in Jesus Christ, clarifying the source of the miracle and inviting listeners to experience spiritual renewal through faith. Overall, the lesson underscores the transformative power of the Gospel message, inviting believers to embrace faith in Jesus and participate in the promise of abundant life and redemption.

Questions:

1. What was the significance of the Gate Beautiful in Jerusalem, and why was it a notable location for the miraculous healing (Acts 3:1-3)?
2. How did Peter and John respond to the lame beggar's plea for alms, and what did their response reveal about their faith and authority (Acts 3:6-8)?
3. What was the immediate reaction of the formerly lame beggar to his healing, and what significance did it hold for the witnesses (Acts 3:8-10)?
4. How did Peter redirect the crowd's amazement at the miraculous healing toward a deeper understanding of Jesus' role in the event (Acts 3:12-15)?
5. What was the central message of Peter's sermon in Solomon's Portico, and how did he call the crowd to respond (Acts 3:17-19)?

6. What prophetic fulfillment did Peter emphasize in his sermon, and how did he connect it to Jesus Christ (**Acts 3:22-24**)?
7. How did Peter emphasize the role of faith in Jesus Christ for spiritual healing and restoration (**Acts 3:16**)?
8. What promise did Peter offer to those who repented, and what was its significance (**Acts 3:20-21**)?
9. How did the formerly lame beggar's response to his healing serve as a testimony to the crowd (**Acts 3:9-11**)?
10. What invitation did Peter extend to the crowd at the conclusion of his sermon, and what was the significance of this invitation (**Acts 3:26**)?

1. Peter And John Before The Council (Acts 4:1-22).

a. The arrest of Peter and John (Acts 4:1-4):

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- b) This period of confinement allowed the religious authorities time to convene and determine the appropriate course of action regarding Peter and John's preaching and its perceived threat to their religious establishment (**Acts 4:3**).

b) This bold inquiry served to confront the council with the undeniable reality of the miraculous event and prompted them to consider the divine implications of the healing (**Acts 4:9**).

- 3) Peter proclaims that the man was healed by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom they crucified but whom God raised from the dead:
 - a) In his response to the council's inquiry, Peter fearlessly proclaimed the truth regarding the healing of the lame man. He attributed the miraculous event to the power and authority of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom the religious leaders had crucified but whom God had raised from the dead (**Acts 4:10**).
 - b) By emphasizing Jesus' resurrection, Peter affirmed His divine nature and highlighted the fulfillment of God's redemptive plan through Him (**Acts 4:11**).
- 4) He asserts that there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved:
 - a) Peter's testimony culminated in a powerful assertion of the exclusive and universal significance of Jesus Christ for salvation. He declared unequivocally that there is no other name under heaven given among men by which humanity can be saved. This statement affirmed Jesus Christ as the sole mediator between God and humanity and emphasized the necessity of faith in Him for eternal salvation (**Acts 4:12**).
 - b) Peter's bold proclamation challenged the religious authorities' understanding of salvation and underscored the centrality of Jesus in God's plan of redemption for humanity (**Acts 4:13**).
- c. The council's response (**Acts 4:13-22**):
 - 1) The council, seeing the boldness of Peter and John and realizing they were uneducated and common men, were astonished (**Acts 4:13**):
 - a) Despite their lack of formal education or prestigious backgrounds, Peter and John displayed remarkable boldness and confidence in their testimony before the religious authorities. The council, comprised of educated and influential figures, was taken aback by the courage and conviction exhibited by these ordinary fishermen turned apostles.
 - b) This astonishment highlights the extraordinary transformation wrought by the Holy Spirit in empowering ordinary individuals to boldly proclaim the Gospel message.
 - 2) They recognized them as having been with Jesus, but because of the man who was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against them (**Acts 4:14**):
 - a) While the religious leaders acknowledged Peter and John's association with Jesus during His earthly ministry, they found themselves unable to refute their testimony or discredit their message due to the undeniable evidence of the miraculous healing standing before them.
 - b) The presence of the healed man served as irrefutable proof of the authenticity and authority behind Peter and John's actions, leaving the council without grounds to oppose them.
 - 3) After further discussion, they commanded Peter and John not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus, to which Peter and John replied that they must obey God rather than men:
 - a) Despite the council's attempts to silence them, Peter and John remained resolute in their commitment to obey God rather than human authority. Their response underscores the primacy of divine obedience in matters of faith and underscores their unwavering dedication to proclaiming the Gospel message, regardless of the consequences.
 - b) This exchange highlights the apostles' unwavering allegiance to Jesus Christ as their ultimate authority and their refusal to compromise their convictions for the sake of appeasing earthly powers.
 - 4) The council, unable to find a way to punish them because of the people, warned them again and released them (**Acts 4:18-20**):

- a) Faced with the dilemma of punishing Peter and John without inciting a backlash from the people who witnessed the miraculous healing, the council opted to issue a stern warning instead. Despite their desire to suppress the spread of the Gospel, they recognized the growing influence and support for the apostles among the populace.
- b) Their decision to release Peter and John with a warning reflects a calculated attempt to mitigate potential unrest while still asserting their authority over matters of religious doctrine and practice. However, this warning did not deter the apostles from continuing to boldly proclaim the name of Jesus Christ and the message of salvation.

This passage presents a pivotal moment in the early church's journey, marked by confrontation and resilience in the face of opposition. The arrest and subsequent bold testimony of Peter and John before the religious council underscore the transformative power of the Gospel and the unwavering commitment of the apostles to proclaiming the name of Jesus. Despite intimidation and threats from religious authorities, Peter and John stand firm in their faith, prioritizing obedience to God over human authority. Their courage and conviction serve as a testament to the indomitable spirit of the early believers and foreshadow the challenges and triumphs that lie ahead as the Gospel continues to spread throughout the world. This section of Acts serves as a reminder of the enduring power of faith and the unyielding resolve of those who are called to proclaim the message of salvation to all nations.

2. Christians Pray For Boldness (Acts 4:23-31).

Here, we witness a remarkable display of unity, faith, and boldness among the early Christians in the face of adversity. Following their release from interrogation by the religious authorities, Peter and John shared their experiences with the brethren. In response, the gathered believers turn to prayer and praise, acknowledging God's sovereignty and seeking His empowerment to continue their mission. Their prayer is marked by a recognition of God's role as Creator and a plea for boldness in proclaiming the Gospel amidst opposition. God responds to their prayer by filling them with the Holy Spirit, empowering them to speak the word of God with even greater boldness. This section serves as a powerful testament to the transformative power of prayer and the indispensable role of the Holy Spirit in empowering believers to fulfill their mission.

a. The report to the brethren (Acts 4:23-24):

1) Peter and John returned to the other brethren and reported all that had happened (Acts 4:23):

- a) After being released by the council, Peter and John wasted no time in sharing the events of their encounter with the religious authorities with their brethren. They provided a detailed account of the interrogation, the council's response, and their unwavering commitment to continue preaching the Gospel despite the threats and opposition they faced.
- b) By sharing their experience with the rest of the brethren, Peter and John sought to strengthen the resolve of the church and reinforce their collective commitment to spreading the message of Jesus Christ.

2) The brethren responded with prayer and praise to God (Acts 4:24):

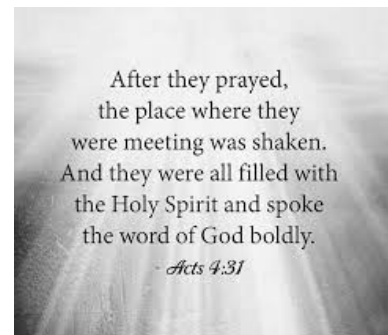
- a) Upon hearing Peter and John's report, the gathered brethren responded with prayer and praise to God. Recognizing the challenges and opposition faced by the apostles, the brethren turned to prayer as a means of seeking divine guidance, protection, and empowerment. Their prayerful response reflects their deep dependence on God and their trust in His sovereignty amidst adversity.
- b) Additionally, the brethren offered praise and worship to God, acknowledging His faithfulness and provision in the midst of persecution. This communal act of prayer and praise served to unite the believers in solidarity and strengthen their spiritual resolve as they continued to navigate the challenges of proclaiming the Gospel in a hostile environment.

b. The prayer for boldness (Acts 4:25-30):

1) The brethren acknowledged God as the Creator of all things and quoted from Psalm 2, affirming that Herod, Pontius Pilate, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel conspired against Jesus (Acts 4:24-28):

- a) The brethren, in their prayer, first recognized the sovereignty of God as the Creator of all things. By acknowledging God's supreme authority over creation, they affirmed His power and control over every circumstance, including the opposition they faced.

- b) They then quoted from Psalm 2, a Messianic psalm that foretold the opposition faced by God's Anointed One. In doing so, the brethren identified Jesus as the fulfillment of this prophecy and recognized Him as God's chosen servant, whom the rulers of the earth conspired against.
 - c) This acknowledgment reinforced their understanding of Jesus' divine mission and the inevitability of opposition to His message.
- 2) They prayed for boldness to continue speaking the word of God while God performed signs and wonders in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:29-30):
- a) In response to the opposition and threats they encountered, the brethren prayed fervently for boldness to proclaim the Gospel in the face of adversity. They recognized the importance of courage and conviction in bearing witness to the truth of Jesus Christ, even amidst opposition and persecution.
 - b) Moreover, the brethren petitioned God to accompany their proclamation with signs and wonders performed in the name of Jesus. By seeking divine confirmation through miraculous works, they expressed their reliance on God's power to authenticate their message and demonstrate His presence among them.
 - c) This prayer reflected their unwavering commitment to advancing the kingdom of God and their dependence on His empowerment to fulfill their mission effectively.
- c. The response of God (Acts 4:31):
- 1) After they prayed, the place where they were gathered was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit:
 - a) Following the earnest prayer of the brethren, the place where they were assembled experienced a tangible manifestation of God's presence. The shaking of the location symbolized the divine response to their supplication, signifying God's power and sovereignty. This supernatural occurrence affirmed the brethren's faith and reinforced their reliance on God's provision and guidance.
 - b) Furthermore, the filling of the Holy Spirit provided them with renewed strength, courage, and spiritual empowerment to continue their mission amidst opposition and adversity.
- 2) They continued to speak the word of God with boldness:
- a) Encouraged and emboldened by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the brethren remained steadfast in their commitment to proclaiming the word of God.
 - b) Despite the threats and intimidation from religious authorities, they refused to be silenced or deterred from their mission. Instead, they spoke with even greater boldness and conviction, fearlessly declaring the truth of the Gospel to all who would listen.
 - c) This unwavering resolve and courage were a direct result of their reliance on the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit, enabling them to overcome fear and opposition as they fulfilled their calling to be witnesses of Jesus Christ.



In this passage, we witness the early Christians responding to adversity with unity, faith, and boldness. Through prayer and praise, they acknowledge God's sovereignty and seek His empowerment to continue their mission in the face of opposition. God responds by filling them with the Holy Spirit, enabling them to speak the word of God with greater boldness. This passage underscores the importance of prayer, dependence on God, and the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of believers. It serves as a powerful example of how faith-filled prayer can lead to divine intervention and embolden believers to fulfill their calling despite challenges and threats.

3. Christians Share Their Possessions (Acts 4:32-37).

In this passage, we observe the early Christians exemplifying unity and generosity within their community. They shared a deep sense of camaraderie and purpose, viewing themselves as one body bound together by their faith in Jesus Christ. This unity led to radical acts of generosity, as they willingly shared their possessions to ensure that no one among them lacked basic necessities. Barnabas emerges as a notable example of this spirit of generosity, selling a piece of property and donating the proceeds to support the needs of his fellow believers. His actions underscore the transformative impact of the Gospel, inspiring others to follow his example in sacrificial giving and selfless service within the community.

a. Unity and generosity among believers (Acts 4:32-35):

- 1) The brethren were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed that any of their possessions was their own (Acts 4:32):
 - a) This unity among the believers was marked by a deep sense of community and shared purpose. They viewed themselves not as individual owners but as part of a collective body, bound together by their faith in Jesus Christ.
 - b) This unity extended beyond mere agreement in doctrine; it encompassed a genuine concern for one another's well-being, leading them to hold their possessions with open hands and to prioritize the needs of the community above their own.
- 2) They shared everything they had, and there were no needy persons among them because those who owned land or houses sold them and brought the money from the sales to the apostles' feet for distribution to anyone who had need (Acts 4:33-35):
 - a) The radical generosity of the early Christians flowed from their unity of heart and soul. They demonstrated a profound commitment to caring for one another, ensuring that no member of the community suffered from lack while others had plenty.
 - b) This generosity was not compulsory but voluntary, arising from a genuine desire to meet the needs of their brothers and sisters in Christ. Their sacrificial giving resulted in a tangible expression of love and solidarity within the community, reflecting the transformative power of the Gospel in their lives.



b. The example of Barnabas (Acts 4:36-37).

- 1) Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, was called Barnabas by the apostles, which means “son of encouragement” (Acts 4:36):
 - a) Barnabas, whose birth name was Joseph, received a nickname from the apostles that reflected his character and influence within the early Christian community. The name “Barnabas” signifies “son of encouragement,” indicating his role as a source of comfort, support, and motivation for his fellow believers.
 - b) This designation suggests that Barnabas possessed qualities of compassion, kindness, and exhortation, which endeared him to those around him and made him an invaluable member of the community.
- 2) He sold a field he owned and brought the money to the apostles' feet (Acts 4:37).
 - a) Barnabas demonstrated his commitment to the principles of unity and generosity among the believers by selling a piece of property he owned and donating the proceeds to support the *needs* of the brethren. His action mirrored the sacrificial giving practiced by other brethren, reflecting a deep conviction in the importance of sharing resources and caring for one another.
 - b) By presenting the proceeds of the sale to the apostles, Barnabas entrusted them with the responsibility of distributing the funds to those in need, exemplifying his humility and willingness to contribute to the common good. This act of generosity not only provided practical assistance but also served as an inspiration for others to follow his example in selfless giving and service.

In this passage, we witness a profound display of unity and generosity among the early Christians, driven by their shared faith in Jesus Christ. This unity extended beyond mere agreement in doctrine, encompassing a genuine concern for one another's well-being and a willingness to sacrificially share their possessions. Through their actions, they demonstrated a deep commitment to caring for one another and ensuring that no member of the community suffered from lack. Barnabas stands out as a prime example of this spirit of generosity, exemplifying the transformative power of the Gospel in action. His selfless act of selling a piece of property to support the needs of his fellow brethren serves as an inspiration for others to emulate, highlighting the importance of compassion, kindness, and mutual support within the Christian community.

Summary:

1. **Bold Witness In The Face Of Opposition (Acts 4:1-22):** This section highlights the confrontation between the religious authorities and Peter and John following their bold preaching in the temple courtyard. Despite threats and intimidation, Peter and John stand firm in their faith, prioritizing obedience to God over human authority. Their unwavering courage serves as a testament to the transformative power of the Gospel and sets the stage for the ongoing conflict between the early church and the religious establishment.
2. **Prayer For Boldness And Empowerment (Acts 4:23-31):** After their release, Peter and John report their encounter to the brethren, who respond with prayer and praise. Through their prayer, they acknowledge God's sovereignty and seek His empowerment to continue their mission amidst opposition. God responds by filling them with the Holy Spirit, enabling them to speak the word of God with even greater boldness. This passage underscores the importance of prayer and dependence on the Holy Spirit in the life of believers facing challenges.
3. **Unity And Generosity Among Brethren (Acts 4:32-37):** In this section, we observe the early Christians exemplifying unity and generosity within their community. They view themselves as one body, sharing everything they have to ensure that no one among them lacks basic necessities. Individuals like Barnabas stand out as examples of sacrificial giving, inspiring others to follow suit. This passage highlights the transformative impact of the Gospel on their lives and relationships, emphasizing the principles of community and compassion taught by Jesus Christ.

This chapter portrays the early Christians as bold witnesses in the face of opposition, relying on prayer, the Holy Spirit, and sacrificial unity to advance the Gospel and care for one another amidst adversity.

Applications:

1. **Practicing Generosity (Acts 4:34-35):** The example of the early Christians challenges us to examine our own attitudes towards possessions and generosity. We can apply this lesson by actively seeking opportunities to share our resources with those in need, whether it be through financial contributions, donating time and skills, or offering hospitality to others.
2. **Unity In Community (Acts 4:32):** The unity displayed among Christians serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of unity within the church. We can apply this by fostering a spirit of unity and solidarity within our local churches and prioritizing love, compassion, and mutual support in all our interactions.
3. **Boldness In Prayer (Acts 4:29-31):** The response of the early Christians to opposition teaches us the importance of boldness in prayer. We can apply this by approaching God with confidence and trust, boldly presenting our requests and concerns before Him, and seeking His guidance and empowerment to fulfill His purposes in our lives.

These applications provide valuable insights for believers in their spiritual walk. Practicing generosity urges individuals to reevaluate their relationship with possessions and actively seek opportunities to share with others in need, fostering a spirit of compassion and stewardship. Unity in community underscores the significance of fostering harmony and mutual support within the church, prioritizing love and cooperation in all interactions. Finally, boldness in prayer encourages believers to approach God with confidence, trusting in His power and seeking His guidance to overcome challenges and fulfill His purposes. Together, these applications inspire believers to embody generosity, unity, and boldness in their Christian journey, contributing to the flourishing of the church and the advancement of God's kingdom.

Key Points:

1. **Unity And Generosity (Acts 4:32-37):** These verses portray the early Christians as a community characterized by unity of heart and soul, where individuals willingly shared their possessions to ensure that no one among them lacked basic necessities. This radical generosity stemmed from their deep sense of solidarity and shared commitment to caring for one another.
2. **Barnabas: A Model Of Generosity (Acts 4:36-37):** Barnabas emerges as a notable example of sacrificial giving within the early church. By selling a piece of property and donating the proceeds to support the needs of his fellow brethren, Barnabas exemplified the spirit of generosity and selflessness encouraged among believers.
3. **Community Response To Needs (Acts 4:32-37):** The actions of the early Christians in Acts 4:32-37 demonstrate the transformative power of the Gospel in shaping their attitudes towards possessions and their response to the needs of others. Their communal sharing reflects a commitment to prioritizing the well-being of the community over individual interests, fostering a culture of mutual support and care within the early church.

These key points highlight the importance of unity, generosity, and communal support within the Christian community, serving as a model for believers today as they seek to embody the values of selflessness and compassion in their relationships and stewardship of resources.

Questions:

1. What characterized the unity among the early Christians (Acts 4:32-35)?
2. Who was Barnabas, and what did he do according (Acts 4:36-37)?
3. What was the response of the brethren after Peter and John's report (Acts 4:23-24)?
4. For what did the brethren pray (Acts 4:29-30)?
5. How did God respond to the brethren's prayer (Acts 4:31)?
6. What characterized the response of Peter and John to the council's command not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:19-20)?
7. Why were the religious leaders unable to find a way to punish Peter and John (Acts 4:21)?
8. What did Peter proclaim about salvation (Acts 4:12)?
9. How did the council respond to Peter and John's boldness (Acts 4:13-18)?
10. What characterized the brethren's generosity (Acts 4:32-35)?

In these verses, we are introduced to Ananias and Sapphira, a couple whose story serves as a cautionary tale about the importance of integrity and sincerity within the early church. Their decision to sell a piece of property and withhold a portion of the proceeds highlights the contrast between genuine generosity and deceptive motives. Despite outwardly professing devotion to the church, their actions reveal a deeper struggle with greed and deceit, ultimately leading to dire consequences. This passage challenges believers to examine their own hearts and motives, emphasizing the significance of authenticity and honesty in their relationship with God and fellow brethren.

- a. Ananias and Sapphira sell a piece of property but withhold a portion of the proceeds (Acts 5:1).
 - 1) Here, we encounter Ananias and Sapphira, a couple who sold a piece of property with the intention of contributing the proceeds to the common fund of the church. This act of selling one's possessions and sharing the proceeds was a common practice among Christians, reflecting their commitment to supporting those in need (Acts 4:32-35).
 - 2) However, Ananias and Sapphira chose to withhold a portion of the money for themselves, indicating a lack of sincerity and integrity in their actions. Instead of fully surrendering the proceeds from the sale, they secretly kept back some of the money for personal gain, betraying the trust of their brethren and acting in direct contradiction to the principles of generosity and selflessness that characterized Christians.
- b. They conspire together to deceive the apostles and the church about the amount of money they received (Acts 5:2).
 - 1) Not content with merely withholding a portion of the proceeds, Ananias and Sapphira conspired together to deceive the apostles and the church about the amount of money they received from the sale of their property. Their deceitful scheme involved presenting a portion of the money to the apostles while falsely claiming that it constituted the full amount of the sale. By doing so, they sought to maintain the appearance of generosity and devotion to the community while secretly holding onto a significant portion of the proceeds for themselves.
 - 2) This act of deception not only betrayed the trust of the apostles and the church but also represented a deliberate attempt to manipulate and deceive God Himself, as the early Christian community was guided by the Holy Spirit, through the apostles, in matters of communal living and sharing resources (Acts 4:32-35). Ananias and Sapphira's actions reveal the insidious nature of hypocrisy and selfishness within the church and serve as a warning against the dangers of pretending to be something we are not in the sight of God and others.

In these verses, the narrative unfolds with the introduction of Ananias and Sapphira, a couple whose story serves as a sobering lesson on integrity and sincerity within the early Christian community. Selling a piece of property ostensibly to contribute to the church, they retain a portion of the proceeds for themselves, exposing their deceitful motives. Their actions betray a struggle with greed and dishonesty, highlighting the importance of genuine generosity and transparency. This passage challenges believers to examine their own hearts, emphasizing the significance of authenticity and honesty in their relationships with God and fellow believers.

In these verses, we witness a pivotal moment in the early church as Peter confronts Ananias about his deceitful actions regarding the proceeds from the sale of property. This confrontation exposes the severity of Ananias' deception and underscores the importance of truthfulness and integrity within the Christian community. Ananias' swift judgment serves as a sobering reminder of God's holiness and the consequences of hypocrisy, prompting fear and reverence among believers. This passage challenges readers to examine their own hearts and motives, emphasizing the necessity of genuine sincerity in their relationship with God and fellow believers.

- a. Peter confronts Ananias about his deception and exposes the lie (Acts 5:3).
 - 1) Peter directly questions Ananias about the amount of money received from the sale of the property, probing the truthfulness of his statement.
 - 2) Ananias is confronted with the reality of his deception as Peter exposes the discrepancy between the actual proceeds and the amount he claimed to have brought.

b. Ananias falls dead upon hearing Peter's words, and fear grips all who hear about it (**Acts 5:5-6**).

- 1) In response to Peter's accusation and exposure of his deception, Ananias immediately falls dead, struck by the severity of God's judgment.
- 2) The sudden and dramatic nature of Ananias' death sends shockwaves through the church, instilling a profound fear of God's righteous judgment among all who witness or hear about the incident.

In these verses, the narrative unfolds as Peter confronts Ananias regarding his deceitful actions concerning the proceeds from the sale of property. This pivotal moment exposes the severity of Ananias' deception and underscores the importance of truthfulness and integrity within the Christian community. Ananias' swift judgment serves as a sobering reminder of God's holiness and the consequences of hypocrisy, prompting fear and reverence among believers. The dramatic nature of Ananias' death highlights the gravity of dishonesty and its repercussions, challenging readers to examine their own hearts and motives, emphasizing the necessity of genuine sincerity in their relationship with God and fellow believers.

3. Sapphira's Deception And Confrontation (Acts 5:7-10).

In these verses, we witness the continuation of the sobering narrative surrounding Ananias and Sapphira's deception within the early church. As Sapphira enters the scene, Peter extends the same scrutiny he applied to Ananias, questioning her about the sale of their property. Like her husband, Sapphira is given an opportunity to come clean about their deceitful actions. However, upon being confronted by Peter, she also meets a swift and tragic end, mirroring the judgment that befell Ananias. The sudden and severe consequences of their deception serve as a stark reminder of God's holiness and the importance of truthfulness within the Christian community. The fear and awe that follow underscore the gravity of their actions and the reverent response they elicit among believers.

a. Sapphira arrives later and is questioned by Peter about the sale of the property (**Acts 5:7-8**).

- 1) Upon Sapphira's arrival, Peter inquires about the transaction concerning the property, mirroring the confrontation he had with Ananias earlier.
- 2) Sapphira is given the opportunity to confirm or deny the accuracy of the information provided by her husband, Ananias, regarding the proceeds from the sale.

b. Sapphira also falls dead after being confronted by Peter, and fear spreads throughout the community (**Acts 5:9-10**).

- 1) Similar to Ananias, Sapphira faces divine judgment for her complicity in the deception, resulting in her sudden death upon Peter's exposure of the lie.
- 2) The swift and consequential nature of Sapphira's demise reinforces the seriousness of deceit and the holiness of God's standards within the Christian community, prompting a widespread sense of awe and reverence among those who witness or hear about the event.

In these verses, the narrative continues with the examination of Sapphira's involvement in the deceitful scheme initiated by her husband, Ananias. As Peter questions her about the sale of their property, Sapphira is given an opportunity to confess the truth. However, like Ananias before her, she faces divine judgment for her complicity in the deception and suffers a sudden and tragic fate. The swift and severe consequences of their actions serve as a poignant reminder of God's holiness and the importance of truthfulness within the Christian community. The fear and awe that follow Sapphira's death underscore the gravity of deceit and elicit a reverent response among believers, highlighting the profound implications of integrity in one's relationship with God and fellow brethren.

4. Signs And Wonders Accomplished By The Apostles (Acts 5:12-16).

In these verses, we witness the continuation of the miraculous manifestations of God's power through the apostles. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the apostles perform an array of signs and wonders, including healings and deliverances, that captivate the attention of the people. The fame of their miraculous abilities spreads far and wide, prompting individuals to seek healing not only directly from the apostles but also through indirect means, such as hoping for Peter's shadow to fall upon them. This extraordinary reputation draws multitudes from surrounding cities, each bringing their sick and demon-possessed to experience the transformative power of God firsthand. The remarkable outcomes of these encounters serve as a testament to the pervasive impact of the apostles' ministry and the boundless mercy and compassion of God toward His people.

a. The apostles perform many signs and wonders among the people (**Acts 5:12**). In continuation of the miraculous works observed in the early church, the apostles, empowered by the Holy Spirit, perform numerous extraordinary deeds, including healings and the expulsion of demons that capture the attention and astonishment of the church.

- b. People bring the sick into the streets, hoping that Peter's shadow might fall on them and heal them (Acts 5:15). The fame of the apostles' spreads throughout the region, prompting individuals to seek healing not only directly from the apostles, but also through indirect means, such as the mere shadow of Peter. This demonstrates the extent of the people's faith and the anticipation of divine intervention in their lives.
- c. Multitudes gather from surrounding cities, bringing their sick and those afflicted by unclean spirits, and they are all healed (Acts 5:16). The extraordinary reputation of the apostles attracts large crowds from neighboring cities, each bringing their sick and demon-possessed to seek healing and deliverance. Remarkably, all who come in faith are healed, showcasing the pervasive impact of the apostles' ministry and the transformative power of God at work among His people.

In these verses, we witness the ongoing display of God's power through the apostles as they perform miraculous signs and wonders. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, these extraordinary deeds, including healings and deliverances, attract widespread attention and admiration. People from surrounding cities flock to witness these miracles, bringing their sick and afflicted loved ones in anticipation of divine intervention. The reputation of the apostles spreads far and wide, leading to remarkable outcomes where all who come in faith are healed. These events serve as a powerful testament to the impact of the apostles' ministry and the boundless compassion of God towards His people, inspiring awe and faith among believers and non-believers alike.

5. The Apostles Arrested And Freed By An Angel (Acts 5:17-21).

In these verses, we encounter a pivotal moment in the early church as the religious authorities, driven by jealousy and threatened by the growing influence of the apostles, take drastic measures to suppress their message. The high priest and the Sadducees have the apostles arrested and imprisoned, seeking to quell the momentum of their ministry. However, their efforts are thwarted by divine intervention when an angel of the Lord miraculously opens the prison doors during the night, liberating the apostles and commanding them to continue proclaiming the Gospel fearlessly. This extraordinary deliverance serves as a powerful testament to God's sovereignty over earthly powers and His unwavering commitment to advancing His kingdom agenda despite opposition and persecution.

- a. The high priest and the Sadducees become jealous of the apostles' popularity and have them arrested (Acts 5:17-18).

- 1) The growing influence and miraculous works performed by the apostles arouse jealousy and resentment among the religious leaders, particularly the high priest and the Sadducees, who perceive the apostles as a threat to their authority and status quo.
- 2) In response to their fear of losing control and influence over the people, they have the apostles arrested and placed in custody.

- b. During the night, an angel of the Lord opens the prison doors, leads the apostles out, and instructs them to preach in the temple (Acts 5:19-21).

- 1) Despite their imprisonment, the apostles experience divine intervention as an angel miraculously opens the prison doors during the night. The angel not only facilitates their escape but also issues them a directive to resume their preaching in the temple, thereby defying the orders of the religious authorities.
- 2) This supernatural deliverance underscores God's sovereignty over earthly powers and His unwavering commitment to His mission of spreading the Gospel message.



Here, we witness a crucial turning point for the early church as the religious elite, driven by envy and threatened by the burgeoning influence of the apostles, resort to drastic measures to stifle their message. The high priest and the Sadducees' decision to imprison the apostles reflects their fear of losing control over the people. However, divine intervention disrupts their plans as an angel of the Lord liberates the apostles, commanding them to continue spreading the Gospel boldly. This miraculous escape serves as a potent demonstration of God's supremacy over human authorities and His unwavering dedication to advancing His kingdom despite opposition.

6. The Apostles' Testimony Before The Council (Acts 5:22-32).

In these verses, we witness the apostles' bold testimony before the council, a pivotal moment marked by confrontation, courage, and divine intervention. Assembled to question the apostles, the council is astonished to find the prison doors securely locked and the guards at their posts, only to discover the apostles freely preaching in the temple. Peter, undeterred by intimidation, proclaims their allegiance to God rather than men, boldly affirming their divine mandate to proclaim the Gospel. Accusing the council of crucifying Jesus, Peter declares God's exaltation of Him as Savior and Prince, emphasizing His sovereignty and redemptive plan. Despite the council's rage and plot to kill them, Gamaliel's counsel urges caution, warning against opposing the work of God. The apostles, undeterred by threats, rejoice in their suffering for Christ, embodying unwavering faith and resilience in the face of persecution.

- a. The high priest and the council assemble to question the apostles, but they find the prison doors securely locked and the guards standing at their posts (Acts 5:22-23).
 - 1) Despite the guards' vigilance and the security measures in place, the apostles miraculously find themselves freed from prison. The high priest and the council are bewildered by this turn of events, as they had expected the apostles to remain under strict custody.
 - 2) This supernatural intervention highlights God's power and protection over His faithful servants, foiling the plans of those who seek to suppress the spread of the Gospel.
- b. The apostles are brought before the council, and Peter boldly proclaims their allegiance to God rather than men (Acts 5:27-29).
 - 1) In the face of interrogation and intimidation, Peter fearlessly asserts the apostles' unwavering commitment to obeying God rather than human authority. He boldly proclaims their mandate to preach the Gospel, emphasizing their allegiance to the divine commission entrusted to them by Jesus Christ.
 - 2) Peter's courageous stance underscores the apostles' refusal to be silenced or deterred from fulfilling their calling, regardless of the consequences.
- c. Peter accuses the council of crucifying Jesus, but God has exalted Him as Savior and Prince (Acts 5:30-31).
 - 1) Peter confronts the council with their culpability in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, attributing His death to their rejection of Him as the Messiah. However, Peter also declares God's sovereignty and redemptive plan, asserting that despite their actions, God has exalted Jesus as Savior and Prince.
 - 2) This proclamation underscores the divine reversal of Jesus' fate, from crucifixion to resurrection and exaltation, affirming His authority and role as the source of salvation for all humanity.
- d. The council is infuriated and plots to kill the apostles, but Gamaliel advises caution, warning them against opposing the work of God (Acts 5:33-39).
 - 1) Enraged by the apostles' bold testimony and unwilling to heed Peter's admonition, the council devises plans to eliminate the apostles and suppress their message. However, Gamaliel, a respected Pharisee and teacher of the Law, counsels moderation and caution. Drawing on historical precedents, Gamaliel urges the council to refrain from opposing the apostles, cautioning that if their mission is of human origin, it will fail, but if it is of God, they will find themselves fighting against God Himself.
 - 2) Gamaliel's argument may appear logical on the surface, as he presents a pragmatic approach to dealing with the situation involving the apostles. However, upon closer examination, there are some flaws in his reasoning. Consider: there have been many religious movements in the past, and even many today, that are not of God that have and continue to flourish.
- e. The council agrees to flog the apostles and orders them not to speak in the name of Jesus, but the apostles rejoice in their suffering for Christ (Acts 5:40-42).
 - 1) Despite facing persecution and threats from the religious authorities, the apostles remain steadfast in their commitment to proclaiming the name of Jesus Christ. The council's decision to flog the apostles and forbid them from speaking in Jesus' name serves as a testament to the intensity of opposition faced by the early church.

No matter your stature or intellect, fallibility can still find its way into your judgment, casting shadows on the wisdom you impart.

- 2) However, far from being deterred, the apostles rejoice in their suffering, considering it a privilege to suffer for the sake of Christ (**cp. Philippians 3:10-11**). Their response reflects a deep-seated faith and unwavering devotion to their Lord and Savior, setting an example of endurance and perseverance in the face of adversity.

In these verses, the religious authorities, threatened by the apostles' growing influence, have them arrested and imprisoned, only to witness their miraculous escape facilitated by an angel of the Lord. This supernatural intervention highlights God's sovereignty over earthly powers and His commitment to advancing His kingdom agenda despite opposition. Subsequently, the apostles boldly testify before the council, proclaiming their allegiance to God rather than men and affirming Jesus' exaltation as Savior. Despite threats and persecution, they rejoice in their suffering for Christ, embodying unwavering faith and resilience. These events underscore the transformative power of the Gospel and the unwavering commitment of early Christians to their faith, inspiring believers to stand firm in the face of adversity and persecution.

Summary:

1. **Ananias And Sapphira's Deception (Acts 5:1-11):** Acts 5 opens with the account of Ananias and Sapphira deceiving the apostles and the church by withholding a portion of the proceeds from the sale of their property, leading to their sudden deaths as a result of divine judgment.
2. **Apostolic Miracles And Opposition (Acts 5:12-16, 17-42):** Despite opposition from religious authorities, the apostles continue to perform signs and wonders among the people, drawing multitudes and instilling fear among the ruling class. Their escape from prison showcases God's protection and sovereignty over earthly powers.
3. **Fearless Testimony And Persecution (Acts 5:27-42):** The apostles boldly testify before the council, proclaiming the Gospel despite threats and persecution. Their unwavering faith and rejoicing in suffering exemplify the courage and commitment of early Christians in the face of adversity.

This chapter highlights the significance of honesty, courage, and unwavering faith for believers. Ananias and Sapphira's deceit warns against hypocrisy, while the apostles' miracles and bold testimony show God's power amid opposition. Believers can draw inspiration from the early church's example, staying committed to truth, boldly sharing the Gospel, and finding joy in suffering for Christ.

Applications:

1. **Integrity In Christian Community (Acts 5:1-11):** This lesson underscores the importance of honesty within the church. Ananias and Sapphira's deception serves as a warning against hypocrisy and selfishness, reminding believers of the need for transparency and sincerity in their dealings with fellow believers and with God.
2. **Courage In The Face Of Opposition (Acts 5:17-42):** The apostles' boldness in continuing to preach the Gospel despite persecution and threats serves as a powerful example for modern-day Christians. This lesson encourages believers to stand firm in their faith and to boldly proclaim the message of Jesus Christ, even in the face of opposition or adversity.
3. **Trust In God's Sovereignty (Acts 5:12-16, 27-42):** Throughout this lesson, we see God's sovereignty at work, both in executing judgment on the deceitful and in protecting and delivering His faithful servants. This teaches believers to trust in God's providence and to rely on His power and guidance in all circumstances, knowing that He is in control and will ultimately accomplish His purposes.

These applications serve as valuable reminders for believers in their daily walk with God. Integrity, courage, and trust in God's sovereignty are essential aspects of the Christian life. By practicing honesty and sincerity, standing firm in the face of opposition, and relying on God's guidance, believers can navigate challenges with confidence and continue to advance God's kingdom in their lives and communities.

Key Points:

1. **Integrity And Sincerity (Acts 5:1-11):** these are vital in the Christian community, as demonstrated by the cautionary tale of Ananias and Sapphira's deceit. Their story emphasizes the importance of genuine generosity and transparency in relationships with God and fellow believers.

2. **God's Transformative Power (Acts 5:12-16):** The apostles' miraculous signs and wonders, empowered by the Holy Spirit, draw multitudes and showcase God's transformative power. These events highlight the impact of the apostles' ministry and God's boundless mercy and compassion towards His people.
3. **Unwavering Faith (Acts 5:17-42):** Despite facing opposition and persecution, the apostles boldly testify to the truth of the Gospel, rejoicing in their suffering for Christ. Their unwavering faith and resilience inspire believers to stand firm in their commitment to truth and courageously proclaim the message of Jesus Christ, trusting in God's sovereignty and providence.

These key points emphasize the importance of integrity, courage, and trust in God's sovereignty within the early church. Ananias and Sapphira's deceit serves as a cautionary tale, highlighting the necessity of sincerity and transparency. The apostles' miraculous works demonstrate God's power and draw multitudes to witness His transformative grace. Despite facing opposition, the apostles' bold testimony inspires believers to stand firm in their faith, trusting in God's providence amidst challenges.

Questions:

1. What was the sin committed by Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-2)?
2. What were the consequences of Ananias and Sapphira's deception (Acts 5:5-10)?
3. How did the apostles perform signs and wonders among the people (Acts 5:12-16)?
4. Why were the religious authorities threatened by the apostles (Acts 5:17-18)?
5. How did God intervene to rescue the apostles from prison (Acts 5:19-21)?
6. What was Peter's response when questioned by the council (Acts 5:27-32)?
7. Who advised caution to the council regarding their treatment of the apostles (Acts 5:33-39)?
8. How did the apostles react to the council's command not to speak in the name of Jesus (Acts 5:40-42)?
9. What lessons can believers learn from Ananias and Sapphira's deception (Acts 5:1-11)?
10. How can believers apply the examples of the apostles' boldness and endurance in their own lives (Acts 5:27-32)?

LESSON 6 • • • • •
Unity Amidst Service: The Appointment Of Seven Servants And Stephen's Testimony (Acts 6:1-15).

1. Introduction.

In this chapter, the rapidly growing church in Jerusalem grapples with the challenges of this growth and cultural diversity. As believers from varied backgrounds unite around the teachings of Jesus Christ, practical issues, such as equitable resource distribution, emerge, particularly concerning the care of widows. Amidst these challenges, the apostles seek to maintain unity and address grievances promptly, underscoring the importance of fairness and cooperation within the community. This chapter highlights the dynamic nature of the early church as it navigates organizational complexities while remaining steadfast in its commitment to the Gospel mission (**Acts 6:1-7**).

- a. Context: The early Christian community in Jerusalem is growing rapidly:

- 1) In this chapter, we see the church in Jerusalem facing significant growth and the resulting challenges. This expansion was not only numerical but also cultural and organizational, as Christians from diverse backgrounds came together to form a vibrant community centered on Jesus Christ.
- 2) The growth of the church posed practical issues related to the equitable distribution of resources and the fair treatment of all members, particularly widows, within the community.
- 3) This context sets the stage for the events that unfold in this passage, highlighting the dynamic nature of the early church as it navigated the complexities of rapid growth (2:41-47; 4:32-35; 5:12-16; 6:1-7).

Acts 6:1; A Problem with the Daily Distribution

- During the first days of the church, some of the Hellenist widows were being neglected during the daily distribution. (Acts 6:1)
- The apostles told the brethren to select seven men to be entrusted with the daily distribution. (Acts 6:2-4)
- The multitude chose Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas. (Acts 6:5-6)
- As the word of God spread, the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem. (Acts 6:7)

- b. Purpose: Addressing a dispute arising from the distribution of food to widows:

- 1) In this chapter, one of the primary purposes is to address a dispute that arises among the brethren in Jerusalem regarding the equitable distribution of food to widows.
- 2) As the church continued to grow, practical issues emerged, and the needs of certain groups, particularly widows, were not being adequately met. This situation led to murmuring and discontent among the Hellenistic Jews, who felt that their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food.
- 3) Recognizing the importance of ensuring fairness and equality within the community, the apostles sought to address this issue promptly, thereby preserving unity and preventing division within the church (Acts 6:1-7).

- c. **Unity:** Maintaining unity among the believers in Jerusalem amidst cultural and organizational challenges:

- 1) Alongside the rapid growth of the early church, maintaining unity became increasingly crucial, especially given the diverse backgrounds and cultural differences among believers.
- 2) The dispute over the distribution of food to widows threatened to disrupt the harmony and unity within the Christian community in Jerusalem.
- 3) Resolving this dispute not only addressed practical concerns but also reinforced the importance of unity and cooperation among believers, demonstrating the church's commitment to preserving the bond of peace and solidarity (**Ephesians 4:3; Philippians 2:2; Colossians 3:14**).

The burgeoning Christian community in Jerusalem faces significant growth, accompanied by challenges in resource distribution and the fair treatment of all members, particularly widows. This chapter illustrates the dynamic nature of the early church as it navigates these complexities while remaining faithful to its mission. Addressing a dispute over food distribution highlights the community's commitment to fairness and unity, crucial for its cohesion amidst cultural and organizational challenges. Through prompt resolution and communal cooperation, the church demonstrates its dedication to preserving peace and solidarity, essential for its continued growth and effectiveness in spreading the Gospel message.

2. Appointment Of Seven Deacons (Acts 6:1-7).

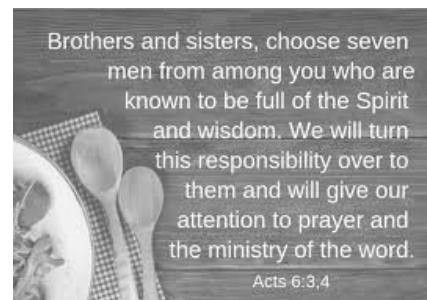
In these verses, the flourishing church in Jerusalem faces a significant challenge regarding the equitable distribution of food to widows, revealing potential disparities within the early church. Prompted by complaints from Greek-speaking Jewish widows, the Twelve summon the disciples to address the issue, demonstrating a proactive approach to conflict resolution and communal unity. They propose the selection of seven men known for their good reputation, spiritual maturity, and wisdom to oversee food distribution, which receives unanimous approval. The apostles commission these men through prayer and laying on of hands, signifying their endorsement and empowerment for the task. As a result, the word of God continues to spread, leading to both numerical and spiritual growth within the church, even among unlikely converts like the priests. This section highlights the early church's commitment to addressing practical challenges while maintaining unity and advancing its mission of proclaiming the Gospel.

a. The problem arises (Acts 6:1-2):

- 1) Complaint from the Greek-speaking Jewish widows about being neglected in the daily distribution of food:
 - a) The narrative in these verses reveals a significant challenge within the church in Jerusalem. A complaint arises from the Greek-speaking Jewish widows concerning their perceived neglect in the daily distribution of food. These widows, likely part of the Hellenistic Jewish community, were Jews who spoke Greek and may have been immigrants or had been raised in a Greek-speaking environment (Acts 6:1).
 - b) This complaint highlights a potential disparity or oversight in the distribution system within the early church. It underscores the importance of equitable treatment and care for all members of the community, regardless of their cultural or linguistic background. Neglecting the needs of vulnerable members, such as widows, contradicted the principles of compassion and communal sharing that characterized the early church (Acts 4:32-35).
- 2) The Twelve summon the disciples to address the issue:
 - a) In response to the complaint, the Twelve, likely referring to the apostles who held leadership roles within the Jerusalem church, summon the disciples to address the issue (Acts 6:2).
 - b) This action demonstrates the apostles' proactive approach to resolving conflicts and addressing practical concerns within the community. By involving the wider body of believers in the decision-making process, the apostles fostered a sense of collective responsibility and unity among the disciples (Acts 6:2).
 - c) The apostles' recognition of the need to address the issue promptly reflects their commitment to maintaining peace and harmony within the church, thereby preventing potential divisions or disputes that could undermine the unity of the believers (Ephesians 4:3; Colossians 3:14).

b. Proposal and selection of servants (Acts 6:3-6):

- 1) The Twelve propose the selection of seven men known for their good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom, to oversee the distribution of food:
 - a) In response to the challenge of addressing the complaint from the Greek-speaking Jewish widows, the Twelve propose a solution involving the selection of seven men to oversee the distribution of food (Acts 6:3).
 - b) These men were to be chosen based on specific qualifications: they were to have a good reputation within the community, be full of the Holy Spirit, and possess wisdom (Acts 6:3).
 - c) This proposal reflects the apostles' recognition of the importance of appointing individuals who were not only trustworthy and respected but also spiritually mature and endowed with wisdom from God. Such qualifications were essential for effectively managing the practical affairs of the church and ensuring the equitable treatment of all members (1 Timothy 3:8-13).



- 2) The congregation approves the proposal, and the Seven are chosen: Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus:
 - a) The proposal put forth by the Twelve receives the approval of the entire congregation, indicating widespread support for the initiative (**Acts 6:5**).
 - b) Subsequently, seven men are chosen to serve in this capacity. These men, named Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, are selected based on their qualifications and suitability for the task (**Acts 6:5**).
 - c) The selection of these individuals from among the brethren demonstrates the importance of communal involvement in the decision-making process within the early church. It affirms the principle of shared responsibility and mutual accountability among believers in addressing practical needs and challenges (**Acts 6:5**).
- 3) The apostles pray and lay their hands on the Seven, commissioning them for their service:
 - a) Before officially assuming their responsibilities, the Seven are presented to the apostles, who pray over them and lay their hands on them (**Acts 6:6**).
 - b) This act of prayer and laying on of hands signifies the apostles' endorsement and authorization of the Seven for their appointed task. It symbolizes the impartation of spiritual authority and empowerment for their service within the church (**cp. 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6**).
 - c) Through this commissioning ceremony, the apostles publicly affirm the chosen men's suitability for the role and invoke God's blessing upon them as they embark on their ministry of overseeing the distribution of food to widows.
- c. The word spreads, and the number of disciples multiplies (**Acts 6:7**):
 - 1) The word of God continues to spread, and the number of disciples in Jerusalem multiplies greatly:
 - a) Following the appointment of the Seven to oversee the distribution of food, the ministry of the word of God experiences significant growth and expansion (**Acts 6:7**).
 - b) Despite the internal challenge faced by the early church regarding the equitable distribution of resources, the community remains steadfast in its commitment to proclaiming the Gospel message (**Acts 6:7**).
 - c) The continued spread of the word of God underscores the effectiveness of the apostles' leadership and the Holy Spirit is empowerment in advancing the mission of the church (**Acts 6:7**).
 - d) This growth is not merely quantitative but also qualitative, as new converts are added to the community, contributing to its spiritual vitality and dynamism (**Acts 6:7**).
 - 2) Even a large number of priests become obedient to the faith:
 - a) As the Gospel message spreads throughout Jerusalem, it transcends social and religious barriers, leading to the conversion of individuals from diverse backgrounds, including priests (**Acts 6:7**).
 - b) The inclusion of priests among those who become obedient to the faith demonstrates the transformative power of the Gospel to penetrate even the most entrenched religious structures and traditions (**Acts 6:7**).
 - c) The conversion of priests signifies a significant shift in allegiance from the religious establishment to the person of Jesus Christ, indicating the compelling nature of the Gospel message and its ability to effect radical change in the lives of individuals (**Acts 6:7**).
 - d) This development highlights the inclusive nature of the early Christian community, which welcomed believers from various backgrounds into fellowship, regardless of their social status or religious affiliations (**Acts 6:7**).

The early church in Jerusalem encounters a challenge concerning the fair distribution of resources, particularly food to widows. The Twelve, recognizing the importance of addressing this issue promptly, propose the appointment of seven men of good reputation and wisdom to oversee the task. With the approval of the congregation, these men are commissioned through prayer and laying on of hands. This proactive approach to problem-solving not only ensures equitable treatment within the community but also fosters unity and facilitates the continued spread of the Gospel message. The church's response reflects its commitment to addressing practical needs while remaining faithful to its mission, resulting in both numerical and spiritual growth.

3. Stephen's Ministry And Opposition (Acts 6:8-15).

In these verses, we witness the ministry of Stephen, a man filled with grace and power, who performs great wonders and signs among the people. Despite his remarkable works, Stephen faces fierce opposition from various Jewish groups, leading to heated debates concerning his teachings and the validity of his miracles. False accusations are levelled against him, alleging blasphemy against Moses and God, inciting the people, elders, and scribes to seize him and bring him before the Sanhedrin. As Stephen appears before the council, his face shines like that of an angel, reflecting God's presence and his innocence amidst the false charges. This introduction sets the stage for a dramatic confrontation between Stephen and the religious authorities of Jerusalem, highlighting the challenges faced by early Christians as they boldly proclaimed the message of Jesus Christ amidst persecution and opposition.

a. Stephen's Miraculous Works and Teachings (Acts 6:8-10):

- 1) Stephen, full of grace and power, performs great wonders and signs among the people:
 - a) Acts 6:8 portrays Stephen as a man filled with grace and power, attributes that empower him to perform extraordinary miracles and signs among the people.
 - b) His ministry is marked by the manifestation of God's supernatural power, which validates his message and establishes his credibility as a servant of the Lord (Acts 6:8).
- 2) Opposition arises from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen, Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and others, leading to debates with Stephen:
 - a) Acts 6:9-10 recounts the opposition faced by Stephen from certain groups within the Jewish community, including the Synagogue of the Freedmen (former slaves), Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and others.
 - b) These opponents engage in disputes with Stephen, challenging his teachings and disputing the validity of his miraculous works (Acts 6:9-10).
 - c) The debates with Stephen likely centered on theological matters related to the identity of Jesus as the Messiah and the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, among other doctrinal issues (Acts 6:9-10).
 - d) Despite facing opposition and hostility from various quarters, Stephen remains steadfast in his faith and commitment to proclaiming the Gospel, undeterred by the challenges posed by his adversaries (Acts 6:10).

b. False Accusations against Stephen (Acts 6:11-14):

- 1) Some men falsely accuse Stephen of speaking blasphemous words against Moses and God:
 - a) Acts 6:11 describes how certain individuals from various Jewish groups stirred up the people and elders against Stephen by spreading false accusations.
 - b) These accusers allege that Stephen speaks blasphemous words against Moses, the revered lawgiver of Israel, and against God Himself. Such accusations aimed to discredit Stephen's teachings and undermine his authority among the people (Acts 6:11).
- 2) They incite the people, elders, and scribes to seize Stephen and bring him before the Sanhedrin:
 - a) Acts 6:12 depicts how the false accusers agitated the crowd, along with the elders and scribes, to take action against Stephen.
 - b) Incited by these accusations, the people and their leaders become inflamed with anger and zeal to apprehend Stephen and subject him to judgment before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council of religious authority (Acts 6:12).

- c) This orchestrated effort to bring charges against Stephen reflects the hostility and opposition faced by early Christians as they boldly proclaimed the message of Jesus Christ, often encountering resistance from religious leaders and traditionalists who perceived their teachings as a threat to established norms and beliefs (**Acts 6:12-14**).

c. Stephen's Appearance before the Sanhedrin (**Acts 6:15**):

- 1) Stephen is brought before the Sanhedrin, and false witnesses testify against him:
 - a) Acts 6:15 recounts how Stephen is brought before the Sanhedrin, the supreme Jewish council, to face the charges brought against him by false witnesses.
 - b) These false witnesses, likely instigated by those opposed to Stephen's teachings, fabricate accusations of blasphemy against Moses and God (**Acts 6:13-14**).
 - c) The scene depicts a moment of confrontation where Stephen, a representative of the burgeoning Christian movement, is forced to defend his beliefs and actions before the religious authorities of Jerusalem (**Acts 6:15**).
- 2) Despite the false accusations, Stephen's face shines like that of an angel as he stands before the council:
 - a) Acts 6:15 describes an extraordinary aspect of Stephen's appearance during his trial before the Sanhedrin.
 - b) Despite the grave charges and the hostile environment, Stephen's countenance radiates with a divine light, resembling that of an angel.
 - c) This miraculous manifestation not only symbolizes God's presence with Stephen but also underscores his innocence and righteousness in the face of false accusations (**Acts 6:15**).
 - d) The shining of Stephen's face serves as a powerful testimony to the truth of his message and the favor of God upon him, even in the midst of persecution and opposition (**Acts 6:15**).

Here, we witness the emergence of Stephen as a powerful figure in the church, marked by his ministry of great wonders and signs. Despite facing opposition and false accusations from various Jewish groups, Stephen remains steadfast in his faith and commitment to proclaiming the Gospel. His appearance before the Sanhedrin, radiating with divine light, symbolizes his innocence and God's favor upon him. This section underscores the challenges encountered by Christians as they confronted opposition and persecution while boldly testifying to the truth of Jesus Christ. Stephen's unwavering faith and divine empowerment serve as a powerful testimony to the transformative power of the Gospel amidst adversity, inspiring believers to stand firm in their convictions despite opposition.

Summary:

1. **Unity And Service (Acts 6:1-7):** The appointment of seven servants not only addressed practical needs within the early church but also demonstrated a commitment to unity and cooperation among believers. By selecting individuals of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, the apostles ensured that the distribution of resources, particularly food to widows, was conducted fairly and equitably. This proactive approach to problem-solving emphasized the importance of communal involvement in decision-making processes and the shared responsibility of believers in addressing challenges within the community. The unity displayed in the selection and commissioning of these servants reinforced the early church's cohesion and solidarity, contributing to its continued growth and effectiveness in fulfilling its mission.
2. **Bold Testimony (Acts 6:8-15; 7:1-60):** Stephen's unwavering faith and bold testimony amidst opposition exemplify the courage and conviction of early Christians in proclaiming the Gospel message. Despite facing fierce opposition and false accusations, Stephen remained steadfast in his commitment to Christ, refusing to compromise his beliefs or silence his witness. His fearless proclamation of the truth, accompanied by miraculous signs and wonders, challenged the religious establishment and inspired fellow believers to stand firm in their faith, even in the face of persecution. Stephen's example serves as a powerful reminder of the transformative impact of the Gospel and the enduring strength it provides to those who boldly testify to its truth.

3. **Divine Empowerment (Acts 6:3-6):** Through prayer and commissioning, the early church demonstrated its reliance on divine empowerment in navigating challenges and advancing its mission. The apostles' recognition of the need for spiritual discernment and guidance in selecting and commissioning the seven servants underscored their dependence on God's wisdom and direction. By invoking God's blessing and authority through prayer and the laying on of hands, the apostles affirmed the chosen servants' suitability for their roles and entrusted them with the task of overseeing the distribution of resources within the community. This act of commissioning symbolized the impartation of spiritual authority and empowerment, enabling the servants to carry out their duties effectively and in accordance with God's will. The divine empowerment experienced by the early church enabled it to overcome obstacles, persevere in the face of adversity, and continue spreading the Gospel message with boldness and conviction.

In summary, the appointment of seven servants, Stephen's bold testimony, and the early church's reliance on divine empowerment exemplify key aspects of its identity and mission. Through unity, service, courage, and divine guidance, the early church remained steadfast in its commitment to proclaiming the Gospel and advancing the kingdom of God, inspiring believers throughout the ages to follow their example.

Applications:

1. **Commitment To Unity And Service (Acts 6:1-7):** The appointment of the seven servants underscores the importance of maintaining unity and addressing practical needs within the church. As Christians, we can apply this by actively participating in and supporting initiatives that promote unity and meet the needs of others within our local church. This could involve volunteering for service opportunities, supporting benevolence efforts, or advocating for equitable treatment and inclusion of all members, especially the vulnerable.
2. **Courageous Testimony (Acts 6:8-15; 7:1-60):** Stephen's bold testimony in the face of opposition challenges us to courageously proclaim and defend our faith, even when confronted with hostility or adversity. We can apply this by cultivating a deep understanding of our beliefs, strengthening our relationship with God through prayer and study of Scripture, and actively sharing our faith with others, both in word and deed. By living out our convictions with courage and integrity, we can bear witness to the transformative power of the Gospel in our lives and communities.
3. **Dependence On Divine Empowerment (Acts 6:3-6):** The early church's reliance on divine empowerment through prayer and commissioning reminds us of the essential role of God's guidance and empowerment in fulfilling our mission as believers. We can apply this by prioritizing prayer and seeking God's wisdom and direction in all aspects of our lives and ministries. By acknowledging our dependence on God's strength rather than relying solely on our own abilities, we open ourselves to His leading through the word and empowerment, enabling us to overcome obstacles, discern His will, and fulfill His purposes more effectively.

By applying these lessons, we can deepen our commitment to unity and service, boldly proclaim our faith in the face of opposition, and rely on God's empowerment to fulfill His mission in our lives and communities.

Key Points:

1. **Addressing Practical Needs With Unity (Acts 6:1-7):** The early church in Jerusalem faced challenges related to the equitable distribution of resources, particularly concerning the care of widows. The appointment of seven servants demonstrated the importance of addressing practical needs promptly while maintaining unity and cooperation within the Christian community.
2. **Bold Testimony Amidst Opposition (Acts 6:8-15; 7:1-60):** Stephen's ministry and subsequent confrontation with various Jewish groups highlight the courage and steadfastness required to boldly proclaim the Gospel message, even in the face of opposition and persecution. His unwavering faith and divine empowerment serve as a powerful example for believers facing similar challenges today.
3. **Dependence On Divine Empowerment (Acts 6:3-6):** Throughout the chapter, the early church's reliance on prayer and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit is evident. This dependence on divine guidance and strength underscores the importance of seeking God's wisdom and empowerment in fulfilling the mission of the church and confronting challenges with confidence and faith.

These key points underscore the early church's proactive response to challenges, demonstrated through the appointment of seven servants to address practical needs while maintaining unity. Additionally, Stephen's unwavering testimony amidst opposition showcases the courage and dedication required to boldly proclaim the Gospel message. Throughout these events, the church's reliance on prayer and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit highlights the crucial role of divine guidance and strength in navigating challenges and advancing the mission of the church.

Questions:

1. Who were the individuals chosen to oversee the distribution of food in the early church (Acts 6:3-6)?
2. What were the qualifications required for those selected to be servants (Acts 6:3)?
3. How did the apostles address the issue of equitable resource distribution in response to complaints within the church (Acts 6:2-3)?
4. What significant growth did the early church experience after the appointment of the seven servants (Acts 6:7)?
5. Who were among those who became obedient to the faith as a result of the church's growth and the appointment of the seven servants (Acts 6:7)?
6. What miraculous works and signs did Stephen perform among the people (Acts 6:8)?
7. How did Stephen respond to the opposition he faced concerning his teachings and miracles (Acts 6:10)?
8. What false accusations were levelled against Stephen by certain individuals (Acts 6:11-14)?
9. What supernatural phenomenon accompanied Stephen as he appeared before the Sanhedrin (Acts 6:15)?
10. What significance does Stephen's testimony hold for the early church in facing challenges and opposition (Acts 6:15)?

This chapter recounts Stephen's speech before the Sanhedrin, the ruling council of Judea. The opening verses (**Acts 7:1-2**) set the stage for this pivotal moment. Here, we see the high priest initiating the proceedings, calling upon Stephen to answer charges against him (**Acts 7:1**). In response, Stephen adopts a respectful approach. He acknowledges the council's authority by addressing them as "Brethren and fathers" (**Acts 7:2**). He further prepares for his defense by inviting them to listen attentively with the phrase "Hear ye" (**Acts 7:2**). These opening lines establish the context of accusation and defense while highlighting Stephen's respectful demeanor towards the council.

- a. The high priest's inquiry (**Acts 7:1**). Stephen is called upon to defend himself against accusations.
- b. Stephen's respectful address (**Acts 7:2**):
 - 1) He acknowledges the authority of the council ("Brethren and fathers").
 - 2) He prepares to offer a historical perspective ("Hear ye").

The opening verses (Acts 7:1-2) set the stage for a dramatic confrontation. Stephen, facing accusations before the Sanhedrin, is called upon to defend himself. The high priest initiates the proceedings, highlighting the seriousness of the situation (Acts 7:1). In contrast, Stephen adopts a respectful approach. He acknowledges the council's authority by addressing them as respected leaders ("Brethren and fathers") (Acts 7:2). Furthermore, he demonstrates his willingness to engage in a reasoned discussion by inviting them to listen attentively ("Hear ye") (Acts 7:2). These opening lines establish the context: Stephen, accused but respectful, prepares to offer his defense.

Stephen's defense begins with a historical overview (**Acts 7:3-16**), emphasizing God's unwavering faithfulness to Israel's ancestors through events like the call of Abraham and the migration to Egypt.

- a. The call of Abraham (Acts 7:3-4):
 - 1) God appears to Abraham and promises him land and descendants (Genesis 12:1-2).
 - 2) Abraham leaves his homeland in obedience to God's call (Genesis 12:4).
- b. The famine and migration to Egypt (Acts 7:5-16):
 - 1) Jacob and his family travel to Egypt due to famine in Canaan (Genesis 41:54-57; 42:1-5).
 - 2) Joseph, sold into slavery, becomes powerful in Egypt (Genesis 37:23-36; 41:41-44).
 - 3) Joseph's family is brought to Egypt, establishing the Israelites there (Genesis 45:6-28).

By recounting the call of Abraham and the migration to Egypt, Stephen lays the groundwork for his argument. He highlights God's continuous faithfulness to the Israelites, even during challenging times. Despite a shift in location from the Promised Land, God preserves His people through Joseph's leadership in Egypt. This historical foundation paves the way for Stephen to address the present situation and potentially challenge the Sanhedrin's understanding of God's plan.

Stephen recounts Moses' miraculous birth and upbringing, highlighting God's providence (**Acts 7:17-20**). Stephen then details Moses' calling to liberate Israel, emphasizing God's initiative and Moses' role as God's chosen leader (**Acts 7:21-36**). Finally, he touches on the Exodus and the giving of the Law, showcasing God's faithfulness while hinting at a recurring theme: the Israelites' disobedience (**Acts 7:37-44**).

- a. Moses' birth and upbringing (**Acts 7:17-20**):
 - 1) God intervenes in Moses' birth to preserve him from Pharaoh's decree (**Exodus 1:22-2:2**).
 - 2) Moses is raised in Pharaoh's household but remains connected to his Hebrew heritage (**Exodus 2:3-10**).
- b. Moses' leadership potential and commission (**Acts 7:21-36**):
 - 1) Moses flees Egypt after killing an Egyptian and spends years in Midian (**Exodus 2:11-15**).
 - 2) God appears to Moses at the burning bush and calls him to liberate Israel (**Exodus 3:1-12**).

3) Moses hesitates but ultimately accepts his mission (**Exodus 4:1-17**).

c. The exodus and the giving of the Law (**Acts 7:37-44**):

- 1) Moses leads the Israelites out of Egypt through signs and wonders (**Exodus 13-14**).
- 2) The Israelites receive the Law at Mount Sinai, establishing a covenant with God (**Exodus 19-20**).
- 3) Despite God's faithfulness, the Israelites rebel in the wilderness (**Exodus 32**).

Stephen's focus on Moses (**Acts 7:17-44**) strengthens his argument. By highlighting God's intervention in Moses' birth, his calling as a leader, and the deliverance from Egypt, Stephen paints a picture of God's active role in Israel's history. However, the mention of the Israelites' rebellion in the wilderness (**Acts 7:44**) foreshadows a recurring theme: despite God's faithfulness, the people tend to stray. This sets the stage for Stephen's later point about the ongoing pattern of rejecting God's messengers.



4. The Temple: Not A Requirement For God (**Acts 7:45-50**).

Shifting gears in his defense, Stephen tackles the concept of the temple. He acknowledges the Israelites having a portable tabernacle during their wanderings (**Acts 7:44-46**). He then moves on to King David's desire for a permanent temple, highlighting God's response that a future descendant would be entrusted with that task (**Acts 7:47-48**). Finally, while acknowledging the existence of Solomon's temple, Stephen delivers a key point: God's presence is not limited to physical structures built by humans, referencing the prophet Isaiah (**Acts 7:48-50**).

- a. The tabernacle in the wilderness (**Acts 7:44-46**): The Israelites carry a portable tabernacle, a place for encountering God, during their desert wanderings (**Exodus 25-27**).
- b. David's desire and God's promise (**Acts 7:47-48**):
 - 1) King David desires to build a permanent temple for God's presence (**2 Samuel 7:1-3**).
 - 2) God acknowledges David's heart but specifies a future descendant will build the temple (**2 Samuel 7:12-16**).
- c. Solomon's Temple and God's true dwelling (**Acts 7:48-50**):
 - 1) King Solomon builds the temple according to God's instructions (**1 Kings 6**).
 - 2) Stephen emphasizes that God is not confined to temples made by human hands, citing the prophet Isaiah (**Isaiah 66:1-2**).

Challenging a central aspect of Jewish belief, Stephen argues that the physical temple is not essential for God's presence (**Acts 7:45-50**). He acknowledges historical precedents like the tabernacle and Solomon's temple, but emphasizes God's words through Isaiah: true worship is not limited by human-made structures (**Acts 7:48-50**). This paves the way for Stephen's later claim that the Sanhedrin, despite having the temple, has rejected God's will.

5. Accusation And Rejection Throughout History (**Acts 7:51-53**).

As his defense nears its climax, Stephen transitions to a more confrontational approach (**Acts 7:51-53**). He directly criticizes the Sanhedrin, using strong language to expose their hypocrisy.

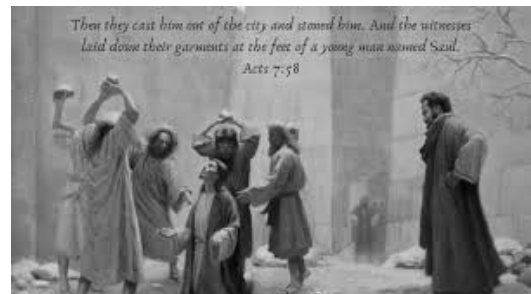
- a. Stephen's sharp rebuke (**Acts 7:51**): He accuses the Sanhedrin of being “stiff-necked” and “resisting the Holy Spirit.”
- b. A Pattern of rejecting God's messengers (**Acts 7:52-53**): Stephen parallels the council's actions with the Israelites' historical rejection of the prophets.

Stephen's defense reaches a boiling point. He throws off his respectful demeanor and directly confronts the Sanhedrin. Using harsh terms like “stiff-necked” and “resisting the Holy Spirit,” he accuses them of rejecting God's will. Furthermore, he draws a historical parallel, highlighting the Israelites' repeated pattern of rejecting prophets sent by God (**Acts 7:52-53**). This comparison implies the Sanhedrin is following in those same footsteps by rejecting Stephen and his message about Jesus.

6. Stephen's Martyrdom: A Witness For Christ (Acts 7:54-60).

The climax of Stephen's speech arrives in these closing verses. Facing his accusers, Stephen experiences a powerful vision of Jesus in heaven (Acts 7:55-56). This divinely-sent experience serves multiple purposes: empowering Stephen, confirming his message, and foreshadowing his own heavenly reward. However, the Sanhedrin remains unconvinced. Enraged by his words and vision, they drag him outside the city and stone him to death (Acts 7:57-58). Even in this brutal moment, Stephen demonstrates Christ-like character by praying for forgiveness of his killers (Acts 7:59). While not explicitly stated, Stephen's act of faith and forgiveness marks him as the first Christian martyr, his death a powerful testament to his beliefs. A seemingly minor detail adds further significance: a young man named Saul, who will later become the apostle Paul, witnesses Stephen's execution (Acts 7:58). The irony is that Saul, initially an opponent of Christianity, will himself be transformed by faith, highlighting God's unexpected ways of working through Stephen's sacrifice.

- a. A heavenly vision (Acts 7:55-56): Stephen sees "the heavens opened" and a vision of Jesus standing at God's right hand.
 - 1) Just as Stephen is about to face his accusers, Acts 7:55-56 describes a powerful moment: "But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."
 - 2) This vision serves several purposes:
 - a) Empowerment: Filled with the Holy Spirit, Stephen receives strength and courage in the face of persecution.
 - b) Confirmation: The vision confirms Stephen's message about Jesus and His place of authority with God.
 - c) Foreshadowing: Seeing Jesus at God's right hand foreshadows Stephen's own future heavenly reward.
- b. The council's fury and Stephen's stoning (Acts 7:57-58):
 - 1) The Sanhedrin is enraged by Stephen's words and vision (Acts 7:57).
 - 2) They drag him outside the city and stone him to death (Acts 7:58).
- c. Stephen's forgiveness and legacy (Acts 7:59-60):
 - 1) Following Jesus' example, Stephen prays for forgiveness of his killers (Acts 7:60; see also Jesus' words on the cross: Luke 23:34).
 - 2) Stephen dies as the first Christian martyr, his faith a powerful witness for Christ (this is not directly referenced in a single verse, but implied in Acts 7:60 and the context of early church history).
- d. The significance of Saul (Acts 7:58).
 - 1) While overseeing Stephen's stoning, this verse mentions a young man named Saul approving of the execution: "And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul." This seemingly minor detail introduces Saul, who will later become the apostle Paul, a prominent figure in spreading Christianity.
 - 2) The irony here is that Saul, who witnessed Stephen's faith and forgiveness, will initially be a fierce persecutor of Christians. However, his dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 9) will transform him into a passionate advocate for Jesus. Therefore, Stephen's martyrdom indirectly paves the way for Paul's ministry, highlighting God's unexpected ways of working through his purposes.



Stephen's speech concludes dramatically (Acts 7:54-60). Empowered by a heavenly vision of Jesus, Stephen delivers a final message. The Sanhedrin, however, remains unconvinced and condemns him to death by stoning. Even facing execution, Stephen displays remarkable Christ-like forgiveness. Though not explicitly stated, Stephen's unwavering faith and act of pardon solidify him as the first Christian martyr. The presence of a young Saul, future apostle Paul, witnessing this event adds another layer of significance. Saul's eventual conversion to Christianity becomes a powerful testament to Stephen's lasting impact and God's mysterious plan unfolding.

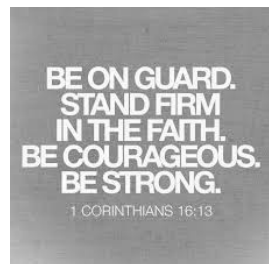
Summary:

1. **Stephen's Defense Speech: Faithfulness, Rebellion, And Temple (Acts 7:3-50):** Stephen, accused before the Sanhedrin, delivers a powerful defense speech (Acts 7). He recounts God's faithfulness throughout Israel's history, highlighting figures like Abraham, Moses, and King David (Acts 7:3-44). However, Stephen also points out the Israelites' tendency to rebel against God (Acts 7:44). He challenges a central belief by arguing that a physical temple is not necessary for God's presence (Acts 7:45-50). Finally, Stephen confronts the council for their hypocrisy, accusing them of rejecting God's messengers just as past generations did (Acts 7:51-53).
2. **Stephen's Martyrdom: Forgiveness And The First Martyr (Acts 7:57-60):** Unconvinced, the Sanhedrin stones Stephen to death (Acts 7:57). Despite this brutality, Stephen demonstrates Christ-like forgiveness by praying for his killers (Acts 7:60). Though not explicitly stated, Stephen's act of faith marks him as the first Christian martyr (Acts 7:60).
3. **The Significance Of Saul (Acts 7:58): A Witness And Future Apostle:** The scene closes with a seemingly minor detail: a young Saul (future apostle Paul) witnessing the execution (Acts 7:58). This foreshadows Saul's dramatic conversion to Christianity, highlighting God's unexpected ways of working through Stephen's sacrifice.

This chapter recounts Stephen's defense before the Sanhedrin. He highlights God's faithfulness to Israel, but criticizes their rebellion and challenges the centrality of the temple (Acts 7:3-50). Accusing them of hypocrisy, Stephen is stoned (Acts 7:51-57). Despite this, he forgives his killers, becoming the first Christian martyr (Acts 7:59-60). The witnessing Saul foreshadows his future conversion (Acts 7:58).

Applications:

1. **Standing Up For Your Faith (Acts 7:54-60):** this lesson shows us how to be strong in our beliefs. Like Stephen, we may face challenges. By knowing the Bible and speaking in love, we can confidently share our faith. Even in tough times, following Stephen's example of forgiveness shows the true meaning of following Jesus.
2. **Focusing On What Matters (Acts 7:51-53):** This account encourages us to examine our faith. Are there traditions we follow more than our connection with God? This lesson reminds us to focus on core values like love and following God's will. Be open to learning and prioritize a genuine relationship with God above all else.
3. **God's Unexpected Work (Acts 7:58; 8:1):** The surprise appearance of Saul foreshadows his conversion. This reminds us that God works in mysterious ways. Trust that He has a plan, even when things seem difficult. Be aware of God's presence in your life and the lives of others, and know that He can use you in unexpected ways to accomplish His goals.



These applications offer valuable lessons for believers. Standing up for one's faith, as exemplified by Stephen, teaches the importance of steadfastness and respectful dialogue, even in the face of adversity. Focusing on what truly matters prompts introspection, urging us to prioritize a genuine connection with God over religious traditions. Lastly, God's unexpected work, highlighted through Saul's transformation, underscores the mysterious yet purposeful nature of divine intervention. These narratives collectively emphasize the significance of faith, introspection, and trust in God's plan, guiding believers towards a deeper understanding of their spiritual journey.

Key Points:

1. **God's Faithfulness And Israel's Rebellion (Acts 7:3-44):** Stephen's defense speech emphasizes God's faithfulness to Israel, recounting stories of Abraham, Moses, and King David (Acts 7:3-44). However, he also acknowledges the Israelites' tendency to rebel against God, even after witnessing His miraculous acts (Acts 7:44). This reminds us that God's love is constant, but our choices have consequences.
2. **Temples And The Heart Of Worship (Acts 7:45-50):** Challenging a central belief, Stephen argues that the physical temple is not essential for God's presence (Acts 7:45-50). He references the tabernacle used during the Israelites' wanderings and highlights God's message through Isaiah, emphasizing that true worship is not limited by buildings made by human hands (Acts 7:47-48). This encourages us to focus on having a genuine relationship with God in our hearts, not just attending religious services or following traditions.

3. **Martyrdom's Lasting Impact (Acts 7:54-60):** Stephen's speech culminates in his vision of Jesus and his subsequent stoning (Acts 7:54-60). Despite the brutality, Stephen demonstrates Christ-like character by praying for his killers (Acts 7:60). Though not explicitly stated, this act marks him as the first Christian martyr. The seemingly minor detail of a young Saul witnessing the event (Acts 7:58) foreshadows his dramatic conversion to Christianity (Acts 9). This reminds us that our actions, even in difficult times, can have a significant and unexpected influence on others, and God's plan can unfold in mysterious ways.

These key points from Lesson 7 explore faith. (i) God is faithful despite rebellion (Acts 7:3-44). (ii) True worship goes beyond temples (Acts 7:45-50). (iii) Our actions have lasting impact (Acts 7:54-60).

Questions:

1. Who is Stephen, and why is he before the Sanhedrin (Acts 7:1)?
2. How does Stephen begin his defense speech (Acts 7:2)?
3. According to Stephen, whom did God call to leave his homeland and travel to a new land (Acts 7:2-4)?
4. What reason does Stephen give for the Israelites' migration to Egypt (Acts 7:5-16)?
5. Who rose to power in Egypt and helped the Israelites during their time there (Acts 7:9-16)?
6. According to Stephen, who did God send to liberate the Israelites from Egypt (Acts 7:35-36)?
7. What does Stephen mention about the Israelites' behavior in the wilderness after their exodus from Egypt (Acts 7:43)?
8. What point does Stephen make about the temple, referencing the prophet Isaiah (Acts 7:47-50)?
9. How does Stephen conclude his defense speech before the Sanhedrin (Acts 7:51-53)?
10. What significant event occurs after Stephen's speech (Acts 7:57-60)?

1. Persecution And The Spread Of The Gospel (Acts 8:1-8).

a. The persecution of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1-3):

- b. Philip's⁶ ministry in Samaria (Acts 8:4-8):

- In this passage, the early church faces severe persecution following Stephen's martyrdom, with Saul leading the charge against believers in Jerusalem. However, this persecution leads to the scattering of believers throughout Judea and Samaria, facilitating the spread of the Gospel beyond Jerusalem. Amidst this adversity, Philip's ministry in Samaria stands out, marked by powerful signs and wonders that draw the attention of the crowds and bring great joy to the city. Despite the opposition and challenges faced by the church, the Gospel continues to advance, demonstrating the resilience and transformative power of God's Word in the face of persecution.

a. Simon's sorcery and influence (Acts 8:9-13):

⁶ Philip was one of the seven men chosen by the early church to serve in the role of a deacon, as described in Acts 6:1-7. He is often referred to as Philip the Evangelist to distinguish him from Philip the Apostle. Philip played a significant role in the early spread of Christianity, particularly in Samaria and among Gentiles (Acts 8:4-8, 26-40; 21:8-9).

- 1) Simon, a sorcerer, practices magic in Samaria and amazes the people with his abilities, claiming to be someone great (Acts 8:9-10).
 - 2) The Samaritans pay attention to Simon, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is the power of God that is called Great" (Acts 8:10).
 - 3) They follow Simon because of his long-standing magic and influence (Acts 8:11).
 - 4) However, they believe Philip's message about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ and are baptized, both men and women (Acts 8:12).
- b. Simon's conversion and attempt to purchase spiritual power (Acts 8:14-25):
- 1) The apostles in Jerusalem hear about the Samaritans' acceptance of the word of God, and they send Peter and John to them (Acts 8:14-15).
 - 2) Peter and John pray for the Samaritans to receive the Holy Spirit, as they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 8:16).
 - 3) Simon sees that the Holy Spirit is given through the laying on of the apostles' hands and offers them money, wanting to obtain this power for himself (Acts 8:18-19).
 - 4) Peter rebukes Simon, telling him that he and his money will perish together if he does not repent of his wickedness and pray for forgiveness (Acts 8:20-23).
 - 5) Simon asks Peter to pray for him so that nothing of what Peter has said will happen to him (Acts 8:24).
 - 6) After testifying and preaching the word of the Lord in Samaria, Peter and John return to Jerusalem, proclaiming the good news in many Samaritan villages (Acts 8:25).

In this passage, the narrative unveils the contrasting responses to the Gospel message in Samaria. While many Samaritans embrace Philip's preaching and turn to faith in Jesus Christ, Simon the Sorcerer's encounter with the apostles reveals his shallow understanding and misguided pursuit of spiritual power. Simon's attempt to purchase the Holy Spirit exposes the dangers of seeking God's gifts for personal gain, prompting Peter's stern rebuke and call to repentance⁷. Through this encounter, the narrative underscores the importance of genuine faith and humility in receiving the Holy Spirit, cautioning against the allure of spiritual manipulation and self-serving motives.

3. Philip And The Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-40).

In this passage, the narrative unveils Philip's divine encounter with an Ethiopian eunuch, showcasing God's orchestrated plan to spread the Gospel beyond the confines of Jerusalem. Prompted by an angel of the Lord, Philip embarks on a journey along the desert road from Jerusalem to Gaza, where he encounters the eunuch - a high-ranking official in the Ethiopian court - reading from the book of Isaiah. Guided by the Holy Spirit, Philip seizes the opportunity to explain the Scriptures and preach Jesus Christ to the eunuch, ultimately leading to his baptism and joyful reception of the Gospel message. The account concludes with Philip's miraculous disappearance and subsequent ministry, underscoring the sovereignty of God in orchestrating divine appointments and advancing His kingdom purposes through obedient servants like Philip.

a. Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-35):

- 1) An angel of the Lord instructs Philip to go south on the desert road from Jerusalem to Gaza (Acts 8:26).
- 2) On his journey, Philip meets an Ethiopian eunuch who serves as the treasurer for Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, and is returning from worshiping in Jerusalem (Acts 8:27-28).
- 3) The Holy Spirit prompts Philip to approach the eunuch's chariot, where he hears the man reading from the book of Isaiah (Acts 8:29-30).
- 4) Philip asks the eunuch if he understands what he is reading, and the eunuch invites Philip to join him and explain the passage (Acts 8:30-31).

⁷ While Simon's belief may have been sincere initially, his subsequent actions demonstrate a deviation from genuine faith and a misunderstanding of the character of God's grace. Peter's call to repentance underscores the need for Simon to recognize and turn away from his misguided motives and actions, rather than undergoing baptism again. This interpretation aligns with the broader biblical understanding of faith as an ongoing journey marked by growth, repentance, and transformation.

- 5) The eunuch is reading from Isaiah 53, and Philip uses this passage to preach Jesus to him, starting from there and explaining the good news about Jesus (Acts 8:32-35).

b. The Eunuch's baptism and Philip's disappearance (Acts 8:36-40):

- 1) As they were travelling along the road, they came to some water, and the eunuch asks Philip what prevents him from being baptized since there is water nearby (Acts 8:36).
- 2) Philip responds by stating that if the eunuch believes with all his heart, he may be baptized, to which the eunuch affirms his belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Acts 8:37).
- 3) They both go down into the water, and Philip baptizes the eunuch (Acts 8:38).
- 4) When they come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly takes Philip away, and the eunuch does not see him again but continues on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:39).
- 5) Philip finds himself at Azotus and travels through the towns, preaching the gospel until he reaches Caesarea (Acts 8:40).

In this passage, Philip's encounter with the Ethiopian eunuch epitomizes the divine orchestration of evangelistic opportunities and the transformative power of the Gospel message. Through divine guidance, Philip seizes the moment to explain the Scriptures and proclaim Jesus Christ, leading to the eunuch's conversion and baptism. This narrative underscores God's sovereignty in orchestrating divine appointments and the inclusivity of the Gospel, which transcends cultural and social barriers. Furthermore, Philip's miraculous disappearance highlights the supernatural intervention accompanying faithful obedience to God's leading. As Philip continues his ministry, the narrative exemplifies the ongoing spread of the Gospel and the transformative impact of encountering Jesus Christ.

Summary:

1. **Resilience Amidst Persecution (Acts 8:1-4):** The narrative in this chapter demonstrates the early church's resilience in the face of severe persecution following Stephen's martyrdom. Despite facing opposition and scattering from Jerusalem, believers continued to boldly proclaim the Gospel, resulting in the spread of Christianity to new regions.
2. **Contrasting Responses To The Gospel (Acts 8:9-40):** The accounts of Simon the Sorcerer and the Ethiopian eunuch highlight contrasting responses to the Gospel message. While Simon sought spiritual power for personal gain, the Ethiopian eunuch responded with genuine faith and was baptized, exemplifying the transformative power of encountering Jesus Christ.
3. **Divine Orchestration And Obedient Witness (Acts 8:26-40):** Throughout this chapter, divine orchestration is evident as God guides Philip to minister to the Samaritans and the Ethiopian eunuch. These encounters underscore the importance of obedient witness and reliance on the Holy Spirit in spreading the Gospel, leading to the expansion of God's kingdom beyond Jerusalem.

This chapter showcases the early church's resilience in the face of persecution, leading to the spread of the Gospel beyond Jerusalem. Contrasting responses to the Gospel, from Simon's pursuit of power to the Ethiopian eunuch's genuine faith, highlight the transformative power of encountering Jesus Christ. Through divine orchestration, Philip's ministry to the Samaritans and the Ethiopian eunuch demonstrates the importance of obedient witness and reliance on the Holy Spirit in expanding God's kingdom.

Applications:

1. **Boldness In The Face Of Opposition (Acts 8:1-3):** Like the early believers, we may encounter opposition or persecution in our journey of faith. This lesson encourages us to remain bold in proclaiming the Gospel despite challenges or setbacks. We should trust in God's sovereignty and continue sharing His love with others, knowing that He is with us through every trial.
2. **Discernment In Spiritual Matters (Acts 8:9-24):** The account of Simon the Sorcerer reminds us of the dangers of seeking spiritual power for personal gain. As Christians, we must exercise discernment in our spiritual pursuits, ensuring that our motives align with God's will and that we seek His power for the right reasons – to glorify Him and further His kingdom.

3. **Divine Providence and Obedient Witness (Acts 8:26-40):** Philip's encounters with the Samaritans and the Ethiopian eunuch highlight God's providential orchestration in connecting believers with those who are seeking the truth. As we obediently walk in the Spirit by obeying the Scriptures, and engage in faithful witness, God can use us as instruments to reach people from all walks of life. By relying on prayer, Scripture, and the providence of God, we can participate in His divine plan to expand His kingdom and bring salvation to those who are open to receiving the Gospel.

These applications remind us of the enduring power of the Gospel to transform lives, the importance of genuine faith in responding to God's Word, and the necessity of obediently walking in the Spirit by relying on prayer, Scripture, and divine providence to fulfill our role in spreading the Good News.

Key Points:

1. **Resilience Amidst Persecution (Acts 8:1-4):** Despite facing severe persecution following Stephen's martyrdom, the early church demonstrated resilience and continued to boldly proclaim the Gospel, resulting in the spread of Christianity to new regions.
2. **Contrasting Responses To The Gospel (Acts 8:9-40):** The accounts of Simon the Sorcerer and the Ethiopian eunuch highlight contrasting responses to the Gospel message. While Simon sincerely obeyed the gospel, he quickly fell and sought spiritual power for personal gain, the Ethiopian eunuch responded with genuine faith and was baptized; he remained faithful, exemplifying the transformative power of encountering Jesus Christ.
3. **Divine Providence And Obedient Witness (Acts 8:26-40):** Philip's encounters with the Samaritans and the Ethiopian eunuch underscore God's providential orchestration in connecting believers with those who are seeking the truth. As believers obediently walk in the Spirit by relying on prayer, Scripture, and divine providence, they can participate in God's divine plan to expand His kingdom and bring salvation to those who are open to receiving the Gospel.

These key points highlight the resilience of the early church in the face of persecution, the contrasting responses to the Gospel message, and the importance of divine providence and obedient witness in spreading the message of salvation.

Questions:

1. Who was the prominent figure responsible for the persecution against the early church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1)?
2. What was the response of the believers following Stephen's martyrdom (Acts 8:1)?
3. What miraculous signs accompanied Philip's ministry in Samaria (Acts 8:6-7)?
4. Who was Simon the Sorcerer, and what did he seek to obtain (Acts 8:9-11)?
5. How did Simon react when he saw the apostles laying hands on the Samaritans to receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:18-19)?
6. What was Peter's response to Simon's offer (Acts 8:20-23)?
7. What prompted Philip to approach the Ethiopian eunuch's chariot (Acts 8:29-30)?
8. What passage was the Ethiopian eunuch reading from, and how did Philip use it to preach Jesus to him (Acts 8:32-35)?
9. What was the response of the Ethiopian eunuch when they came to some water along the road (Acts 8:36-37)?
10. What happened to Philip after baptizing the eunuch (Acts 8:39)?

3) Ananias' obedience and Saul's restoration of sight and baptism (Acts 9:17-19a):

- a) Ananias obeys the Lord's command and goes to Straight Street, where he finds Saul and lays his hands on him, restoring his sight and filling him with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17-18).
- b) Saul's sight is restored immediately, and he receives baptism as a sign of his conversion and identification with the Christian community (Acts 9:18-19a).

In this passage, the account of Saul's conversion exemplifies the profound impact of encountering the risen Christ and the transformative power of divine intervention. Saul, initially a zealous persecutor of Christians, undergoes a radical transformation after encountering Jesus on the road to Damascus. Through Saul's encounter, the narrative underscores the sovereignty of God in orchestrating divine appointments and the willingness of obedient servants like Ananias to participate in God's redemptive plan. Saul's conversion serves as a compelling testimony to the boundless mercy and grace of God, demonstrating His ability to transform even the most hardened hearts into vessels of His glory. This pivotal event marks the beginning of Saul's journey as the apostle Paul, a testament to the life-changing power of encountering Jesus Christ.

2. Saul Preaches In Damascus (Acts 9:19b-25).

In this passage, Saul's conversion leads to a dramatic shift in his mission and identity as he immediately begins preaching Jesus as the Son of God in the synagogues of Damascus. His bold proclamation astonishes those who knew him as a persecutor of Christians, sparking both wonder and hostility among his listeners. As the Jews conspire to kill him for his newfound faith, Saul's fellow believers come to his aid, facilitating his escape from Damascus. This section highlights the radical transformation in Saul's life and the perilous circumstances faced by early Christians, underscoring the challenges and risks associated with openly identifying with Jesus as the Messiah.

a. Saul's preaching in the synagogues (Acts 9:19b-22):

1) Saul's immediate proclamation of Jesus as the Son of God (Acts 9:19b-20):

- a) Following his conversion and baptism, Saul begins to proclaim Jesus as the Son of God in the synagogues of Damascus, immediately demonstrating his newfound faith (Acts 9:19b-20).
- b) Saul's preaching emphasizes Jesus' divine identity and his role as the promised Messiah, likely drawing from his extensive knowledge of Scripture and newfound understanding of Jesus' significance (Acts 9:20).

2) The amazement of those who heard Saul's preaching (Acts 9:21):

- a) Those who hear Saul's preaching in the synagogues are amazed and astonished at the transformation in his life, recognizing him as the one who formerly persecuted the followers of Jesus in Jerusalem (Acts 9:21).
- b) Saul's dramatic conversion and bold proclamation of Jesus as the Son of God create a significant impact on the listeners, prompting them to wonder at the radical change in his beliefs and behavior (Acts 9:21).

3) The Jews' plot to kill Saul (Acts 9:22):

- a) Saul's preaching provokes the Jews in Damascus, leading them to conspire to kill him for his newfound faith and bold proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah (Acts 9:22).
- b) The Jews' hostility towards Saul underscores the intense opposition faced by early Christians from religious authorities and highlights the risks associated with openly identifying with Jesus as the Son of God (Acts 9:22).

b. Saul escapes from Damascus (Acts 9:23-25): The disciples' protection of Saul and his escape from the city (Acts 9:23-25):

- 1) Despite the Jews' plot to kill Saul, his fellow believers in Damascus come to his aid and protect him, demonstrating their solidarity with him as a fellow follower of Jesus (Acts 9:23-25).
- 2) The disciples' protection of Saul likely involves concealing him and helping him escape from Damascus, ensuring his safety and enabling him to continue his ministry elsewhere (Acts 9:23-25).

- 3) Saul's escape from Damascus not only preserves his life but also allows him to evade the threat posed by his adversaries, enabling him to continue his mission of proclaiming the Gospel and planting churches in other regions (**Acts 9:23-25**).

In this passage, Saul's conversion marks a profound turning point in his life, leading to his immediate proclamation of Jesus as the Son of God in the synagogues of Damascus. His bold preaching astonishes many and incites hostility from the Jews, prompting a plot to kill him. However, Saul's fellow believers protect him, enabling his escape from Damascus. This narrative illustrates the transformative power of encountering Jesus and the subsequent challenges faced by believers in boldly proclaiming their faith. It also highlights the importance of solidarity and support within the Christian community amidst persecution.

3. Saul In Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-30).

Here, Saul's journey to Jerusalem marks a significant turning point in his newfound faith and ministry. Despite initial apprehensions due to his past reputation, Saul seeks to join the disciples. Barnabas intervenes, advocating for Saul's genuine conversion and facilitating his acceptance into the Christian community. Saul boldly preaches the Gospel in Jerusalem, facing opposition from certain Hellenistic Jews, which ultimately leads to his departure to Caesarea for safety. This section highlights Saul's rapid transformation from persecutor to preacher, emphasizing the importance of acceptance and reconciliation within the Christian community, amidst ongoing challenges in proclaiming the Gospel.

a. Saul's attempt to join the disciples (Acts 9:26-27):

- 1) Saul's arrival in Jerusalem and his attempt to join the disciples (**Acts 9:26-27**):
 - a) After his escape from Damascus, Saul arrives in Jerusalem and seeks to join⁸ the disciples there, likely to align himself with the larger Christian community and continue his ministry (**Acts 9:26-27**).
 - b) Saul's desire to join the disciples reflects his eagerness to integrate into the broader Christian movement and be recognized as a fellow believer and follower of Jesus (**Acts 9:26-27**).
 - c) Saul's decision to go to Jerusalem despite the risks demonstrates his commitment to his newfound faith and his willingness to face potential opposition or suspicion from the disciples (**Acts 9:26-27**).
- 2) The disciples' fear and Barnabas' intervention (**Acts 9:26-27**):
 - a) The disciples in Jerusalem initially react with fear and scepticism upon hearing about Saul's arrival, likely due to his notorious reputation as a persecutor of Christians (**Acts 9:26-27**).
 - b) Barnabas, however, comes to Saul's defense and vouches for him, affirming Saul's genuine conversion and recounting his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus (**Acts 9:26-27**).
 - c) Barnabas' intervention helps to alleviate the disciples' concerns and fosters acceptance of Saul into the Christian community, highlighting the importance of empathy, grace, and reconciliation within the body of believers (**Acts 9:26-27**).

b. Saul's preaching in Jerusalem (Acts 9:28-30):

- 1) Saul's boldness in preaching in the name of the Lord (**Acts 9:28**): After his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus and his subsequent conversion, Saul wasted no time in boldly proclaiming the Gospel in Jerusalem. Despite his former reputation as a persecutor of the church, Saul fearlessly preached the message of Jesus Christ, demonstrating his newfound faith and commitment to spreading the Good News.
- 2) The Hellenists' plot against Saul and his departure to Caesarea (**Acts 9:29-30**):
 - a) Saul's preaching in Jerusalem quickly drew opposition from certain Hellenistic Jews who were likely aligned with the synagogue of the Freedmen. Fearing for his life due to their plot to kill him, the believers in Jerusalem took action to protect Saul. Recognizing the imminent danger, Saul's fellow disciples escorted him to Caesarea, a coastal city northwest of Jerusalem, where he would find safety and continue his ministry under divine protection.

⁸ The term "join" used could imply Saul's intention to affiliate himself formally with the local church in Jerusalem, suggesting a desire for membership. However, it is essential to consider the broader context and Saul's circumstances at that time. Given Saul's recent conversion and his reputation as a persecutor of the church prior to that, it is plausible that his primary motivation for seeking to "join" the disciples in Jerusalem was to align himself with the Christian community, and integrate into the fellowship of believers. His desire may have been more about fellowship and validation of his newfound faith rather than a formal process of church membership as we understand it today.

- b) This event highlights the ongoing hostility Saul faced from those who opposed the message of Jesus Christ and the measures taken by the early church to safeguard its members in the face of persecution.

In these verses, Saul's journey to Jerusalem and subsequent preaching signify a pivotal transformation from persecutor to preacher. Despite initial skepticism from the disciples, Saul's acceptance into the Christian fold, led by Barnabas, underscores the importance of grace and reconciliation among believers. Saul's bold proclamation of the Gospel in Jerusalem demonstrates his steadfast commitment to his newfound faith, despite facing opposition. The threats against Saul's life and his departure to Caesarea highlight the ongoing challenges and risks encountered by early Christians. Overall, this section illustrates Saul's resilience and courage amidst adversity, emphasizing the importance of acceptance and solidarity within the Christian community.

4. Summary Of Saul's Conversion (Acts 9:31):

In this verse, the summary of Saul's conversion serves as a pivotal moment in the narrative, signalling a shift in focus from Saul's individual transformation to the broader growth and encouragement experienced by the early church. This verse underscores the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit within the Christian community, fostering internal peace and unity while facilitating the expansion of the gospel message. As the church thrives amidst a season of peace, its mission to spread the teachings of Jesus Christ gains momentum, emphasizing the symbiotic relationship between internal spiritual growth and outward evangelistic outreach.

- a. Growth and encouragement: This verse serves as a bridge between the focus on Saul's conversion and Peter's ministry. It highlights that while Saul's conversion story is significant, the early church continued to experience growth and receive encouragement from the Holy Spirit during this time.
- b. Internal peace and mission: This verse can also be interpreted as suggesting a connection between the church's internal peace ("enjoyed a time of peace") and its ability to spread the gospel ("continued to increase"). When the church is free from persecution and strengthened by the Holy Spirit, it can more effectively carry out its mission of making disciples.

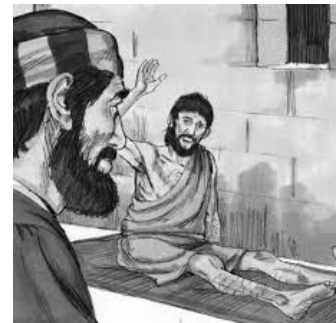
In this verse, the summary of Saul's conversion offers a glimpse into the ongoing dynamics of the early church, highlighting both internal growth and external mission. Amidst a period of peace and encouragement, the believers experienced an expansion in numbers and a deepening of their faith, all under the guidance and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. This verse serves as a reminder of the essential role of unity, prayer, and the Holy Spirit in sustaining and advancing the church's mission. It underscores the interconnectedness of internal spiritual vitality and outward evangelistic fervor, illustrating how a community rooted in faith and unity can effectively fulfill its calling to bear witness to the gospel and make disciples.

5. Peter's Ministry In Lydda And Joppa (Acts 9:32-43).

In this passage, we witness Peter's ministry in Lydda and Joppa, characterized by miraculous healings and a profound demonstration of God's power. In Lydda, Peter's encounter with Aeneas, a paralyzed man, results in his miraculous healing and the conversion of many in the region as they witness the transformative power of faith in Jesus Christ. Additionally, Peter's raising of Tabitha in Joppa from death to life not only brings astonishment and belief among the residents but also strengthens the faith of believers and serves as a powerful testament to the authority bestowed upon God's chosen servants. These accounts highlight the significant impact of Peter's ministry in demonstrating God's power and advancing the message of salvation.

- a. Peter's healing of Aeneas in Lydda (Acts 9:32-35):

- 1) Peter's encounter with Aeneas, a paralyzed man (Acts 9:32-33): In the town of Lydda, Peter encountered Aeneas, who had been bedridden for eight years due to paralysis. This man's condition was well-known among the residents of Lydda, and his plight likely elicited sympathy and compassion from those who knew him. When Peter arrived, he was made aware of Aeneas' condition, prompting him to visit the paralyzed man and bring about a miraculous transformation in his life.



- 2) Peter's healing of Aeneas and its impact on the residents of Lydda and Sharon (Acts 9:34-35):

- a) Moved by compassion and empowered by the Holy Spirit, Peter spoke words of healing to Aeneas, declaring, "Jesus Christ heals you; rise and make your bed." Instantly, Aeneas experienced a supernatural restoration of strength and mobility, rising from his bed of paralysis.

- b) This miraculous healing profoundly impacted not only Aeneas but also the residents of Lydda and the nearby region of Sharon. Witnessing such a remarkable display of God's power through Peter's ministry, many in Lydda and Sharon turned to the Lord, believing in Jesus Christ as the source of miraculous healing and salvation. This event served as a testimony to the transformative power of faith in Jesus Christ and the authority bestowed upon His disciples to perform signs and wonders in His name.

b. Peter's raising of Tabitha in Joppa (Acts 9:36-43):

- 1) The death of Tabitha (Dorcas) and the mourning of the widows (Acts 9:36-37):
 - a) In the coastal town of Joppa, there lived a woman named Tabitha, also known as Dorcas, who was esteemed for her acts of kindness and charity, especially towards the widows in the community.
 - b) However, Tabitha fell ill and died, leaving the widows and those who knew her grieving deeply over their loss. The widows, in particular, mourned the departure of someone who had been a source of comfort and support to them in their time of need.
- 2) Peter's prayer and the miraculous raising of Tabitha (Acts 9:38-42): Upon learning of Tabitha's death, the believers in Joppa sent for the apostle Peter, who was in a nearby town called Lydda. Peter responded to their summons and came to Joppa, where he was brought to the upper room where Tabitha's body lay. After sending everyone out of the room, Peter knelt down and prayed to God. Filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, Peter then commanded Tabitha to arise, and she opened her eyes, sat up, and was restored to life. This miraculous resurrection of Tabitha served as a demonstration of God's power through Peter and affirmed the truth of the Gospel message he preached.
- 3) The spread of the news and the impact on Joppa (Acts 9:43).
 - a) News of Tabitha's miraculous restoration to life spread rapidly throughout Joppa, and many people came to believe in the Lord as a result. Peter remained in Joppa for some time, lodging with a tanner named Simon.
 - b) This remarkable event not only brought great joy and amazement to the residents of Joppa but also strengthened the faith of the believers and served as a powerful testimony to the transformative power of God's grace and the authority given to His chosen servants.

In this passage, we witness the remarkable ministry of Peter characterized by miraculous healings and the restoration of life. Through the healing of Aeneas in Lydda and the raising of Tabitha in Joppa, Peter demonstrates the transformative power of faith in Jesus Christ and affirms the truth of the Gospel message. These miraculous events not only bring physical restoration but also lead to the spiritual transformation of many, resulting in the spread of the Gospel and the strengthening of believers' faith. Peter's ministry serves as a powerful testimony to God's authority and grace, inspiring awe and belief among those who witness His miraculous works.

Summary:

1. **Saul's Conversion (Acts 9:1-19a):** Saul's journey to Damascus begins with a mission to persecute Christians, but an encounter with Jesus on the road transforms his life. Despite initial apprehension, Ananias obeys God's command to minister to Saul, leading to his restoration to sight and baptism, marking the start of his conversion to Christianity.
2. **Saul Preaches In Damascus (Acts 9:19b-25):** Saul wastes no time proclaiming Jesus in Damascus, astonishing listeners with his newfound faith. However, his preaching stirs hostility among the Jews, prompting a plot against his life. With help from fellow believers, Saul escapes, highlighting the risks of openly identifying with Jesus.
3. **Saul In Jerusalem (Acts 9:26-30):** Saul's attempt to join the disciples in Jerusalem is met with fear, but Barnabas vouches for him, facilitating his acceptance. Despite preaching boldly, threats force Saul's departure to Caesarea, revealing ongoing challenges in spreading the Gospel.

4. **Summary Of Saul's Conversion (Acts 9:31):** The early church experiences growth and encouragement amidst internal peace, enabling effective mission. This verse emphasizes the interconnectedness of peace and evangelism within the church.
5. **Peter's Ministry In Lydda And Joppa (Acts 9:32-43):** Peter's healing of Aeneas in Lydda leads to conversions, demonstrating God's power. His raising of Tabitha in Joppa strengthens faith and brings many to believe in the Lord, showcasing the transformative impact of miraculous signs.

Applications:

1. **Transformation Through Encounter (Acts 9:1-19):** This chapter illustrates the transformative power of encountering the risen Christ. Saul's dramatic conversion from a persecutor to a preacher serves as a powerful reminder that no one is beyond the reach of God's grace. This application prompts believers to reflect on their own "encounters" with Christ and the transformation it has brought to their lives, encouraging them to share their testimonies of God's redeeming love with others.
2. **The Importance Of Discipleship And Support (Acts 9:10-19):** Ananias's role in Saul's conversion highlights the significance of discipleship and support within the Christian community. Just as Ananias played a crucial role in guiding Saul's early steps in the faith, believers are called to come alongside new converts, offering mentorship, encouragement, and practical support as they grow in their relationship with Christ. This application emphasizes the importance of nurturing and equipping new believers for a life of discipleship.
3. **God's Sovereign Plan (Acts 9:1-43):** This chapter underscores God's sovereign plan in orchestrating events for the advancement of His kingdom. From Saul's conversion to Peter's healing of Aeneas and raising of Tabitha, divine intervention is evident throughout the chapter. This application encourages believers to trust in God's providence and sovereignty in their own lives, even in times of uncertainty or adversity. By recognizing that God is at work behind the scenes, believers can find hope and assurance in His ability to fulfill His purposes and bring about His kingdom on earth.

These applications remind us of the transformative power of encountering Christ, the importance of discipleship and support within the Christian community, and the assurance of God's sovereign plan. Through reflection, mentorship, and trust in God's providence, believers can grow in their faith and actively participate in the advancement of God's kingdom on earth.

Questions:

1. How did Saul's conversion impact his immediate actions and identity as a follower of Jesus (Acts 9:19-20)?
2. What reactions did Saul's preaching evoke among those who heard him in the synagogues of Damascus (Acts 9:21)?
3. Why did the Jews in Damascus plot to kill Saul (Acts 9:22)?
4. How did Saul escape from Damascus, and what does this event reveal about the early Christian community's response to persecution (Acts 9:23-25)?
5. Why were the disciples in Jerusalem initially hesitant to accept Saul into their midst (Acts 9:26)?
6. Who intervened on Saul's behalf in Jerusalem, and how did this individual's action influence Saul's acceptance by the disciples (Acts 9:27)?
7. What did Saul do immediately upon his arrival in Jerusalem, and how did this action reflect his commitment to his newfound faith (Acts 9:28)?
8. Who conspired against Saul in Jerusalem, and why (Acts 9:29)?
9. How did Saul's fellow believers ensure his safety in the face of the plot against him in Jerusalem (Acts 9:30)?
10. What summarizes Saul's conversion and its impact on the church (Acts 9:31)?

1. Introduction (Acts 10:1-8).

Peter's Ministry (Acts 9-12)

The map shows the following locations and regions:

- Regions:** GALILEE, SAMARIA, JUDEA, PHOENECIA, DECAPOLIS, PEREA.
- Cities:** Caesarea, Joppa, Lydda, Jerusalem.
- Geographical Features:** PLAIN OF SHARON.

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1) Introduction of Cornelius, a centurion in Caesarea, as a devout and God-fearing man (Acts 10:1):

- 2) Cornelius receives a vision from God instructing him to send for Peter in Joppa (Acts 10:3-6). Cornelius has a vision where an angel of God appears to him, calling him by name and instructing him to send men to Joppa to bring back Simon Peter, who is lodging with Simon, a tanner, by the sea. This vision sets in motion the divine encounter between Cornelius and Peter, marking a significant moment in the expansion of the Gospel to the Gentiles.
- 3) Cornelius obeys the vision and sends his servants to Joppa (Acts 10:7-8). These verses depict Cornelius's immediate obedience to the vision. He calls two of his servants and a devout soldier, explains the vision to them, and sends them to Joppa without delay. This obedience underscores Cornelius's sincerity and readiness to respond to God's word.

- 1) Throughout this passage, Cornelius is portrayed as a man of upright character and deep reverence for God. His devotion is evident in his prayers and acts of charity towards the Jewish people, which are recognized by God and serve as a testament to his faithfulness.
- 2) This description highlights Cornelius as a model of faith and righteousness, despite being a Gentile, foreshadowing the inclusivity of the Gospel message.

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2. Peter's Vision (Acts 10:9-23a).

In this passage, we encounter a pivotal moment in the narrative as Peter receives a vision from God while praying on the rooftop. This vision challenges Peter's deeply ingrained beliefs and prepares him for the radical inclusivity of God's plan of salvation. As Peter grapples with the symbolic imagery of the great sheet containing both clean and unclean animals, he begins to understand that God's acceptance extends beyond traditional boundaries. Meanwhile, Cornelius' messengers arrive, setting the stage for a divine encounter that will reshape Peter's understanding of God's grace and the universality of the Gospel message. This section highlights the divine orchestration of events and the pivotal role of Peter in bridging the gap between Jews and Gentiles in the early church.

a. Peter's vision on the rooftop (Acts 10:9-16):

- 1) Peter goes up to the rooftop to pray around noon (Acts 10:9). This verse portrays Peter's regular practice of going to the rooftop to pray, a common custom among Jews for seeking solitude and communion with God. This act highlights Peter's devoutness and commitment to prayer, even amidst his daily activities.
- 2) He falls into a trance and sees a vision of a great sheet descending from heaven (Acts 10:10). This verse describes Peter's trance-like state during prayer, where he receives a profound vision from God. The imagery of a great sheet descending from heaven signifies the divine origin of the vision and foreshadows the revelation that Peter is about to receive regarding God's inclusive plan of salvation for all people.
- 3) The sheet contains all kinds of animals, both clean and unclean (Acts 10:11-12). These verses illustrate Peter's vision of a sheet containing a variety of animals, representing both clean and unclean according to Jewish dietary laws outlined in Leviticus 11. This mixture of clean and unclean animals challenges Peter's understanding of ritual purity and prepares him for the radical message of inclusivity that God is about to impart to him.
- 4) A voice commands Peter to kill and eat, but Peter objects, citing Jewish dietary laws (Acts 10:13-14). A voice instructs Peter to kill and eat the animals presented on the sheet. However, Peter's immediate response is one of objection, reflecting his strict adherence to Jewish dietary regulations that prohibit the consumption of certain animals deemed unclean under Mosaic Law.
- 5) The voice rebukes Peter, declaring that what God has cleansed, Peter should not call common (Acts 10:15). This verse portrays the voice from heaven rebuking Peter's objection, challenging his ingrained cultural and religious biases. The voice emphasizes that God has declared all creatures clean, overturning traditional Jewish understandings of ritual purity and signalling a new era of inclusivity in God's redemptive plan. This declaration prepares Peter for the forthcoming encounter with Cornelius and the Gentiles, prompting him to reconsider his exclusivist views and embrace the universal scope of God's grace.



b. The arrival of Cornelius' messengers (Acts 10:17-23a):

- 1) Peter ponders the vision and its meaning.
- 2) Meanwhile, Cornelius' messengers arrive at the gate of Simon the tanner's house, where Peter is staying.
- 3) The Spirit prompts Peter to go downstairs and meet the men, without hesitation or prejudice.

In this passage, we witness the unfolding of divine revelation as Peter receives a vision that challenges his preconceived notions of exclusivity and prepares him for a groundbreaking encounter with Cornelius and the Gentiles. Through the symbolic imagery of the great sheet and the voice from heaven, God dismantles barriers of cultural and religious prejudice, inviting Peter to embrace the universal scope of His grace. As Peter obediently responds to the Spirit's instructions, the stage is set for a transformative moment in the expansion of the Gospel to the Gentiles. This section underscores the profound impact of divine revelation in reshaping perspectives and illuminating the inclusivity of God's redemptive plan for all humanity.

3. Peter Visits Cornelius (Acts 10:23b-33).

In this passage, we witness the unfolding of divine providence as Peter welcomes Cornelius' messengers and Cornelius eagerly anticipates Peter's arrival. This section sets the stage for a remarkable encounter between Peter, a Jewish apostle, and Cornelius, a devout Gentile centurion, highlighting the transformative power of God's inclusive grace. Through Peter's hospitality and Cornelius' receptive attitude, we glimpse the breaking down of cultural barriers and the expansion of the Gospel to the Gentiles. This introduction sets the tone for a significant moment in the early church's mission to reach beyond traditional boundaries and embrace all who seek God's salvation.

a. Peter welcomes Cornelius' messengers (Acts 10:23b-26):

1) Peter greets Cornelius' servants and learns the reason for their visit (Acts 10:23b-24):

- a) Peter welcomes Cornelius' messengers who have come from Caesarea to Joppa to find him. Upon meeting them, Peter inquires about the purpose of their visit, indicating his openness to engage with Gentiles, despite the traditional Jewish reluctance to associate with them.
- b) This initial interaction sets the stage for Peter's encounter with Cornelius and his household and underscores Peter's willingness to listen and respond to God's leading in reaching out to the Gentiles.

2) He invites them in and provides lodging for them (Acts 10:23b-24):

- a) Peter shows hospitality towards Cornelius' messengers by inviting them into his house and providing lodging for them. This act of hospitality not only demonstrates Peter's kindness and generosity but also symbolizes his willingness to break down social and cultural barriers between Jews and Gentiles.
- b) By welcoming the Gentile messengers into his home, Peter takes a significant step towards embracing God's inclusive plan of salvation, which transcends ethnic and religious boundaries. This gesture foreshadows the broader acceptance and fellowship that will soon follow between Peter and Cornelius, marking a pivotal moment in the expansion of the early church to the Gentiles.

b. Cornelius' expectation (Acts 10:27-33):

- 1) Cornelius awaits Peter's arrival with eager anticipation, gathering his relatives and close friends (Acts 10:27-28). Cornelius expresses his earnest expectation as he awaits Peter's arrival. He gathers together his relatives and close friends, indicating the significance of the occasion and his anticipation of what Peter will bring. This demonstrates Cornelius' openness and receptivity to the message he anticipates receiving from Peter, highlighting his genuine desire to encounter God and receive divine guidance.
- 2) He recounts his vision and God's instruction to send for Peter (Acts 10:30-32). These verses record Cornelius' recounting of his vision and the divine instruction he received to send for Peter. Cornelius shares with Peter the details of his encounter with the angel of God, emphasizing the importance and validity of the divine message he received. By sharing his vision with Peter, Cornelius seeks to establish a common ground of understanding and to convey the divine purpose behind Peter's visit. This demonstrates Cornelius' faithfulness in responding to God's revelation and his willingness to act in obedience to divine guidance.
- 3) Cornelius expresses his readiness to hear whatever Peter has to say (Acts 10:33). This verse captures Cornelius' humble posture as he expresses his readiness to hear whatever Peter has to say. He acknowledges Peter's authority as a messenger of God and affirms his willingness to receive and heed the message he brings. Cornelius' openness and receptivity reflect his sincere desire to align his life with God's will and to pursue a deeper understanding of divine truth. This attitude of humility and openness prepares the way for Cornelius to receive the fullness of God's grace and salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

In this passage, we witness the convergence of divine guidance and human responsiveness as Peter welcomes Cornelius' messengers with hospitality, and Cornelius eagerly awaits Peter's arrival. Through their interactions, we observe the beginning of a profound shift in the early church's understanding of God's inclusive plan of salvation. Peter's willingness to engage with Gentiles and Cornelius' openness to receive the message of God's grace foreshadow the breaking down of cultural barriers and the expansion of the Gospel to all nations. This section underscores the transformative power of divine encounters and the importance of hospitality, openness, and receptivity in fostering unity and understanding among diverse communities.

4. Peter's Sermon To Cornelius And His Household (Acts 10:34-43).

In this passage, Peter delivers a transformative message to Cornelius and his household, challenging traditional Jewish perspectives on God's impartiality and extending the invitation of salvation to Gentiles. Peter's opening address emphasizes God's acceptance of all who fear Him and do what is right, setting the stage for his proclamation of Jesus' ministry, death, and resurrection. Through his sermon, Peter declares Jesus as Lord of all and the Judge of the living and the dead, offering forgiveness of sins to all who believe in His name. This section highlights the universal scope of God's grace and the transformative power of the gospel message in reconciling people to God and to one another.

a. Peter's opening address (Acts 10:34-35):

- 1) Peter acknowledges God's impartiality and acceptance of all who fear Him and do what is right (Acts 10:34-35):
 - a) Peter begins his address by recognizing the universal nature of God's acceptance. He declares that God shows no partiality but accepts people from every nation who fear Him and do what is right.
 - b) This statement reflects Peter's understanding of God's inclusive love and grace, which transcends cultural and ethnic boundaries. By affirming God's impartiality, Peter lays the foundation for the message he is about to deliver to Cornelius and his household, emphasizing the accessibility of salvation to all who sincerely seek God.
- 2) He emphasizes that God shows no partiality but welcomes those from every nation who fear Him and do what is right.

b. Jesus' ministry and resurrection (Acts 10:36-43):

- 1) Peter summarizes Jesus' ministry, beginning from His baptism by John to His death and resurrection (Acts 10:36-43):
 - a) Peter provides a concise overview of Jesus' earthly ministry, highlighting key events such as His baptism by John the Baptist, His anointing with the Holy Spirit, His ministry of healing and deliverance, His sacrificial death on the cross, and His resurrection from the dead.
 - b) By recounting these pivotal moments in Jesus' life, Peter underscores the significance of Jesus' mission on earth and His role as the promised Messiah. This summary serves to establish the foundation for Peter's proclamation of the gospel to Cornelius and his household, emphasizing Jesus' authority and redemptive work.
- 2) He testifies to Jesus' authority as Lord of all and His commission to preach peace through Him (Acts 10:36):
 - a) Peter affirms Jesus' authority as Lord of all, emphasizing that Jesus is not only the Jewish Messiah but also the sovereign ruler over all nations and peoples. By acknowledging Jesus' universal lordship, Peter challenges any exclusivist notions among his Jewish audience and extends the invitation of salvation to Gentiles like Cornelius.
 - b) Additionally, Peter highlights Jesus' commission to preach peace through Him, emphasizing the reconciling power of the gospel message. This declaration underscores the transformative impact of Jesus' ministry, which brings about reconciliation between God and humanity, as well as among individuals from diverse backgrounds.
- 3) Peter declares Jesus as the Judge of the living and the dead, affirming that all who believe in Him receive forgiveness of sins through His name (Acts 10:42-43):
 - a) Peter proclaims Jesus as the ultimate Judge of the living and the dead, highlighting His role in determining the destiny of every individual. By emphasizing Jesus' authority to judge, Peter underscores the seriousness of the gospel message and the urgency of responding to it in faith.
 - b) Furthermore, Peter declares that forgiveness of sins is available to all who believe in Jesus' name, irrespective of their background or ethnicity. This statement emphasizes the universality of salvation through Jesus Christ and the inclusive nature of God's grace. Peter's proclamation serves as a call to repentance and faith, inviting Cornelius and his household to receive the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

Peter's sermon to Cornelius represents a turning point in the early church's perception of God's inclusive love and salvation. By emphasizing Jesus' universal authority and the accessibility of salvation to all who believe, Peter challenges cultural barriers and sets the stage for the broader mission of the church to reach people of every nation and ethnicity with the gospel message. This pivotal moment highlights the significance of Cornelius' conversion as the first Gentile to receive the gospel, foreshadowing the expansion of Christianity beyond traditional boundaries.

5. The Holy Spirit Falls On Gentile Believers (Acts 10:44-48).

The narrative in these verses portrays a profound moment in the early church's history as the Holy Spirit falls upon Gentile believers, signifying God's acceptance of all who believe in Jesus Christ. As Peter shares the message of Jesus with Cornelius and his household, the Holy Spirit descends upon them, validating their faith and confirming their inclusion in the body of Christ. This divine outpouring prompts astonishment among the Jewish believers present, who witness the Gentiles speaking in tongues and praising God. The baptism of Cornelius and his household follows, sealing their identification with Christ and their incorporation into the body of Christ. Peter's invitation for them to remain and fellowship with the Jewish believers further emphasizes the unity and inclusivity of God's kingdom, where people from every nation are welcomed into the family of faith.

a. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44-46):

- 1) While Peter is speaking, the Holy Spirit falls upon all who hear the word (Acts 10:44):
 - a) As Peter is sharing the message of Jesus with Cornelius and his household, the Holy Spirit falls upon them, demonstrating God's acceptance and approval of these Gentile believers. This divine outpouring signifies the inclusion of Gentiles in the body of Christ and validates their faith in Jesus.
 - b) The sudden outpouring of the Holy Spirit confirms God's sovereign work in bringing salvation to all people, regardless of their ethnic or cultural background. It is a powerful demonstration of God's grace and His desire for all humanity to experience the transformative power of the gospel.
- 2) The Jewish believers with Peter are astonished to witness the Gentiles receiving the Holy Spirit, evidenced by speaking in tongues and praising God (Acts 10:45):
 - a) This verse describes the shock of Jewish Christians who accompanied Peter when they witnessed the Gentiles receiving the Holy Spirit. The fact that these Gentile believers were speaking in tongues and praising God serves as undeniable evidence of their genuine encounter with the Holy Spirit.
 - b) This miraculous manifestation not only confirms the authenticity of their faith but also challenges the preconceived notions of the Jewish believers regarding the inclusion of Gentiles in the community of faith. The visible and audible expression of the Holy Spirit's presence among the Gentiles serves to unify believers across cultural divides and reinforces the universal nature of God's redemptive plan. It prompts Peter and his companions to recognize and affirm God's impartiality in bestowing His Spirit on all who believe in Jesus Christ.

b. Baptism of Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:47-48):

- 1) Peter witnesses the manifestation of the Holy Spirit and acknowledges its significance (Acts 10:47):
 - a) Peter witnesses the Gentiles receiving the Holy Spirit, evidenced by their speaking in tongues and praising God. Recognizing the unmistakable presence of the Holy Spirit among them, Peter acknowledges the significance of this divine manifestation.
 - b) It becomes clear to him that God has accepted these Gentiles into the community of faith, affirming their status as recipients of salvation. This realization prompts Peter to acknowledge the impartiality of God's grace and the inclusion of Gentiles in the body of Christ, irrespective of their ethnic background or cultural heritage.
- 2) He commands Cornelius and his household to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 10:48):
 - a) Following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius and his household, Peter issues a command for them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. On the day of Pentecost, it was Peter who called on believers to repent and be baptised for the remission of sins. The purpose for the baptism of Cornelius and his household is for the same reason – the remission of sins.

- b) By commanding Cornelius and his household to be baptized, Peter affirms their newfound status as members of the Christian community and acknowledges their inclusion in the body of believers.
- 3) Peter requests that Cornelius and his household remain for a few days, inviting them to fellowship with the Jewish believers (**Acts 10:48**):
 - a) After commanding Cornelius and his household to be baptized, Peter extends an invitation for them to remain for a few days. This invitation reflects Peter's recognition of the significance of their newfound faith and his desire for them to experience fellowship with the Jewish believers.
 - b) By welcoming Cornelius and his household into their midst, Peter and the Jewish believers demonstrate a spirit of unity and acceptance, transcending cultural and religious barriers. This act of hospitality not only fosters mutual understanding and reconciliation but also symbolizes the unity of the body of Christ, composed of individuals from diverse backgrounds and traditions. It underscores the transformative power of the gospel to break down barriers and create a community bound together by love and faith in Jesus Christ.

The events here mark a significant milestone in the early church's understanding of God's inclusive plan of salvation. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Gentile believers demonstrates God's impartiality and acceptance of all who believe in Jesus Christ, regardless of their ethnic or cultural background. The astonishment of the Jewish believers underscores the transformative nature of this divine encounter, challenging their preconceived notions and affirming the universal scope of God's grace. The baptism of Cornelius and his household seals their incorporation into the body of Christ and their participation in the community of faith. Peter's invitation for them to fellowship with the Jewish believers reflects the unity and harmony that characterize God's kingdom, where diverse individuals are united in love and faith. This passage highlights the radical inclusivity of the gospel and serves as a testament to God's desire for all people to experience the fullness of His salvation.

Summary:

1. **Cornelius Receives A Vision (Acts 10:1-8):** Cornelius, a devout Roman centurion stationed in Caesarea, receives a vision while praying at the ninth hour. An angel appears to him, acknowledging his prayers and alms and instructing him to send men to Joppa to summon a man named Peter.
2. **Peter's Vision And Gentile Inclusion (Acts 10:9-48):** While Peter is on the rooftop praying, he falls into a trance and sees a vision of a great sheet descending from heaven, containing all kinds of four-footed animals, reptiles, and birds. A voice tells him to kill and eat, but Peter objects, stating that he has never eaten anything unclean. The voice responds by saying, "What God has made clean, do not call common." This happens three times, and as Peter ponders the vision, messengers from Cornelius arrive and request Peter's presence. Peter goes with them to Caesarea, where he preaches the Gospel to Cornelius and his household. While he is still speaking, the Holy Spirit falls on all who hear the word, just as it had on the Jewish believers at Pentecost.
3. **Recognition Of Gentile Inclusion (Acts 10:34-48; 11:1-18):** Witnessing the Gentiles receiving the Holy Spirit, Peter and the Jewish believers with him realize that God shows no partiality and that the Gospel is not exclusive to the Jews but is meant for all nations. Peter declares, "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him." This pivotal moment leads to the acceptance of Gentiles into the early Christian community, marking a significant expansion of the Gospel beyond its Jewish roots. Peter later recounts these events to the believers in Jerusalem, leading to their acknowledgment and praise of God for granting even the Gentiles repentance that leads to life.

This chapter showcases a pivotal moment in the early church's history, emphasizing the universal reach of God's salvation. Through divine intervention and human obedience, barriers of culture and tradition are shattered, paving the way for the inclusion of Gentiles in the body of Christ. The baptism of Cornelius and his household signifies their acceptance into the community of faith, illustrating the transformative power of God's grace. This narrative underscores the radical inclusivity of the Gospel, highlighting God's desire for all people to experience the fullness of His salvation, regardless of background or ethnicity.

Applications:

1. **Embrace Inclusivity (Acts 10:34-35):** This lesson encourages us to embrace the inclusivity of God's salvation. Just as Peter learned to recognize God's impartiality in accepting Gentiles into the faith community, we are called to break down barriers and extend the love of Christ to all people, regardless of their background or ethnicity. This means actively seeking opportunities to engage with and welcome those who may be different from us, fostering unity and understanding within the body of Christ.
2. **Cultivate Receptivity To Divine Guidance (Acts 10:19-20):** Cornelius' obedience to God's vision and Peter's responsiveness to the Holy Spirit is leading serve as powerful examples of receptivity to divine guidance. Similarly, we are called to cultivate a spirit of openness and obedience to God's providence in our lives. This involves prayerfully listening for Spirit's voice in the scriptures, being willing to step out in faith even when it challenges our preconceived notions, and trusting in His wisdom and sovereignty.
3. **Practice Radical Hospitality (Acts 10:23-24):** Peter's embrace of Cornelius' messengers and Cornelius' welcome of Peter exemplify radical hospitality. As believers, we are called to warmly receive others, especially those on the margins, fostering inclusive communities where everyone feels valued. By extending Christ's love through hospitality, we reflect God's inclusive kingdom and further His redemptive purpose.

These applications encourage us to actively embrace inclusivity, heed divine guidance, and practice radical hospitality. By breaking down barriers, listening to God's voice, and welcoming others with love, we embody the transformative power of the gospel in our daily lives, fostering unity and reflecting God's inclusive love to all.

Key Points:

1. **Divine Encounters (Acts 10:34-35):** The narrative highlights the transformative power of divine encounters in challenging preconceived notions and preparing individuals for God's inclusive plan of salvation.
2. **Inclusive Gospel (Acts 10:36-43):** Peter's sermon to Cornelius underscores the universal scope of God's grace and the transformative power of the gospel message in reconciling people to God and to one another.
3. **Baptism (Acts 10:44-48):** The baptism of Cornelius and his household seals their incorporation into the body of Christ, affirming the universality of God's redemptive plan.

These key points illuminate the profound impact of divine revelation, the radical inclusivity of the gospel, and the significance of baptism in the early church's mission to reach beyond traditional boundaries and embrace all who seek God's salvation.

Questions:

1. Who is Cornelius, and what distinguishes him (Acts 10:1-8)?
2. What vision does Cornelius receive, and what instructions does he receive as a result (Acts 10:3-6)?
3. What vision did Peter experience and what was its significance (Acts 10:9-16)?
4. How does Peter respond to the voice commanding him to eat (Acts 10:13-14)?
5. What prompts Peter to go downstairs and meet Cornelius' messengers (Acts 10:19-20)?
6. How does Peter describe Jesus' ministry and resurrection in his sermon to Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:34-43)?
7. What astonishes the Jewish believers accompanying Peter (Acts 10:45)?
8. How does Peter respond to the manifestation of the Holy Spirit among Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:47)?
9. What significance does baptism hold in the narrative of Cornelius and his household, and how does it underscore their acceptance into the Christian community (Acts 10)?
10. How did the events in this chapter challenge the traditional understanding of God's chosen people and the boundaries of salvation, and what does this suggest about the universality of God's grace (Acts 10)?

2) Witnessing the gentiles' reception of the Holy Spirit (Acts 11:11-17):

a) Recounting the events at Cornelius' house:

- (i) Peter continues his explanation by recounting his journey to Cornelius' house in Caesarea (Acts 11:11-14).
- (ii) He describes how Cornelius shared his own divine encounter, where an angel instructed him to send for Peter, who would bring a message by which Cornelius and his household would be saved (Acts 11:13-14).
- (iii) This testimony confirms the divine orchestration of events leading to the encounter between Peter and Cornelius and underscores the inclusion of Gentiles in God's redemptive plan.

b) Outpouring of the Holy Spirit:

- (i) Peter then recounts how, as he began to speak to Cornelius and his household, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, just as it had upon the Jewish believers at Pentecost (Acts 11:15-16).
- (ii) He emphasizes that the Gentiles received the same gift of the Holy Spirit as the Jewish believers, confirming their acceptance by God and their inclusion in the body of Christ (Acts 11:17).
- (iii) This demonstration of the Holy Spirit is outpouring on Gentile believers serves as a powerful validation of their faith and underscores the unity of the Christian community, irrespective of ethnic or cultural distinctions.

c. Reaction of the circumcision party (Acts 11:18):

1) Silence:

- a) Upon hearing Peter's explanation of his encounter with Cornelius and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles, the circumcision party fell silent (Acts 11:18).
- b) This silence likely reflects their astonishment and perhaps their internal struggle to reconcile their preconceived notions with the reality of God's inclusive grace.
- c) The unexpected revelation of God's acceptance of Gentiles without requiring them to adhere to Jewish customs and laws may have left them speechless, prompting them to reconsider their theological convictions.

2) Glorification of God:

- a) Despite their initial resistance and skepticism, the circumcision party ultimately glorified God in response to Peter's testimony (Acts 11:18).
- b) Witnessing the undeniable evidence of God's acceptance of Gentiles, they recognized and acknowledged the sovereignty and inclusivity of God's redemptive plan.
- c) Their glorification of God signifies a shift in perspective, from exclusivity to inclusivity, as they come to embrace the truth that salvation is available to all who believe in Jesus Christ, regardless of their ethnic or cultural background.
- d) This response highlights the transformative power of divine encounters and the capacity of God's grace to challenge and change deeply ingrained prejudices and biases, leading to a deeper understanding and appreciation of the breadth and depth of God's love for all humanity.

In this passage, Peter's explanation of his encounter with Cornelius marks a significant turning point in the church's understanding of God's inclusive salvation. Through Peter's retelling of his vision and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles, we witness the breaking down of cultural and ethnic barriers and the affirmation of the accessibility of salvation to all who believe in Jesus Christ. The reaction of the Jews, from initial scepticism to eventual glorification of God, demonstrates the transformative power of divine encounters and the capacity of God's grace to challenge and change deeply ingrained prejudices. This section serves as a powerful reminder of the universality of God's redemptive plan and the importance of embracing diversity within the Christian community.

2. Expansion Of The Church To Antioch (Acts 11:19-21).

In these verses, we witness the expansion of the early church beyond the confines of Jerusalem to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, marking a pivotal moment in the spread of the gospel message. Initially focused on preaching to fellow Jews, believers from Cyprus and Cyrene begin sharing the gospel with Gentiles in Antioch, signalling a significant shift in the church's mission towards inclusivity. This section highlights the universal appeal of the gospel message and the transformative power of God's grace to reach people of every nation and ethnicity. As the church in Antioch grows among both Jews and Gentiles, it foreshadows the broader expansion of the gospel to the Gentile world, setting the stage for the subsequent missionary journeys of Paul and others.

a. Preaching to Jews in Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch (Acts 11:19-20):

1) Spread of the gospel:

- a) Following the persecution that arose after Stephen's martyrdom, some believers scattered and travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, spreading the message of the gospel (Acts 11:19).
- b) This dispersion led to the expansion of the church beyond the confines of Jerusalem, contributing to the growth and spread of Christianity throughout the region.
- c) The willingness of these Christians to share the gospel with others, despite facing opposition and persecution, demonstrates their commitment to fulfilling Jesus' command to be witnesses to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8).

2) Ministry to Jews:

- a) Initially, those who preached the gospel in Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch focused primarily on sharing the message with fellow Jews (Acts 11:19).
- b) This ministry to the Jewish community underscores the continuity between Jesus' ministry and the early Christian movement, as the apostles and believers sought to fulfill the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament regarding the coming of the Messiah.
- c) By proclaiming Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies and the long-awaited Savior, they invited their Jewish brothers and sisters to embrace the message of salvation and join the community of believers.
- d) This ministry to Jews also laid the foundation for the eventual expansion of the gospel to Gentiles, as seen in the subsequent events in Antioch where a diverse and multicultural Christian community emerged (Acts 11:20).

b. Outreach to gentiles in Antioch (Acts 11:21):

1) Preaching to gentiles:

- a) The outreach to Gentiles in Antioch marks a significant shift in the early church's mission, moving beyond the exclusive focus on the Jewish community to embrace the Gentiles with the message of salvation.
- b) Believers from Cyprus and Cyrene, who had been preaching the Lord Jesus, began sharing the gospel with Gentiles in Antioch (Acts 11:20-21).
- c) This intentional effort to reach out to Gentiles reflects the fulfillment of Jesus' commission to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19), as well as the vision Peter received regarding the inclusion of Gentiles in God's redemptive plan (Acts 10:34-35).

2) Multitude comes to the Lord.

- a) The preaching of the gospel to Gentiles in Antioch resulted in a large number of people turning to the Lord (Acts 11:21).
- b) This response highlights the universal appeal of the gospel message and the openness of Gentiles to receive salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.
- c) The conversion of Gentiles in Antioch demonstrates God's desire for all people to be saved and brought into fellowship with Him, regardless of their ethnic or cultural background (1 Timothy 2:3-4).

- d) The growth of the church in Antioch among both Jews and Gentiles foreshadows the broader expansion of the gospel to the Gentile world, as witnessed in the subsequent missionary journeys of Paul and others (Acts 13-28).

In these verses, we witness the early church's expansion to regions beyond Jerusalem, including Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, signifying a significant step in the spread of the gospel. Initially focused on preaching to fellow Jews, believers from Cyprus and Cyrene began sharing the message with Gentiles in Antioch, marking a pivotal shift towards inclusivity in the church's mission. This section underscores the universal appeal of the gospel and the transformative power of God's grace to reach people of every nation and ethnicity. As the church in Antioch grows among both Jews and Gentiles, it sets the stage for the broader expansion of the gospel to the Gentile world, as seen in the subsequent missionary journeys of Paul and others.

3. Barnabas Sent To Antioch (Acts 11:22-24).

In these verses, we delve into Barnabas' pivotal role in the early church, particularly his mission to Antioch. As a trusted leader, Barnabas was tasked with encouraging and strengthening the fledgling community of believers in Antioch, demonstrating his commitment to nurturing their spiritual growth. Additionally, Barnabas exemplified exceptional character qualities, being described as "a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith," which underscored his deep connection to God and his unwavering trust in Him. This section illuminates Barnabas' significant influence and contribution to the expansion of the church beyond Jerusalem, setting the stage for further developments in the burgeoning Christian movement.

a. Barnabas' role (Acts 11:22-23):

- 1) Encouraging the Church: Barnabas played a crucial role in encouraging and strengthening the brethren in Antioch when he was sent there by the church in Jerusalem (Acts 11:22).
- 2) Witnessing God's Grace: Barnabas witnessed firsthand the evidence of God's grace among the Gentile believers in Antioch, as indicated by their conversion and growth in faith (Acts 11:23).

b. Barnabas' character (Acts 11:24):

- 1) Description of Barnabas: Barnabas is described as "a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith" (Acts 11:24a).
- 2) Full of the Holy Spirit and Faith: The scripture emphasizes that Barnabas was not only known for his goodness but also for being filled with the Holy Spirit and having strong faith (Acts 11:24b).

In these verses, Barnabas emerges as a central figure in the early church, embodying qualities of encouragement, spiritual strength, and steadfast faith. His journey to Antioch not only highlights his willingness to support and nurture new believers but also reflects the expanding reach of the gospel beyond Jerusalem. Barnabas' exemplary character, described as "a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith," serves as a beacon of inspiration for believers, demonstrating the transformative power of God's grace in individual lives. His role in Antioch lays the groundwork for the growth and development of the Christian community in diverse cultural contexts, underscoring the inclusive nature of God's redemptive plan.

4. Barnabas Retrieves Saul From Tarsus (Acts 11:25-26).

In these verses, we witness a pivotal moment in the early church as Barnabas seeks out Saul in Tarsus and brings him to Antioch. This encounter sets the stage for a dynamic partnership in ministry and underscores the importance of collaboration and mutual support among believers in advancing the gospel message. Through their teaching and discipleship in Antioch, Barnabas and Saul lay the foundation for the emergence of a vibrant Christian community, marked by a distinctive identity as followers of Christ.

a. Barnabas seeks Saul (Acts 11:25):

- 1) Journey to Tarsus: Barnabas embarked on a journey to Tarsus, likely covering a considerable distance, to seek Saul (Acts 11:25a).
- 2) Finding Saul: After reaching Tarsus, Barnabas found Saul and brought him back to Antioch, initiating a significant partnership in ministry (Acts 11:25b).

b. Ministry together in Antioch (Acts 11:26):

- 1) Teaching: Barnabas and Saul devoted themselves to teaching the disciples in Antioch, imparting knowledge and wisdom about the ways of Christ (Acts 11:26a).

- 2) Disciples called Christians: It was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians, indicating a significant development in the identity and recognition of followers of Christ (Acts 11:26b). Some connect this with Isaiah 62:1-2.

The account of Barnabas retrieving Saul from Tarsus reveals the power of partnership in advancing the kingdom of God. As Barnabas and Saul join forces in Antioch, their combined efforts lead to significant growth and impact within the Christian community. Moreover, the disciples' identification as Christians in Antioch signifies a milestone in the spread of the gospel, highlighting the transformative influence of their teaching and example. This episode underscores the importance of unity, collaboration, and discipleship in fulfilling the mission of the church and bearing witness to the name of Christ.

5. Relief For Judea Predicted (Acts 11:27-30).

In these verses, we witness the prophecy of Agabus regarding a severe famine that would impact the Roman world, prompting the disciples in Antioch to take action. This section highlights the importance of prophetic insight and the responsiveness of the early church to the needs of fellow believers. Through their collective efforts to provide relief for Judea, the disciples in Antioch exemplify the spirit of compassion and solidarity that characterized the early Christian community, demonstrating their commitment to caring for one another in times of adversity.

a. Prophets visit from Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-28):

- 1) Agabus' prophecy: Agabus, a prophet from Jerusalem, visited Antioch and prophesied by the Spirit that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. This prophecy came to pass during the reign of Claudius (Acts 11:27-28a).
- 2) Famine predicted: Agabus' prophecy served as a warning to the disciples in Antioch, prompting them to take action to provide relief for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. This they did by sending their gift with Barnabas and Saul to the elders in Jerusalem (Acts 11:28b).

b. Response of the disciples in Antioch (Acts 11:29-30):

- 1) Sending relief to Judea: In response to Agabus' prophecy about the impending famine, the disciples in Antioch determined to send relief to the brothers and sisters living in Judea. Each of the disciples, according to their ability, decided to provide financial support for this cause (Acts 11:29).
- 2) Contribution to the relief effort: The disciples in Antioch collected their resources and entrusted them to Barnabas and Saul, who then delivered the contribution to the elders in Judea. This act of generosity and solidarity demonstrated the unity and care within the early Christian community, as they sought to support those in need during a time of crisis (Acts 11:30).

The account of relief for Judea predicted in these verses showcases the compassionate and proactive response of the early church to the needs of others. In heeding Agabus' prophecy, the disciples in Antioch exemplify the principles of generosity, unity, and care within the Christian community. Their willingness to contribute to the relief effort reflects a deep commitment to supporting fellow believers during times of hardship, underscoring the practical expression of love and concern that characterized the early church. As Barnabas and Saul deliver the relief contribution to the elders in Judea, they embody the spirit of solidarity and mutual support that defined the early Christian movement, serving as a model for subsequent generations of believers.

Summary:

1. **Peter's Revelation And Inclusive Grace** (Acts 10:34-35): Through Peter's explanation of his encounter with Cornelius and the Gentiles, we witness the breaking down of cultural and ethnic barriers and the affirmation of the accessibility of salvation to all who believe in Jesus Christ.
2. **Expansion Of The Gospel Message** (Matthew 28:19): The expansion of the church to regions beyond Jerusalem, particularly to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, signifies a pivotal shift in the church's mission towards inclusivity, highlighting the universal appeal of God's grace and the transformative power of the Holy Spirit.
3. **Barnabas' Exemplary Leadership** (Acts 11:24): Barnabas emerges as a central figure in the early church, embodying qualities of encouragement, spiritual strength, and steadfast faith. His partnership with Saul in Antioch sets the stage for the growth and development of the Christian community, underscoring the importance of collaboration and discipleship in advancing the gospel message.

4. **Response Of The Early Church to Needs (Acts 2:44-45):** The prophecy of Agabus regarding the famine and the subsequent response of the disciples in Antioch exemplify the spirit of compassion and solidarity that characterized the early Christian community. Through their collective efforts to provide relief for Judea, the disciples demonstrate their commitment to caring for one another in times of adversity, embodying the love of Christ in practical ways.

This summary encapsulates the key themes and lessons from this chapter, grounded in scripture and highlighting the foundational principles of the early church's mission and community life.

Applications:

1. **Embrace Inclusivity And Diversity (Acts 10:34-35):** Just as Peter's encounter with Cornelius challenged his preconceptions about who could receive God's grace, we are reminded to embrace inclusivity and diversity in our own lives and communities. This means actively reaching out to those who may be different from us, whether culturally, ethnically, or socially, and recognizing the inherent value and dignity of every individual as a beloved child of God.
2. **Foster Unity Amidst Differences (Acts 11:19-21):** The expansion of the early church to Antioch demonstrates the power of unity amidst diversity. Despite coming from different backgrounds and cultures, believers in Antioch united under the common banner of Christ. We can apply this by fostering unity within our own congregation, and recognize that our shared faith in Jesus transcends any differences we may have and striving to love and support one another regardless of background or circumstance.
3. **Respond To Needs With Compassion And Generosity (Acts 11:27-30):** The response of the disciples in Antioch to the prophecy of the famine serves as a model of compassionate and generous action. When we see needs of brethren around us, whether within our local church or on a global scale, we are called to respond with compassion and generosity. This may involve giving of our time, resources, or talents to support those in need, demonstrating the love of Christ in tangible ways and reflecting the heart of God.

These applications provide practical ways to apply the lessons of this chapter in our lives and churches today. By embracing inclusivity and diversity, fostering unity amidst differences, and responding to the needs of brethren with compassion and generosity, we can embody the principles of the early church and contribute to the advancement of God's kingdom on earth.

Key Points:

1. **Peter's Explanation Of Inclusive Grace (Acts 11:1-18):** Peter explains his actions regarding the inclusion of Gentiles to the church in Jerusalem, highlighting the transformative power of divine encounters and the capacity of God's grace to challenge deeply ingrained prejudices (Acts 11:1-18).
2. **Expansion Of The Church To Antioch (Acts 11:19-21):** The expansion of the church to Antioch signifies a pivotal shift towards inclusivity in the mission of the early church, as believers from diverse backgrounds begin sharing the gospel message with Gentiles (Acts 11:19-21).
3. **Barnabas Encourages The Believers (Acts 11:22-24):** Barnabas plays a central role in encouraging and strengthening the believers in Antioch, exemplifying qualities of encouragement, spiritual strength, and steadfast faith (Acts 11:22-24).
4. **Barnabas Retrieves Saul For Partnership (Acts 11:25-26):** Barnabas retrieves Saul from Tarsus, initiating a significant partnership in ministry and setting the stage for the growth and development of the church in Antioch (Acts 11:25-26).
5. **Prophetic Prediction Of Famine And Relief Efforts (Acts 11:27-30):** Agabus prophesies a severe famine, prompting the disciples in Antioch to provide relief for Judea, demonstrating the spirit of compassion and solidarity within the early church (Acts 11:27-30).

These key points encapsulate the main events and themes from this lesson, illustrating the transformative power of God's grace and the inclusive nature of the early Christian movement.

Questions:

1. What pivotal moment occurs in the early church in this chapter regarding the inclusion of Gentiles (**Acts 11:1-18**)?
2. Where does the expansion of the church beyond Jerusalem to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch signify a significant shift in the church's mission (**Acts 11:19-21**)?
3. Who plays a central role in encouraging and strengthening the believers in Antioch (**Acts 11:22-24**)?
4. Who retrieves Saul from Tarsus, initiating a significant partnership in ministry in Antioch (**Acts 11:25-26**)?
5. What prophetic prediction prompts the disciples in Antioch to provide relief for Judea (**Acts 11:27-30**)?
6. What internal tensions arise in the early church concerning the inclusion of Gentiles (**Acts 11:1-3**)?
7. What significant shift occurs in the church's mission as believers begin sharing the gospel with Gentiles in Antioch (**Acts 11:19-21**)?
8. What character qualities are attributed to Barnabas (**Acts 11:24**)?
9. What milestone event in the early church's development occurs in Antioch (**Acts 11:26**)?
10. How do the disciples in Antioch respond to Agabus' prophecy of the famine (**Acts 11:29-30**)?

1. Persecution And Miraculous Escape Of Peter (Acts 12:1-19).

a. Imprisonment of Peter (Acts 12:1-4):

- b. Prayer of the church (Acts 12:5-12):

- c. Peter's arrival at Mary's house (Acts 12:12-17):

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- 4) Peter keeps knocking until they finally let him in (Acts 12:16): Despite the disbelief and hesitation of those inside, Peter persists in knocking until they finally open the door. His persistence and determination to gain entry demonstrate his urgency to reunite with the believers and share news of his miraculous escape.
- 5) Peter instructs them to inform James and the brothers (Acts 12:17): Upon entering the house, Peter calms the astonished believers and shares the story of his miraculous deliverance. He instructs them to relay the news to James and the other brothers before departing to a different location, possibly for his safety.

d. Punishment of the guards (Acts 12:18-19):

- 1) Morning comes, and there is an uproar among the soldiers about Peter's escape (Acts 12:18): The morning after Peter's miraculous escape, the soldiers responsible for guarding him discover his absence, causing a significant disturbance and confusion among them. This event highlights the astonishment and panic among those tasked with Peter's custody.
- 2) Herod orders a thorough search but finds no trace of Peter (Acts 12:19): Herod, upon learning of Peter's escape, orders an intensive search for him throughout the city. Despite their efforts, Peter remains elusive, and no trace of him is found. This failure to apprehend Peter amplifies Herod's frustration and escalates the consequences for those responsible for his escape.
- 3) Guards are interrogated and subsequently executed by Herod's command (Acts 12:19): In response to the guards' failure to prevent Peter's escape, Herod subjects them to intense interrogation and subsequently sentences them to death as punishment for their negligence. This harsh penalty underscores the severity of the consequences for failing in their duty to secure Peter's imprisonment.

This passage portrays the relentless persecution faced by the church and the miraculous deliverance of Peter, illustrating God's sovereignty and provision amidst adversity. Through fervent prayer and divine intervention, Peter's escape serves as a testament to the unwavering faith of believers and the unstoppable advance of the Gospel. Readers are challenged to trust in God's power and to persevere in faith even in the darkest of times.

2. Death Of Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:20-23).

In these verses, we encounter the dramatic account of the death of Herod Agrippa, a ruler known for his hostility towards the early Christian community. The section begins with Herod's conflict with the people of Tyre and Sidon, leading to a fateful encounter where divine judgment is swiftly administered for Herod's pride and failure to give glory to God.

a. Judgment on Herod (Acts 12:20-22):

- 1) Herod Agrippa is enraged with the people of Tyre and Sidon (Acts 12:20): Herod's anger toward the people of Tyre and Sidon arises due to a conflict or dispute between them and him. This hostility prompts the people of Tyre and Sidon to seek reconciliation with Herod to avoid any negative consequences, particularly regarding their food supply, which relies on trade with Herod's territory.
- 2) They seek an audience with him, wanting peace because their cities depended on the king's country for food (Acts 12:20): Recognizing the critical importance of maintaining peaceful relations with Herod's kingdom for their survival, the people of Tyre and Sidon approach Herod with a unified delegation. They appeal for reconciliation and peace, emphasizing the vital economic relationship between their cities and Herod's domain, particularly concerning the supply of food.
- 3) Herod delivers a speech, dressed in royal robes, receiving their flattery as if he were a god (Acts 12:21-22): Herod seizes the opportunity of the delegation's visit to stage a grand public appearance. He addresses the people, likely intending to impress and assert his authority. The people's flattery, acclaiming him as divine, reveals the extent of their reverence and submission to Herod's power, which he gladly accepts.

b. Divine judgment (Acts 12:23):

- 1) An angel of the Lord strikes Herod because he did not give glory to God (Acts 12:23): Herod's failure to acknowledge God and accept the glory due to Him results in divine judgment. The angel of the Lord acts as an instrument of God's justice, swiftly striking Herod down for his pride and blasphemy. This emphasizes the importance of giving proper honor and glory to God and the severe consequences of arrogance and impiety.

- 2) Herod is eaten by worms and dies a gruesome death (**Acts 12:23**): As a consequence of divine judgment, Herod experiences a horrific and agonizing death. The graphic imagery of being consumed by worms underscores the severity and gruesomeness of his punishment. This serves as a stark reminder of God's power and the inevitability of facing consequences for defying His authority and failing to acknowledge His sovereignty.

The death of Herod Agrippa serves as a sobering reminder of the consequences of arrogance and the importance of acknowledging God's sovereignty. Through divine judgment, Herod's downfall underscores the biblical principle that pride goes before destruction. This episode highlights the contrast between human power and divine authority, inviting reflection on the implications of living in alignment with God's will.

3. Spread Of The Word Of God (Acts 12:24-25).

In these verses, we witness the ongoing spread of the Word of God despite persecution and opposition faced by the early church. This section highlights the resilience of the Gospel message, which continues to flourish and grow, transcending human obstacles. Furthermore, it depicts the dedication of early Christian leaders such as Barnabas and Saul, who, after completing a mission of aid delivery, return to Antioch to continue their ministry and teaching activities, contributing to the expansion and strengthening of the church.

a. Continued growth of the church (Acts 12:24):

- 1) Despite persecution and opposition, the word of God continues to spread and grow (**Acts 12:24**): Despite the challenges posed by persecution, imprisonment, and even the death of believers such as James and the threat against Peter, the message of the Gospel continues to advance. This verse highlights the resilience and unstoppable nature of God's Word, which transcends human obstacles and flourishes even in the face of adversity.
- 2) Barnabas and Saul return to Jerusalem after completing their mission of delivering aid to the believers in Judea (**Acts 12:25**): Barnabas and Saul, having fulfilled their task of delivering aid to the believers in Judea, return to Jerusalem. This mission likely involved providing support and assistance to the Christians in Judea who were facing hardship, possibly due to famine or other difficulties. Their successful completion of this mission demonstrates the practical care and support within the early church and contributes to the overall growth and strength of the church.

b. Return to Antioch (Acts 12:25):

- 1) Barnabas and Saul take John Mark with them and return to Antioch (**Acts 12:25**): After completing their mission in Jerusalem, Barnabas and Saul, accompanied by John Mark, return to Antioch. John Mark, also known as Mark, would later become an important figure in the early church, notably as the author of the Gospel of Mark. This journey back to Antioch marks a significant moment in their ministry and signifies the continuation of their partnership in spreading the Gospel.
- 2) They continue their ministry and teach many others (**Acts 12:25**): Upon their return to Antioch, Barnabas and Saul resume their ministry and teaching activities. Their commitment to spreading the Gospel and nurturing the brethren in Antioch reflects their dedication to advancing the kingdom of God. The mention of being "committed to the grace of God" emphasizes their reliance on God's empowerment and guidance in their mission.

These verses encapsulate the enduring growth and vitality of the early Christian community amidst adversity. Despite facing persecution and challenges, the Word of God persists in spreading and flourishing, underscoring the unstoppable nature of God's message. Moreover, the commitment of leaders like Barnabas and Saul to their mission exemplifies the dedication and resilience of believers in advancing the kingdom of God. This section serves as a testament to the transformative power of faith and the ongoing work of God in building His Church.

Summary:

1. **Divine Deliverance And Providential Guidance (Acts 12:1-19):** The narrative of Peter's miraculous escape from prison underscores the power of prayer and divine intervention in the face of persecution. Despite King Herod's attempts to silence the church, Peter's liberation serves as a testament to God's sovereignty and protection over His people.

2. **Consequences Of Arrogance And Divine Judgment (Acts 12:20-23):** The death of Herod Agrippa serves as a sobering reminder of the consequences of arrogance and the importance of acknowledging God's sovereignty. Through divine judgment, Herod's downfall underscores the biblical principle that pride goes before destruction, highlighting the contrast between human power and divine authority.
3. **Persistence In Ministry And Growth Of The Church (Acts 12:24-25):** Despite persecution and opposition, the Word of God continues to spread and flourish, exemplified by Barnabas and Saul's return to Antioch after completing their mission. Their commitment to ministry and teaching activities reflects the dedication and resilience of believers in advancing the kingdom of God, emphasizing the enduring growth and vitality of the early church amidst adversity.

This summary encapsulates the key themes and lessons from this chapter, grounded in scripture and highlighting the transformative power of faith and God's providence in the face of persecution and adversity.

Applications:

1. **Trust In God's Sovereignty (Acts 12:5):** This lesson reminds us of the power of prayer and divine intervention, as seen in Peter's miraculous escape from prison. When faced with challenges or persecution in our lives, we can trust in God's sovereignty and seek His guidance through prayer. Just as God delivered Peter from captivity, He can also provide solutions to our problems and lead us through difficult circumstances.
2. **Humility And Acknowledgment Of God's Glory (Acts 12:21-23):** The death of Herod Agrippa serves as a sobering reminder of the consequences of pride and arrogance. As believers, we should cultivate humility and acknowledge God's sovereignty in our lives. Instead of seeking recognition or glory for ourselves, let us give honor and praise to God for His goodness and grace. By living with humility and reverence for God, we can avoid the pitfalls of pride and experience His favor and blessings.
3. **Commitment To Ministry And Spreading The Gospel (Acts 11:25-26):** Barnabas and Saul's return to Antioch and their continued ministry and teaching activities highlight the importance of commitment to serving God and spreading the Gospel message. As followers of Christ, we are called to actively participate in advancing God's kingdom and sharing the good news of salvation. Let us be diligent in our efforts to minister to others, teach the Word of God, and make disciples, trusting that our labor in the Lord is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58).

These applications call us to deeper trust in God's sovereignty, humble acknowledgment of His glory, and steadfast commitment to ministry and spreading the Gospel. As we integrate these principles into our lives, we embrace a faith that is active, humble, and dedicated to advancing God's kingdom. Through trust, humility, and commitment, we embody the transformative power of this lesson and align our lives with God's purposes.

Key Points:

1. **Peter's Imprisonment And Miraculous Escape (Acts 12:1-19):** Peter is imprisoned by King Herod, but the church fervently prays for his safety. God sends an angel to miraculously rescue Peter from prison, demonstrating the power of prayer and divine intervention (Acts 12:1-19).
2. **Divine Judgment On Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:20-23):** Herod Agrippa, enraged by the people of Tyre and Sidon, delivers a speech in which he accepts their flattery as if he were a god. As a result of his failure to give glory to God, Herod is struck by an angel and dies a gruesome death, highlighting the consequences of pride and blasphemy (Acts 12:20-23).
3. **Continued Growth And Ministry Of Barnabas And Saul (Acts 12:24-25):** Despite persecution and opposition, the word of God continues to spread and grow. Barnabas and Saul return to Antioch after completing their mission of delivering aid to the believers in Judea, continuing their ministry and teaching many others (Acts 12:24-25).

These key points encapsulate the main events and themes from lesson 12, illustrating the power of prayer, divine judgment, and the ongoing spread of the Gospel message despite adversity.

Questions:

1. What miraculous event happens to Peter, and how does it illustrate divine intervention (**Acts 12:6-11**)?
2. How does the church respond to Peter's release from prison, and what does this reveal about the power of communal prayer (**Acts 12:12-16**)?
3. What fate befalls King Herod Agrippa, and what is the reason for his downfall (**Acts 12:20-23**)?
4. How does the death of Herod Agrippa demonstrate the sovereignty of God and the swift justice of divine judgment (**Acts 12:23**)?
5. Despite persecution and opposition, what encouraging aspect of the church's growth is highlighted (**Acts 12:24**)?
6. Who returns to Antioch after delivering aid to believers in Judea, and what is significant about their ministry there (**Acts 12:25**)?
7. What key role does Antioch play in the early Christian movement, and how does this reflect the inclusive nature of the gospel message (**Acts 11:19-26**)?
8. How does Peter's miraculous escape from prison parallel earlier events in Acts, such as the release of Paul and Silas (**Acts 12:6-11; Acts 16:25-26**)?
9. What role does communal prayer play, and how does it contribute to the unfolding narrative of divine intervention (**Acts 12:5, 12**)?
10. What lesson can Christians today learn from the events in this chapter regarding the sovereignty of God, the power of prayer, and the perseverance of the church in the face of adversity (**Acts 12:5, 24**)?

1. Commissioning Of Barnabas And Saul (Acts 13:1-3).

a. The church at Antioch (Acts 13:1):

- b. Fasting and prayer (Acts 13:2): The Holy Spirit's instruction:

- c. Laying on of hands (Acts 13:3): Sending off Barnabas and Saul:

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- 3) This moment highlights the collaborative nature of ministry in the early church and underscores the significance of spiritual leadership and discernment in recognizing and affirming God's calling on individuals for specific tasks and roles within the body of Christ.

The commissioning of Barnabas and Saul exemplifies the collaborative and discerning nature of ministry within the early church. As the prophets and teachers in Antioch engage in fasting and prayer, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they demonstrate a reliance on divine wisdom and discernment in discerning God's will for their community. Through the laying on of hands, the church formally endorses and supports Barnabas and Saul, imparting divine blessing and empowerment for their ministry endeavors. This pivotal moment underscores the importance of spiritual leadership, communal discernment, and collaborative partnership in advancing the kingdom of God and spreading the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

2. Ministry In Cyprus (Acts 13:4-12).

The ministry of Barnabas and Saul in Cyprus represents a significant phase in the expansion of the early church and the spread of the Gospel to Gentile territories. Departing from Antioch under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Barnabas and Saul embark on a missionary journey that symbolizes their obedience to God's call and their commitment to proclaiming the message of salvation beyond the confines of their local church. Preaching in synagogues and encountering opposition from a Jewish sorcerer, their ministry in Cyprus underscores the spiritual conflict inherent in proclaiming God's truth and the miraculous power of God to overcome opposition and bring about repentance and faith.

a. Departure from Antioch (Acts 13:4): Setting out on their journey:

- 1) This marks the beginning of Barnabas and Saul's missionary journey, as they depart from Antioch under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This momentous occasion symbolizes their obedience to God's call and their commitment to spreading the Gospel beyond the boundaries of their local church.
- 2) The departure from Antioch signifies a significant shift in Barnabas and Saul's ministry focus, transitioning from serving within the confines of their home church to embarking on a broader mission to proclaim the message of salvation to Gentiles in distant regions.
- 3) The decision to embark on this missionary journey highlights Barnabas and Saul's willingness to step out in faith, trusting in God's provision and guidance as they navigate the challenges and uncertainties of ministry in unfamiliar territories.

b. Preaching in Salamis (Acts 13:5): Proclaiming the word of God in synagogues:

- 1) This describes Barnabas and Saul's method of ministry in Salamis, emphasizing their commitment to proclaiming the word of God in the synagogues. This approach reflects their strategic engagement with the Jewish community, recognizing the synagogues as central places of worship, teaching, and community gathering.
- 2) The choice to preach in synagogues underscores the continuity between the message of Jesus Christ and the Jewish scriptures, highlighting the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies and the continuity of God's redemptive plan through the Messiah.
- 3) Barnabas and Saul's proclamation of the word of God in synagogues serves as a bridge between the Old and New Covenants, inviting their listeners to recognize Jesus as the fulfillment of Messianic promises and the Savior of both Jews and Gentiles.

c. Encounter with Bar-Jesus (Acts 13:6-12):

- 1) Confrontation with the sorcerer Elymas:
 - a) These verses introduce Elymas, also known as Bar-Jesus, a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet who opposes Barnabas and Saul's preaching of the Gospel to Sergius Paulus, the proconsul of Cyprus. Elymas's opposition to the Gospel underscores the spiritual conflict that often accompanies the proclamation of God's word, as forces of darkness seek to hinder the spread of truth and maintain their influence over people's lives.
 - b) Elymas's characterization as a sorcerer implies that he practices occult arts and deceptive tricks to manipulate and deceive others. His opposition to the Gospel reveals the spiritual blindness and bondage that result from rejecting God's truth and embracing falsehood.

- c) Elymas's opposition ultimately serves to highlight the superiority of God's truth over falsehood and the authority of the Gospel to overcome the forces of darkness. This confrontation sets the stage for Paul's pronouncement of judgment and the subsequent demonstration of God's power through miraculous intervention.

2) Paul's pronouncement of blindness:

- a) In response to Elymas's opposition and attempts to turn Sergius Paulus away from the faith, Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, confronts Elymas and pronounces judgment upon him (Acts 13:9-11). Paul's pronouncement of blindness upon Elymas serves as a divine judgment against his deceit and opposition to the Gospel. It demonstrates God's intolerance of spiritual deception and His commitment to upholding His truth and righteousness.
- b) Paul's action reflects his authority as an apostle of Christ and underscores the seriousness of opposing God's work. It also highlights the power of prayer and spiritual discernment in confronting and overcoming spiritual opposition.
- c) Elymas's blindness serves as a catalyst for Sergius Paulus's belief in the Gospel, as he witnesses the miraculous power of God and recognizes the truth of Paul's message (Acts 13:12). This demonstrates God's ability to use even moments of confrontation and judgment to bring about repentance and faith in those who are open to His truth.

The ministry of Barnabas and Saul in Cyprus illustrates the challenges and triumphs of spreading the Gospel in Gentile territories. Their departure from Antioch signifies a pivotal moment in their ministry journey, symbolizing their obedience to God's call and their willingness to step out in faith. Preaching in synagogues and confronting opposition from a Jewish sorcerer highlights the spiritual conflict inherent in proclaiming God's truth, yet it also demonstrates the power of God to overcome darkness and bring about repentance and faith. Ultimately, their ministry in Cyprus sets the stage for further expansion of the Gospel to the ends of the earth, as Barnabas and Saul continue to fulfill their calling as ambassadors of Christ.

3. Preaching In Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:13-52).

The narrative here chronicles Paul and Barnabas's ministry in Pisidian Antioch, representing a significant phase in the spread of the Gospel beyond the Jewish community to Gentile territories. Beginning with their arrival in Pisidian Antioch and journey to the synagogue, Paul delivers a powerful sermon, tracing Israel's history, proclaiming Jesus as the fulfillment of prophecy, and offering salvation through faith in Him. The response from both Jews and Gentiles varies, with initial interest and acceptance giving way to opposition and expulsion from the region. Despite these challenges, the spreading of the Gospel to Iconium reflects the disciples' unwavering commitment to fulfilling their mission and spreading the message of salvation.

a. Arrival in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:13-14): Journey to the synagogue:

- 1) Paul and his companions head to the synagogue upon arrival in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:14). This reflects Paul's strategic approach to start his ministry by engaging with the Jewish community first.
- 2) By visiting the synagogue, Paul aims to establish common ground and credibility with both Jews and God-fearing Gentiles. It provides him with an opportunity to communicate the Gospel within the cultural and religious context of his audience.

b. Paul's sermon (Acts 13:15-41):

1) Introduction and history of Israel (Acts 13:16-22):

- a) Paul addresses the gathered audience, recounting Israel's history from their time in Egypt to the establishment of King David (Acts 13:16-22). He emphasizes God's choice of Israel as His people and His faithfulness in fulfilling His promises throughout their history.
- b) This historical overview serves to establish a common understanding of God's dealings with Israel and lays the foundation for Paul's message about Jesus.

2) The promise of a Savior (Acts 13:23-25):

- a) Paul declares the fulfillment of God's promise to send a Savior, Jesus, as foretold by the prophets (**Acts 13:23-25**).
 - b) He highlights John the Baptist's role as the forerunner preparing the way for Jesus, emphasizing the continuity between the Old Testament prophecies and their realization in Jesus.
 - c) This proclamation underscores Jesus' identity as the long-awaited Messiah, the fulfillment of Israel's hope for salvation.
- 3) The rejection and crucifixion of Jesus (**Acts 13:26-30**):
- a) Paul recounts how the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem rejected Jesus and called for His crucifixion, fulfilling the prophecies concerning the suffering of the Messiah (**Acts 13:26-30**).
 - b) He emphasizes the irony of the Jewish leaders' actions, as they fulfilled the very prophecies they should have recognized and accepted.
 - c) This part of Paul's sermon highlights the culpability of the Jewish leaders in Jesus' crucifixion and sets the stage for the proclamation of His resurrection.
- 4) Resurrection and fulfillment of prophecy (**Acts 13:31-37**):
- a) Paul proclaims Jesus' resurrection from the dead, citing eyewitnesses who saw Him after His resurrection (**Acts 13:31-37**).
 - b) He connects Jesus' resurrection to the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, particularly Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 55:3, demonstrating that Jesus' resurrection was part of God's plan of redemption.
 - c) This declaration underscores the significance of Jesus' resurrection as the ultimate vindication of His identity as the Son of God and the fulfillment of God's promises.
- 5) Justification through faith (**Acts 13:38-41**):
- a) Paul offers salvation through Jesus Christ, proclaiming forgiveness of sins and justification to all who believe in Him (**Acts 13:38-41**).
 - b) He contrasts the inability of the Law of Moses to provide justification with the freedom and completeness of justification through faith in Jesus.
 - c) This message of salvation by faith underscores the central theme of Paul's preaching and aligns with the broader theological emphasis on the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice for salvation.
- c. Response of the Jews and gentiles (**Acts 13:42-52**):
- 1) Initial interest and invitation to return (**Acts 13:42-43**): After Paul and Barnabas finish preaching, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism express interest and ask them to speak more on the following Sabbath (**Acts 13:42-43**). This initial response indicates a positive reception among both Jews and Gentiles in the synagogue, demonstrating their openness to Paul's message and eagerness to learn more about the gospel.
 - 2) Opposition from Jews and acceptance by Gentiles (**Acts 13:44-48**):
 - a) The following Sabbath, almost the whole city gathers to hear the word of the Lord, provoking jealousy among the Jews who contradict Paul's teaching and blaspheme (**Acts 13:44-45**).
 - b) In response to the Jews' rejection, Paul and Barnabas turn to the Gentiles, declaring that they will now focus on bringing salvation to the Gentiles (**Acts 13:46-47**).
 - c) This shift in focus from the Jews to the Gentiles reflects the fulfillment of Jesus' commission to take the gospel to all nations (**Acts 1:8**) and highlights the widespread acceptance of the gospel among Gentiles.

- 3) Expulsion from the region (Acts 13:49-50): The spreading of the word of the Lord throughout the region leads to the Jews stirring up influential women and leading men of the city to persecute Paul and Barnabas and expel them from their region (Acts 13:50). This expulsion demonstrates the growing hostility toward the message of Jesus and the resistance encountered by Paul and Barnabas as they proclaim the gospel in new territories.

- 4) Spreading of the gospel to Iconium (Acts 13:51-52):

- a) Paul and Barnabas, undeterred by the opposition, shake the dust off their feet as a testimony against those who reject the gospel and proceed to Iconium (Acts 13:51).
- a) The disciples are filled with joy and the Holy Spirit, continuing their mission to spread the gospel and make disciples despite the challenges they face (Acts 13:52).
- b) This response exemplifies the perseverance and resilience of Paul and Barnabas in the face of persecution, as well as the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit enabling them to fulfill their calling.

The ministry of Paul and Barnabas in Pisidian Antioch exemplifies the complexities and triumphs of early Christian mission endeavors. Their strategic engagement with the synagogue community, coupled with Paul's compelling sermon, initiates a mixed response among Jews and Gentiles, highlighting the tension between acceptance and opposition to the Gospel message. Despite facing persecution and expulsion from the region, Paul and Barnabas remain steadfast in their mission, spreading the Gospel to new territories and continuing to make disciples. Their perseverance and reliance on the Holy Spirit underscore the transformative power of the Gospel and its enduring impact on diverse communities across cultural and geographical boundaries.

Summary:

1. **Divine Guidance And Commissioning (Acts 13:1-3):** The commissioning of Barnabas and Saul illustrates the importance of seeking divine guidance and communal discernment in ministry endeavors. As Christians, we are called to rely on the Holy Spirit's direction (through the scriptures) and the support of the church as we embark on mission endeavors, trusting in God's provision and empowerment for the tasks ahead (Acts 13:1-3; 16:6-10; Ephesians 1:11-12).
2. **Spiritual Warfare And Victory (Acts 13:4-12):** The ministry of Barnabas and Saul in Cyprus highlights the spiritual conflict inherent in proclaiming the Gospel, yet it also demonstrates God's power to overcome opposition and bring about repentance and faith. As we engage in spreading the Gospel, we should be prepared to face opposition but also confident in God's ability to work through the power of the gospel and transform lives through His Word (Acts 13:4-12; Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5).
3. **Perseverance And Resilience (Acts 13:13-52):** The response to Paul and Barnabas's preaching in Pisidian Antioch reflects the mixed reactions that often accompany the proclamation of the Gospel. Despite facing persecution and expulsion, Paul and Barnabas remain steadfast in their mission, demonstrating resilience and perseverance in the face of adversity. As Christians, we are called to emulate their example, trusting in the providence of God to sustain us and enable us to fulfill our calling, even in the midst of challenges and opposition (Acts 13:13-52; Romans 5:3-5; James 1:2-4).



Antioch: This is where Saul and Barnabas were commissioned by the Holy Spirit for their missionary journey (Acts 13:1-3).

Seleucia: Saul and Barnabas sailed from here to Cyprus (Acts 13:4).

Cyprus: They travelled through this island preaching the word of God (Acts 13:4-12).

Paphos: They encountered a Jewish false prophet named Bar-Jesus (Elymas) here (Acts 13:6-12).

Perga: They departed from Paphos and came to this city in Pamphylia (Acts 13:13).

Antioch in Pisidia: They preached in the synagogue here, but faced opposition from the Jews (Acts 13:14-50).

Iconium: They went here after being expelled from Antioch in Pisidia and preached in the synagogue (Acts 13:51-14:1).

This chapter, from Barnabas and Saul's commissioning to their ministry in Cyprus and Pisidian Antioch, reveals key insights into Christian mission. It stresses the importance of divine guidance, communal discernment, and reliance on the Spirit and church support. Additionally, it highlights the reality of spiritual opposition in spreading the Gospel, emphasizing preparedness and confidence in God's power. Through Paul and Barnabas's resilience in adversity, Christians are urged to trust in God's providence, knowing their labor in the Lord isn't in vain. Their example reminds us of the enduring call to faithfully proclaim the Gospel, trusting in God's empowerment and sovereignty (**Acts 13:1-52; Ephesians 6:10-18; Romans 8:31-39**).

Applications:

1. **Seeking Divine Guidance (Acts 13:1-3):** Just as the early church sought divine guidance through fasting, prayer, and communal discernment before commissioning Barnabas and Saul, Christians today should prioritize seeking God's direction in their mission endeavors. This involves earnest prayer, and a deep immersion in Scripture. By seeking God's guidance, believers can discern His will more clearly and align their actions with His purposes.
2. **Embracing Resilience In Ministry (Acts 13:4-12):** The ministry of Barnabas and Saul in Cyprus and Pisidian Antioch exemplifies the resilience required in spreading the Gospel. Despite facing opposition, rejection, and persecution, they remained steadfast in their mission, demonstrating unwavering faith and commitment. Similarly, believers are called to persevere in their ministry endeavors, recognizing that challenges and setbacks are inevitable but trusting in God's strength to sustain them. By embracing resilience, believers can continue to advance the kingdom of God amidst adversity.
3. **Cultivating A Heart For All People (Acts 13:13-52):** The diverse responses to Paul and Barnabas's preaching in Pisidian Antioch highlight the universal appeal of the Gospel message. While some embraced it eagerly, others rejected it vehemently. This diversity reminds believers of the importance of cultivating a heart for all people, regardless of their background or response to the Gospel. Just as Paul and Barnabas turned to the Gentiles when faced with Jewish opposition, believers are called to extend the message of salvation to all nations, showing love, compassion, and grace to everyone they encounter.

These applications underscore the importance of seeking divine guidance, embracing resilience in ministry, and cultivating a heart for all people as believers engage in spreading the Gospel and advancing the kingdom of God, following the example set forth in Acts 13:1-52.

Key Points:

1. **Commissioning of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:1-3):** Acts 13 marks a pivotal moment in the expansion of the early church as Barnabas and Saul are commissioned for missionary work. This commissioning signifies a deliberate shift towards reaching out to Gentile territories, expanding the reach of the Gospel beyond traditional Jewish regions. It highlights the role of the Holy Spirit and the importance of communal discernment in guiding the church's mission endeavors (**Acts 13:1-3**).
2. **Ministry in Cyprus (Acts 13:4-12):** The narrative portrays Barnabas and Saul's ministry in Cyprus, where they encounter opposition from a Jewish sorcerer named Elymas. This section underscores the spiritual conflict inherent in proclaiming the Gospel and the miraculous power of God to overcome opposition. Through Paul's confrontation with Elymas and the subsequent demonstration of God's power, the ministry in Cyprus highlights the authority of the Gospel and its transformative impact on both Jews and Gentiles (**Acts 13:4-12**).
3. **Preaching in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:13-52):** Paul's sermon in Pisidian Antioch serves as a central point in Acts 13, emphasizing Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies and the offer of salvation through faith in Him. The diverse responses to Paul's message - from initial interest to outright rejection - illustrate the universal appeal and divisive nature of the Gospel. Despite facing opposition and persecution, Paul and Barnabas remain steadfast in their mission, spreading the Gospel to new territories and continuing to make disciples (**Acts 13:13-52**).

These key points illuminate the early church's mission's dynamic nature and the Gospel's transformative impact. Commissioning Barnabas and Saul demonstrates the deliberate expansion of outreach guided by the Holy Spirit. In Cyprus, the ministry reveals spiritual conflict and God's authority over opposition. Paul's sermon in Pisidian Antioch underscores the Gospel's universal appeal and the disciples' resilience in spreading it. Despite challenges, these events inspire believers to advance God's kingdom with courage and faith.

Questions:

1. What was the significance of the church at Antioch in the commissioning of Barnabas and Saul (**Acts 13:1**)?
2. How did the prophets and teachers contribute to the church at Antioch (**Acts 13:1**)?
3. What was the significance of fasting and prayer in the commissioning of Barnabas and Saul (**Acts 13:2**)?
4. What does the laying on of hands signify in the commissioning of Barnabas and Saul (**Acts 13:3**)?
5. How did Barnabas and Saul demonstrate resilience in their ministry in Cyprus (**Acts 13:4-12**)?
6. What was the response to Paul's sermon in Pisidian Antioch (**Acts 13:42-43**)?
7. How did Paul connect Jesus to Old Testament prophecies in his sermon (**Acts 13:23-25**)?
8. What was the consequence of Paul's pronouncement of blindness upon Elymas (**Acts 13:11**)?
9. How did Paul and Barnabas respond to opposition in Pisidian Antioch (**Acts 13:51**)?
10. What empowered Paul and Barnabas to continue their mission despite opposition and persecution (**Acts 13:52**)?

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4. Stoning Of Paul In Lystra (Acts 14:19-20).

In these verses, we encounter a harrowing event in Lystra where the opposition faced by Paul and Barnabas reaches a violent climax. Stirred up by Jews from Antioch and Iconium, the crowd turns against the apostles, culminating in Paul's stoning and near-fatal injuries. This dramatic turn of events underscores the intense opposition encountered by early Christian missionaries and highlights the risks involved in proclaiming the gospel message in hostile environments.

- a. Jews from Antioch and Iconium stir up the crowd (Acts 14:19). Upon hearing of Paul and Barnabas's presence in Lystra, Jews from Antioch and Iconium, where they had previously faced opposition, travelled to Lystra and stirred up the crowd against them.
- b. Paul is stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:20a). As a result of the agitation fuelled by the Jews from Antioch and Iconium, the crowd turned against Paul and stoned him, inflicting severe injuries and leaving him seemingly lifeless
- c. Paul miraculously survives (Acts 14:20b). Despite being stoned and left for dead, Paul miraculously survived. God intervened to preserve his life, demonstrating His power and protection over His faithful servant.

The account of Paul's stoning in Lystra serves as a sobering reminder of the persecution faced by early Christians in their efforts to spread the gospel. Despite the grave danger and apparent hopelessness of the situation, Paul's miraculous survival stands as a testament to God's sovereign power and protection over His servants. This remarkable deliverance underscores the resilience and faithfulness of those who endure persecution for the sake of Christ and serves as an encouragement for believers to remain steadfast in the face of opposition.

5. Departure To Derbe (Acts 14:20-21).

In these verses, we witness Paul and Barnabas's strategic response to persecution as they depart from Lystra and journey to Derbe. Fleeing from the violent opposition encountered in Lystra, the apostles embark on a new phase of their missionary endeavor, recognizing the importance of regrouping and continuing their mission in a safer environment. Their resilience in the face of adversity reflects their unwavering dedication to spreading the gospel message despite the challenges they encounter.

- a. Paul and Barnabas leave Lystra and go to Derbe (Acts 14:20). Following the violent incident in Lystra where Paul was stoned and left for dead, Paul and Barnabas made the decision to leave the city and seek refuge elsewhere. Recognizing the danger posed by staying in Lystra, they departed for Derbe, another city in the region of Lycaonia.
- b. Preaching and making disciples in Derbe (Acts 14:21a). Upon their arrival in Derbe, Paul and Barnabas continued their mission of preaching the gospel. Despite the recent persecution and adversity they faced in Lystra, they remained steadfast in their commitment to spreading the message of Jesus Christ. In Derbe, they not only preached but also made disciples, teaching and nurturing new believers in the faith.

The narrative in these verses exemplifies Paul and Barnabas's resilience and determination in the face of persecution. Their departure from Lystra and subsequent ministry in Derbe demonstrate their strategic approach to navigating challenging circumstances while remaining faithful to their mission. This episode serves as a poignant reminder of the perseverance required in proclaiming the gospel and the importance of adapting to changing circumstances in fulfilling God's calling.

6. Return Journey Through Previous Cities (Acts 14:21-28).

In these verses, we witness Paul and Barnabas's return journey through the cities they had previously visited during their missionary expedition. This section encapsulates their ministry strategy of strengthening and encouraging the believers they had established in these regions, while also appointing elders to provide spiritual leadership. The narrative culminates with their return to Syrian Antioch, where they report back to the church and celebrate the remarkable work of God among the Gentiles.

- a. Return to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch (Acts 14:21-22). After preaching in Derbe, Paul and Barnabas retraced their steps back through the cities where they had previously established churches: Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch.
- b. Strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain firm in the faith (Acts 14:22). As they revisited these cities, Paul and Barnabas took the opportunity to strengthen and encourage the disciples they had made during their initial missionary journey. They exhorted them to remain steadfast in their faith despite the challenges and persecutions they might face.

c. Appointment of elders in every church (Acts 14:23):

- 1) Recognizing the importance of providing spiritual leadership and guidance to the newly formed churches, Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in each of the congregations they had established.
- 2) These elders were entrusted with the responsibility of shepherding and overseeing the spiritual welfare of the local assemblies. An elder had to meet specific qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-7 ; Titus 1:5-9).

d. Journey back to Syrian Antioch, where they had started (Acts 14:24-26). Following their ministry in the cities of Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, Paul and Barnabas embarked on the journey back to Syrian Antioch, the city from which they had initially been sent out on their missionary endeavor.

e. Reporting back to the church in Antioch, sharing about their mission trip (Acts 14:27). Upon their return to Syrian Antioch, Paul and Barnabas gathered with the church and reported back on their mission trip. They shared about the work God had done through them, the challenges they had faced, and the successes they had experienced in spreading the gospel among the Gentiles.

f. Celebration of God's work among the Gentiles (Acts 14:28). The church in Antioch rejoiced and celebrated the work that God had accomplished through Paul and Barnabas among the Gentiles. They praised God for His faithfulness and the salvation that had come to many through the preaching of the gospel.

This account offers a comprehensive view of Paul and Barnabas's ministry, highlighting their impact on early Christian communities. By revisiting and fortifying established churches and appointing elders for ongoing spiritual guidance, they nurtured the growth of the Christian movement. Their return to Syrian Antioch emphasizes the partnership between missionaries and sending churches in advancing the gospel.

Summary:

1. **Bold Proclamation Amidst Opposition** (Acts 14:1-7): The journey of Paul and Barnabas in Iconium underscores the courage required to proclaim the gospel in the face of opposition. Despite encountering resistance, they fearlessly preach Christ, highlighting the challenges early Christian missionaries faced in spreading the gospel.
2. **Miraculous Signs Confirming The Message** (Acts 14:8-10): The miraculous healing of a lame man in Lystra serves as a powerful confirmation of the truth of the gospel preached by Paul and Barnabas. This remarkable event not only transforms the life of the individual but also draws attention to the message of salvation.
3. **Challenges Of Cultural Misinterpretation** (Acts 14:11-18): In Lystra, the people's mistaken identification of Paul and Barnabas as gods reflects the challenges of cultural misinterpretation faced by missionaries. Their response underscores the importance of pointing people towards the one true God amidst diverse religious beliefs.
4. **Perseverance Amidst Persecution** (Acts 14:19-20): The stoning of Paul in Lystra highlights the intense persecution early Christians endured for the sake of the gospel. Despite facing near-fatal injuries, Paul's miraculous survival demonstrates God's protection over His faithful servants.
5. **Strategic Response To Adversity** (Acts 14:20-21): Paul and Barnabas's departure to Derbe reveals their strategic response to persecution. Fleeing from danger, they continue their mission in a safer environment, demonstrating resilience and adaptability in fulfilling their calling.
6. **Nurturing and Strengthening the Church** (Acts 14:21-28): The return journey through previous cities emphasizes Paul and Barnabas's commitment to nurturing and strengthening the fledgling churches. Through appointing elders, providing spiritual leadership, and reporting back to the sending church in Antioch, they ensure the continued growth and stability of the churches they established.

This chapter showcases Paul and Barnabas's courageous witness and strategic ministry as they traverse various cities, proclaiming the gospel amidst opposition, persecution, and physical harm. Despite challenges, they remain steadfast in spreading Jesus Christ's message, demonstrating unwavering faithfulness through miraculous signs, strategic responses to adversity, and the establishment of strong churches. Their journey inspires perseverance, resilience, and reliance on God's providence in adversity, urging modern-day believers to emulate their boldness, commitment, and strategic approach in fulfilling the Great Commission amidst contemporary challenges.

Applications:

1. **Courageous Witness (Acts 14:1-7):** Like Paul and Barnabas, we are called to be courageous witnesses for Christ in our communities and beyond. This lesson challenges us to boldly proclaim the gospel, even in the face of opposition or persecution. It encourages us to trust in God's protection and guidance as we share the message of salvation with those around us.
2. **Strategic Ministry (Acts 14:20-21):** The strategic responses of Paul and Barnabas to adversity highlight the importance of wisdom and discernment in ministry. As we engage in spreading the gospel, we must prayerfully consider our approach, adapting to different circumstances and environments while remaining faithful to our mission. This lesson reminds us to seek God's guidance in every step of our ministry journey.
3. **Nurturing Christian Communities (Acts 14:21-28):** Paul and Barnabas's commitment to strengthening and encouraging the believers they had established underscores the importance of nurturing Christian community. We are called to invest in the spiritual growth and well-being of fellow believers, supporting and equipping one another for the work of ministry. This lesson challenges us to actively participate in building and sustaining vibrant churches where faith can flourish and God's kingdom can advance.

Key Points:

1. **Courageous Witness (Acts 14:1-7):** Paul and Barnabas boldly proclaim the gospel in Iconium despite facing opposition from both Jews and Gentiles.
2. **Miraculous Confirmation (Acts 14:8-10):** The miraculous healing of a lame man in Lystra serves as a powerful confirmation of the gospel message preached by Paul and Barnabas.
3. **Cultural Misinterpretation (Acts 14:11-18):** The people of Lystra mistakenly identify Paul and Barnabas as gods, highlighting the challenge of cultural misinterpretation faced by missionaries.
4. **Perseverance Amidst Persecution (Acts 14:19-20):** Paul endures stoning in Lystra but miraculously survives, demonstrating God's protection over His faithful servants.
5. **Strategic Ministry Response (Acts 14:20-21):** Following persecution, Paul and Barnabas strategically depart to Derbe, emphasizing the importance of wisdom and discernment in ministry.
6. **Nurturing Christian Communities (Acts 14:21-28):** During their return journey, Paul and Barnabas strengthen and appoint elders in churches, highlighting the significance of nurturing Christian community for spiritual growth and stability.

These key points underscore the challenges and triumphs experienced by Paul and Barnabas as they courageously spread the gospel in various cities. Their unwavering faith, strategic responses to adversity, and commitment to nurturing congregations provide valuable lessons for Christians today. As we encounter opposition, cultural misunderstandings, and persecution in our own efforts to share the gospel, may we emulate their courage, perseverance, and reliance on God's guidance.

Questions:

1. What challenges did Paul and Barnabas face while preaching in Iconium (Acts 14:1-2)?
2. How did the people of Lystra respond to the miraculous healing of the lame man (Acts 14:8-10)?
3. What cultural misunderstanding occurred in Lystra, and how did Paul and Barnabas respond (Acts 14:11-15)?
4. What violent opposition did Paul face in Lystra (Acts 14:19-20)?
5. How did Paul and Barnabas respond to persecution in Lystra (Acts 14:20-21)?
6. What strategic actions did Paul and Barnabas take during their return journey (Acts 14:21-23)?
7. What significance did the appointment of elders hold for the early churches (Acts 14:23)?
8. How did Paul and Barnabas conclude their missionary journey (Acts 14:24-26)?
9. How did the church in Antioch respond to Paul and Barnabas's report (Acts 14:27)?
10. What lessons can we learn from Paul and Barnabas's missionary journey (Acts 14:22-28)?

In these verses, the early church grapples with a significant theological dispute over circumcision, highlighting tensions between Jewish and Gentile believers. This conflict emerges within the diverse church in Antioch and prompts Paul and Barnabas to journey to Jerusalem to discuss the matter with the apostles and elders in Jerusalem.

a. Dispute arises among believers from Judea and Antioch regarding circumcision (Acts 15:1):

- 1) In the early church, particularly in Antioch, a diverse group of believers emerged, including both Jewish converts and Gentile converts.
- 2) A controversy arises over whether Gentile believers must be circumcised according to Jewish Law in order to be saved.
- 3) Some Jewish Christians from Judea, likely influenced by their strict adherence to Mosaic Law, insist on circumcision as a requirement for Gentile converts.
- 4) This disagreement threatens to create division within the church and undermines the message of salvation by faith in Christ.

b. Paul and Barnabas debate with these believers, prompting the decision to consult the apostles and elders in Jerusalem (**Acts 15:2**):

- 1) Recognizing the gravity of the dispute, Paul and Barnabas engage in earnest debate with the proponents of circumcision.
- 2) Despite their efforts to resolve the issue locally, they realize the need for a broader discussion and seek the counsel of the apostles and elders in Jerusalem.
- 3) Paul's mission and message were not subject to the approval of the other apostles, as he received his commission directly from Jesus Christ Himself (**Galatians 1:1, 11-12**):
 - a) Paul's purpose in going up to Jerusalem was not to seek permission or validation from the other apostles but rather to ensure unity in the gospel message and to clarify any potential misunderstandings or disagreements. He presented the gospel he preached among the Gentiles to the Jerusalem leaders not for their approval but for the sake of clarity and unity within the early Christian community (**Galatians 2:1-10**).
 - b) Even if there were disagreements or opposition from the other apostles, Paul would have remained steadfast in his commitment to the gospel he received from Christ. As he states, even if an angel from heaven were to preach a gospel contrary to what he had preached, it should be rejected (**Galatians 1:8-9**). This demonstrates Paul's unwavering conviction in the truth of the gospel he proclaimed, regardless of the opinions of others.
 - c) So, while Paul respected the Jerusalem apostles and sought to maintain unity within the church, his primary allegiance was to Christ, and he would have continued preaching the gospel according to the revelation he received, even if it meant standing alone against opposition.
- 4) This decision reflects the early church's recognition of the need for collective discernment and decision-making in addressing significant theological and doctrinal matters, highlighting the communal nature of Christian faith and practice. The apostles still living and residing at Jerusalem made this a unique situation.

c. The church in Antioch sends Paul, Barnabas, and others to Jerusalem to discuss the matter (Acts 15:3):

- 1) Antioch was a vibrant and diverse hub of early Christianity, comprising both Jewish and Gentile believers.
- 2) Recognizing the seriousness of the dispute over circumcision, the church in Antioch takes a proactive approach by sending a delegation to Jerusalem.

- 3) This delegation, led by Paul and Barnabas, likely included representatives from both the Jewish and Gentile segments of the Antiochian church, reflecting a desire for inclusivity and unity in addressing the issue.
- d. The believers in Jerusalem welcome the delegation but some Pharisees argue for the necessity of circumcision (Acts 15:4-5):
 - 1) Upon the delegation's arrival in Jerusalem, they are warmly received, indicating a spirit of hospitality and unity within the early church. However, tensions arise when some Pharisees who had become believers insist on the necessity of circumcision for Gentile converts.
 - 2) These Pharisees, influenced by their background in Jewish Law and tradition, advocate for the continuation of circumcision as a requirement for Gentile inclusion in the Christian community. Their stance underscores the ongoing theological debate within the early church regarding the relationship between Jewish Law and Gentile inclusion, reflecting broader tensions between Jewish and Gentile identity in the emerging church.
 - 3) Despite the presence of differing opinions, the Jerusalem church's welcome of the Antiochian delegation indicates a willingness to engage in dialogue and discernment, reflecting a commitment to unity and mutual understanding within the diverse body of believers.

The conflict over circumcision serves as a pivotal moment in the early church, revealing the challenges of navigating theological differences within a diverse and rapidly expanding community. Through dialogue and discernment, the church in Antioch and Jerusalem seeks to preserve unity while affirming the inclusion of Gentile believers in the promise of salvation through faith in Christ. Despite tensions and disagreements, the episode ultimately underscores the importance of mutual respect, understanding, and a shared commitment to the gospel message in fostering unity amidst diversity within the body of Christ.

2. Peter's Testimony (Acts 15:6-11).

In these verses, the brethren convene in Jerusalem to address the divisive issue of circumcision and its implications for Gentile believers. As apostles and elders gather, Peter emerges as a key voice, drawing upon his own experiences to advocate for the inclusion of Gentiles in the church apart from adherence to Jewish customs. His testimony underscores the foundational principle of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and challenges the notion that Gentile believers must conform to Jewish practices to be fully accepted within the Christian community.

- a. Apostles and elders gather to discuss the issue (Acts 15:6):
 - 1) The gathering of apostles and elders in Jerusalem signifies the importance and gravity of the matter at hand.
 - 2) This assembly represents a collective effort to address the dispute over circumcision in a spirit of unity and discernment.
 - 3) The inclusion of both apostles, who held positions of authority and leadership in the early church, and elders, who provided wisdom and guidance, reflects the collaborative nature of decision-making within the Christian community.
- b. Peter recalls his experience with Cornelius and emphasizes salvation by grace through faith (Acts 15:7-9; Acts 10:44-48):
 - 1) Peter recounts his encounter with Cornelius, a Gentile centurion, and his household, during which the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them, signifying God's acceptance of Gentiles into the church (Acts 10:44-48). This pivotal event, marked by the Gentiles' reception of the Holy Spirit apart from circumcision or adherence to the Mosaic Law, serves as a powerful testimony to God's inclusion of Gentiles in the promise of salvation.
 - 2) Peter emphasizes that salvation is not based on adherence to Jewish customs or rituals but is freely given by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ.
 - 3) By citing his experience with Cornelius, Peter affirms the legitimacy of Gentile conversion apart from circumcision, challenging the notion that Gentile believers must become Jewish proselytes to be fully incorporated into the Christian community.

- c. He asserts that imposing circumcision on Gentile believers is burdening them with a yoke that neither they nor their ancestors could bear (**Acts 15:10-11**):
 - 1) Peter argues against the imposition of circumcision on Gentile believers, likening it to a burdensome yoke that neither they nor their ancestors were able to bear.
 - 2) Peter's assertion aligns with Jesus' criticism of the Pharisees for burdening people with heavy religious obligations (**Matthew 23:4**) and emphasizes the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice for salvation.
 - 3) By rejecting the imposition of circumcision, Peter affirms the principle of justification by faith in Christ and underscores the universal accessibility of salvation to both Jews and Gentiles through Jesus Christ.

Peter's testimony represents a pivotal moment in the church's understanding of Gentile inclusion and the nature of salvation. By recounting his encounter with Cornelius and emphasizing salvation through faith, Peter affirms the legitimacy of Gentile conversion apart from adherence to Jewish laws. His rejection of the imposition of circumcision underscores the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice for salvation and underscores the universal accessibility of salvation to both Jews and Gentiles. Ultimately, Peter's testimony contributes to the resolution of the circumcision controversy and reinforces the foundational principles of grace and unity within the Christian church.

3. Paul And Barnabas' Witness (Acts 15:12).

In this verse, Paul and Barnabas offer testimony before the assembly in Jerusalem, recounting the signs and wonders God performed among the Gentiles through their ministry. Their witness serves to affirm the legitimacy of Gentile conversion and challenge the notion that adherence to Jewish customs is necessary for inclusion in the Christian community. Through their testimony, Paul and Barnabas highlight the transformative work of the Holy Spirit among the Gentiles, underscoring God's inclusive plan of salvation for all people.

- a. Paul and Barnabas recount the signs and wonders God performed among the Gentiles (**Acts 15:12**).
- b. They testify to the transformative work of the Holy Spirit among the Gentiles, demonstrating that God's acceptance and empowerment of Gentile believers were not contingent upon adherence to Jewish customs or rituals (**Acts 15:8-9**):
 - 1) Paul and Barnabas emphasize the miraculous manifestations of the Holy Spirit's presence and power among the Gentiles, indicating divine approval and validation of their ministry.
 - 2) These signs and wonders serve as tangible evidence of God's inclusive plan of salvation for all people, regardless of ethnic or cultural background.
 - 3) By highlighting the supernatural manifestations accompanying their ministry, Paul and Barnabas affirm the legitimacy of Gentile conversion and refute any notion that Gentile believers must conform to Jewish customs to be considered part of the Christian community.
 - 4) Their testimony reinforces the central message of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ and underscores the universal scope of God's redemptive plan for humanity.

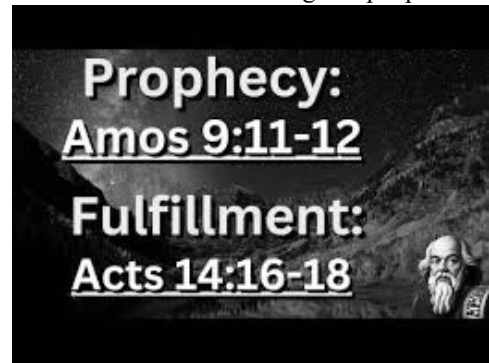
Paul and Barnabas' witness serves as a powerful affirmation of God's inclusive plan of salvation for both Jews and Gentiles. By recounting the signs and wonders accompanying their ministry, they provide tangible evidence of God's acceptance and empowerment of Gentile believers apart from adherence to Jewish customs. Their testimony reinforces the central message of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ and underscores the universal scope of God's redemptive plan, challenging cultural barriers and fostering unity within the diverse body of believers.

4. James' Judgment (Acts 15:13-21).

In these verses, James delivers a judgment regarding the inclusion of Gentile believers in the Christian community. Affirming Peter's testimony and citing the prophet Amos, James provides a theological basis for embracing Gentile believers without imposing Jewish customs. He suggests practical guidelines for Gentile believers to promote unity and respect within the diverse Christian community.

- a. James, a pillar of the Jerusalem church, speaks, affirming Peter's testimony and quoting the prophet Amos (**Acts 15:13-18; Amos 9:11-12**):
 - 1) James, often regarded as a prominent leader within the Jerusalem church and known for his wisdom and authority, addresses the assembly.
 - 2) He acknowledges Peter's testimony concerning the inclusion of Gentiles in the Christian community and affirms its validity.

- 3) James quotes from the prophet Amos, specifically referencing Amos 9:11-12, to support Peter's testimony and demonstrate that God's plan has always included the inclusion of the Gentiles among His people.
 - 4) By appealing to Scripture, James provides a solid theological foundation for the decision to embrace Gentile believers without imposing Jewish customs, emphasizing the continuity between Old Testament prophecy and the unfolding of God's redemptive plan in Christ.
 - 5) His citation of Amos underscores the divine intention to establish a united and inclusive community of believers, transcending ethnic and cultural boundaries.
- b. He suggests that Gentile believers be instructed to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals, and from sexual immorality (Acts 15:19-21).



James' judgment represents a pivotal moment in the early church's understanding of Gentile inclusion and the application of Jewish Law to Gentile believers. By affirming Peter's testimony and citing Scripture, he provides a theological foundation for embracing Gentiles without imposing Jewish customs. His practical guidelines for Gentile believers reflect a desire to promote unity and respect within the diverse Christian community, emphasizing the principles of grace, love, and mutual consideration. Ultimately, James' judgment contributes to the resolution of the circumcision controversy and reinforces the principles of inclusion and unity within the body of Christ.

5. Letter To Gentile Believers (Acts 15:22-35).

In these verses, the brethren reach a consensus on the issue of Gentile inclusion, and a letter is drafted to communicate the decision to the Gentile believers. Representatives are chosen to accompany Paul, Barnabas to Antioch with the letter, demonstrating the unity and solidarity of the Jerusalem church with the broader Christian community. Upon the letter's arrival in Antioch, it brings joy and encouragement to the Gentile believers, affirming their status within the Christian community and providing clarity on the issue of circumcision. Paul and Barnabas remain in Antioch, continuing their ministry of teaching and preaching alongside others, fostering spiritual growth and unity within the local church.

- a. The apostles, elders, and whole church choose representatives to send with Paul, Barnabas, and others to Antioch with a letter explaining the decision (Acts 15:22-23):
 - 1) Following deliberations and discussions, the apostles, elders, and the entire church in Jerusalem reach a consensus on the issue of Gentile inclusion and the instructions to be communicated to the Gentile believers.
 - 2) They select representatives, including Judas Barsabbas and Silas, to accompany Paul, Barnabas, and others back to Antioch with a formal letter detailing the decision reached at the council.
 - 3) This action underscores the unity and solidarity of the Jerusalem church with the broader Christian community, as they seek to communicate their decision and provide clarity to the Gentile believers in Antioch and beyond.
- b. The letter is read in Antioch, bringing joy and encouragement to the believers (Acts 15:30-31):
 - 1) Upon receiving the letter from Jerusalem, the brethren in Antioch gather together to hear its contents. The reading of the letter brings relief, joy, and encouragement to the Gentile brethren, as it affirms their status within the Christian community and provides clarity on the issue of circumcision and adherence to Jewish customs.
 - 2) The letter serves as a source of affirmation and validation for the Gentile believers, reassuring them of their acceptance by the broader church and reinforcing the principles of grace and unity in Christ.
 - 3) The response of joy and encouragement among the brethren highlights the significance of clear communication and unity within the church, fostering a sense of belonging and mutual support among its members.
- c. Paul and Barnabas remain in Antioch, teaching and preaching with many others (Acts 15:32-35).

The letter to the Gentile believers represents a significant milestone in the early church's understanding of Gentile inclusion and unity within the body of Christ. Through clear communication and solidarity, the brethren in Jerusalem affirm the status of Gentile believers and provide instructions for their integration into the Christian community. The response of joy and encouragement among the Gentile believers highlights the importance of unity and mutual support within the church, fostering a sense of belonging and spiritual growth. As Paul and Barnabas remain in Antioch, their continued ministry contributes to the strengthening and maturation of the local church, emphasizing the ongoing importance of teaching, preaching, and communal support in the Christian journey.

6. Paul And Barnabas Disagree (Acts 15:36-41).

In these verses, Paul and Barnabas encounter a disagreement regarding their future ministry endeavors. Paul suggests revisiting the cities where they had previously preached, reflecting his pastoral concern for the spiritual well-being of the believers. However, a disagreement arises over whether to include John Mark, leading to a parting of ways as Barnabas takes Mark to Cyprus while Paul chooses Silas as his companion. Despite this disagreement, both Paul and Barnabas remain committed to the mission of spreading the gospel, illustrating the complexity and challenges of ministry partnerships within the early church.

- a. Paul suggests to Barnabas that they revisit the cities where they had preached to see how the believers are doing (Acts 15:36):
 - 1) After the Jerusalem council and the resolution of the dispute over circumcision, Paul proposes to Barnabas that they embark on a journey to revisit the churches they had previously established.
 - 2) Paul's suggestion reflects his pastoral concern for the spiritual well-being and growth of the brethren in these churches.
 - 3) He recognizes the importance of follow-up and ongoing ministry in nurturing the faith and supporting the development of these fledgling congregations (Ephesians 4:11-16).
 - 4) Paul's proposal demonstrates his commitment to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:14-16) and his desire to ensure the continued vitality and stability of the churches they had planted.
- b. Barnabas wants to take John Mark along, but Paul disagrees due to Mark's earlier departure from their missionary journey (Acts 15:37-38):
 - 1) Barnabas expresses his desire to take John Mark, his cousin, along on the journey to revisit the churches.
 - 2) However, Paul disagrees with Barnabas's suggestion due to Mark's previous departure from their missionary journey.
 - 3) John Mark had abandoned them during their first missionary journey, causing a rift between Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:13).
 - 4) Paul's reluctance to take Mark along may stem from concerns about his reliability and commitment to the mission, as well as a desire to avoid potential disruptions or conflicts during their ministry.
- c. Barnabas takes Mark and sails to Cyprus, while Paul chooses Silas and departs on a separate journey, visiting churches and strengthening the believers (Acts 15:39-41):
 - 1) Unable to reach a compromise on the issue of John Mark's involvement, Paul and Barnabas decide to part ways.
 - 2) Barnabas takes Mark and sails to Cyprus, likely to resume their ministry there and perhaps to provide Mark with an opportunity for restoration and growth.
 - 3) Meanwhile, Paul selects Silas as his companion and departs on a separate journey, embarking on a mission to revisit the churches and strengthen the believers in the regions of Syria and Cilicia.
 - 4) Despite their disagreement and subsequent separation, both Paul and Barnabas remain committed to the mission of spreading the gospel and nurturing the fledgling Christian communities.
 - 5) Their decision to part ways reflects a pragmatic response to their differences and a recognition of the need for flexibility and adaptability in ministry.

- 6) Ultimately, God uses this disagreement and separation to expand the scope of their ministry and to bring about His purposes in the spread of the gospel.

The disagreement between Paul and Barnabas highlights the challenges and complexities of ministry partnerships within the early church. Despite their differing perspectives on including John Mark in their ministry, both Paul and Barnabas remain committed to the mission of spreading the gospel. Their decision to part ways reflects a pragmatic response to their differences and a recognition of the need for flexibility and adaptability in ministry. Ultimately, God uses this disagreement and separation to expand the scope of their ministry and to bring about His purposes in the spread of the gospel, illustrating His sovereignty and ability to work through human differences for His glory.

Summary:

1. **Unity Amidst Diversity (Acts 15:1-41):** The meeting at Jerusalem marks a crucial moment in the early church, highlighting the importance of unity amidst theological and cultural diversity. Through dialogue and discernment, the brethren affirm the inclusion of Gentile believers, emphasizing the foundational principles of salvation by faith and the transformative power of the gospel.
2. **Testimonies Of Faith (Acts 15:6-12):** The testimonies of Peter, Paul, and Barnabas underscore the core tenets of the Christian faith, emphasizing salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Peter's recounting of the Gentile conversion at Cornelius's house, Paul and Barnabas's witness of God's work among the Gentiles, all affirm God's inclusive plan of salvation for all people, regardless of cultural or ethnic background.
3. **Guidance And Judgment (Acts 15:13-21):** James' judgment and guidance based on Scripture provide a solid theological foundation for embracing Gentile believers without imposing Jewish customs. His citation of Amos underscores God's intention to establish a united and inclusive community of believers, transcending ethnic and cultural boundaries, while his practical guidelines promote unity and respect within the diverse Christian community.
4. **Flexibility In Ministry (Acts 15:36-41):** The disagreement between Paul and Barnabas highlights the need for flexibility and adaptability in ministry partnerships. Despite their differences regarding including John Mark, both remain committed to the mission of spreading the gospel. Their decision to part ways demonstrates God's ability to work through human differences for His glory, expanding the scope of their ministry and advancing the mission of the early church.

This chapter of Acts reveals the early church grappling with significant theological and practical issues, from the inclusion of Gentile believers to the dynamics of ministry partnerships. Through dialogue, discernment, and a reliance on Scripture, the early Christians navigate these challenges, ultimately reinforcing the foundational principles of grace, faith, and unity in Christ. As the church continues to grow and spread, this chapter serves as a model for addressing diversity and disagreement within the body of Christ, emphasizing the importance of mutual respect, understanding, and a shared commitment to the gospel message.

Applications:

1. **Embrace Diversity (Romans 12:5):** Just as the early church navigated theological differences and cultural diversity, modern-day Christians are called to embrace diversity within the body of Christ. This means fostering an inclusive environment where believers from various backgrounds feel welcomed and valued, recognizing that unity in Christ transcends cultural, and ethnic differences.
2. **Prioritize Unity (Ephesians 4:3):** The meeting at Jerusalem exemplifies the importance of prioritizing unity amidst disagreement. Rather than allowing theological disputes to divide the church, Christians should seek opportunities for dialogue, discernment, and reconciliation. By focusing on common beliefs and shared mission, believers can foster unity within the body of Christ while respecting individual convictions (**Romans 14:1-23**).
3. **Flexibility In Ministry Partnerships (Philippians 2:3):** The disagreement between Paul and Barnabas underscores the need for flexibility and adaptability in ministry partnerships. While disagreements may arise, Christians should strive to maintain unity and mutual respect, recognizing that God can work through diverse personalities and perspectives for His glory. This calls for humility, open communication, and a willingness to seek God's guidance in navigating differences for the advancement of His kingdom.

These applications provide practical insights gleaned from the deliberations at Jerusalem and the subsequent actions of church leaders. They underscore the enduring relevance of the principles of embracing diversity, prioritizing unity, and maintaining flexibility in ministry partnerships within the contemporary Christian context. These lessons encourage Christians to cultivate inclusive communities where diversity is celebrated, unity is prioritized, and differences are navigated with humility. By applying these principles, we can foster healthy relationships, strengthen the body of Christ, and effectively fulfill the Great Commission in today's diverse and ever-changing world.

Key Points:

1. **Conflict Over Circumcision (Acts 15:1-5):** The early church faces a theological dispute over circumcision, revealing tensions between Jewish and Gentile believers. Some insist on circumcision for Gentile converts, threatening unity and challenging the message of salvation by faith. Paul and Barnabas journey to Jerusalem to address this issue, highlighting the need for discernment and collective decision-making within the church.
2. **Peter's Testimony (Acts 15:6-11):** Peter recounts his experience with Cornelius, affirming Gentile inclusion in the Christian community apart from Jewish customs. He emphasizes salvation through faith, rejecting circumcision as a burden on Gentile believers. Peter's testimony underscores the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice for salvation and the universal accessibility of salvation to both Jews and Gentiles.
3. **Paul And Barnabas' Witness (Acts 15:12):** Paul and Barnabas testify to the Holy Spirit's work among Gentile believers, demonstrating God's acceptance regardless of adherence to Jewish customs. Their witness reinforces the central message of salvation by faith in Christ and challenges cultural barriers, affirming the universal scope of God's redemptive plan.
4. **James' Judgment (Acts 15:13-21):** James affirms Gentile inclusion based on Peter's testimony and Scripture, providing a theological basis for embracing Gentile believers without imposing Jewish customs. He suggests practical guidelines or instructions for Gentile believers, promoting unity within the diverse Christian community and underscoring the importance of inclusivity and solidarity.
5. **Letter To Gentile Believers (Acts 15:22-35):** Representatives are sent with a letter affirming Gentile inclusion, bringing joy and encouragement to Gentile believers. The letter reinforces their status within the Christian community and provides clarity on the issue of circumcision, fostering unity and mutual support among believers.
6. **Paul And Barnabas Disagree (Acts 15:36-41):** Paul proposes revisiting churches to nurture the faith of believers, while Barnabas suggests taking John Mark along, leading to disagreement. Despite their differences, both remain committed to spreading the gospel, highlighting the challenges and complexities of ministry partnerships within the early church.

These key points highlight the significance of the meeting in Jerusalem in addressing theological disputes, affirming Gentile inclusion, and fostering unity within the early church.

Questions:

1. How did the early church handle the theological dispute over circumcision, and why was it significant (Acts 15:1-5)?
2. What key testimony did Peter provide during the Jerusalem council, and how did it shape the discussion (Acts 15:6-11)?
3. How did Paul and Barnabas contribute to the discussion at Jerusalem, and what was the essence of their witness (Acts 15:12)?
4. What judgment did James deliver during the Jerusalem council, and what was its theological basis (Acts 15:13-21)?
5. How did the brethren communicate its decision to the Gentile believers, and what was the response in Antioch (Acts 15:22-35)?
6. What disagreement arose between Paul and Barnabas after the Jerusalem council, and how did they resolve it (Acts 15:36-41)?

7. Why was circumcision such a contentious issue in the early church, and how did it reflect broader tensions within the Christian community (**Acts 15:1-5**)?
8. How did Peter's testimony regarding Cornelius challenge traditional views within the early church (**Acts 15:7-11**)?
9. What role did Scripture play in James' judgment during the meeting, and how did it shape the decision-making process (**Acts 15:13-21**)?
10. How did the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas after the meeting reflect broader challenges in ministry partnerships within the early church (**Acts 15:36-41**)?

c. Delivering the decrees (Acts 16:4-5):

- 1) Paul and his companions travel through the cities (Acts 16:4).
- 2) They deliver the decrees decided by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem (Acts 16:4; 15:22-29).
- 3) The churches are strengthened in the faith and increase in number daily (Acts 16:5).

The meeting and subsequent inclusion of Timothy in Paul's mission illustrate the strategic and sensitive nature of early Christian evangelism. By circumcising Timothy, Paul addresses the cultural and religious sensitivities of the Jewish communities they will encounter. As Paul and his companions deliver the decrees from the Jerusalem Council, the churches are strengthened and grow in number, highlighting the effective spread of the Gospel and the establishment of early Christian doctrine and practice.

2. Paul's Vision Of The Man Of Macedonia (Acts 16:6-10).

In these verses, we observe Paul and his companions as they travel through the regions of Phrygia and Galatia, directed by the Holy Spirit in their missionary journey. Despite their intentions to preach in Asia and Bithynia, the Spirit prevents them, guiding them instead towards Troas. This divine redirection culminates in a significant vision that Paul receives, revealing a man from Macedonia pleading for help, which they interpret as a clear call from God to bring the Gospel to Macedonia.

a. Travel through Phrygia and Galatia (Acts 16:6):

- 1) The Holy Spirit forbids them from speaking the word in Asia (Acts 16:6). While the specific reasons are not detailed, it is clear that God had a strategic plan for the spread of the Gospel, which included opening new fields in Macedonia and perhaps preparing Asia for future ministry.
- 2) They pass through the region of Phrygia and Galatia (Acts 16:6).

b. Travel to Mysia and Bithynia (Acts 16:7-8):

- 1) The Spirit does not allow them to go into Bithynia (Acts 16:7). Perhaps for the same reasons as in verse 6.
- 2) They pass by Mysia and go down to Troas (Acts 16:8).

c. Paul's vision (Acts 16:9-10):

- 1) Paul has a vision in the night of a man from Macedonia begging him to come and help (Acts 16:9).
- 2) They conclude that God has called them to preach the gospel in Macedonia (Acts 16:10).

Paul's vision of the Macedonian man marks a pivotal moment in the missionary journey, demonstrating the Spirit's active direction in their ministry. This redirection not only highlights God's strategic plan for the spread of the Gospel but also emphasizes the importance of responsiveness to divine instruction. As a result, Paul and his companions set their course for Macedonia, ready to extend their evangelistic efforts into new territories, thus paving the way for the Gospel's expansion into Europe.

3. The Conversion Of Lydia (Acts 16:11-15).

In these verses, Paul and his companions continue their journey, travelling from Troas to Philippi, a significant Roman colony in Macedonia. As they seek out places of worship, they encounter a group of women by the river on the Sabbath. This encounter sets the stage for the notable conversion of Lydia, a businesswoman from Thyatira, which marks the beginning of the church in Philippi.

a. Journey to Philippi (Acts 16:11-12):

- 1) They set sail from Troas to Samothrace and then to Neapolis (Acts 16:11).
- 2) They arrive at Philippi, a Roman colony and leading city of the district of Macedonia (Acts 16:12).

The Decrees (Acts 15:22-29)

The church wrote a letter to the Gentile believers, outlining the following requirements:

Abstain From Food Polluted By Idols: Gentiles were to avoid eating food that had been sacrificed to idols, which was a common practice in pagan rituals and offensive to Jewish Christians (Acts 15:29).

Abstain From Sexual Immorality: They were to maintain moral purity, avoiding practices that were common in their previous pagan lifestyles but contrary to Christian ethics (Acts 15:29).

Abstain From Meat Of Strangled Animals And Blood: These dietary restrictions were intended to respect Jewish sensibilities and maintain fellowship between Jewish and Gentile Christians (Acts 15:29).



Philippi's Significance**1. Roman Colony:**

- ☛ **Status And Privileges:** Philippi was a Roman colony, which granted its citizens certain privileges similar to those enjoyed by citizens in Italy, including exemption from certain taxes and the right to own property. This status made Philippi an important administrative and military center.
- ☛ **Roman Influence:** As a colony, Philippi was heavily Romanized in culture, law, and governance. The citizens were proud of their Roman citizenship, which played a role in the events of Acts 16, where Paul asserts his own Roman citizenship to gain release from imprisonment (Acts 16:37-39).

Geographical and Economic Importance**1. Strategic Location:**

- ☛ **Via Egnatia:** Philippi was situated along the Via Egnatia, a major Roman road that connected the Adriatic Sea to Byzantium (modern-day Istanbul). This road facilitated trade, military movement, and communication across the Roman Empire.
- ☛ **Gateway To Europe:** Philippi's location made it a strategic point for spreading the Gospel into Europe. Paul's establishment of a church here was a crucial step in the expansion of Christianity westward.

Religious And Social Context**1. Religious Diversity:**

- ☛ **Pagan Worship:** Philippi, like many Roman cities, had various temples and places of worship dedicated to different gods and goddesses. This included the imperial cult, which worshipped the Roman emperor as a deity.
- ☛ **Jewish Community:** Although the Jewish population was not large, there was a place of prayer by the river outside the city gate, where Paul and his companions met Lydia and other women (Acts 16:13).

b. Meeting with women by the river (Acts 16:13):

- 1) On the Sabbath, they go outside the gate to the riverside, where they suppose there is a place of prayer (Acts 16:13).
- 2) They sit down and speak to the women who have gathered there (Acts 16:13).

c. Lydia's conversion (Acts 16:14-15):

- 1) Lydia, a seller of purple goods from Thyatira, hears them (Acts 16:14).
- 2) The Lord opens her heart to pay attention to what Paul says (Acts 16:14).
- 3) She and her household are baptized (Acts 16:15).
- 4) She invites Paul and his companions to stay at her house (Acts 16:15).

The conversion of Lydia in Philippi underscores the powerful and personal nature of God's calling. Lydia's open-hearted response to Paul's message, followed by her baptism and hospitality, illustrates the transformative impact of the Gospel. This event not only signifies the establishment of the first European church but also highlights the role of individual faith and community in the early Christian mission.

4. Paul And Silas In Prison (Acts 16:16-24).

In these verses, Paul and Silas encounter a significant challenge in Philippi when they confront a slave girl possessed by a spirit of divination. Their actions not only result in the girl's deliverance but also provoke the wrath of her owners, who profit from her fortune-telling. This conflict escalates, leading to their public accusation, beating, and imprisonment, demonstrating the opposition faced by early Christian missionaries.

a. Encounter with the slave girl (Acts 16:16-18):

- 1) Paul and his companions encounter a slave girl with a spirit of divination who brings her owners much profit by fortune-telling (Acts 16:16).
- 2) She follows them, crying out that they are servants of the Most High God (Acts 16:17).
- 3) Paul becomes annoyed and commands the spirit to come out of her, and it leaves her (Acts 16:18).

Greek Mythology And The Python Spirit

- ☛ **Python:** In Greek mythology, Python was a serpent or dragon that lived at Delphi and was slain by the god Apollo. The creature was associated with the Delphic Oracle, which was famous for its prophecies. The oracle was believed to be inspired by the god Apollo, who was thought to communicate through a priestess known as the Pythia.
- ☛ **Pythia:** The Pythia, or Delphic Oracle, was the high priestess of the Temple of Apollo, and she was believed to deliver prophecies under the influence of Apollo. The term “Pythia” itself derives from Python, the serpent slain by Apollo.
- ☛ **Spirit Of Python:** By the time of the New Testament, the term “Python” had come to refer to a spirit of divination or fortune-telling, believed to be inspired by demonic forces. Thus, a person with a “spirit of Python” was thought to have the ability to foretell the future, often through demonic influence.

b. The owners’ reaction and Paul and Silas seized (Acts 16:19-21):

- 1) The girl’s owners see that their hope of profit is gone⁹ (Acts 16:19).
- 2) The owners of the slave girl seize Paul and Silas and drag them to the marketplace before the authorities (Acts 16:19).
- 3) They accuse Paul and Silas of disturbing the city and advocating unlawful customs (Acts 16:20-21).

c. Paul and Silas are beaten and imprisoned (Acts 16:22-24):

- 1) The crowd joins in attacking them (Acts 16:22).
- 2) The magistrates order them to be stripped and beaten with rods (Acts 16:22).
- 3) After being severely flogged, they are thrown into prison, and the jailer is ordered to keep them securely (Acts 16:23).
- 4) The jailer puts them in the inner prison and fastens their feet in the stocks (Acts 16:24).

Paul and his companions were Roman citizens, and the treatment they endure at the hands of the authorities was illegal.

The imprisonment of Paul and Silas highlights the cost of discipleship and the hostile environment in which the early church operated. Despite their unjust treatment and the physical suffering they endure, their commitment to the Gospel remains steadfast. This passage sets the stage for a powerful demonstration of faith and divine intervention, showcasing the resilience and unwavering faith of Paul and Silas amidst persecution.

5. The Philippian Jailer Converted (Acts 16:25-34).

In these verses, Paul and Silas demonstrate remarkable faith and resilience as they pray and sing hymns to God despite being imprisoned. Their worship leads to a miraculous intervention, an earthquake that opens the prison doors and loosens the prisoners' chains. This event sets off a chain reaction that culminates in the dramatic conversion of the Philippian jailer and his household, illustrating the power of faith and the far-reaching impact of God's providence.

a. Paul and Silas pray and sing hymns (Acts 16:25):

- 1) About midnight, Paul and Silas are praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners are listening to them (Acts 16:25).
- 2) Their faith and worship influence the other prisoners (implied by context of Acts 16:25).

b. The earthquake and the jailer’s reaction (Acts 16:26-27):

- 1) A great earthquake shakes the prison, all doors open, and everyone's bonds are unfastened (Acts 16:26).
- 2) The jailer wakes up and, seeing the prison doors open, draws his sword to kill himself, thinking the prisoners have escaped (Acts 16:27). Under Roman law, a jailer who allowed prisoners to escape would be held personally responsible. This often meant severe punishment, which could include execution. The jailer, understanding the seriousness of his responsibility, assumed that the escape of the prisoners would lead to his own execution. By attempting to kill himself, he was trying to avoid the disgrace and potential torture that could accompany a public execution.

⁹ The words “he came out” in verse 18 and the words “was gone” in verse 19 are from the same Greek word *exerchomai*. The play on the Greek word *exerchomai* serves as a literary device that connects the exorcism of the spirit with the economic repercussions for the slave owners. This wordplay enhances the narrative by highlighting the multifaceted impact of the Gospel: spiritual liberation often entails significant social and economic consequences, disrupting systems of exploitation and bringing about profound change.

c. Paul's intervention and the jailer's question (Acts 16:28-30):

- 1) Paul cries out loudly not to harm himself, as they are all there (Acts 16:28).
- 2) The jailer calls for lights, rushes in, and trembling, falls before Paul and Silas (Acts 16:29).
- 3) He brings them out and asks, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30).

d. The Jailer's Conversion (Acts 16:31-34):

- 1) Paul and Silas tell him to believe in the Lord Jesus, and he will be saved, along with his household (Acts 16:31).
- 2) They speak the word of the Lord to him and to all in his house (Acts 16:32).
- 3) The jailer washes their wounds, and he and his household are baptized (Acts 16:33; cp. Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38).
- 4) He brings them into his house, sets food before them, and rejoices with his entire household that he has come to believe in Jesus (Acts 16:34).

The conversion of the Philippian jailer highlights the transformative power of the Gospel and the profound changes it can bring to individuals and their families. Paul's quick intervention not only saves the jailer from suicide but also leads him to ask the life-changing question, "What must I do to be saved?" Through their preaching and compassionate actions, Paul and Silas guide the jailer and his household to faith in Jesus Christ, resulting in their baptism and joy in newfound belief. This passage underscores the theme of salvation available to all who believe, regardless of their past or present circumstances.

6. Paul And Silas Released (Acts 16:35-40).

In these verses, the aftermath of Paul and Silas's imprisonment unfolds as the magistrates order their release. The magistrates' initial ignorance of Paul and Silas's Roman citizenship sets the stage for a significant confrontation. This section highlights the legal rights and protections afforded to Roman citizens and the respectful yet assertive manner in which Paul navigates his release, ensuring justice and dignity are maintained.

a. Orders to release Paul and Silas (Acts 16:35-36):

- 1) When it is day, the magistrates send the police, ordering the release of Paul and Silas (Acts 16:35).
- 2) The jailer informs Paul and Silas that they are free to go in peace (Acts 16:36).

b. Paul's response to the magistrates (Acts 16:37-38):

- 1) Paul insists that they have been beaten publicly and uncondemned, being Roman citizens¹⁰, and now they are being asked to leave secretly (Acts 16:37).
- 2) Paul demands that the magistrates come and escort them out themselves (Acts 16:37).
- 3) The magistrates are alarmed when they hear that Paul and Silas are Roman citizens (Acts 16:38).

c. The release and departure (Acts 16:39-40):

- 1) The magistrates come and apologize to them (Acts 16:39).
- 2) They escort Paul and Silas out and request them to leave the city (Acts 16:39).
- 3) Paul and Silas visit Lydia, encourage the brethren, and then depart from the city (Acts 16:40).

Paul and Silas's release from prison not only demonstrates the importance of legal rights but also underscores their unwavering commitment to the mission despite adversities. Their insistence on a public release serves as a powerful statement against the unjust treatment they received. After being officially escorted out by the magistrates, they visit Lydia, strengthening the new believers before departing Philippi. This episode reinforces the early church's resolve and the strategic wisdom in maintaining both integrity and public witness in their ministry.

¹⁰ The significance of Roman citizenship in this context lies in the legal protections it afforded, which Paul utilized to ensure fair treatment and to highlight the unjust actions of the Philippian magistrates. This action not only secured their release but also demonstrated the power and reach of Roman legal rights, even in distant colonies like Philippi.

Summary:

1. **Guidance By The Holy Spirit (Acts 16:6-10):** Throughout this chapter, we see the Holy Spirit actively guiding Paul and his companions. From directing them away from Asia and Bithynia to leading them to Macedonia through a vision, it is clear that the early missionary work was divinely orchestrated.
2. **Strategic Evangelism (Acts 16:1-5, 11-15):** The chapter highlights the strategic approach of Paul in selecting Timothy, circumcising him to better reach Jewish communities, and choosing Philippi as a key location for their mission work. This strategic mindset, combined with divine guidance, facilitated the spread of the Gospel effectively and efficiently.
3. **Impact Of Personal Witness (Acts 16:13-15, 25-34):** The conversions of Lydia and the Philippian jailer underscore the power of personal witness and the ripple effect it can have. Lydia's open-hearted response and subsequent hospitality, along with the jailer's dramatic conversion and immediate baptism of his household, illustrate how individual transformations contribute to the growth and strengthening of the early church.
4. **Perseverance Amidst Persecution (Acts 16:16-24):** Paul and Silas's imprisonment and their response through prayer and singing hymns show their unwavering faith and resilience. Despite severe flogging and unjust imprisonment, they remained steadfast, leading to miraculous events that not only ensured their release but also facilitated further evangelistic opportunities.
5. **Assertion Of Legal Rights (Acts 16:35-40):** Paul's insistence on a public apology and proper release as Roman citizens highlights the importance of justice and dignity. This action not only safeguarded their rights but also provided a public testimony to the integrity and courage of Christian leaders, reinforcing the credibility of their mission and protecting the nascent Christian community in Philippi.

This chapter vividly illustrates the dynamic interplay of divine guidance, strategic evangelism, personal witness, perseverance amidst persecution, and the assertion of legal rights, providing a powerful testament to the resilience and impact of the early Christian mission.

Applications:

1. **Rely On Scripture As The Guide For Life And Ministry (2 Timothy 3:16-17):** Just as Paul and his companions relied on the Holy Spirit's guidance in their missionary endeavors, believers today are directed by the inspired Word of God, the Scriptures. By studying and meditating on the Bible, Christians can discern God's will and direction for their lives and ministries. Scripture provides wisdom, guidance, and insight into God's purposes, equipping believers to make decisions that align with His plan and glorify Him in all they do.
2. **Value Strategic And Contextual Evangelism (1 Corinthians 9:22-23):** The decision to circumcise Timothy and the focus on significant urban centers like Philippi show the importance of understanding and adapting to cultural contexts in evangelism. Christians should seek to understand their audience and context to effectively communicate the Gospel, while also being strategic about where and how they invest their evangelistic efforts.
3. **Maintain Faith And Integrity Amidst Trials (James 1:2-4):** Paul and Silas's response to imprisonment with prayer and worship serves as a powerful example of maintaining faith and integrity in difficult circumstances. Believers are encouraged to remain steadfast and continue to trust God during trials, knowing that their witness can lead to unexpected opportunities for sharing the Gospel and bringing others to faith.

These applications encourage believers to prioritize scriptural study and obedience, adapt their evangelistic approach to cultural contexts, and maintain unwavering faith and integrity amidst trials, ultimately enabling them to effectively fulfill the Great Commission and advance God's kingdom in the world today.

Key Points:

1. **Divine Guidance In Missionary Endeavors (Acts 16:6-10):** The chapter portrays the Holy Spirit actively guiding Paul and his companions, redirecting their plans and leading them to Macedonia through a vision (Acts 16:6-10), demonstrating the importance of divine guidance in the spread of the Gospel. Christians today are directed by the inspired Word of God, the Scriptures. By studying and meditating on the Bible, Christians can discern God's will and direction for their lives and ministries. Scripture provides wisdom, guidance, and insight into God's purposes, equipping believers to make decisions that align with His plan and glorify Him in all they do.

2. **Strategic Selection And Cultural Adaptation (Acts 16:1-5, 11-15):** Paul's strategic approach in selecting Timothy as a companion, circumcising him for Jewish outreach, and choosing Philippi as a key location illustrates the importance of strategic thinking and cultural adaptation in effective evangelism (Acts 16:1-5, 11-15).
3. **Transformation Through Personal Witness (Acts 16:13-15, 25-34):** The conversions of Lydia and the Philippian jailer highlight the transformative power of personal witness and the ripple effect it can have on individuals and communities (Acts 16:13-15, 25-34), emphasizing the significance of authentic Christian testimony in spreading the Gospel.
4. **Resilience And Worship Amidst Persecution (Acts 16:16-24):** Paul and Silas's response to persecution through prayer and worship in the midst of imprisonment underscores the importance of unwavering faith and resilience in adversity (Acts 16:16-24), showcasing the power of faith to overcome challenges.
5. **Assertion Of Legal Rights For Justice (Acts 16:35-40):** Paul's insistence on a public apology and proper release as Roman citizens highlights the importance of justice and dignity in asserting legal rights (Acts 16:35-40), demonstrating the integrity and courage of Christian leaders in upholding principles of fairness and righteousness.

These key points underscore the divine guidance, strategic thinking, transformative witness, resilience in adversity, and commitment to justice exemplified in the early Christian mission, providing valuable lessons for believers today.

Questions:

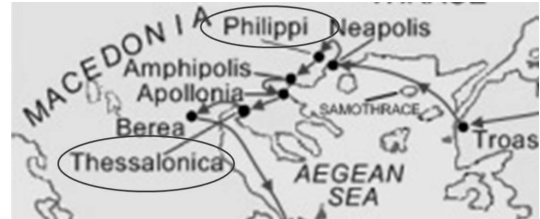
1. What prompted Paul to circumcise Timothy, and what was the significance of this act (Acts 16:3)?
2. How did the Holy Spirit guide Paul and his companions in their missionary journey (Acts 16:6-10)?
3. What impact did Lydia's conversion have on the early church in Philippi (Acts 16:14-15)?
4. How did Paul and Silas respond to persecution and imprisonment in Philippi (Acts 16:25)?
5. What miraculous event occurred while Paul and Silas were imprisoned (Acts 16:26)?
6. How did the Philippian jailer react to the earthquake (Acts 16:27)?
7. What question did the jailer ask Paul and Silas, and how did they respond (Acts 16:30-31)?
8. How did Paul assert his legal rights as a Roman citizen after his release from prison (Acts 16:37-38)?
9. How did the magistrates respond to Paul's assertion of his legal rights (Acts 16:38)?
10. What actions did Paul and Silas take after their release from prison in Philippi (Acts 16:40)?

LESSON 17 • • • • •

Paul's Mission In Thessalonica, Berea, And Athens (Acts 17:1-34).

1. Paul And Silas In Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9).

In this section, Pau and Silas continue their missionary journey by arriving in Thessalonica, a city in Macedonia. Their mission strategy involves preaching in the local synagogue, where they engage the Jewish community and God-fearing Gentiles by reasoning from the Scriptures about Jesus being the Messiah. Their message garners a mixed response, leading to both conversions and fierce opposition, which culminates in a citywide uproar instigated by jealous Jews.



- a. Paul and Silas - arrival and ministry in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-4):

- ### 1) Journey to Thessalonica (Acts 17:1):

- a) Paul and Silas travel through Amphipolis and Apollonia (**Acts 17:1**). It is unclear whether they preached the gospel in these cities.
- b) They come to Thessalonica, where there is a synagogue of the Jews (**Acts 17:1**).

- ## 2) Preaching in the synagogue (Acts 17:2-3):

- a) Paul, as was his custom, goes into the synagogue (**Acts 17:2**).
 - b) For three Sabbaths, he reasons with them from the Scriptures (**Acts 17:2**).
 - c) He explains and proves that the Christ had to suffer (**cp. Isaiah 53:1-12**) and rise from the dead (**cp. Psalms 16:10**) (**Acts 17:3**).
- Role Of Jason**

(i) Jason appears as a supporter and a place for Paul's shelter and

- d) Paul proclaims Jesus as the Christ (Acts 17:3). The combination of political subjugation, social and economic hardships, religious fervor, apocalyptic expectations, and various sectarian beliefs created a climate ripe for messianic anticipation. The Jewish people, holding fast to their scriptural promises and prophetic traditions, lived in eager expectation that the Messiah would soon come to deliver them from their suffering and establish God's kingdom on earth.

- ### 3) Response to the message (Acts 17:4):

- a) Some Jews are persuaded and join Paul and Silas (**Acts 17:4**).
- b) A large number of God-fearing Greeks also join them (**Acts 17:4**).
- c) Quite a few prominent women join them as well (**Acts 17:4**).

- b. Opposition and uproar (Acts 17:5-9):

- ### 1) Jealousy of the Jews (Acts 17:5):

- a) The envious Jews take some wicked men from the marketplace (Acts 17:5).

- b) They form a mob and set the city in an uproar (Acts 17:5).**

Role Of Jason

(i) Jason appears to have been a convert to Christianity and a supporter of Paul's mission. He offered his home as a place for Paul and Silas to stay, providing them with shelter and support (Acts 17:5). (ii) When the hostile Jews could not find Paul and Silas, they dragged Jason and some other believers before the city officials, accusing them of causing trouble and proclaiming Jesus as king, contrary to Caesar's decrees (Acts 17:6-7). (iii) Jason and the other Christians were forced to post bond, essentially a form of bail or guarantee, ensuring that they would not cause further disturbances. This act likely included assurances that Paul and Silas would leave the city, which they soon did.

Significance Of Jason

(i) Jason's willingness to host Paul and Silas and face persecution highlights the important role that local believers played in the spread of Christianity. They provided logistical support, shelter, and a network of contacts. (ii) By associating with Paul and Silas, Jason risked his safety and financial security. His actions demonstrate the sacrifices early Christians were willing to make for the sake of the gospel. (iii) Jason's experience illustrates the immediate impact of Paul's ministry and the mixed reactions it provoked. While many were converted and strengthened in their faith, others reacted with hostility, leading to persecution of new believers.

Jason of Thessalonica is remembered as a courageous and supportive early Christian who played a crucial role in aiding Paul and Silas during their missionary efforts. His actions and the subsequent persecution he faced underscore the challenges and sacrifices encountered by early believers in the spread of Christianity.

2) Attack on Jason's house (Acts 17:5-6):

- a) They attack Jason's house, seeking to bring Paul and Silas out to the crowd (Acts 17:5).
- b) Not finding them, they drag Jason and some other believers before the city officials (Acts 17:6).
- c) They shout that these men have caused trouble all over the world and have now come here (Acts 17:6).

3) Accusations against Paul and Silas (Acts 17:7):

- a) The mob accuses them of defying Caesar's decrees (Acts 17:7).
- b) They say Paul and Silas are proclaiming another king, Jesus (Acts 17:7).

4) Reaction of the city officials (Acts 17:8-9):

- a) The crowd and the city officials are thrown into turmoil upon hearing these accusations (Acts 17:8).
- b) Jason and the others are released after posting bond (Acts 17:9).

The ministry in Thessalonica demonstrates both the power and the peril of proclaiming the Gospel in a new city. While Paul and Silas successfully convert many Jews and Gentiles, their presence also incites jealousy and violence from those resistant to their message. The opposition leads to legal accusations and disturbances, highlighting the challenges early Christians faced in spreading their faith. Despite these obstacles, the new believers, including prominent community members, strengthen the church's foundation in Thessalonica.

2. Paul And Silas In Berea (Acts 17:10-15).

In Berea, Paul and Silas find a more receptive audience compared to their experience in Thessalonica. The Bereans are commended for their noble character, as they eagerly receive the message and diligently examine the Scriptures daily to verify Paul's teachings. This attitude leads to many conversions among Jews and prominent Greek men and women. However, the tranquillity is short-lived as Jews from Thessalonica arrive to stir up trouble, prompting the immediate departure of Paul to Athens while Silas and Timothy remain behind to support the new believers.

a. Reception in Berea (Acts 17:10-12):

- 1) Immediate departure to Berea (Acts 17:10): The brethren send Paul and Silas away to Berea at night.
- 2) Preaching in the synagogue (Acts 17:10): Upon arrival, they go to the Jewish synagogue.
- 3) The noble character of the Bereans (Acts 17:11):
 - a) The Bereans are more noble than those in Thessalonica (Acts 17:11).
 - b) They receive the message with great eagerness (Acts 17:11).
 - c) They examine the Scriptures daily to see if what Paul says is true (Acts 17:11). This is an example of how to "test the spirits" (1 John 4:1).
- 4) Many believers (Acts 17:12):
 - a) Many Bereans believe (Acts 17:12).
 - b) A number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men also believe (Acts 17:12).

The Greek word translated as "noble" in this passage is *eugenesteroi*, which can also be translated as "fair-minded," "open-minded," or "noble-minded". In this context, being "noble" means having an open-minded, eager, diligent, and fair approach to new teachings, especially in the pursuit of understanding and verifying the truth through the Scriptures.

b. Opposition from Thessalonica (Acts 17:13-15):

- 1) Thessalonian Jews stir up trouble (Acts 17:13):
 - a) The Jews from Thessalonica learn that Paul is preaching in Berea (Acts 17:13).
 - b) They come to Berea, agitating the crowds and stirring them up (Acts 17:13).



2) Paul sent away (Acts 17:14):

- a) The believers immediately send Paul to the coast (Acts 17:14).
- b) Silas and Timothy stay in Berea (Acts 17:14). It seems it may have been Paul's custom to leave more experienced brethren to help new congregations (see 1 Timothy 1:3; Titus 1:5; Acts 18:19).

3) Paul's journey to Athens (Acts 17:15):

- a) Those who escort Paul bring him to Athens (Acts 17:15).
- b) They return with instructions for Silas and Timothy to join him as soon as possible (Acts 17:15).

The Berean episode highlights the importance of a noble and diligent approach to receiving the Gospel, exemplified by their eagerness and scriptural examination. This openness results in significant conversions but also attracts opposition from hostile forces from Thessalonica. Paul's strategic withdrawal to Athens, while leaving Silas and Timothy behind, ensures the new Berean believers are nurtured in their faith, showcasing the balance between advancing the mission and consolidating new converts in the early church.

3. Paul In Athens (Acts 17:16-34).

Paul's visit to Athens marks a significant moment in his missionary journeys, as he engages with a city steeped in idolatry and renowned for its intellectual pursuits. Upon seeing the city's numerous idols, Paul is deeply distressed and begins to reason both in the synagogue and the marketplace. His encounters with various philosophers lead to an invitation to speak at the Areopagus, where he delivers a profound sermon about the "unknown god," proclaiming the Creator God, humanity's purpose, and the call to repentance through Jesus Christ.

a. Paul's distress over idolatry (Acts 17:16-21):

1) Distress in Athens (Acts 17:16):

- a) While waiting for Silas and Timothy, Paul is greatly distressed (Acts 17:16).
- b) He sees that the city is full of idols (Acts 17:16).

2) Reasoning in the synagogue and marketplace (Acts 17:17):

- a) Paul reasons in the synagogue with the Jews and God-fearing Greeks (Acts 17:17).
- b) He also reasons in the marketplace day by day with those who happen to be there (Acts 17:17).

3) Encounter with philosophers (Acts 17:18):

- a) A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers begins to dispute with him (Acts 17:18).
- b) Some call him a babbler (Acts 17:18).
- c) Others say he seems to be advocating foreign gods because he is preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection (Acts 17:18).

4) Invitation to the Areopagus (Acts 17:19-21):

- a) They bring Paul to a meeting of the Areopagus (Acts 17:19).
- b) They ask him to explain his teachings (Acts 17:19).
- c) Athenians and foreigners spend their time discussing new ideas (Acts 17:21).

b. Paul's speech at the Areopagus (Acts 17:22-31):

1) Introduction and acknowledgment of Athenian religiosity (Acts 17:22-23):

- a) Paul stands up in the meeting and begins his speech (Acts 17:22).
- b) He acknowledges that the Athenians are very religious (Acts 17:22).
- c) He notes an altar inscribed "TO AN UNKNOWN GOD" (Acts 17:23).
- d) Paul proclaims that he will explain to them the God they worship without knowing (Acts 17:23).



2) Proclamation of the Creator God (Acts 17:24-25):

- a) Paul explains that the God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth (Acts 17:24).
- b) He does not live in temples built by hands (Acts 17:24).
- c) He is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything (Acts 17:25).
- d) He gives everyone life and breath and everything else (Acts 17:25).

3) Humanity's origin and purpose (Acts 17:26-28):

- a) From one man, God made every nation of men to inhabit the whole earth (Acts 17:26).
- b) He determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their lands (Acts 17:26).
- c) God did this so that men would seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him (Acts 17:27).
- d) He is not far from any one of us (Acts 17:27).
- e) Paul quotes their own poets, saying, "In Him we live and move and have our being" and "We are His offspring" (Acts 17:28).

4) Call to repentance (Acts 17:29-31):

- a) Since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold, silver, or stone - an image made by human design and skill (Acts 17:29).
- b) In the past, God overlooked such ignorance, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30).
- c) He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the man He has appointed (Acts 17:31).
- d) He has given proof of this to everyone by raising Him from the dead (Acts 17:31).

c. Response to Paul's message (Acts 17:32-34):

1) Reaction to the resurrection (Acts 17:32):

- a) When they hear about the resurrection of the dead, some sneer (Acts 17:32).
- b) Others say they want to hear more about this subject (Acts 17:32).

2) Hearing the different reactions, Paul departs from the Areopagus (Acts 17:33).

3) Conversions in Athens (Acts 17:34):

- a) Some men join Paul and believe (Acts 17:34).
- b) Among them are Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, and a woman named Damaris (Acts 17:34).
- c) Others also join them (Acts 17:34).

Paul's discourse at the Areopagus in Athens presents a masterful blend of cultural engagement and theological proclamation. His message about the resurrection elicits mixed reactions: some mock, some express interest, and a few believe, including notable individuals such as Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris. This episode underscores the varied responses to the Gospel and highlights the importance of contextualizing the message to different audiences while maintaining its core truths.

Summary:

1. **Effective Evangelism Techniques (Acts 17:1-34):** The chapter highlights different methods of evangelism employed by Paul and Silas in various contexts. In Thessalonica, they engaged the Jewish community in the synagogue, reasoning from the Scriptures (Acts 17:1-4). In Berea, they were received with eagerness and their message was carefully examined against the Scriptures, resulting in many conversions (Acts 17:10-12). In Athens, Paul used cultural references and philosophical dialogue to connect with the intellectuals at the Areopagus (Acts 17:16-31).

2. **Mixed Responses To The Gospel (Acts 17:4, 12, 32-34):** The reactions to Paul's preaching ranged from acceptance to hostility. In Thessalonica, some Jews and many God-fearing Greeks believed, but others opposed them, causing an uproar (Acts 17:4-5). The Bereans, in contrast, were more noble, receiving the message with readiness and verifying it through Scripture, leading to many believing (Acts 17:11-12). In Athens, while some mocked Paul, others were intrigued and a few believed, demonstrating the varied responses to the Gospel (Acts 17:32-34).
3. **Role Of Scripture (Acts 17:11):** The Bereans' approach to Paul's message underscores the importance of Scripture in verifying the truth. Their noble character was marked by a diligent examination of the Scriptures to confirm Paul's teachings, setting a precedent for how believers should engage with doctrinal teachings (Acts 17:11).
4. **Perseverance And Courage (Acts 17:5-10, 13-16, 32-34):** Paul and Silas demonstrated significant perseverance and courage throughout their journeys. Despite facing opposition and being forced to leave Thessalonica and Berea due to hostility stirred up by certain Jews, they continued their mission with steadfast determination. Paul's bold proclamation of the Gospel in the intellectual hub of Athens, despite mixed reactions, further highlights their unwavering commitment (Acts 17:5-10, 13-16, 32-34).
5. **Transformative Power Of The Gospel (Acts 17:4, 12, 34):** The chapter shows the Gospel's power to transform lives across different social and cultural backgrounds. In Thessalonica, both Jews and Greeks came to faith (Acts 17:4). In Berea, the diligent study of Scripture led to many conversions among Jews and prominent Greek men and women (Acts 17:12). In Athens, even in a city known for its intellectual skepticism, individuals like Dionysius and Damaris believed and joined Paul, illustrating the Gospel's reach and transformative power (Acts 17:34).

This chapter provides a rich tapestry of evangelistic methods and responses in the early Christian mission. It illustrates how Paul and Silas adapted their approach to different audiences, from reasoning with Jews in Thessalonica and Berea to engaging philosophers in Athens. The varied reactions, from acceptance and diligent scriptural examination to outright hostility and philosophical debate, underscore the diverse ways people respond to the Gospel. Furthermore, the chapter highlights the transformative power of the Gospel, capable of reaching and changing lives across cultural and social divides. It also emphasizes the importance of perseverance and courage in the face of opposition, as well as the central role of Scripture in verifying and affirming the truth of the message.

Applications:

1. **Engage Culture Thoughtfully And Respectfully:** Paul's approach in Athens demonstrates the importance of understanding and engaging with the cultural context of those we are trying to reach. By acknowledging the religiosity of the Athenians and referencing their own poets, Paul found common ground to introduce the Gospel. This teaches us to be respectful and informed about the beliefs and practices of others, using wisdom and sensitivity to share the message of Christ effectively (Acts 17:22-23; cp. 1 Corinthians 9:19-23).
2. **Diligently Study The Scriptures:** The Bereans are commended for their noble character in eagerly receiving the message and examining the Scriptures daily to verify Paul's teachings. This example encourages believers to be diligent in studying the Bible, testing teachings against Scripture, and being proactive in their personal spiritual growth and understanding (Acts 17:11; cp. 1 John 4:1).
3. **Persevere In The Face Of Opposition:** Throughout this chapter, Paul and Silas face significant opposition, yet they continue to preach the Gospel boldly and faithfully. Their perseverance despite hostility and danger serves as an example for believers to remain steadfast in their mission, trusting God to work through their efforts and to protect and guide them even in challenging circumstances (Acts 17:5, 13).

These applications challenge us to thoughtfully engage with our culture, commit to rigorous study of the Scriptures, and maintain perseverance in our faith journey.

Key Points:

1. **Proclaiming Christ Despite Opposition (Acts 17:1-9):** Paul and Silas face both acceptance and hostility in Thessalonica. They preach in the synagogue, resulting in conversions among Jews, God-fearing Greeks, and prominent women (Acts 17:1-4). However, jealous Jews incite a mob against them, causing an uproar and dragging believers before city officials, accusing them of defying Caesar (Acts 17:5-9). This section highlights the mixed reactions to the Gospel and the perseverance required in missionary work.

2. **Noble Response To The Gospel (Acts 17:10-12):** In Berea, Paul and Silas find a more receptive audience. The Bereans are commended for their noble character, as they eagerly receive the message and diligently examine the Scriptures daily to verify Paul's teachings (Acts 17:10-11). Many Bereans, including prominent Greek women and men, believe in the message (Acts 17:12). This underscores the importance of a diligent and open-hearted approach to Scripture.
3. **Opposition From Outside (Acts 17:13-15):** Opposition follows Paul and Silas to Berea, as Jews from Thessalonica come and stir up trouble (Acts 17:13). This forces the believers to send Paul away to Athens while Silas and Timothy remain (Acts 17:14-15). This section shows that opposition to the Gospel can come from external sources and that believers must be prepared to adapt and continue their mission despite such challenges.
4. **Engagement With Philosophers In Athens (Acts 17:16-21):** While in Athens, Paul is distressed by the city's idolatry and engages both in the synagogue and the marketplace (Acts 17:16-17). He encounters Epicurean and Stoic philosophers, some of whom mock him, while others are curious about his teachings on Jesus and the resurrection (Acts 17:18-21). This part highlights the need for Christians to engage thoughtfully with different worldviews.
5. **Paul's Address At The Areopagus (Acts 17:22-34):** Paul delivers a significant speech at the Areopagus, starting with acknowledging the Athenians' religiosity and introducing the "unknown god" as the true Creator (Acts 17:22-23). He proclaims God as the Creator who does not dwell in temples, and calls for repentance, emphasizing the resurrection as proof of future judgment (Acts 17:24-31). The response is mixed, with some sneering and others wanting to hear more, but a few, including Dionysius and Damaris, believe (Acts 17:32-34). This section underscores the importance of contextualizing the Gospel message to connect with the audience's beliefs and culture.

These key points illustrate the varied responses to the Gospel, the importance of examining Scripture, the challenges of opposition, the need for thoughtful engagement with different cultures, and the bold proclamation of the Gospel despite mixed reactions.

Questions:

1. What cities did Paul and Silas travel through before arriving in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1)?
2. Where did Paul go to preach when he arrived in Thessalonica, and for how long (Acts 17:2)?
3. What was Paul's main message in the synagogue in Thessalonica (Acts 17:3)?
4. Who were some of the groups of people that were persuaded by Paul's message in Thessalonica (Acts 17:4)?
5. Why did the Jews in Thessalonica become jealous, and what did they do in response (Acts 17:5)?
6. What accusation did the mob make against Paul and Silas before the city officials in Thessalonica (Acts 17:7)?
7. How did the Bereans respond to Paul's message compared to the Thessalonians (Acts 17:11)?
8. What happened when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching in Berea (Acts 17:13)?
9. Where was Paul sent after the trouble in Berea, and what did he do upon arrival (Acts 17:15-16)?
10. What was the reaction of the Athenians when Paul spoke about the resurrection at the Areopagus (Acts 17:32)?

- 3) Sosthenes beaten: The crowd seizes Sosthenes, the synagogue ruler, and beats him in front of the tribunal, but Gallio shows no concern (Acts 18:17).

Paul's time in Corinth marks a period of both challenge and growth. Through his collaboration with Aquila and Priscilla and his persistent preaching in the synagogue and to the Gentiles, Paul establishes a strong Christian presence in the city. Despite facing legal accusations and opposition, Paul's unwavering dedication, bolstered by divine reassurance, results in significant conversions and the strengthening of the early church in Corinth. This passage encapsulates the resilience and resourcefulness that characterize Paul's ministry and the early spread of Christianity.

2. Paul Returns To Antioch (Acts 18:18-23).

In these verses, the narrative follows Paul's departure from Corinth and his journey back to Antioch, marking a significant transition in his missionary endeavors. This passage highlights his strategic movements, including a brief but impactful stop in Ephesus, where he reasons with the Jews in the synagogue, and his eventual return to Antioch in Syria. Paul's travels are marked by his unwavering commitment to strengthening the churches and his dedication to fulfilling his religious vows and obligations.

a. Departure from Corinth (Acts 18:18):

- 1) Paul's decision: Paul decides to leave Corinth after a considerable time (Acts 18:18).
- 2) Companions on the journey: Paul takes Priscilla and Aquila with him (Acts 18:18).
- 3) Nazarite vow: Paul cuts his hair at Cenchreae because of a vow (Acts 18:18). Commentators cannot agree on the *who* – Paul or Aquila – the *why* or even the *type* of vow. So, I see no value in speculating.



b. Brief stop in Ephesus (Acts 18:19-21):

- 1) Reasoning in the synagogue: Paul arrives in Ephesus, leaves Priscilla and Aquila there, and reasons with the Jews in the synagogue (Acts 18:19).
- 2) Invitation to stay: The Jews ask Paul to stay longer, but he declines (Acts 18:20).
- 3) Promise to return: Paul promises to return if God wills and sets sail from Ephesus (Acts 18:21). Paul says, "I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem". Several commentators believe this to be the Passover, and others believe it was Pentecost. If there were absolute proof, there would be no disagreement. So we cannot say for sure. Some have suggested that the requirements of Paul's vow could have made it necessary for him to be in Jerusalem soon. It is not within the scope to discuss this any further.

c. Return to Antioch and further travels (Acts 18:22-23):

- 1) Arrival in Caesarea: Paul lands at Caesarea and greets the church (Acts 18:22). Caesarea, formerly called Strato's Tower, was situated on the coast of the Mediterranean, at the mouth of a small river, and had a fine harbor. It was 36 miles south of Acre, and about 62 miles northwest of Jerusalem.
- 2) Visit to Jerusalem: Paul goes up to Jerusalem (Acts 18:22).
- 3) Return to Antioch: Paul returns to Antioch (Acts 18:22). This is the Antioch in Syria from which they had originally be sent out (Acts 13:1-3).
- 4) Strengthening the disciples: After spending some time in Antioch, Paul sets out, travelling from place to place in the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples (Acts 18:23).

Paul's return to Antioch underscores his relentless dedication to his missionary work and his role in consolidating the early Christian church. After a prolonged and productive stay in Corinth, Paul continues to support and fortify the faith of the disciples across various regions, including Galatia and Phrygia. This passage encapsulates a period of transition and reinforcement in Paul's ministry, reflecting his strategic approach to spreading and nurturing the Christian faith amidst his travels and commitments.

3. Apollos In Ephesus And Achaia (Acts 18:24-28).

In these verses, the focus shifts to Apollos, a learned and eloquent Jew from Alexandria who arrives in Ephesus. Known for his deep knowledge of the Scriptures, Apollos teaches about Jesus with enthusiasm and accuracy, although his understanding is limited to the baptism of John. This passage highlights Apollos' initial ministry, his encounter with Priscilla and Aquila who provide him with a fuller understanding of the Christian faith, and his impactful ministry in Achaia.

a. Introduction of Apollos (Acts 18:24-25):

- 1) Apollos' background: Apollos, a learned Jew from Alexandria, arrives in Ephesus (Acts 18:24).
- 2) Eloquence and knowledge: Apollos is eloquent and mighty in the Scriptures (Acts 18:24).
- 3) Instruction and preaching: Apollos is instructed in the way of the Lord, teaching accurately about Jesus, though he knows only the baptism of John (Acts 18:25).

b. Further instruction by Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18:26):

- 1) Bold preaching: Apollos speaks boldly in the synagogue (Acts 18:26).
- 2) Hearing by Priscilla and Aquila: Priscilla and Aquila hear him (Acts 18:26).
- 3) Private instruction: They take him aside and explain the way of God more accurately (Acts 18:26).

c. Ministry in Achaia (Acts 18:27-28):

- 1) Commendation to the disciples: Apollos wishes to go to Achaia. The brothers encourage him and write to the disciples to welcome him (Acts 18:27).
- 2) Help to believers: In Achaia, Apollos greatly helps those who have believed through grace¹² (Acts 18:27).
- 3) Effective apologetics: Apollos powerfully refutes the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 18:28).

The account of Apollos concludes with his strengthened ministry following further instruction from Priscilla and Aquila. Encouraged by the believers in Ephesus, Apollos travels to Achaia, where he significantly aids the Christian community. His eloquent and powerful public refutations of Jewish arguments, grounded in the Scriptures, affirm that Jesus is the Christ, greatly benefiting the believers and enhancing the spread of the gospel. This passage underscores the importance of continued learning and mentorship in effectively advancing the Christian message.

Summary:

1. **Strength In Collaboration And Ministry (Acts 18:1-3, 18:4-11):** Paul's time in Corinth demonstrates the power of strategic partnerships and dedicated ministry. His collaboration with Aquila and Priscilla not only provided him with practical support but also played a crucial role in establishing a robust Christian presence in the city. This partnership highlights the importance of working together in ministry to overcome challenges and spread the gospel effectively (Acts 18:3).
2. **Resilience Amidst Opposition (Acts 18:12-17, 18:18-23):** Throughout his journey, Paul faced significant opposition and legal challenges, particularly in Corinth. Despite these obstacles, his unwavering dedication, supported by divine encouragement, allowed him to continue his mission. His ability to navigate these challenges and maintain his commitment to spreading the Christian message serves as a powerful example of resilience in the face of adversity (Acts 18:9-10).
3. **Mentorship And Effective Teaching (Acts 18:24-28):** The introduction of Apollos and his subsequent mentorship by Priscilla and Aquila underscores the importance of accurate teaching and continuous learning in ministry. Apollos' initial fervor and eloquence, combined with the more accurate understanding imparted by Priscilla and Aquila, enabled him to become a highly effective advocate for Christianity. This passage highlights the value of mentorship and the ongoing development of one's understanding of the faith to effectively communicate the gospel (Acts 18:26).

¹² "Believed through grace". God was and is not under any obligation to save sinners. If anyone has come to hear and obey the gospel, then it is solely by the His grace.

This chapter encapsulates the dynamic and multifaceted nature of early Christian ministry, showcasing the importance of strategic partnerships, resilience in the face of opposition, and the vital role of mentorship in spreading the gospel and strengthening the early church.

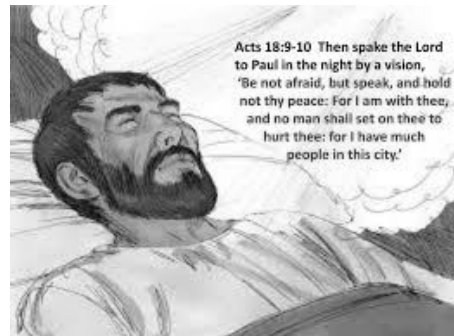
Applications:

1. **Building Strong Partnerships (Acts 18:3):** Like Paul, we should seek to build strong partnerships with fellow believers to support and enhance our ministry efforts. Collaborating with others can provide mutual encouragement, practical help, and a shared commitment to advancing the gospel. By working together, we can accomplish more and better withstand challenges.
2. **Persevering Through Opposition (Acts 18:9-10):** When faced with opposition and challenges in our faith journey, we should remember God's encouragement to Paul to "keep on speaking" and not be silent. God's assurance that He is with us and has people ready to support us should motivate us to persevere and continue our mission with confidence.
3. **The Importance Of Continued Learning And Mentorship (Acts 18:26):** Just as Apollos benefited from the guidance of Priscilla and Aquila, we should remain open to learning and receiving instruction from others in our spiritual journey. Being teachable and seeking to grow in our understanding of God's Word equips us to be more effective in our ministry and witness.

These applications remind us to seek strong partnerships in ministry, persevere through challenges with God's assurance, and remain open to continuous learning and mentorship, thereby equipping ourselves to effectively spread and strengthen the Christian faith.

Key Points:

1. **Strategic Partnerships In Ministry (Acts 18:1-3):** In this chapter, we see the significant role that strategic partnerships play in ministry. Paul's arrival in Corinth and his meeting with Aquila and Priscilla is a prime example. This couple, who had also been displaced due to Claudius' edict expelling Jews from Rome, share Paul's trade of tent making. Their collaboration not only provided Paul with financial support but also created a supportive environment for ministry efforts. This partnership was crucial as it allowed Paul to focus on his preaching while ensuring his material needs were met. It illustrates the importance of finding and nurturing relationships with fellow believers who can support and work alongside us in our mission.
2. **Resilience And Divine Encouragement (Acts 18:4-11):** Paul's ministry in Corinth was marked by both significant opposition and divine encouragement. Despite regular resistance from some Jews, Paul persisted in his efforts to preach in the synagogue and later shifted his focus to the Gentiles, which led to the conversion of many, including Crispus, the synagogue leader. In a vision, the Lord encouraged Paul to continue speaking boldly and assured him of His presence and protection. This divine encouragement was crucial in helping Paul to remain steadfast and effective in his ministry despite the challenges he faced.
3. **Importance Of Accurate Teaching And Mentorship (Acts 18:24-26):** The introduction of Apollos in Ephesus highlights the significance of accurate teaching and the role of mentorship in ministry. Apollos, described as eloquent and well-versed in the Scriptures, preached fervently about Jesus but had an incomplete understanding, knowing only the baptism of John. Priscilla and Aquila took him aside and provided further instruction, thereby enhancing his understanding of the Christian faith. This mentoring enabled Apollos to minister more effectively, both in Ephesus and later in Achaia. This underscores the need for continual learning and guidance in our spiritual journey to ensure that our ministry is rooted in sound doctrine and is more impactful.



These key points emphasize the value of forming supportive partnerships, the importance of resilience bolstered by divine encouragement, and the critical role of accurate teaching and mentorship in ministry. Together, they provide a comprehensive framework for effective Christian service and personal spiritual growth.

Questions:

1. From which city did Paul travel to Corinth (**Acts 18:1**)?
2. Who were the Jewish couple Paul met in Corinth, and why had they recently left Italy (**Acts 18:2**)?
3. What trade did Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla share that allowed them to work together (**Acts 18:3**)?
4. Where did Paul reason and try to persuade people every Sabbath in Corinth (**Acts 18:4**)?
5. What change occurred in Paul's ministry focus after Silas and Timothy arrived in Corinth (**Acts 18:5**)?
6. What was Paul's response to the opposition from the Jews in Corinth (**Acts 18:6**)?
7. Who was the synagogue leader in Corinth who believed in the Lord along with his entire household (**Acts 18:8**)?
8. What encouragement did the Lord give Paul in a vision in Corinth (**Acts 18:9-10**)?
9. How long did Paul stay in Corinth, teaching the word of God (**Acts 18:11**)?
10. Who was the learned and eloquent Jew from Alexandria that came to Ephesus and later received further instruction from Priscilla and Aquila (**Acts 18:24-26**)?

1. Paul In Ephesus (Acts 19:1-10).

a. Paul meets disciples of John the baptist (Acts 19:1-7):

- b. Paul's ministry in the synagogue and the hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19:8-10):

- Paul's ministry in Ephesus showcases his relentless commitment to spreading the gospel and nurturing new believers. His encounter with the disciples of John emphasizes the importance of understanding and receiving the full message of Jesus Christ, including the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Despite facing opposition in the synagogue, Paul's strategic move to teach in the hall of Tyrannus for two years allowed the message of Christianity to permeate the entire province of Asia. This passage highlights Paul's adaptability and perseverance, resulting in the widespread dissemination of the gospel and the strengthening of the early church.

2. Miracles And The Sons Of Sceva (Acts 19:11-20).

In these verses, the narrative highlights the extraordinary miracles performed through Paul and the dramatic incident involving the sons of Sceva. Paul's ministry in Ephesus is marked by remarkable demonstrations of God's power, where even handkerchiefs and aprons that touched him could heal the sick and cast out evil spirits. This passage also recounts the failed attempt by the sons of Sceva to use the name of Jesus in exorcisms, resulting in a profound impact on the community of Ephesus.

a. Extraordinary miracles by Paul (Acts 19:11-12):

- 1) God performs extraordinary miracles through Paul: Handkerchiefs and aprons that touched Paul heal the sick and cast out evil spirits (Acts 19:11-12).
- 2) Unusual nature of miracles: These miracles are notable for their unusual nature, showing the extraordinary power of God working through Paul (Acts 19:11-12).

b. The sons of Sceva¹³ (Acts 19:13-16):

- 1) Jewish exorcists attempt to use Jesus' name: Some Jews try to invoke the name of Jesus over those possessed by evil spirits (Acts 19:13).
- 2) The sons of Sceva encounter an evil spirit: Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, are overpowered by an evil spirit who acknowledges Jesus and Paul but rejects them (Acts 19:14-16).

c. Impact on the Ephesians (Acts 19:17-20):

- 1) Fear and reverence for Jesus' name: The incident with the sons of Sceva becomes widely known, and the name of the Lord Jesus is held in high honor (Acts 19:17).
- 2) Public confession and burning of scrolls: Many believers confess their practices and burn their sorcery scrolls, leading to the spread and strengthening of the word of the Lord (Acts 19:18-20).

The events described here underscore the supreme authority of Jesus' name and the genuine power of God working through His true apostles. The failed exorcism by the sons of Sceva serves as a powerful reminder that the authority of Jesus cannot be invoked without true faith and divine commission. The aftermath of these events leads to a deep reverence for Jesus' name, public repentance, and the renunciation of sorcery, significantly advancing the spread of the gospel and the strengthening of the Christian community in Ephesus.

3. The Riot In Ephesus (Acts 19:21-41).

In this passage, the narrative recounts a tumultuous period in Ephesus marked by Paul's travel plans, a significant disturbance instigated by a local silversmith named Demetrius, and a subsequent riot. This passage begins with Paul's decision to travel to Jerusalem and then to Rome, and his sending of Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia. It then details how Demetrius, concerned about the economic impact of Paul's message on the trade of silver shrines of Artemis, incites a large-scale uproar. The chapter concludes with a chaotic scene in the Ephesian theatre and the intervention of the city clerk, who manages to calm the crowd and restore order.

a. Paul's plans and Timothy and Erastus sent ahead (Acts 19:21-22):

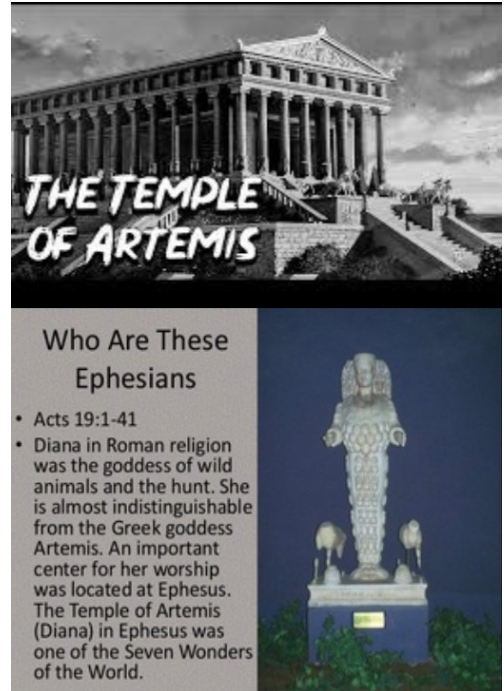
- 1) Paul's travel plans: Paul decides to go to Jerusalem and then to Rome after passing through Macedonia and Achaia (Acts 19:21).
- 2) Sending Timothy and Erastus: Paul sends Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia while he stays in Asia a little longer (Acts 19:22).

b. Uproar caused by Demetrius (Acts 19:23-27):

- 1) Disturbance about the Way: A great disturbance arises because of the Way (Acts 19:23):
 - a) The term "the Way" is mentioned in several passages in Acts: (i) **Acts 9:2**: Saul seeks to arrest followers of "the Way" in Damascus. (ii) **Acts 19:9**: Paul speaks about some people publicly maligning "the Way." (iii) **Acts 19:23**: A disturbance arises in Ephesus concerning "the Way." (iv) **Acts 22:4**: Paul refers to persecuting followers of "the Way." (v) **Acts 24:14**: Paul describes himself as a follower of "the Way."

¹³ See article: The Sons Of Sceva: A Cautionary Tale Of Spiritual Authority And Authentic Faith

- b) The term “the Way” directly ties to Jesus' own words in John 14:6, where He declares, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” This indicates that early Christians viewed Jesus not just as a teacher or prophet but as the unique and exclusive path to God. By identifying their faith as “the Way,” early Christians emphasized their belief in Jesus as the only means of salvation and reconciliation with God.
 - c) “The Way” suggests a distinct mode of living. Early Christians adopted a way of life that was markedly different from both the Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures around them. This lifestyle included communal sharing, ethical behavior, love for one another, and a commitment to Jesus' teachings. It signified a holistic transformation encompassing beliefs, actions, and community life.
- 2) Demetrius’ speech: Demetrius, a silversmith who makes shrines of Artemis, incites the craftsmen by highlighting the economic threat posed by Paul’s message, which discredits their trade and the temple of Artemis (Acts 19:24-27):
- a) Significance Of Artemis: Artemis of the Ephesians, also known as Diana in Roman mythology, held immense significance in the religious and cultural life of Ephesus. Her worship was deeply ingrained in the fabric of society, influencing various aspects of daily life.
 - b) Temple Of Artemis: The Temple of Artemis in Ephesus was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. This monumental structure was dedicated to Artemis and served as a center for her worship. The temple's grandeur and size reflected the importance of Artemis in the eyes of the Ephesians and attracted pilgrims and visitors from far and wide.
 - c) Depiction And Attributes: Artemis was typically depicted as a multi-breasted figure, symbolizing her nurturing and maternal attributes. She was revered as the goddess of fertility, childbirth, and wild animals, embodying aspects of nature and the feminine divine.
 - d) Cultural And Economic Impact: The worship of Artemis was not only a religious practice but also had significant economic implications for Ephesus. The city's economy relied heavily on the trade associated with Artemis worship, including the production and sale of religious artifacts and offerings.
 - e) Fear Of Disruption: The silversmith Demetrius's reaction to Paul's preaching highlights the deep-seated fear among some Ephesians that the spread of Christianity would undermine the worship of Artemis and disrupt their economic livelihoods.
 - f) Riot Incited By Demetrius: Demetrius's incitement of a riot in Ephesus demonstrates the intensity of the opposition faced by early Christians as they spread their message. The riot underscores the clash between the teachings of Christianity and the established religious and economic interests in the ancient city.
- c. The riot in the theatre (Acts 19:28-34):
- 1) The city's reaction: The city is filled with confusion, and people rush to the theatre, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's travelling companions (Acts 19:28-29).
 - 2) Paul's desire to address the crowd: Paul wants to speak to the crowd, but the disciples and some officials of the province, who were friends of Paul, persuade him not to go (Acts 19:30-31).



- 3) Alexander's attempt to speak: The Jews push Alexander to the front to make a defense, but when the crowd realizes he is a Jew, they shout in unison for about two hours, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" (Acts 19:32-34).

d. The city clerk's intervention (Acts 19:35-41):

- 1) The clerk calms the crowd: The city clerk quiets the crowd, arguing that the greatness of Artemis and her temple is undisputed (Acts 19:35-36).
- 2) Legal channels for grievances: He suggests that if Demetrius and his craftsmen have a grievance, the courts are open and there are proconsuls; they can press charges there (Acts 19:37-39).
- 3) Dismissing the assembly: He warns that the current uproar risks being charged with rioting, as there is no justification for it. He then dismisses the assembly (Acts 19:40-41).

The account of the riot in Ephesus underscores the profound social and economic impact of the early Christian movement, as well as the volatile reactions it could provoke. Despite the dangerous uproar incited by Demetrius, the incident highlights the importance of legal processes and the role of civic authorities in maintaining order. The city clerk's effective intervention not only quells the immediate threat but also underscores the legitimacy and resilience of Paul's mission. This episode reflects the broader challenges faced by early Christians in spreading their faith amidst deeply entrenched cultural and economic interests.

Summary:

1. **Clarifying The Reception Of The Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1-7):** Paul's interaction with the disciples of John highlights the necessity of understanding the complete Christian message. While receiving miraculous gifts of the Spirit is not essential for salvation, it played a significant role in the early church for empowerment and validation of their faith.
2. **The Power And Authority Of Jesus' Name (Acts 19:11-20):** The miraculous acts performed through Paul and the failed exorcism by the sons of Sceva illustrate the unmatched authority of Jesus' name. These events lead to a heightened reverence for Jesus and a widespread renunciation of occult practices, demonstrating the profound impact of genuine faith and divine power.
3. **Handling Opposition and Maintaining Order (Acts 19:21-41):** The riot in Ephesus, driven by economic concerns and religious fervor, highlights the significant challenges faced by early Christians. The city clerk's intervention to restore order emphasizes the importance of legal processes and civic responsibility in addressing public unrest, illustrating the broader societal implications of the burgeoning Christian movement.



This chapter encapsulates the transformative journey of the early church in Ephesus, where the gospel's power is vividly displayed through miraculous healings, the defeat of false exorcists, and the profound societal shifts prompted by Paul's teachings. It underscores the challenges and triumphs of spreading Christianity in a diverse and often hostile environment, demonstrating the resilience and adaptability of early believers.

Applications:

1. **Discernment In Spiritual Matters (Acts 19:13-16):** The account of the sons of Sceva emphasizes the need for genuine faith and divine authority when engaging in spiritual warfare. Christians should seek a deep and authentic relationship with Jesus, relying on His power rather than attempting to use His name superficially. This encourages believers to cultivate a sincere and committed faith life, recognizing the importance of true spiritual authority in their walk with God.
2. **The Impact Of Miracles And Authentic Faith (Acts 19:11-12, 19:17-20):** The extraordinary miracles performed through Paul, and the resulting fear and reverence for Jesus' name, highlight the power of authentic faith and the transformative impact it can have on a community. Believers are reminded that God's power can work through them to bring spiritual healing and transformation to others, encouraging a life of faith that seeks to demonstrate God's love and power in tangible ways.

3. **Handling Opposition With Wisdom And Grace (Acts 19:21-41):** The riot in Ephesus, and the calm intervention by the city clerk, teach valuable lessons about handling opposition and conflict. Christians are encouraged to respond to challenges and hostility with wisdom, grace, and reliance on legal and peaceful means to resolve disputes. This application emphasizes the importance of maintaining a Christ-like demeanor and seeking peaceful solutions, even in the face of significant opposition.

These applications underscore the importance of genuine faith, the impact of living out an authentic Christian life, and the necessity of wise and graceful responses to opposition. They provide practical guidance for contemporary believers, drawing on the lessons learned from Paul's ministry and the events in Ephesus to navigate their spiritual journey with discernment, faith, and wisdom.

Key Points:

1. **Paul's Ministry In Ephesus (Acts 19:1-10):** Paul's arrival in Ephesus marks a pivotal moment in his missionary journey, where he encounters disciples of John the Baptist who had not received the full message of Jesus Christ. This encounter emphasizes the importance of understanding and receiving the Holy Spirit for believers.
2. **Extraordinary Miracles By Paul (Acts 19:11-12):** The narrative highlights the remarkable miracles performed through Paul in Ephesus, including the healing of the sick and the casting out of evil spirits. These miracles authenticate Paul's ministry and underscore the power of God at work through him.
3. **The Sons Of Sceva Incident (Acts 19:13-20):** The failed attempt by the sons of Sceva to exorcise evil spirits using the name of Jesus demonstrates the importance of genuine faith and authority in invoking the name of Jesus. This incident leads to a greater reverence for Jesus' name among the Ephesians.
4. **Impact On The Ephesians (Acts 19:17-20):** The aftermath of the sons of Sceva incident results in widespread fear and reverence for Jesus' name, leading many to confess their practices and turn away from sorcery. This event contributes to the spread and strengthening of the Christian faith in Ephesus.
5. **The Riot In Ephesus (Acts 19:21-41):** The chapter concludes with a riot incited by Demetrius, a silversmith, who is concerned about the economic impact of Paul's message on the trade of silver shrines of Artemis. This incident highlights the societal and economic challenges faced by the early Christians as they spread the gospel message.

These key points illuminate the dynamic nature of Paul's ministry in Ephesus, showcasing both the extraordinary miracles performed through him and the challenges faced by early Christians in confronting opposing forces. From encounters with disciples of John the Baptist to dramatic exorcism attempts and riotous uprisings, the narrative in this chapter underscores the power of God at work amidst spiritual warfare and societal tensions. Through it all, Paul remains steadfast in his commitment to spreading the gospel and strengthening the faith of believers, leaving a lasting impact on the Ephesian community and beyond.

Questions:

1. What was the response of the Ephesian disciples when Paul asked if they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed (Acts 19:2)?
2. What significant event occurred when Paul baptized the disciples in the name of the Lord Jesus and laid his hands on them (Acts 19:5-6)?
3. What was the duration of Paul's teaching in the synagogue and the hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19:8-10)?
4. What was the response of the Jews when they attempted to invoke the name of Jesus over those possessed by evil spirits (Acts 19:13)?
5. Who were the sons of Sceva, and what happened when they tried to cast out an evil spirit using the name of Jesus (Acts 19:14-16)?
6. What was the outcome of the incident with the sons of Sceva concerning the Ephesians (Acts 19:17-20)?
7. Who stirred up a riot in Ephesus and why (Acts 19:23-27)?

8. What was the reaction of the city of Ephesus when they heard Demetrius' speech (**Acts 19:28-29**)?
9. Why did the city clerk intervene in the riot in Ephesus (**Acts 19:35-41**)?
10. What was the ultimate outcome of the riot in Ephesus (**Acts 19:41**)?

1. Paul's Journey To Macedonia And Greece (Acts 20:1-6).

a. Departure from Ephesus (Acts 20:1):

- b. Ministry in Macedonia (Acts 20:2):

- c. Arrival and stay in Greece (Acts 20:3):

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- 2) Plot against Paul by the Jews: Paul's presence and his successful ministry often attracted opposition, and this time was no different. During his stay in Greece, some Jews plotted against him. This opposition was not new to Paul, as he had faced numerous threats and attacks throughout his missionary journeys. The plot was serious enough to cause Paul to reconsider his plans. The nature of the plot likely involved a threat to his life, aiming to prevent him from continuing his mission or reaching Jerusalem.
- 3) Change of travel plans due to the plot: Due to the discovered plot against him, Paul had to alter his travel plans. Initially, he intended to sail directly to Syria, but the threat led him to take a different route. To avoid the danger, Paul decided to return through Macedonia, retracing his steps through the region. This change in plans highlights Paul's adaptability and his commitment to ensuring his safety while still pursuing his mission. By altering his route, Paul demonstrated prudence, using wisdom to navigate the dangers he faced while continuing to support the churches and advance his mission.

The journey of Paul to Macedonia and Greece reveals the tireless dedication and strategic planning characteristic of his missionary efforts. Despite facing threats and opposition, Paul remains steadfast in his commitment to nurturing the early Christian communities and advancing the gospel message. His ministry in these regions serves as a testament to the transformative power of faith and the enduring impact of Christian witness in the face of adversity. Through Paul's example, we are reminded of the importance of perseverance, adaptability, and reliance on God's guidance in fulfilling the Great Commission.

2. Return Through Macedonia And Journey To Troas (Acts 20:4-6).

In these verses, we witness Paul's return journey through Macedonia and his subsequent travels to Troas, marking a crucial phase in his missionary endeavors. Accompanied by a diverse group of companions, Paul traverses familiar territories, offering support to believers and reinforcing the bonds of Christian fellowship. Their arrival in Troas sets the stage for significant events that further illuminate the challenges and triumphs of early Christian ministry.

a. Return through Macedonia (Acts 20:4-5):

- 1) Companions accompanying Paul: As Paul travelled back through Macedonia, he was not alone; he was accompanied by several companions. These men were fellow workers and representatives from various churches. Their presence provided both practical and moral support for Paul on his journey. Travelling in a group offered protection against the numerous dangers of the road, including bandits and hostile opponents. Additionally, these companions served as witnesses to Paul's ministry and as representatives of the broader Christian community.
- 2) Names of the companions:
 - a) Sopater of Berea: Likely from the church in Berea, he was possibly the same Sopater mentioned as the son of Pyrrhus.
 - b) Aristarchus of Thessalonica: A loyal companion of Paul, Aristarchus later accompanied Paul on his voyage to Rome and is mentioned in Colossians 4:10 and Philemon 1:24.
 - c) Secundus of Thessalonica: Another representative from Thessalonica, traveling with Aristarchus.
 - d) Gaius of Derbe: Gaius is mentioned in several places in the New Testament, including Acts 19:29 and Romans 16:23.
 - e) Timothy: A close and trusted companion of Paul, Timothy is mentioned frequently throughout Paul's letters.
 - f) Tychicus: He is noted as a faithful minister in Ephesians 6:21 and Colossians 4:7, and he often served as a messenger for Paul.
 - g) Trophimus of Asia: He was an Ephesian and is later mentioned in Acts 21:29 and 2 Timothy 4:20.
- 3) Purpose of their companionship. The companions had multiple roles and purposes:
 - a) Support and Encouragement: They provided Paul with companionship and encouragement, essential for someone facing constant opposition and hardship.

- b) Representation: Each companion represented their respective churches, signifying the unity and support of the broader Christian community for Paul's mission.
- c) Accountability and Stewardship: These men likely helped in managing the collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem, ensuring transparency and accountability.
- d) Witness and Continuation of Ministry: As witnesses to Paul's teaching and actions, they could carry on his teachings and ministry in their home regions, spreading the gospel further and ensuring the continuity of the church's mission.

b. Travel to Troas (Acts 20:6):

- 1) Sailing from Philippi after the Feast of Unleavened Bread: Paul and his companions set sail from Philippi following the Jewish festival of Unleavened Bread. This feast, also known as Passover, commemorates the Israelites' exodus from Egypt and is a significant event in the Jewish calendar. By waiting until after this feast, Paul ensured that they observed the important traditions and perhaps connected with Jewish Christians in Philippi during this time. The timing also highlights Paul's continued respect for his Jewish heritage and the customs that shaped his faith.
- 2) Joining the others in Troas: After leaving Philippi, Paul and his team made their way to Troas, where they reunited with the rest of their companions. Troas, an important city in the Roman province of Asia, served as a strategic meeting point. The reunion in Troas allowed them to regroup, share updates, and plan their next steps in ministry. This gathering underscores the collaborative nature of early Christian missionary work, where coordination and mutual support were crucial for the success of their mission.
- 3) Staying in Troas for seven days: Paul and his companions stayed in Troas for a week, providing ample opportunity to minister to the local believers. During this time, Paul likely engaged in teaching, preaching, and encouraging the church. The seven-day stay indicates the importance of Troas as a hub for Paul's ministry and his commitment to spending meaningful time with the believers there. This period also sets the stage for the significant event of Eutychus's revival, demonstrating the power and compassion of God working through Paul.

The account of Paul's return through Macedonia and journey to Troas underscores the collaborative nature of early Christian mission work and the strategic planning inherent in Paul's ministry. As Paul and his companions navigate through familiar territories and reunite with fellow believers, they embody the principles of solidarity, support, and mutual encouragement that characterize the early Christian community. Their journey serves as a testament to the resilience and dedication of those committed to advancing the gospel message amidst various challenges and opportunities.

3. Paul's Farewell Visit To Troas (Acts 20:7-12).

In these verses, we encounter a poignant account of Paul's farewell visit to Troas, marked by a gathering of believers, a tragic incident, and a miraculous intervention. This passage offers profound insights into early Christian worship practices, the challenges of spiritual fervor amidst physical limitations, and the demonstration of God's power through Paul's ministry.

a. Gathering on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7):

- 1) Meeting with the brethren: Paul gathered with the brethren in Troas to break bread and fellowship. This assembly took place on the first day of the week, a significant time for early Christians who met to remember and celebrate Jesus' resurrection. The gathering likely included prayer, teaching, and the breaking of bread, which refers to sharing the Lord's Supper or Communion. This practice was central to the early church's worship and a way to strengthen their faith and unity.
- 2) Paul's extended preaching until midnight: During this gathering, Paul engaged in extended preaching, continuing his discourse until midnight. Knowing that he would soon depart from Troas, Paul seized the opportunity to teach and encourage the believers thoroughly. His lengthy message reflects his deep commitment to equipping the church with sound doctrine and spiritual guidance. This prolonged session also underscores the hunger and dedication of the early Christians to learn and grow in their faith, willing to stay late into the night to listen to Paul's teachings.

- 3) Significance of the first day of the week: The first day of the week, Sunday, holds special significance for Christians as it commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ, which occurred on a Sunday. Early Christians adopted this day for worship and fellowship, marking a distinct shift from the Jewish Sabbath (Saturday) to celebrate the new covenant in Christ. This practice of meeting on the first day of the week became a foundational aspect of Christian worship, symbolizing new life and hope brought by Jesus' victory over death. It reflects the transformative impact of the resurrection on the believers' lives and their weekly rhythm of worship and community.

b. Eutychus falls from the window (Acts 20:8-9):



- 1) The setting: a room with many lamps: The meeting took place in an upper room, which was illuminated by many lamps. The presence of numerous lamps suggests a well-lit environment, but it also contributed to the heat and possibly the stuffiness of the room. This setting indicates the earnestness and dedication of the believers who gathered despite the discomforts. The use of lamps also highlights the effort to create a conducive environment for extended teaching and fellowship during the night.
- 2) Eutychus falls asleep and falls from the third story: Eutychus, a young man present in the gathering, was sitting in a window. As Paul continued his prolonged preaching, Eutychus gradually succumbed to deep sleep, likely due to the late hour and possibly the warm and crowded room. Tragically, he fell from the third story window to the ground below. This incident underscores the human vulnerability and the physical challenges faced even in spiritual settings. It also reflects the natural fatigue experienced during long gatherings.
- 3) The reaction of the believers: The reaction of the believers was one of great alarm and concern. Witnessing Eutychus' fall and likely assuming the worst, the immediate response would have been a mix of fear, shock, and distress. This reaction highlights the close-knit nature of the early Christian community, where the well-being of each member was deeply valued. The incident would have abruptly interrupted the meeting, focusing everyone's attention on the young man's critical condition and underscoring the fragility of human life amidst their spiritual pursuits.

c. Eutychus raised to life (Acts 20:10-12):

- 1) Paul's response: going down and embracing Eutychus: Upon witnessing the tragic fall of Eutychus, Paul immediately ceased his preaching and rushed down to the place where the young man had fallen. His action of embracing Eutychus was not just a comforting gesture but a display of deep compassion and concern. This physical act of embracing is reminiscent of similar miraculous interventions in the Bible, where prophets like Elijah and Elisha also performed miracles involving physical contact to raise the dead (1 Kings 17:21; 2 Kings 4:34). Paul's immediate and heartfelt response underscores his pastoral care and the power of God working through him.
- 2) Assurance given: "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him": After embracing Eutychus, Paul provided reassurance to the distressed believers. He declared, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him." This statement was a declaration of faith and a prophetic assurance that Eutychus was not dead but alive. It was meant to calm the believers and redirect their focus from fear to faith. This assurance reflects Paul's confidence in God's power to restore life and the importance of faith in the miraculous workings of God.
- 3) Continuing the meeting and departure of Paul: Following the miraculous restoration of Eutychus, Paul and the believers returned to the upper room. Remarkably, they continued their meeting, breaking bread and eating together. This continuation signifies the believers' resilience and unwavering commitment to fellowship and learning, even in the face of dramatic events. Paul continued talking with them until daybreak, showing his dedication to teaching and strengthening the believers. After this extended time of fellowship and teaching, Paul departed, leaving behind a community undoubtedly strengthened in faith by the witnessed miracle. The incident not only affirmed the power of God at work through Paul but also solidified the believers' faith and commitment to the gospel.

The narrative of Paul's farewell visit to Troas serves as a testament to the vitality of early Christian communities and the transformative impact of encounters with God's power. Through the gathering on the first day of the week, the incident involving Eutychus, and his subsequent revival, we witness the convergence of spiritual devotion, human frailty, and divine intervention. Paul's response to this extraordinary event underscores the compassion and authority vested in him as an apostle, leaving an indelible impression on the believers and strengthening their faith for the journey ahead.

4. Journey From Troas To Miletus (Acts 20:13-16).

In these verses, we witness Paul's journey from Troas to Miletus, marked by strategic decisions, practical considerations, and significant milestones along the way. This section provides insights into Paul's travel methods, the dynamics of his companionship, and the strategic planning underlying his mission. As Paul navigates through various cities and regions, his actions reflect both his commitment to his mission and his sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

a. Travel from Troas to Assos (Acts 20:13):

- 1) Paul's companions sail to Assos: Paul's companions took a ship and sailed ahead to Assos. This group, which included notable figures like Luke (the author of Acts), Gaius, Aristarchus, and others, were tasked with preparing for Paul's arrival and ensuring logistical arrangements for the continuation of their journey. Sailing was a common and often faster mode of travel for covering longer distances, especially in the coastal regions of the Mediterranean. This decision to split the travel methods highlights the practical considerations of their missionary journeys, balancing speed and directness.
- 2) Paul travels to Assos by land: Contrary to his companions, Paul chose to travel to Assos by land. This approximately 20-mile journey on foot allowed Paul some solitude and reflection time. It might have also provided opportunities for additional ministry or personal encounters along the way. Traveling by land, Paul could have experienced the countryside, met local residents, and perhaps even spread the gospel further. This choice reflects Paul's dedication and willingness to walk significant distances to fulfill his mission.
- 3) Meeting in Assos: Upon reaching Assos, Paul reunited with his companions. This meeting was crucial for ensuring that their journey continued smoothly. Assos was a strategic meeting point due to its port and accessibility from Troas. Rejoining his companions, Paul would have been able to continue his journey with renewed focus and the support of his fellow travelers. This reunion underscores the collaborative nature of Paul's ministry, highlighting the importance of teamwork and fellowship in their mission.

b. Sailing to Mitylene and beyond (Acts 20:14-15):

- 1) Sailing from Assos to Mitylene: After their brief stop in Assos, Paul and his companions set sail for Mitylene. Mitylene was a significant city on the island of Lesbos, known for its strategic location and maritime importance. The journey by sea would have taken them across the Aegean Sea, navigating through various islands and coastal towns along the way. Sailing offered the most efficient means of travel for covering long distances, allowing them to reach their destinations relatively quickly.
- 2) Next stops: Kios and Samos: Following their stop in Mitylene, the voyage continued with planned stops at Kios and Samos. These locations were likely chosen for strategic reasons, such as refueling, restocking supplies, or accommodating passengers. Kios, known for its strategic location on the coast of Asia Minor, would have provided an opportunity for the travelers to replenish their provisions and make any necessary arrangements for the remainder of their journey. Samos, an island in the eastern Aegean Sea, offered a similar opportunity for resupplying and resting before their final leg of the journey.
- 3) Arriving in Miletus: The journey eventually led them to Miletus, a significant port city in the region of Caria, located on the western coast of Asia Minor. Miletus was renowned for its commercial activity and maritime trade, making it an essential hub for travelers and merchants alike. Arriving in Miletus marked a significant milestone in Paul's journey, as it was here that he would have a crucial meeting with the elders of the church in Ephesus. This meeting, as recorded in Acts 20:17-38, would be poignant and memorable, as Paul imparted final instructions and words of encouragement to the leaders of the church before continuing his journey.

c. Decision to bypass Ephesus (Acts 20:16):

- 1) Paul's desire to reach Jerusalem by Pentecost: Paul's decision to bypass Ephesus was motivated by his earnest desire to reach Jerusalem by the time of Pentecost. Pentecost was a significant Jewish festival occurring fifty days after Passover, and it was a time of pilgrimage and celebration for Jews from various regions. Knowing the importance of this festival and the opportunities it presented for spreading the gospel, Paul was determined to arrive in Jerusalem to participate in Pentecost and engage in ministry opportunities among the Jewish population gathered there. This sense of urgency and purpose drove Paul's strategic planning of his journey, prioritizing his mission to Jerusalem over other destinations.
- 2) Avoiding delays in Asia: Another factor influencing Paul's decision was the desire to avoid potential delays and distractions that awaited him in Asia, particularly in Ephesus. While Ephesus held significant importance as a major urban center and hub for Paul's ministry, it also posed challenges and potential obstacles that could hinder his progress toward Jerusalem. Paul may have been aware of the unrest and opposition he could face in Ephesus, as well as the time-consuming nature of addressing various issues within the church and community. By bypassing Ephesus and other cities in Asia, Paul aimed to streamline his journey and minimize potential disruptions, allowing him to focus on his mission to Jerusalem with greater efficiency and purpose.
- 3) Strategic planning of Paul's journey: Paul's decision to bypass Ephesus exemplified his strategic approach to ministry and mission planning. Throughout his missionary journeys, Paul demonstrated a keen sense of strategic foresight, carefully weighing the opportunities and challenges presented by each location and situation. His itinerary was not arbitrary but rather meticulously planned to maximize impact and effectiveness in spreading the gospel. By prioritizing his journey to Jerusalem and Pentecost, Paul aligned his actions with his overarching mission objectives, ensuring that his efforts were focused on advancing the kingdom of God and fulfilling his calling as an apostle to the Gentiles. This strategic mindset characterized Paul's ministry and contributed to the success and resilience of the early Christian movement.

The journey from Troas to Miletus illuminates the strategic mindset and spiritual discernment that characterized Paul's missionary endeavors. Through his choices of travel routes, methods, and destinations, Paul demonstrated a keen awareness of the opportunities and challenges inherent in his mission. His decision to bypass Ephesus underscored his unwavering commitment to his overarching mission objective of reaching Jerusalem by Pentecost, while also highlighting his pragmatic approach to ministry. As Paul continued his journey, he remained guided by the Spirit, seeking to maximize the impact of his efforts in spreading the gospel and strengthening the early Christian communities along the way.

5. Paul's Farewell To The Ephesian Elders (Acts 20:17-38).

In this passage, we witness a poignant farewell as Paul addresses the Ephesian elders in Miletus. This section captures the essence of Paul's pastoral heart, his commitment to the gospel, and his deep affection for the church. Through his words and actions, Paul imparts crucial instructions, encouragement, and warnings to the elders, preparing them for the challenges that lie ahead.

a. Summoning the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:17):

- 1) Paul's message from Miletus: While Paul was in Miletus, he summoned the elders of the Ephesian church to meet with him. Miletus was a strategic port city located near Ephesus, making it a convenient meeting point for Paul and the elders. Despite his urgency to reach Jerusalem, Paul recognized the importance of meeting with these leaders to impart crucial instructions and encouragement to them. Understanding the significant role the Ephesian elders played in shepherding the local church and advancing the gospel in the region, Paul deemed it necessary to convey his final words of wisdom and guidance before his departure. His message to the elders reflected his deep concern for the spiritual well-being of the Ephesian church and his commitment to equipping and empowering its leaders for the challenges that lay ahead.



- 2) Elders travel to meet Paul: Upon receiving Paul's summons, the elders of the Ephesian church embarked on the journey to Miletus to meet with him. This demonstration of their responsiveness and commitment underscored the strong bond of fellowship and mutual respect that existed between Paul and the Ephesian church leadership. Despite the potential difficulties and inconveniences associated with travel, the elders recognized the importance of meeting with Paul and eagerly responded to his call. Their willingness to prioritize this meeting affirmed their recognition of Paul's authority and their readiness to receive his counsel and instruction. The journey to Miletus symbolized their dedication to the unity and welfare of the broader body of believers and their commitment to upholding the principles of Christian leadership and accountability.
 - 3) Significance of this meeting: The meeting between Paul and the Ephesian elders held profound significance for both parties and for the future of the Ephesian church.
 - a) For Paul, it was an opportunity to impart his final words of wisdom, encouragement, and exhortation to those entrusted with the spiritual oversight of the congregation. Paul's address to the elders served as a testament to his enduring commitment to nurturing and equipping the next generation of church leaders and ensuring the continuity and vitality of the Christian mission.
 - b) For the Ephesian elders, the meeting represented a pivotal moment of instruction and commissioning, as they received valuable insights and directives from one of the foremost apostles of Christ. The words spoken during this meeting would shape their ministry and leadership style, guiding them in their efforts to shepherd the flock of God and contend earnestly for the faith.
 - c) Overall, the meeting between Paul and the Ephesian elders exemplified the spirit of mutual edification, accountability, and partnership that characterized the early Christian community, serving as a model for effective leadership and discipleship in the church.
- b. Paul's address to the Ephesian elders (**Acts 20:18-35**):
- 1) Paul's Ministry in Ephesus (**Acts 20:18-21**):
 - a) Paul's humility and tears: As Paul addressed the Ephesian elders, he did so with deep humility and genuine emotion, evidenced by his tears. His humility was not merely a posture of speech but a reflection of his sincere devotion to the Lord and his sacrificial service to the Ephesian church. Paul's tears bore witness to the depth of his love and concern for the believers in Ephesus, emphasizing the intimate bond he shared with them as their spiritual father and shepherd.
 - b) His faithful service to the Lord: Throughout his ministry in Ephesus, Paul demonstrated unwavering commitment and faithfulness to the Lord's calling. Despite facing numerous trials and opposition, Paul remained steadfast in his dedication to preaching the gospel and building up the body of Christ. His tireless efforts in teaching and exhorting believers exemplified his devotion to fulfilling God's purposes and advancing the kingdom of God in Ephesus and beyond.
 - c) Preaching repentance and faith: Central to Paul's ministry in Ephesus was his unwavering commitment to preaching repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. Recognizing the transformative power of the gospel, Paul tirelessly proclaimed the message of salvation, calling both Jews and Gentiles to turn from their sins and embrace the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. His preaching emphasized the foundational truths of the Christian faith, urging believers to live lives worthy of the gospel and to walk in obedience to God's Word.
 - 2) Paul's imminent departure (**Acts 20:22-24**):
 - a) Compelled by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem: Despite the imminent dangers and hardships that awaited him, Paul was compelled by the Holy Spirit to journey to Jerusalem. Sensing the leading of the Spirit, Paul embraced his mission with unwavering resolve, recognizing that his obedience to God's call was paramount, regardless of the personal cost. His willingness to face persecution and imprisonment for the sake of the gospel testified to his deep-seated conviction and unwavering faith in God's sovereign purposes.

- b) Awareness of impending hardships: Paul was acutely aware of the hardships and trials that awaited him in Jerusalem, including persecution and imprisonment. Despite the potential risks to his own safety and well-being, Paul remained undeterred in his commitment to fulfilling God's calling on his life. His readiness to suffer for the sake of Christ exemplified his unwavering faith and trust in God's faithfulness, even in the face of adversity and opposition.
- c) Determination to complete his mission: In the face of uncertainty and danger, Paul remained resolute in his determination to complete the mission entrusted to him by the Lord. His unwavering faith and perseverance served as a testimony to his unshakable confidence in God's providence and his commitment to advancing the gospel to the ends of the earth. Paul's steadfast resolve to finish the race set before him inspired the Ephesian elders to similarly persevere in their own ministry and service to the Lord.

3) Warning and exhortation (Acts 20:25-31):

- a) Warning of future challenges: Recognizing the spiritual dangers that lay ahead, Paul issued a solemn warning to the Ephesian elders regarding the challenges and trials that would confront the church in the future. Paul foresaw the rise of false teachers and divisive influences within the church, urging the elders to remain vigilant and steadfast in guarding the flock entrusted to their care. His prophetic insight underscored the importance of spiritual discernment and doctrinal fidelity in preserving the integrity of the Christian faith.
- b) Urging elders to be vigilant: In light of the impending threats to the church, Paul urged the Ephesian elders to be vigilant and watchful, standing firm in the face of spiritual opposition and deception. He admonished them to remain steadfast in their commitment to sound doctrine and biblical truth, guarding against the infiltration of false teaching and heresy. Paul's exhortation underscored the vital role of spiritual leadership in safeguarding the church from error and preserving its unity and purity.
- c) Calling to shepherd the flock: Above all, Paul charged the Ephesian elders with the solemn responsibility of shepherding the flock of God with diligence and care. He reminded them of their divine calling to oversee and nurture the believers under their care, guiding them with wisdom and compassion. Paul's admonition echoed the words of Jesus Himself, who entrusted Peter with the task of feeding His sheep and tending His lambs. By calling the elders to emulate the Good Shepherd in their leadership, Paul emphasized the importance of servant-hearted leadership and sacrificial love in the ministry of the church.

c. Paul's personal example (Acts 20:32-35):

1) Commending the elders to God (Acts 20:32):

- a) Paul concludes his address to the Ephesian elders by commending them to God and to the word of His grace. Recognizing his own limitations and the challenges that lay ahead for the elders, Paul entrusts them into the faithful care and guidance of God.
- b) By committing the elders to God's sovereign provision and protection, Paul underscores the importance of divine empowerment and guidance in fulfilling their pastoral responsibilities. His act of commendation serves as a reminder of the elders' dependence on God's grace and their need for His sustaining presence in their ministry.

- 2) Reminder of Paul's hard work (Acts 20:33-34): In urging the elders to emulate his own example, Paul recalls his own diligent labor and sacrificial service among them. Throughout his ministry in Ephesus, Paul had demonstrated unwavering dedication and commitment to the advancement of the gospel, laboring tirelessly for the sake of the church. By reminding the elders of his own example, Paul encourages them to emulate his steadfastness and perseverance in the face of trials and opposition. His testimony serves as a source of inspiration and encouragement for the elders as they navigate the challenges of pastoral ministry.

- 3) Encouragement to help the weak (Acts 20:35): Paul concludes his address with an exhortation to the elders to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, who said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." By emphasizing the importance of selfless generosity and compassionate care for the weak and needy, Paul challenges the elders to embody the servant-hearted attitude of Christ in their ministry. His words serve as a reminder of the transformative power of sacrificial love and humble service in building up the body of Christ and extending the kingdom of God. Paul's encouragement underscores the vital role of the church in demonstrating Christ-like compassion and care for the vulnerable and marginalized in society.

d. Emotional farewell (Acts 20:36-38):

- 1) Kneeling and praying together (Acts 20:36): As Paul prepares to depart from the Ephesian elders, the scene is marked by a deeply emotional farewell:
 - a) Recognizing the significance of their parting, Paul and the elders kneel down and pray together. This act of collective prayer symbolizes their unity in faith and their shared commitment to God's purposes.
 - b) By coming together in prayer, Paul and the elders demonstrate their dependence on God's guidance and provision as they face the challenges that lie ahead. Their posture of humility and reliance on divine grace underscores the importance of seeking God's will and seeking His strength in times of transition and uncertainty.
- 2) Weeping and embracing Paul (Acts 20:37): The farewell between Paul and the Ephesian elders is marked by tears and heartfelt embraces. The depth of their affection for Paul is evident as they weep openly at the prospect of his departure. Their tears reflect the strong bond of love and fellowship that exists between them, forged through years of shared ministry and spiritual partnership. In embracing Paul, the elders express their deep appreciation for his leadership, guidance, and friendship. Their emotional response underscores the profound impact of Paul's ministry on their lives and the deep sense of loss they feel at his impending departure.
- 3) Distress over Paul's statement of final departure (Acts 20:38): The emotional intensity of the farewell is further heightened by Paul's statement that they would not see his face again. The realization that this would be their final farewell fills the elders with distress and sorrow. The prospect of parting ways with their beloved mentor and spiritual father weighs heavily on their hearts, leaving them overwhelmed with grief. Paul's words serve as a poignant reminder of the transient nature of human relationships and the inevitability of separation. Yet, even in the face of such sorrow, the elders are comforted by the assurance of God's abiding presence and the hope of reunion in the kingdom of heaven.

Paul's farewell to the Ephesian elders serves as a powerful testament to the depth of his love and concern for the church. His address is marked by humility, steadfastness, and sacrificial love, reflecting the example of Christ Himself. As Paul bids farewell, he leaves behind a legacy of faithfulness, urging the elders to continue the work of shepherding God's flock with diligence and care. The emotional farewell underscores the profound impact of Paul's ministry and the enduring bond of fellowship that binds the believers together as they journey in faith.

Summary:

1. **Paul's Missional Journey And Pastoral Care (Acts 20:1-16):** Throughout Acts 20:1-16, we witness Paul's strategic planning and unwavering commitment to his mission. His journey from Troas to Miletus demonstrates his dedication to spreading the gospel and strengthening the churches he had founded. Despite facing numerous challenges and dangers, Paul's reliance on God's guidance and provision shines through, inspiring us to trust in God's sovereignty as we navigate our own journeys of faith.
2. **Paul's Farewell Address To The Ephesian Elders (Acts 20:17-35):** In Acts 20:17-35, Paul's heartfelt farewell to the Ephesian elders encapsulates the essence of Christian leadership and discipleship. His address is characterized by humility, faithfulness, and compassion, setting an example for leaders in the church today. Through his words, Paul emphasizes the importance of shepherding God's flock with diligence and care, urging believers to emulate Christ's sacrificial love in their service to others.

3. **The Impact Of Paul's Ministry And Legacy (Acts 20:36-38):** As we conclude our study of Acts 20:36-38, we are reminded of the profound impact of Paul's ministry and the enduring legacy he left behind. His emotional farewell to the Ephesian elders serves as a poignant reminder of the depth of Christian fellowship and the bonds of love that unite believers in Christ. Paul's example challenges us to live lives marked by humility, compassion, and unwavering devotion to the gospel, inspiring us to follow in his footsteps as we seek to advance God's kingdom in our own communities and beyond.

This chapter encapsulates the essence of Paul's missionary zeal, pastoral dedication, and the deep bonds of Christian fellowship. It challenges us to emulate his example of unwavering faith, strategic mission, and compassionate leadership in our own journey of faith and service to God's kingdom.

Applications:

1. **Dedication To Teaching And Fellowship (Acts 20:7-12):** Just as Paul seized every opportunity to teach and encourage the Christians in Troas, we too should prioritize gathering with brethren for worship, teaching, and fellowship. Regularly participating in communal worship and study strengthens our faith and unity.
2. **Vigilance And Pastoral Care (Acts 20:28-31):** Paul's warning to the Ephesian elders to be vigilant against false teachings and to shepherd the flock with care is a call for all believers, especially leaders, to guard against doctrinal errors and to nurture their communities with diligence and compassion.
3. **Perseverance In Mission (Acts 20:22-24):** Paul's determination to complete his mission despite the hardships ahead serves as an example for us to stay committed to our God-given callings. We should trust in the Holy Spirit's guidance and remain steadfast in our service, even when facing challenges.

These applications encourage us to reflect on our own dedication to teaching and fellowship, our vigilance in pastoral care, and our perseverance in fulfilling our mission. By integrating these principles into our lives, we can foster a stronger, more resilient Christian community that faithfully serves God's purposes.

Key Points:

Paul's Ministry In Troas And The Miracle Of Eutychus (Acts 20:7-12): In Troas, Paul's gathering with the believers on the first day of the week illustrates the significance of communal worship and fellowship among early Christians. The incident with Eutychus falling from the window serves as a demonstration of God's power working through Paul and highlights the importance of faith within the Christian community.

Paul's Strategic Journey From Troas To Miletus (Acts 20:13-16): Paul's decision to bypass Ephesus reflects his strategic planning and prioritization of mission objectives, guided by the leading of the Holy Spirit. The journey from Troas to Miletus underscores the practical considerations and interconnected nature of early Christian missions, with stops at various ports along the way.

Paul's Farewell Address To The Ephesian Elders (Acts 20:17-38): Paul's address to the Ephesian elders in Miletus demonstrates his deep concern for their spiritual well-being and his commitment to equipping them for the challenges ahead. The emotional farewell, marked by prayer, tears, and embraces, underscores the profound bonds of love and fellowship within the Christian community and serves as a poignant reminder of the transient nature of human relationships.

These key points illuminate the practical, spiritual, and emotional dimensions of Paul's ministry and the vibrant dynamics of the early Church.

Questions:

1. To where was Paul travelling (Acts 20:3)?
2. Did Paul know what would happen to him in Jerusalem (Acts 20:23)?
3. What motivated Paul to continue his journey despite the dangers (Acts 20:24)?
4. About what did Paul warn the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:29-30)?
5. How did Paul describe the church (Acts 20:28)?

6. What responsibility did Paul place on the elders (**Acts 20:28**)?
7. What did Paul say about his own work in Ephesus (**Acts 20:27**)?
- 8 How did Paul provide for himself and his companions during his ministry (**Acts 20:34**)?
9. What did Jesus say according to Paul, that is more blessed than receiving (**Acts 20:35**)?
10. What was the emotional response of the Ephesian disciples when Paul said goodbye (**Acts 20:37-38**)?

LESSON 21**Paul's Perseverance And Defense In Jerusalem (Acts 21:1-40).****1. Paul's Journey To Jerusalem (Acts 21:1-16).**

In this passage, we witness Paul's continued journey toward Jerusalem, marked by encounters with fellow believers, prophecies, and Paul's unwavering determination despite warnings of impending danger. Departing from Miletus, Paul travels through various cities, each stop revealing the deep connections within the brethren and the challenges Paul faces as he presses on towards Jerusalem. These events set the stage for the dramatic events that unfold as Paul reaches his destination, illustrating the commitment and perseverance of a man driven by his mission to share the gospel.

a. Departure from Miletus to Cos, Rhodes, and Patara (Acts 21:1):

- 1) After saying farewell to the Ephesian elders in Miletus, Paul and his companions set sail.
- 2) They travel first to the island of Cos, a stopover on their journey.
- 3) The next day, they continue to Rhodes, another island in the Aegean Sea.
- 4) From Rhodes, they proceed to Patara, a coastal city in Lycia, where they find a ship heading to Phoenicia.

b. Voyage to Phoenicia and passing by Cyprus (Acts 21:2-3):

- 1) In Patara, Paul and his companions find a ship that is set to cross to Phoenicia, a region on the eastern Mediterranean coast.
- 2) They board the ship and set sail for their destination.
- 3) During the voyage, they pass to the south of the island of Cyprus, but do not stop there.
- 4) They continue sailing until they reach the coast of Syria, docking at the port city of Tyre.

c. Arrival in Tyre and staying with disciples (Acts 21:4):

- 1) Upon arriving in Tyre, Paul and his companions seek out the local disciples.
- 2) They stay with these disciples for seven days, engaging in fellowship and possibly ministry.
- 3) During this time, the disciples, guided by the Spirit, urge Paul not to continue on to Jerusalem.
- 4) Despite the warnings, Paul remains determined to proceed with his journey.

d. Departure from Tyre and arrival in Ptolemais (Acts 21:5-7):

- 1) After seven days in Tyre, Paul and his companions prepare to leave (Acts 21:5).
- 2) The disciples in Tyre, along with their families, accompany Paul to the outskirts of the city (Acts 21:5).
- 3) On the beach, they all kneel and pray together, showing their deep affection and support for Paul (Acts 21:5).
- 4) After saying their goodbyes, Paul and his companions board the ship and continue their journey (Acts 21:6).
- 5) They sail south along the coast and arrive in Ptolemais (Acts 21:7).
- 6) In Ptolemais, they greet the local Christians and stay with them for one day, continuing to build relationships and strengthen the Christian community (Acts 21:7).



e. Travel to Caesarea and stay with Philip the evangelist (Acts 21:8-9):

- 1) Paul and his companions leave Ptolemais and travel to Caesarea (Acts 21:8).
- 2) In Caesarea, they stay at the house of Philip the evangelist (Acts 21:8).
- 3) Philip is identified as one of the Seven, a group of men chosen to assist the apostles in ministering to the early church (Acts 21:8).
- 4) Philip has four unmarried daughters who have the gift of prophecy, indicating an active and spiritually gifted household (Acts 21:9).

f. Prophecy of Agabus in Caesarea (Acts 21:10-11):

- 1) While Paul and his companions are staying in Caesarea, a prophet named Agabus arrives from Judea (Acts 21:10).
- 2) Agabus, known for his prophetic gifts, approaches Paul and performs a symbolic act using Paul's belt (Acts 21:11).
- 3) He binds his own hands and feet with the belt, illustrating what will happen to Paul in Jerusalem (Acts 21:11).
- 4) Agabus prophesies that the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will bind Paul and hand him over to the Gentiles, warning of the impending danger (Acts 21:11).



g. Paul's determination to go to Jerusalem despite warnings (Acts 21:12-14):

- 1) After hearing Agabus's prophecy, the brethren and Paul's companions plead with him not to go to Jerusalem (Acts 21:12).
- 2) Despite their earnest pleas and expressions of concern, Paul remains resolute and questions why they are weeping and breaking his heart (Acts 21:13).
- 3) Paul declares his readiness to be bound and even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus, showing his unwavering commitment to his mission (Acts 21:13).
- 4) Seeing Paul's determination, the group ultimately submits to the situation, saying, "The Lord's will be done," acknowledging that they cannot dissuade him (Acts 21:14).

h. Arrival in Jerusalem and reception by the brethren (Acts 21:15-16):

- 1) Paul and his companions finally arrive in Jerusalem after completing their journey from Caesarea (Acts 21:15).
- 2) They are warmly received by the brethren, indicating the close bonds and support within the Christian community (Acts 21:15).
- 3) The next day, Paul and his companions go to see James, likely the brother of Jesus and a prominent leader in the Jerusalem church, along with the elders (Acts 21:18).
- 4) This reception demonstrates the unity and solidarity among believers, as well as the respect for Paul's ministry and his role in spreading the gospel (Acts 21:17-18).

Paul's journey to Jerusalem in this passage underscores the complexities of his mission and the challenges he faced as he followed the directions of the Holy Spirit. Despite warnings and pleas from fellow believers, Paul remained steadfast in his resolve to go to Jerusalem, driven by his unwavering commitment to the gospel. This section of Acts sets the stage for the subsequent events in Jerusalem, highlighting Paul's determination, the unity of the early church, and the sovereignty of God guiding Paul's steps amidst adversity.

2. Paul's Visit To The Temple (Acts 21:17-26).

In this passage, we witness Paul's visit to Jerusalem and his interactions with the church leaders. Paul is warmly received by James and the elders, who express concern about potential tensions between Jewish and Gentile believers. To address these concerns, James and the elders propose a plan for Paul to demonstrate his respect for Jewish customs, culminating in Paul's agreement to participate in purification rites. These events highlight the delicate balance between unity and diversity within the early church and Paul's willingness to navigate cultural sensitivities for the sake of peace.

a. Paul's reception by James and the elders (Acts 21:17-18):

- 1) Upon their arrival in Jerusalem, Paul and his companions are welcomed warmly by the brethren, indicating the strong fellowship among the believers (Acts 21:17).
- 2) The following day, Paul and his companions visit James, a key leader in the Jerusalem church, often identified as the brother of Jesus (Acts 21:18).
- 3) All the elders of the Jerusalem church are present during this meeting, showing the importance of Paul's visit and the collective leadership of the church (Acts 21:18).
- 4) This meeting underscores the respect and acknowledgment of Paul's missionary work and the unity among the early church leaders in supporting the spread of the gospel (Acts 21:18).

b. Paul's report of his ministry among the Gentiles (Acts 21:19):

- 1) During the meeting with James and the elders, Paul greets them warmly, acknowledging their leadership and fellowship (Acts 21:19).
- 2) Paul provides a detailed account of his missionary activities, sharing the successes and challenges he faced while ministering to the Gentiles (Acts 21:19).
- 3) He recounts the miraculous works and conversions that occurred through God's grace, highlighting the spread of the gospel among the Gentile communities (Acts 21:19).
- 4) This report serves to inform and encourage the Jerusalem church leaders, demonstrating the fulfillment of their mission and God's work beyond the Jewish community (Acts 21:19).

c. James and the elders' concern about Jewish believers (Acts 21:20-22):

- 1) After hearing Paul's report, James and the elders praise God for the work done among the Gentiles, acknowledging the spread of the gospel (Acts 21:20).
- 2) They express concern about the many thousands of Jewish believers who are zealous for the Law and have been informed about Paul's teachings (Acts 21:20-21).
- 3) These Jewish believers have heard rumors that Paul teaches Jews living among the Gentiles to abandon the laws of Moses, including circumcision and other customs, causing potential unrest (Acts 21:21).
- 4) James and the elders emphasize the need to address these concerns to maintain unity and peace within the Jewish Christian community in Jerusalem (Acts 21:22).

d. Proposal for Paul to participate in purification rites (Acts 21:23-24):

- 1) To address the concerns of the Jewish believers, James and the elders suggest a plan for Paul to demonstrate his respect for the Jewish Law (Acts 21:23).
- 2) They propose that Paul join four men who have taken a Nazarite vow, a traditional Jewish practice involving purification rites (Acts 21:23).
- 3) Paul is asked to participate in the purification rites with these men and pay for their expenses, which include the costs of the sacrifices required for the completion of their vows (Acts 21:24).
- 4) By doing this, Paul would publicly show that he continues to live in obedience to the Jewish Law, countering the rumors and reassuring the Jewish believers of his respect for their customs (Acts 21:24).

e. Paul agrees to the purification rites (Acts 21:25-26):

- 1) The elders remind Paul that the Gentile believers are not required to observe these Jewish customs, reiterating the decision from the Jerusalem Council that Gentiles should abstain from certain practices, such as eating food sacrificed to idols and immorality (Acts 21:25).
- 2) Paul agrees to the proposal and takes the men who are under the Nazarite vow to the temple (Acts 21:26).
- 3) He purifies himself along with them and gives notice of the date when their purification would be complete and the offerings would be made for each of them (Acts 21:26).
- 4) This action demonstrates Paul's willingness to accommodate Jewish customs to promote peace and unity within the church, and to show that he respects the traditions of his Jewish heritage (Acts 21:26).

Paul's visit to the temple in reveals the complexities of cultural and religious dynamics within the early church. Despite the warm reception from James and the elders, concerns arise regarding tensions between Jewish and Gentile believers. Through dialogue and compromise, Paul agrees to participate in purification rites, demonstrating his commitment to fostering unity within the diverse Christian community. This section serves as a poignant reminder of the importance of cultural sensitivity and mutual respect in maintaining unity amidst diversity within the body of Christ.

3. Paul's Arrest In The Temple (Acts 21:27-36).

In this passage, we witness a tumultuous scene unfold as Paul is falsely accused and violently attacked in the temple courts. Initially, Jews from Asia incite a mob against Paul, accusing him of defiling the temple and teaching against Jewish customs. The situation escalates quickly, leading to Paul being seized and dragged out of the temple, with an attempt on his life ensuing. However, the intervention of Roman soldiers prevents further harm to Paul and restores order, highlighting the volatile religious and political tensions in Jerusalem at the time.

a. Jews from Asia stir up the crowd against Paul (Acts 21:27-28):

- 1) As Paul is completing the purification rites in the temple, Jews from the province of Asia see him and begin to incite the crowd (Acts 21:27).
- 2) They seize Paul, shouting accusations against him, claiming that he teaches against the Jewish people, the law, and the temple (Acts 21:27-28).
- 3) The Asian Jews also accuse Paul of defiling the temple by bringing Gentiles into it, which they believe is a grave offense (Acts 21:28).
- 4) These accusations stir up the entire city, and a mob quickly forms, leading to a chaotic and violent situation (Acts 21:30).

b. Paul seized and dragged out of the temple (Acts 21:30):

- 1) The uproar in the city spreads quickly as people rush together to the temple (Acts 21:30).
- 2) The angry crowd seizes Paul, physically grabbing him and dragging him out of the temple (Acts 21:30).
- 3) As they pull Paul out, the temple doors are immediately shut to prevent further disruption and to protect the sanctity of the temple (Acts 21:30).
- 4) This action escalates the situation, demonstrating the intense hostility of the crowd towards Paul and their determination to remove him from the sacred space (Acts 21:30).

c. Attempt to kill Paul and intervention by Roman soldiers (Acts 21:31-32):

- 1) The mob, intent on killing Paul, begins to beat him violently outside the temple (Acts 21:31).
- 2) News of the uproar reaches the Roman commander of the garrison, who is responsible for maintaining order in Jerusalem (Acts 21:31).
- 3) The Roman commander immediately takes swift action, leading a group of soldiers and centurions to the scene of the commotion (Acts 21:32).

- 4) When the mob sees the Roman soldiers arriving, they stop beating Paul, realizing that the Roman authorities are now involved (Acts 21:32).

d. Paul bound with two chains and questioned by the commander (Acts 21:33-34):

- 1) Upon reaching the scene, the Roman commander orders Paul to be arrested and bound with two chains, signifying that he is considered a serious offender (Acts 21:33).
- 2) The commander then asks the crowd who Paul is and what he has done, attempting to understand the cause of the uproar (Acts 21:33).
- 3) Various members of the crowd shout different accusations, creating confusion and making it difficult for the commander to ascertain the true reason for the disturbance (Acts 21:34).
- 4) Due to the chaotic and conflicting responses from the crowd, the commander decides to take Paul to the barracks for further questioning and to restore order (Acts 21:34).

e. Soldiers carry Paul to the barracks due to the violence of the crowd (Acts 21:35-36):

- 1) Recognizing the escalating violence and the inability to control the crowd, the Roman soldiers seize Paul and carry him away from the tumultuous scene (Acts 21:35).
- 2) The soldiers escort Paul to the nearby barracks, a safer and more controlled environment, to protect him from the enraged mob (Acts 21:35).
- 3) As they carry him, Paul asks permission to address the crowd, seeking an opportunity to explain the situation and defend himself (Acts 21:36).
- 4) Despite Paul's request, the soldiers continue to escort him to the barracks, prioritizing his safety and the restoration of order (Acts 21:36).

The events of Paul's arrest in the temple depict the intensity of opposition he faced in his ministry. Falsely accused and violently attacked, Paul's ordeal underscores the challenges of proclaiming the gospel in a hostile environment. Yet, amidst the chaos, the intervention of Roman authorities ensures Paul's safety and provides an opportunity for him to address the crowd, ultimately fulfilling God's purpose for his journey to Jerusalem. This section serves as a reminder of the trials faced by early Christians and the providential care of God amidst persecution.

4. Paul's Defense (Acts 21:37-40).

In these verses, we witness Paul's defense before the Roman commander following his arrest in Jerusalem. Paul's request to address the commander sets the stage for his defense, revealing his determination to clarify the situation and assert his rights as a Roman citizen. Despite initial confusion about his identity, Paul identifies himself as a Jew from Tarsus and requests to speak to the people, highlighting his connection to the Jewish community and his desire to address the accusations against him. With permission granted, Paul begins his address in Aramaic, strategically engaging the crowd and laying the foundation for his defense.

a. Paul asks to speak to the commander (Acts 21:37):

- 1) Upon reaching the barracks, Paul speaks to the centurion in charge and requests to address the Roman commander, demonstrating his desire to clarify the situation and defend himself (Acts 21:37).
- 2) Paul's request indicates his confidence in his ability to communicate effectively with the Roman authorities and his determination to assert his rights as a Roman citizen (Acts 21:37).
- 3) The centurion relays Paul's request to the commander, highlighting the urgency and importance of Paul's desire to speak with him (Acts 21:37).
- 4) Paul's request sets the stage for his defense before the Roman commander, providing an opportunity for him to explain the events leading up to his arrest and to address the accusations against him (Acts 21:37).

b. Commander mistakes Paul for an Egyptian revolutionary (Acts 21:38):

- 1) When Paul is brought before the Roman commander, he asks Paul if he is the Egyptian who had stirred up a revolt and led 4,000 terrorists into the wilderness some time earlier (Acts 21:38).

- 2) The commander's mistake reveals the confusion and misinformation surrounding Paul's identity and highlights the volatile political climate of the region (**Acts 21:38**).
 - 3) Paul quickly corrects the commander, affirming that he is a Jew from Tarsus, a Roman citizen, and that he wishes to speak to the people (**Acts 21:39**).
 - 4) This misunderstanding underscores the challenge Paul faces in defending himself amidst false accusations and mistaken identities, yet it also provides an opportunity for him to assert his innocence and address the crowd (**Acts 21:39**).
- c. Paul identifies himself as a Jew from Tarsus and requests to speak to the people (**Acts 21:39**):
- 1) Paul corrects the commander's mistaken identity, affirming that he is a Jew from Tarsus, a city in Cilicia known for its educated populace (**Acts 21:39**).
 - 2) By identifying himself as a Jew from Tarsus, Paul establishes his connection to the Jewish people and underscores his familiarity with Jewish customs and traditions (**Acts 21:39**).
 - 3) Paul also asserts his status as a Roman citizen, a significant privilege that affords him certain rights and protections under Roman law (**Acts 21:39**).
 - 4) In requesting to speak to the people, Paul expresses his desire to address the crowd and clarify the events leading up to his arrest, demonstrating his confidence in his ability to defend himself and proclaim the truth (**Acts 21:39**).
- d. Paul granted permission and begins his address in Aramaic (**Acts 21:40**):
- 1) The Roman commander grants Paul permission to address the crowd, recognizing Paul's rights as a Roman citizen and the importance of maintaining order (**Acts 21:40**).
 - 2) Paul begins his address in Aramaic, the common language spoken by many Jews in Jerusalem, ensuring that his message is understood by the majority of the crowd (**Acts 21:40**).
 - 3) By speaking in Aramaic, Paul establishes a connection with the Jewish audience and demonstrates his familiarity with their language and culture (**Acts 21:40**).
 - 4) Paul's decision to speak in Aramaic also serves to capture the attention of the crowd and create a sense of rapport, laying the groundwork for his defense and his subsequent testimony (**Acts 21:40**).

Paul's defense before the Roman commander showcases his strategic approach to addressing the accusations against him and asserting his rights as a Roman citizen. Despite initial challenges, Paul's clarity about his identity and his request to speak to the people demonstrate his commitment to defending himself and proclaiming the truth. By beginning his address in Aramaic, Paul effectively engages the Jewish audience and sets the stage for his defense, illustrating his ability to navigate complex situations and advocate for his beliefs. This section highlights Paul's resilience and determination amidst adversity, inspiring us to stand firm in our convictions and advocate for justice.

Summary:

1. **Journey And Reception (Acts 21:1-16):** Paul's journey to Jerusalem is marked by warm receptions from fellow Christians and prophetic warnings about the challenges he will face. His arrival in Jerusalem is greeted with concern about tensions between Jewish and Gentile believers, highlighting the delicate balance within the early church.
2. **Conflict And Arrest (Acts 21:27-36):** Paul's presence in the temple sparks a violent uproar, leading to his seizure and narrowly avoiding a lynching. Despite attempts to maintain order, Paul is arrested by Roman soldiers, demonstrating the volatile religious and political tensions in Jerusalem.
3. **Defense And Resilience (Acts 21:37-40):** In his defense before the Roman commander, Paul asserts his rights as a Roman citizen, clarifies his identity, and requests to address the crowd. Despite initial confusion, Paul strategically engages the crowd by speaking in Aramaic, demonstrating resilience, strategic thinking, and unwavering commitment to his mission amidst adversity.

This chapter provides a gripping narrative of Paul's journey to Jerusalem, his arrest in the temple, and his subsequent defense before Roman authorities. It showcases the complexities of early Christian church dynamics, the volatile religious atmosphere in Jerusalem, and Paul's unwavering commitment to his mission despite facing severe opposition. Through warm receptions, prophetic warnings, violent conflicts, and strategic defenses, Paul emerges as a resilient and determined figure, inspiring believers to stand firm in their faith and convictions amidst adversity. His example underscores the importance of perseverance, strategic thinking, and reliance on God's guidance in navigating challenges and fulfilling one's calling in the face of opposition.

Applications:

1. **Navigating Tensions In Christian Community (Acts 21:1-16):** Paul's journey to Jerusalem highlights the tensions between Jewish and Gentile believers. It reminds us to navigate cultural and doctrinal differences within our Christian communities with grace and understanding, prioritizing unity in Christ despite our diverse backgrounds. This challenges us to foster an environment of mutual respect and love, where each member's unique contributions are valued.
2. **Remaining Steadfast Amidst Opposition (Acts 21:27-36):** Paul's arrest in the temple demonstrates the hostility and opposition he faced for his faith. It encourages us to stand firm in our convictions and faith in Christ, even when faced with adversity or persecution. This application prompts us to rely on God's strength and guidance in times of conflict, trusting that He equips us to withstand opposition and continue proclaiming the gospel boldly.
3. **Wisdom In Defending Faith And Rights (Acts 21:37-40):** Paul's defense before the Roman commander illustrates the wisdom of asserting our legal rights when unjustly accused or mistreated. It teaches us to advocate for justice and fairness while maintaining a spirit of humility and respect. This application challenges us to be prepared to articulate our faith and defend it with clarity and conviction, following Paul's example of using strategic communication to bridge cultural gaps and promote understanding.

These applications challenge us to navigate tensions in Christian community with grace, stand steadfast in our faith amidst opposition, and exercise wisdom in defending our beliefs and rights. They remind us that our journey as believers may encounter challenges and conflicts, but through reliance on God's guidance and strength, we can grow in unity, resilience, and conviction. By applying these lessons, we deepen our commitment to Christ and become more effective witnesses of His love and truth in a world often marked by division and misunderstanding.

Key Points:

1. **Paul's Determination To Continue His Mission Despite Warnings (Acts 21:1-16):** Throughout his journey to Jerusalem, Paul remains steadfast in his mission despite repeated warnings from disciples and prophets about the dangers awaiting him. This section highlights Paul's unwavering commitment to his calling and his willingness to face persecution for the sake of spreading the gospel.
2. **Paul's Effort To Maintain Unity Within The Jewish And Gentile Believers (Acts 21:17-26):** Upon arriving in Jerusalem, Paul takes steps to demonstrate his respect for Jewish customs by participating in purification rites. This action is aimed at addressing concerns among Jewish believers and maintaining unity within the diverse body of early Christians. It underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity and reconciliation in the ministry.
3. **The Escalating Tension And Conflict Resulting In Paul's Arrest (Acts 21:27-36):** Paul faces hostility from Jews who accuse him of teaching against the Law and defiling the temple. This leads to a violent confrontation and his subsequent arrest by Roman soldiers. The escalating tension highlights the volatile environment in which Paul ministered and sets the stage for his legal battles and continued witness.
4. **Paul's Strategic Approach In Defending Himself And Addressing The Crowd (Acts 21:37-40):** After being arrested, Paul requests to speak to the Roman commander and the crowd. By asserting his rights and identifying himself as a Jew from Tarsus, Paul strategically positions himself to defend his actions and communicate his message. This section demonstrates Paul's wisdom in navigating legal and social challenges to further his mission.

These key points emphasize Paul's courage, strategic thinking, and dedication to fostering unity and understanding within the early Christian community, despite facing significant opposition and danger.

Questions:

1. What cities did Paul and his companions visit on their journey from Miletus to Jerusalem (**Acts 21:1-8**)?
2. How did the disciples in Tyre respond to Paul's intention to go to Jerusalem (**Acts 21:4**)?
3. What significant event took place during Paul's stay in Caesarea at the house of Philip the evangelist (**Acts 21:10-11**)?
4. How did Paul's companions and the local believers react to Agabus's prophecy (**Acts 21:12-14**)?
5. Who did Paul and his companions meet upon their arrival in Jerusalem (**Acts 21:17-18**)?
6. What concerns did James and the elders express regarding Paul's presence in Jerusalem (**Acts 21:20-21**)?
7. What solution did James and the elders propose to address the concerns of the Jewish believers (**Acts 21:23-24**)?
8. How did the Jews from Asia stir up the crowd against Paul in the temple (**Acts 21:27-28**)?
9. What was the Roman commander's initial response to the uproar involving Paul (**Acts 21:31-33**)?
10. What request did Paul make to the Roman commander, and what language did he use to address the crowd (**Acts 21:37-40**)?

1. Paul's Defense Before the Jewish Crowd (Acts 22:1-21).

a. Addressing the crowd in Aramaic (Acts 22:1-2):

- b. Paul's background and early life (Acts 22:3-5):

- c. Paul's encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 22:6-11):

- d. Paul's encounter with Ananias in Damascus (Acts 22:12-16):

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e. Paul's vision in the temple in Jerusalem (Acts 22:17-21):

- 1) Paul returns to Jerusalem... while praying in the temple, he falls into a trance and sees Jesus (Acts 22:17-18).
- 2) Jesus tells Paul to leave Jerusalem quickly because the people will not accept his testimony (Acts 22:18).
- 3) Paul argues that they know his history of persecuting Christians, but Jesus insists and sends him to the Gentiles (Acts 22:19-21).

Paul's defense before the Jewish crowd not only underscores his commitment to his faith but also demonstrates his strategic approach to addressing hostility with respect and clarity. By recounting his background, his divine encounter with Jesus, and his subsequent mission to the Gentiles, Paul emphasizes the continuity of his faith journey within the broader narrative of God's work among the Jewish people. This passage highlights the challenges and complexities of early Christian witness in a deeply divided religious landscape, setting the stage for Paul's continued defense and the unfolding of his mission.

2. Reaction of the Jewish Crowd and Roman Intervention (Acts 22:22-30).

In this passage, we witness the intense reaction of the Jewish crowd to Paul's declaration of his mission to the Gentiles, followed by the Roman authorities' intervention. The crowd, incensed by Paul's message, demands his death and creates a tumultuous scene. In response, the Roman commander orders Paul's interrogation through flogging, only to discover Paul's Roman citizenship, which immediately alters the course of events. This passage highlights the volatility of the situation and the complexities faced by Paul as he navigates both Jewish hostility and Roman legal procedures.

a. The crowd's violent reaction to Paul's mention of the Gentiles (Acts 22:22-23):

- 1) The crowd listens until Paul mentions his mission to the Gentiles, then they raise their voices and demand his death (Acts 22:22).
- 2) They throw off their cloaks and fling dust into the air in outrage (Acts 22:23).

b. Roman commander orders Paul to be examined by flogging (Acts 22:24-25):

- 1) The Roman commander orders Paul to be brought into the barracks and interrogated under scourging to find out why the crowd is shouting against him (Acts 22:24).
- 2) As they prepare to flog him, Paul reveals his Roman citizenship, questioning the legality of flogging a Roman citizen without a trial (Acts 22:25).

c. The commander's concern and Paul's release from the chains (Acts 22:26-29):

- 1) Upon learning that Paul is a Roman citizen, the centurion informs the commander, who becomes alarmed (Acts 22:26-27).
- 2) The commander confirms Paul's citizenship and expresses his own costly acquisition of Roman citizenship (Acts 22:28).
- 3) Paul asserts that he was born a citizen, leading the commander to release him from the chains and reconsider his actions (Acts 22:28-29).

d. Paul brought before the Sanhedrin (Acts 22:30):

- 1) The next day, the commander seeks to understand the charges against Paul by bringing him before the chief priests and the Sanhedrin (Acts 22:30).
- 2) This sets the stage for Paul's defense before the Jewish religious leaders.

The dramatic sequence of events seen here illustrates the precarious nature of Paul's ministry and the intense opposition he faced. The crowd's violent reaction to his mention of the Gentiles and the subsequent Roman intervention underscore the delicate balance Paul had to maintain between different cultural and legal expectations. By revealing his Roman citizenship, Paul averts immediate physical punishment and ensures his legal rights are recognized, setting the stage for his continued defense and interactions with both Jewish and Roman authorities. This narrative showcases Paul's resilience and strategic acumen in the face of adversity.

Summary:

1. **Paul's Defense Before The Jewish Crowd (Acts 22:1-21):** Paul's address to the Jewish crowd in Aramaic immediately captures their attention and respect. He shares his background as a devout Jew and recounts his transformative encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. He describes his subsequent baptism by Ananias and his vision in the temple, where Jesus instructs him to take the Gospel to the Gentiles, emphasizing his divine commission and unwavering commitment to his mission.
2. **Reaction Of The Jewish Crowd (Acts 22:22-23):** The crowd listens attentively until Paul mentions his mission to the Gentiles, which incites a violent reaction. They shout for his death and create a chaotic scene, demonstrating the deep-seated tensions and prejudices within the Jewish community regarding the inclusion of Gentiles in God's plan.
3. **Roman Intervention And Citizenship (Acts 22:24-30):** The Roman commander orders Paul to be flogged to uncover the reason for the uproar, but Paul reveals his Roman citizenship, which halts the illegal punishment. Alarmed by this revelation, the commander releases Paul from his chains and arranges for him to appear before the Sanhedrin, showcasing Paul's strategic use of his legal rights to navigate the precarious situation and further his mission.



This chapter highlights Paul's adept handling of cultural, religious, and legal challenges as he defends his mission and identity before a hostile audience. His articulate speech and strategic invocation of his Roman citizenship demonstrate his resilience and resourcefulness, while the crowd's reaction underscores the deep-rooted divisions within the Jewish community. Through these events, Paul exemplifies unwavering dedication to his divine calling, inspiring believers to persevere in their faith amidst adversity and opposition.

Applications:

1. **Communicate With Cultural Sensitivity (Acts 22:1-2):** Paul's choice to address the Jewish crowd in Aramaic demonstrates the importance of connecting with others in a culturally relevant way. This can be applied by being mindful of the cultural backgrounds and languages of those with whom we engage, ensuring that our message is both respectful and understood. In modern contexts, this might mean learning key phrases in another language, understanding cultural norms, or simply showing respect for different traditions and perspectives.
2. **Stand Firm In Your Testimony (Acts 22:3-21):** Paul's unwavering commitment to sharing his testimony, despite knowing it would provoke hostility, encourages believers to stand firm in their faith and witness. This application challenges us to boldly share our own faith stories and the ways God has transformed our lives, even when faced with opposition or misunderstanding. It reminds us that our personal experiences with God can be powerful tools for ministry and evangelism.
3. **Utilize Legal And Social Rights Wisely (Acts 22:24-30):** Paul's strategic use of his Roman citizenship to avoid unlawful punishment illustrates the value of knowing and utilizing one's legal and social rights to further God's mission. In practical terms, this means being informed about our rights and responsibilities within our communities and using this knowledge to advocate for justice, protect the vulnerable, and ensure that our actions align with God's purposes. Whether it is participating in civic duties, advocating for change, or navigating complex social systems, we can follow Paul's example by being both wise and courageous in our actions.

These applications emphasize the importance of cultural sensitivity, the power of personal testimony, and the strategic use of legal and social rights in our Christian walk. By following Paul's example, we can effectively communicate and connect with diverse audiences, courageously share our faith experiences, and wisely navigate societal structures to advance God's kingdom. These principles not only strengthen our personal faith but also empower us to make a meaningful impact in our communities, demonstrating the relevance and transformative power of the gospel in everyday life.

Key Points:

1. **Paul's Defense Before the Jewish Crowd (Acts 22:1-21):** Paul addresses the Jewish crowd in Aramaic, recounting his background, his zealous persecution of Christians, and his dramatic encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus. He shares his subsequent conversion, baptism by Ananias, and his divine commission to preach to the Gentiles, highlighting the transformative power of his encounter with Christ.
2. **Reaction Of The Jewish Crowd And Roman Intervention (Acts 22:22-29):** The crowd reacts violently to Paul's mention of his mission to the Gentiles, demanding his death. Roman soldiers intervene and prepare to flog Paul, but he asserts his Roman citizenship, preventing the illegal punishment and prompting concern from the Roman commander about the legal ramifications of their actions.
3. **Paul's Appearance Before The Sanhedrin (Acts 22:30):** To understand the accusations against Paul, the Roman commander arranges for him to appear before the Jewish Sanhedrin. This sets the stage for Paul to present his case before the Jewish religious leaders, further showcasing his strategic approach to his defense and his reliance on his legal rights as a Roman citizen.

These key points underscore Paul's unwavering commitment to his mission and his strategic use of his background, citizenship, and legal rights to navigate complex and hostile situations. His ability to connect with his audience through cultural and linguistic commonalities, his boldness in recounting his transformative encounter with Jesus, and his astute defense before both Jewish and Roman authorities serve as powerful examples of resilience and faith. Paul's experiences illustrate the importance of standing firm in one's convictions, utilizing available resources wisely, and trusting in God's guidance when facing opposition and adversity.

Questions:

1. What language did Paul use to address the Jewish crowd in Jerusalem (Acts 22:1-2)?
2. How did Paul identify himself at the beginning of his defense (Acts 22:3)?
3. What significant event occurred to Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 22:6-7)?
4. What was the reaction of Paul's companions when the bright light appeared on the road to Damascus (Acts 22:9)?
5. Who restored Paul's sight in Damascus, and what did he tell Paul about God's plan for his life (Acts 22:12-13)?
6. What did Ananias instruct Paul to do after restoring his sight (Acts 22:16)?
7. What vision did Paul have while praying in the temple in Jerusalem (Acts 22:17-18)?
8. How did the crowd react when Paul mentioned his mission to the Gentiles (Acts 22:22)?
9. What did Paul reveal to the Roman commander to prevent being flogged (Acts 22:25)?
10. Why did the Roman commander bring Paul before the Sanhedrin the next day (Acts 22:30)?

In this passage, Paul faces the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council, to defend himself against serious accusations. This passage highlights Paul's unwavering faith and strategic acumen as he navigates a highly charged and hostile environment. The assembly consists of both Pharisees and Sadducees, whose differing theological views play a critical role in the unfolding events. Paul's defense, his confrontation with the high priest, and the subsequent division he creates within the council demonstrate his ability to stand firm in his beliefs while skilfully leveraging the situation to his advantage.

a. Paul begins his defense (Acts 23:1):

- 1) Addressing The Sanhedrin: Paul stands before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council, to defend himself against accusations. This assembly includes both Pharisees and Sadducees, who hold differing theological views.
- 2) Paul's Opening Statement: Paul begins his defense by declaring that he has lived his life with a clear conscience before God up to this day. This statement highlights Paul's confidence in his integrity and faithfulness to God's commandments.
- 3) Significance Of Paul's Conscience: Paul's reference to his clear conscience emphasizes his sincerity and dedication to his faith. It implies that despite the accusations against him, Paul believes he has not violated any divine laws.

b. High Priest Ananias orders Paul to be struck (Acts 23:2-5):

- 1) Order To Strike Paul (**Acts 23:2**): The High Priest Ananias, reacting angrily to Paul's declaration of a clear conscience, commands those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth.
- 2) Paul's Immediate Response (**Acts 23:3**): Paul reacts strongly, calling Ananias a “whitewashed wall,” implying hypocrisy. He criticizes Ananias for violating the Law by ordering him to be struck, highlighting the contradiction in being judged unlawfully while claiming to uphold the Law.
- 3) Rebuke Of Paul (**Acts 23:4**): Those standing nearby question Paul’s harsh words, pointing out that he is speaking against the high priest. This indicates a breach of decorum and respect expected in addressing high-ranking officials.
- 4) Paul's Apology And Explanation (**Acts 23:5**): Paul quickly apologizes, stating he did not realize Ananias was the high priest. He cites Scripture, acknowledging the command not to speak evil of a ruler of the people (**Exodus 22:28**), showing his respect for the law despite the conflict.

c. Paul creates a division between the Pharisees and Sadducees (Acts 23:6-10):

- 1) Paul declares his Pharisaic background and belief in the resurrection (**Acts 23:6**): Recognizing the mixed composition of the Sanhedrin, Paul strategically identifies himself as a Pharisee. He proclaims that he is on trial because of his hope in the resurrection of the dead, a doctrine upheld by the Pharisees but rejected by the Sadducees.
- 2) The resulting dissension between Pharisees and Sadducees (**Acts 23:7-8**): Paul's statement immediately causes a division within the council. The Pharisees and Sadducees begin to argue, highlighting their theological differences: the Pharisees believe in the resurrection, angels, and spirits, whereas the Sadducees deny all these beliefs.
- 3) Pharisees support Paul, dispute intensifies (**Acts 23:9**): Some Pharisees stand up and argue vigorously in Paul's defense, suggesting that perhaps a spirit or an angel has spoken to him. The debate becomes so heated that it turns into a significant uproar, further polarizing the council.
- 4) Commander intervenes to protect Paul (**Acts 23:10**): Fearing that Paul might be torn apart by the violent dispute, the Roman commander orders his troops to remove Paul from the assembly. The commander has Paul taken back to the barracks to ensure his safety amid the chaos.

The Sadducees and Pharisees were two prominent Jewish sects during the Second Temple period, each holding distinct theological beliefs and interpretations of the Law.

Sadducees: The Sadducees were generally associated with the priestly and aristocratic classes. Their theological stance was characterized by the following key points: (i) **Scripture And Authority:** The Sadducees accepted only the written Torah (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible) as authoritative. They rejected the oral traditions and interpretations that the Pharisees embraced. (ii) **Resurrection And Afterlife:** The Sadducees denied the resurrection of the dead and any form of afterlife. They believed that the soul perished with the body and that there were no rewards or punishments after death. (iii) **Angels And Spirits:** They also rejected the existence of angels and spirits, focusing strictly on the material and physical aspects of religious observance. (iv) **Free Will And Divine Providence:** The Sadducees emphasized free will, holding that individuals have complete control over their actions without divine intervention. They downplayed the role of divine providence in human affairs. (v) **Temple Worship:** Being closely tied to the Temple in Jerusalem, the Sadducees prioritized temple rituals and sacrifices. Their influence waned significantly after the destruction of the Second Temple in A.D. 70

Pharisees: The Pharisees, on the other hand, were more aligned with the common people and were known for their emphasis on piety and adherence to the Law. Their theological beliefs included: (i) **Scripture And Tradition:** The Pharisees accepted not only the written Torah but also the oral Torah, which comprised traditions and interpretations handed down through generations. They believed this oral tradition was essential to understanding and applying the written law. (ii) **Resurrection And Afterlife:** The Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead and an afterlife where individuals would be rewarded or punished based on their earthly deeds. This belief was a cornerstone of their theology. (iii) **Angels And Spirits:** They acknowledged the existence of angels and spirits, believing in a spiritual realm that interacted with the material world. (iv) **Free Will And Divine Providence:** The Pharisees held a balanced view of free will and divine providence, teaching that while humans have free will, God also exercises control over the universe and guides the fate of individuals. (v) **Synagogue And Study:** The Pharisees emphasized the importance of study, teaching, and prayer in synagogues. They believed in making the law accessible to all Jews, not just the priestly class, and encouraged personal piety and ethical conduct.

Impact On Early Christianity: The theological differences between these two groups are evident in the New Testament. For instance, when Paul identifies himself as a Pharisee and speaks of the resurrection during his trial before the Sanhedrin, it creates a division between the Pharisees and Sadducees (**Acts 23:6-10**). Understanding these differences helps clarify the diverse religious landscape in which early Christianity emerged and how early Christians navigated these complex theological environments.

Paul's defense before the Sanhedrin exemplifies his courage and wisdom in the face of persecution. By boldly declaring his clear conscience and strategically identifying with the Pharisees' belief in the resurrection, Paul creates a significant division within the council. This not only diffuses the immediate threat but also ensures his protection through the intervention of the Roman commander. This passage underscores the importance of steadfast faith, quick thinking, and the ability to use circumstances to fulfill one's mission, even amid intense opposition.

2. The Lord's Assurance To Paul (Acts 23:11).

In this verse, amidst a period of great uncertainty and danger, Paul receives a profound divine reassurance. After being rescued from the hostile Sanhedrin and held in the barracks, Paul faces threats to his life and mission. It is during this tense time that Jesus appears to him, offering words of encouragement and a promise that Paul's journey is far from over. This moment serves as a pivotal reassurance for Paul, providing him with renewed strength and a clear sense of purpose for the trials ahead.

a. Jesus appears to Paul at night (Acts 23:11):

- 1) **Setting And Context:** Paul is in the barracks after being rescued from the hostile Sanhedrin by the Roman commander. It is a tense and uncertain time for Paul, who has faced multiple threats and attacks.
- 2) **Jesus' Appearance:** During the night, Jesus stands near Paul, providing him with divine reassurance. This appearance is significant as it underscores Jesus' continued presence and support in Paul's mission.
- 3) **Words Of Encouragement:** Jesus tells Paul to "Take courage!" offering comfort and strength in the face of his trials. Jesus acknowledges Paul's faithful witness in Jerusalem, affirming that his efforts have been seen and valued.
- 4) **Promise Of Future Mission:** Jesus reveals that Paul must also testify in Rome, indicating that his journey and mission are far from over. This promise provides Paul with a clear sense of purpose and direction, assuring him of divine protection until his mission is complete.

- 5) **Impact On Paul:** This encounter with Jesus likely renews Paul's confidence and resolve, empowering him to face future challenges. It serves as a pivotal moment, reinforcing Paul's commitment to spreading the Gospel despite the adversities he encounters.

b. Paul's possible response to Jesus' assurance:

- 1) **Immediate Reaction:** Paul receives Jesus' message with gratitude and determination. He begins to prepare himself mentally and spiritually for the journey ahead.
- 2) **Preparation And Planning:** Paul considers the implications of Jesus' promise to testify in Rome. He strategizes how to continue his ministry effectively in light of this new directive.
- 3) **Sharing With Others:** Paul likely shares this divine revelation with trusted companions and fellow believers. His testimony about Jesus' appearance and the mission ahead strengthens the faith of those around him.
- 4) **Endurance Amid Challenges:** Armed with Jesus' assurance, Paul faces subsequent trials with resilience and unwavering faith. He uses each challenge as an opportunity to demonstrate God's power and faithfulness.

The Lord's assurance to Paul is a significant turning point that reinforces his faith and determination. Jesus' appearance and comforting words not only acknowledge Paul's efforts in Jerusalem but also set a new direction for his mission in Rome. This divine encounter invigorates Paul, enabling him to face future challenges with renewed resilience and unwavering commitment. By sharing this revelation with his companions, Paul also strengthens their faith, ensuring that they continue to support him as he advances the Gospel despite ongoing adversities.

3. The Plot To Kill Paul (Acts 23:12-22).

In this passage, a deadly conspiracy against Paul unfolds, revealing the intense opposition he faces. A group of over forty Jews, determined to eliminate Paul, take a solemn oath not to eat or drink until they have killed him. They devise a cunning plan to ambush Paul during a supposed transfer for further questioning. However, Paul's young nephew discovers the plot and informs Paul, who then orchestrates a way to alert the Roman commander. This passage highlights the dangerous environment Paul navigates and the divine providence that continues to safeguard his mission.

a. The conspiracy to kill Paul (Acts 23:12-15):

1) Jews form a plot and take an oath (Acts 23:12):

- a) **Formation Of The Plot:** A group of Jews, frustrated by Paul's teachings and influence, secretly conspire to kill him. Their motivation is rooted in a perceived threat to their religious authority and traditions posed by Paul's message about Jesus.
- b) **Taking An Oath:** These conspirators bind themselves with a solemn oath, vowing not to eat or drink until they have succeeded in killing Paul. The oath signifies their intense commitment and determination to carry out their plan, highlighting the seriousness of their intentions.



2) Plan to ask for Paul's transfer as an ambush opportunity (Acts 23:13-15):

- a) **Collaborators In The Plan:** More than forty men are involved in this conspiracy, indicating a significant and organized effort. They approach the chief priests and elders, seeking their cooperation to legitimize their plan.
- b) **The Ambush Strategy:** The conspirators propose to the religious leaders that they request the Roman commander to bring Paul to the Sanhedrin again, under the pretext of further questioning. Their true intention is to ambush and kill Paul during his transfer, before he can reach the council.
- c) **Securing Approval:** The conspirators assure the chief priests and elders of their readiness to execute the plan, emphasizing their commitment by the oath they have taken. This coordination between the conspirators and the religious leaders underscores the widespread animosity towards Paul and the lengths to which his opponents are willing to go to stop him.

b. Paul's nephew discovers the plot (Acts 23:16-22):

- 1) Nephew informs Paul of the plot (Acts 23:16): Paul's young nephew overhears the conspiracy and recognizes the imminent danger to Paul's life. He acts quickly and courageously to inform Paul, demonstrating his loyalty and concern for his uncle's safety.
- 2) Paul arranges for his nephew to inform the commander (Acts 23:17-18): Paul, realizing the gravity of the situation, calls a centurion and requests that his nephew be taken to the Roman commander. This action shows Paul's trust in the Roman authorities to protect him and highlights his strategic thinking in using available resources to thwart the plot.
- 3) Nephew reports the plot to the commander (Acts 23:19-21): The commander takes the nephew aside privately to hear the details of the conspiracy. The nephew clearly and bravely communicates the specifics of the ambush plan, ensuring that the commander understands the urgency and seriousness of the threat.
- 4) Commander ensures secrecy about the information (Acts 23:22). The commander instructs the nephew not to tell anyone that he has revealed the plot, maintaining confidentiality to prevent the conspirators from altering their plans. This decision underscores the commander's commitment to protecting Paul and the importance of handling sensitive information discreetly to ensure a successful countermeasure.

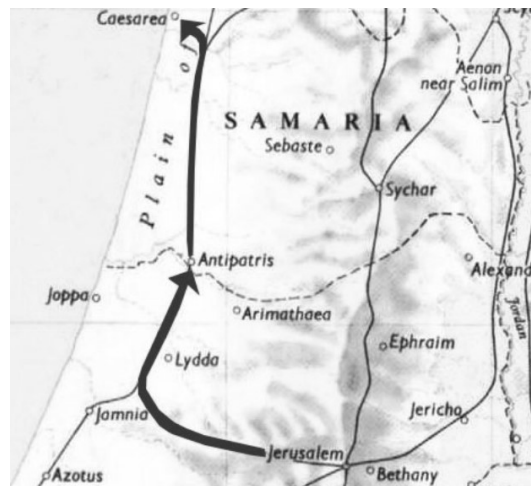
The foiled plot to kill Paul demonstrates the lengths to which his enemies are willing to go to stop him and the resilience of those who support him. The quick actions of Paul's nephew and the decisive intervention of the Roman commander showcase the blend of human courage and divine protection that characterizes Paul's journey. This episode reinforces the theme of God's continual guidance and protection over Paul, ensuring that he remains steadfast in his mission despite the relentless efforts of his adversaries.

4. Paul's Transfer To Caesarea (Acts 23:23-35).

In these verses, the Roman commander's decision to transfer Paul to Caesarea marks a critical juncture in ensuring his safety and legal protection. Recognizing the severe threat from Jewish conspirators, the commander organizes a substantial military escort to safeguard Paul during his journey. This section details the commander's strategic actions, including his comprehensive letter to Governor Felix, the journey itself, and Felix's response upon Paul's arrival. These events highlight the lengths to which the Roman authorities go to maintain order and ensure justice, even amidst significant political and religious tensions.

a. The commander's decision to transfer Paul (Acts 23:23-24):

- 1) Arrangements for a large escort to protect Paul (Acts 23:23): Recognizing the seriousness of the threat against Paul, the commander orders an impressive military escort of 200 soldiers, 70 horsemen, and 200 spearmen to ensure Paul's safety during the transfer. This significant show of force underscores the commander's determination to protect Paul from the conspirators and indicates the high level of danger involved in the transfer. By deploying such a large escort, the commander aims to deter any potential attackers and guarantee Paul's safe passage.
- 2) Plan to transfer Paul to Governor Felix in Caesarea (Acts 23:24): The commander decides to send Paul to Governor Felix in Caesarea, a strategic move to place Paul under the jurisdiction and protection of a higher Roman authority. This transfer not only removes Paul from the immediate danger in Jerusalem but also ensures that his case will be handled at a more secure and appropriate venue. The decision reflects the commander's understanding of the political and judicial complexities surrounding Paul's situation and his commitment to ensuring a fair trial while maintaining order.



b. The commander's letter to Governor Felix (Acts 23:25-30):

- 1) Commander's account of the situation (Acts 23:25-30): In his letter to Governor Felix, the commander, Claudius Lysias, provides a detailed account of the events leading up to Paul's transfer. He explains how he discovered Paul was a Roman citizen and intervened to rescue him from the Jewish mob. Lysias highlights his actions to ensure Paul's safety and his subsequent decision to bring Paul before the Sanhedrin to determine the specific accusations. By outlining these steps, Lysias seeks to demonstrate his adherence to Roman legal procedures and justify his decision to transfer Paul to Caesarea for further investigation.
- 2) Details of the charges against Paul (Acts 23:25-30): The commander notes that the accusations against Paul involve questions of Jewish law and do not warrant death or imprisonment under Roman law. Lysias emphasizes that he found no substantial charges deserving punishment and that the conflict primarily concerns religious disputes. This clarification is crucial for Governor Felix, as it frames the context of the accusations and underscores the absence of any serious crime against Roman authority. Lysias' articulation of the charges aims to facilitate Felix's understanding and proper handling of Paul's case.

c. Paul's transfer to Caesarea (Acts 23:31-33):

- 1) The escort's journey to Antipatris (Acts 23:31): The military escort begins its journey with Paul, travelling by night to ensure his safety and to avoid potential ambushes. They reach Antipatris, a strategic stopping point roughly halfway between Jerusalem and Caesarea. This stage of the journey underscores the commander's commitment to securely transferring Paul, utilizing the cover of night and a substantial force to protect him from the conspirators' plot.
- 2) Arrival in Caesarea and the delivery of Paul and the letter (Acts 23:32-33): Upon arriving in Caesarea, the horsemen deliver Paul safely to Governor Felix, along with the letter from Claudius Lysias detailing the situation. The transfer marks the successful completion of the first leg of Paul's journey to stand trial under Roman jurisdiction. This handover signifies the commander's adherence to proper legal procedures and his effort to ensure that Paul's case is handled at the highest level of authority, reflecting the seriousness with which the Roman officials treat the matter.



d. Felix's response to Paul's arrival (Acts 23:34-35):

- 1) Felix reads the letter and questions Paul (Acts 23:34): Upon receiving Paul and the letter from Claudius Lysias, Governor Felix reads the detailed account of Paul's situation. He then proceeds to question Paul to gain a preliminary understanding of the charges and circumstances. Felix's immediate attention to the letter and his questioning of Paul demonstrate his willingness to engage with the case and his recognition of its potential significance, both politically and legally.
- 2) Felix decides to hear the case when accusers arrive, Paul kept in Herod's Praetorium (Acts 23:35): After reviewing the letter and speaking with Paul, Felix determines that a formal hearing will be conducted once Paul's accusers arrive. In the meantime, he orders that Paul be kept in Herod's Praetorium, a secure and relatively comfortable holding place. This decision reflects Felix's intent to ensure due process while maintaining Paul's safety and security. By waiting for the accusers, Felix ensures that both sides will have the opportunity to present their arguments, adhering to Roman legal principles.

The transfer of Paul to Caesarea illustrates the complexity and seriousness of his situation, involving careful planning and coordination by Roman authorities to protect him from imminent danger. The commander's detailed account and the large military escort emphasize the high stakes and the need for a fair trial under Roman jurisdiction. Governor Felix's measured response and decision to wait for the accusers underline the importance of due process. This episode underscores the interplay of divine providence and human governance in safeguarding Paul and advancing his mission, even as he faces intense opposition.

Summary:

1. **Paul's Courage And Integrity (Acts 23:1-10):** In this passage, Paul demonstrates remarkable courage and integrity as he stands before the Sanhedrin. Despite facing intense hostility, he boldly declares his clear conscience before God. His ability to create a division between the Pharisees and Sadducees reveals his strategic acumen, while his confrontation with the high priest highlights his unwavering commitment to truth and justice. This episode teaches us the importance of maintaining our integrity and using wisdom in challenging situations.
2. **Divine Encouragement And Assurance (Acts 23:11):** This verse shows us how, in the midst of uncertainty and danger, Jesus provides Paul with divine reassurance and encouragement. Jesus' appearance and comforting words offer Paul a renewed sense of purpose and the promise of a future mission in Rome. This divine encounter emphasizes that, in our moments of fear and doubt, we can find strength and guidance in God's presence and promises, reaffirming our mission and direction.
3. **Human Conspiracy And Divine Providence (Acts 23:12-22):** The plot to kill Paul highlights the intense opposition he faces and the lengths to which his enemies will go to stop him. However, it also underscores the role of divine providence in protecting Paul. The timely intervention of Paul's nephew and the decisive actions of the Roman commander showcase how God uses ordinary people and circumstances to thwart evil plans. This reminds us of God's sovereignty and His ability to safeguard His servants even in the direst circumstances.
4. **Legal Protection And Justice (Acts 23:23-35):** In these verses, the Roman commander's careful and strategic transfer of Paul to Caesarea illustrates the importance of legal protection and justice. The commander's detailed letter and the large escort reflect the seriousness with which Roman authorities treat Paul's case. Governor Felix's decision to wait for the accusers ensures due process, highlighting the need for fairness and impartiality in legal matters. This teaches us the value of lawful procedures and the importance of ensuring justice is served in all situations.

This chapter highlights the intricate balance of divine providence and human action in the unfolding of God's plan for Paul. From his bold defense before the Sanhedrin and the divine reassurance he receives, to the discovery and thwarting of the assassination plot and his protected transfer to Caesarea, we see how courage, faith, and strategic intervention play critical roles in advancing Paul's mission. The events underscore the importance of integrity, divine guidance, and justice, reminding us that even in the face of formidable challenges, God's purpose prevails through both miraculous and practical means.

Applications:

1. **Divine Guidance In Perilous Times (Acts 23:1-35):** Paul's ordeal before the Sanhedrin and subsequent events underscore the importance of seeking divine guidance and trusting in God's protection during challenging times. This passage challenges us to rely on God's wisdom and assurance in the face of adversity, knowing that He guides our steps and provides strength when we face opposition (**Proverbs 3:5-6**).
2. **Courageously Standing For Truth (Acts 23:11):** Paul's encounter with Jesus, who reassures him and promises a future mission, inspires us to courageously stand for truth and righteousness in our own lives. This encourages us to rely on God's promises and remain steadfast in our faith, even when circumstances are uncertain or dangerous (**Ephesians 6:13**).
3. **Protection and Justice Through Divine Intervention (Acts 23:12-35):** The thwarting of a plot against Paul and his subsequent transfer to Caesarea illustrate God's providential care and justice. This challenges us to be vigilant against injustice and to advocate for protection and fairness for others, trusting that God works through human actions to bring about His purposes (**Psalms 82:3-4**).

These applications prompt us to embody courage in defending our faith, seek God's guidance amidst uncertainty, and uphold justice in our communities. By doing so, we align ourselves with the principles of Scripture and the examples set forth by Paul's experiences. As we navigate life's challenges, let us remember to trust in God's providence, stand firm in His truth, and advocate for righteousness, knowing that He equips and empowers us for every situation (**Philippians 4:13**).

Key Points:

1. **Paul's Defense Before The Sanhedrin (Acts 23:1-10):** Paul boldly asserts his clear conscience before the Sanhedrin, emphasizing his integrity and commitment to God's commands (Acts 23:1). He confronts the High Priest Ananias when ordered to be struck, citing Scripture and challenging the respect for authority (Acts 23:2-5). Paul strategically divides the Pharisees and Sadducees by declaring his belief in the resurrection, leading to a heated dispute (Acts 23:6-9). The Roman commander intervenes to protect Paul from the escalating conflict, highlighting the delicate balance between Roman authority and Jewish religious leaders (Acts 23:10).
2. **The Lord's Assurance To Paul (Acts 23:11):** Jesus appears to Paul during the night in the barracks, providing words of encouragement and divine reassurance. Jesus affirms Paul's mission to testify in Rome, reinforcing Paul's resolve and purpose in the face of adversity (Acts 23:11).
3. **The Plot To Kill Paul And Divine Intervention (Acts 23:12-35):** A group of Jews conspires to assassinate Paul, taking a solemn oath to carry out their plan (Acts 23:12-15). Paul's nephew learns of the plot and informs him, prompting Paul to involve the Roman commander for protection (Acts 23:16-22). The commander decides to transfer Paul to Caesarea under heavy guard, ensuring his safety amid the assassination plot (Acts 23:23-24). Paul is safely escorted to Caesarea, where Governor Felix agrees to hear his case upon the arrival of his accusers (Acts 23:25-35).

These key points highlight Paul's unwavering commitment to his faith, the divine reassurance he receives in difficult times, and the ongoing challenges he faces in spreading the Gospel amidst opposition and plots against his life.

Questions:

1. Who ordered Paul to be struck on the mouth during his defense before the Sanhedrin (Acts 23:2-3)?
2. What did Paul cite from the Scriptures to acknowledge the command not to speak evil of a ruler of the people (Acts 23:5)?
3. Why did Paul declare himself a Pharisee during his defense before the Sanhedrin (Acts 23:6)?
4. What did the Pharisees say in defense of Paul during the dispute with the Sadducees (Acts 23:9)?
5. How many men were involved in the conspiracy to kill Paul, and what did they swear not to do until Paul was dead (Acts 23:12-14)?
6. Who informed Paul about the plot to kill him (Acts 23:16)?
7. Whom did Paul ask to take his nephew to the Roman commander to inform him about the plot (Acts 23:17-19)?
8. How did the Roman commander ensure the secrecy of the information about the plot against Paul (Acts 23:22)?
9. Why did the Roman commander decide to transfer Paul to Caesarea (Acts 23:23-24)?
10. Upon Paul's arrival in Caesarea, who did Governor Felix decide to hear Paul's case in the presence of (Acts 23:35)?

1. Accusations Against Paul (Acts 24:1-9).

- 1) Arrival of the accusers: Ananias the high priest, some elders, and a lawyer named Tertullus come to Caesarea to present their case against Paul before Governor Felix. The involvement of high-ranking Jewish leaders highlights the seriousness with which they view Paul as a threat to their religious authority.
- 2) Role of Tertullus: Tertullus, acting as the spokesman, indicates the organized and strategic approach the Jewish leaders are taking to ensure Paul is convicted.

- 1) Introduction and flattery: Tertullus begins by flattering Felix, praising his governance and reforms. Tertullus uses flattery to gain favor with Felix, setting a strategic tone for his argument.
- 2) Request for hearing: Tertullus asks Felix to listen to their brief charges against Paul. By requesting a brief hearing, Tertullus attempts to make their accusations seem straightforward and undeniable.

- 1) Troublemaker and ringleader: Tertullus accuses Paul of being a troublemaker, stirring up riots among Jews worldwide, and being a ringleader of the Nazarene sect. These accusations are meant to paint Paul as a dangerous agitator and a leader of a radical movement, justifying severe action against him.
- 2) Temple desecration: Paul is accused of attempting to desecrate the Temple, which led to his arrest. This charge is particularly inflammatory as it strikes at the heart of Jewish religious sensitivities and aims to rally Jewish support against Paul.

- 1) Intervention by Lysias: Tertullus mentions the Roman commander Lysias intervened and took Paul by force. Mentioning Lysias' intervention serves to legitimize their case by showing Roman involvement and concern.
- 2) Call for examination: Tertullus suggests Felix can verify the accusations by examining Paul. Tertullus confidently invites scrutiny, suggesting that the evidence against Paul is clear and compelling.

- 1) Confirmation by Jews: The other Jews present affirm that the accusations brought by Tertullus are true. The unified agreement among the accusers aims to strengthen the credibility and urgency of their case against Paul.
- 2) Intensifying the pressure: The collective support from the Jewish accusers serves to put additional pressure on Felix to take their accusations seriously and rule in their favor, emphasizing the perceived threat Paul poses to their religious and social order.

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2. Paul's Defense Before Felix (Acts 24:10-21).

In this passage, Paul presents his defense before Governor Felix, responding to the serious accusations brought against him by the Jewish leaders. With a respectful and strategic approach, Paul aims to dismantle the charges, clarify his beliefs, and highlight his adherence to Jewish traditions and Roman law. This defense not only addresses the specific allegations but also underscores Paul's integrity and commitment to his faith.

a. Paul's opening remarks (Acts 24:10):

- 1) Respect for Felix: Paul acknowledges Felix's experience as a judge over the nation and expresses his willingness to make his defense. Paul's respectful tone and recognition of Felix's authority set a cooperative and reasonable tone for his defense.
- 2) Appeal to fairness: By acknowledging Felix's position and readiness to defend himself, Paul implicitly appeals to Felix's sense of justice and fairness. This approach aims to establish a favorable impression with Felix, highlighting Paul's adherence to legal proceedings and his desire for a fair hearing despite the serious accusations against him.

b. Refutation of charges (Acts 24:11-13):

- 1) Brief visit: Paul points out that only twelve days have passed since he went to Jerusalem to worship. By highlighting the short duration of his visit, Paul suggests it is unlikely he could have caused significant trouble.
- 2) No evidence of disturbance: Paul asserts there is no evidence of him causing disputes or stirring up a crowd in the Temple, synagogues, or city. Paul directly addresses the accusations, emphasizing the lack of tangible evidence against him.

c. Clarification of beliefs (Acts 24:14-16):

- 1) Following 'The Way': Paul admits he follows "The Way," which his accusers call a sect, and believes in the Law and the Prophets. Paul acknowledges his faith but frames it within the context of Jewish tradition, aiming to show continuity rather than radicalism.
- 2) Hope in resurrection: Paul shares his hope in the resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. This belief aligns him with Pharisaic thought and challenges the Sadducees, potentially dividing his opponents.
- 3) Clear conscience: Paul emphasizes his effort to maintain a clear conscience before God and people. Paul's assertion of a clear conscience speaks to his integrity and ethical conduct, countering claims of wrongdoing.

d. Events in Jerusalem (Acts 24:17-21):

- 1) Purpose of visit: Paul explains he came to Jerusalem to bring gifts for the poor and present offerings. Paul's explanation of his visit as charitable and religious underscores his peaceful intentions.
- 2) Ceremonial purity: Paul states he was ceremonially clean and without a crowd or disturbance in the Temple. This detail reinforces Paul's compliance with Jewish law and counters the claim of Temple desecration.
- 3) Absence of accusers: Paul points out that the Jews from Asia who accused him are not present. The absence of the original accusers weakens the prosecution's case, suggesting their charges are unsubstantiated.
- 4) Challenge to accusers: Paul challenges his accusers to specify any wrongdoing they witnessed, except his statement about the resurrection. By focusing on the resurrection, Paul shifts the issue to a theological debate, highlighting the lack of criminal charges.

Paul's defense before Felix is a masterful blend of respect, logic, and theological clarity. By systematically refuting the accusations, emphasizing his peaceful intentions in Jerusalem, and highlighting his belief in the resurrection, Paul not only defends himself against the charges but also turns the focus towards the theological disputes within Judaism. This encounter illustrates Paul's skilful navigation of legal and religious challenges, maintaining his integrity and faith under intense scrutiny.

3. Felix's Response And Delay (Acts 24:22-27).

In these verses, Governor Felix's response to Paul's trial reveals the complexities of Roman political manoeuvring and personal intrigue. Felix, knowledgeable about "The Way," delays the final decision, reflecting his cautious approach. Throughout this period, Felix's interactions with Paul are marked by a blend of curiosity, fear, and corruption, illustrating the governor's internal conflict and the influence of political considerations on his decisions.

a. Felix's initial decision (Acts 24:22-23):

- 1) Knowledge of 'The Way': Felix, having knowledge of "The Way," adjourns the proceedings until Commander Lysias arrives. Felix's familiarity with the Christian movement allows him to postpone the decision, indicating a cautious and informed approach.
- 2) Custody order: Felix orders Paul to be kept under guard but allows him some freedom and permits his friends to take care of his needs. This order reflects Felix's ambivalence, ensuring Paul's safety and well-being while keeping him in custody.

b. Conversations with Felix (Acts 24:24-26):

- 1) Felix and Drusilla hear Paul: Felix, with his Jewish wife Drusilla, sends for Paul to hear about faith in Christ Jesus. This private audience suggests Felix's personal interest in Paul's message and possibly a genuine curiosity about Christianity.
- 2) Paul's discourse: Paul speaks about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, alarming Felix, who frequently sends Paul away, hoping for a bribe. Paul's bold preaching unsettles Felix, revealing the governor's moral awareness and internal conflict.
- 3) Frequent conversations: Felix converses with Paul frequently, hoping Paul will offer money for his release. Felix's repeated summons under the pretence of bribery reflects the corrupt nature of his administration and his mixed motives.

c. Felix leaves Paul in prison (Acts 24:27):

- 1) Felix's succession: After two years, Felix is succeeded by Porcius Festus. The prolonged imprisonment shows the stagnation and injustice in the legal process, impacting Paul's ministry.
- 2) Political decision: Felix leaves Paul in prison to gain favor with the Jews. Felix's decision to leave Paul in custody despite knowing his innocence underscores the political expediency often overriding justice.

Felix's handling of Paul's case exemplifies the intersection of political expediency and personal motives in the Roman judicial system. Despite his awareness of Paul's innocence, Felix's desire to appease the Jewish leaders and his own corrupt inclinations lead to a prolonged and unjust imprisonment for Paul. This period of delay highlights the challenges Paul faces and underscores the broader themes of justice and integrity within the narrative.

Summary:

1. **Accusations Against Paul (Acts 24:1-9):** In this passage, Paul is confronted by high-ranking Jewish leaders who bring serious accusations against him before Governor Felix in Caesarea. Their charges aim to portray Paul as a dangerous agitator and leader of a sect, highlighting the perceived threat he poses to Jewish religious authority. This episode underscores the intense opposition Paul faced for his beliefs and teachings.
2. **Paul's Defense Before Felix (Acts 24:10-21):** Paul responds to the accusations with a clear and respectful defense, acknowledging Felix's authority while refuting the allegations of sedition and blasphemy. He emphasizes his adherence to Jewish law and his commitment to righteousness and the resurrection of the dead. Paul's defense not only seeks to exonerate himself but also to uphold the integrity of his faith and teachings.
3. **Felix's Response And Delay (Acts 24:22-27):** Governor Felix, though aware of "The Way" and intrigued by Paul's message, delays a verdict for two years. His decision reflects the political complexities of the time and his reluctance to rule definitively on a divisive religious issue. Meanwhile, he keeps Paul in custody, balancing his desire to appease the Jewish leaders with the need to maintain order.

This chapter portrays the tension between religious conviction and political expediency, highlighting Paul's unwavering commitment to truth and justice despite formidable opposition. It challenges us to remain steadfast in our faith, even when facing adversity and delay, trusting in God's providence and justice.

Applications:

1. **Upholding Integrity Amidst Accusations (Acts 24:1-9):** Paul's response to false accusations teaches us the importance of maintaining integrity and clarity of conscience in the face of slander and opposition. When unjustly accused or maligned, we are called to emulate Paul's example by remaining steadfast in our commitment to truth and righteousness (**Psalms 7:8**). This challenges us to uphold our convictions with grace and humility, trusting that God sees and vindicates the upright in due time (**1 Peter 3:16**).
2. **Engaging Wisely In Legal And Political Arenas (Acts 24:10-21):** Paul's strategic defense before Governor Felix highlights the importance of engaging wisely in legal and political contexts. His respectful demeanor and clear presentation of facts serve as a model for navigating complex societal issues with wisdom and discernment (**Colossians 4:5**). This passage encourages us to participate thoughtfully in public discourse, advocating for justice and truth while respecting governing authorities and their roles (**Romans 13:1**).
3. **Patience And Trust In God's Timing (Acts 24:22-27):** The delay in Felix's decision regarding Paul's case reminds us of the virtue of patience and trust in God's timing. Despite facing prolonged uncertainty and injustice, Paul remained faithful and continued to trust in God's providence (**Psalms 27:14**). This challenges us to persevere in faith during seasons of waiting, knowing that God works all things together for good according to His purposes (**Romans 8:28**).

These applications urge us to embody integrity in all circumstances, engage wisely in the arenas of law and politics, and trust in God's timing and justice. By doing so, we align ourselves with biblical principles and emulate the steadfast faith demonstrated by Paul in Acts 24. As we navigate life's challenges and opportunities, may we rely on God's guidance and grace to honor Him in all we do (**Micah 6:8**).

Key Points:

1. **Accusations Against Paul Before Felix (Acts 24:1-9):** The Jewish leaders, led by the high priest Ananias and lawyer Tertullus, present their case against Paul to Governor Felix in Caesarea (**Acts 24:1**). Tertullus strategically flatters Felix before outlining accusations of Paul being a troublemaker and a leader of the Nazarene sect, accused of attempting to desecrate the Temple (**Acts 24:2-6**). Other Jews affirm these charges, intensifying the case against Paul (**Acts 24:9**).
2. **Paul's Defense Before Felix (Acts 24:10-21):** Paul responds to the accusations with respect for Felix's authority and a clear conscience, denying any wrongdoing or disturbance in Jerusalem (**Acts 24:10-13**). He acknowledges his faith in Christ, which he terms as following "The Way," emphasizing his adherence to Jewish beliefs and hope in the resurrection (**Acts 24:14-16**). Paul explains the purpose of his visit to Jerusalem and challenges his accusers to provide evidence of wrongdoing, while asserting his innocence before God and man (**Acts 24:17-21**).
3. **Felix's Response And Delay (Acts 24:22-27):** Felix, knowledgeable about "The Way," adjourns the trial, keeping Paul under guard but granting him some freedoms (**Acts 24:22-23**). He and his wife Drusilla listen to Paul's teachings about faith in Christ Jesus, but Felix delays a decision, hoping for a bribe from Paul (**Acts 24:24-26**). After two years, Felix is succeeded by Porcius Festus, leaving Paul in prison to appease the Jews and gain political favor (**Acts 24:27**).

These key points illustrate Paul's defense against serious accusations, his commitment to truth and integrity, and the political complexities surrounding his legal proceedings before Felix in Caesarea.

Questions:

1. Who presented the accusations against Paul before Governor Felix in Caesarea (**Acts 24:1**)?
2. What flattering remarks did Tertullus make about Governor Felix at the beginning of his speech (**Acts 24:2-3**)?
3. What specific charges did Tertullus bring against Paul (**Acts 24:5-6**)?

4. How did Felix respond to Paul's defense after Tertullus presented the accusations (**Acts 24:22-23**)?
5. Who did Felix and his wife Drusilla summon to hear Paul speak about faith in Christ Jesus (**Acts 24:24**)?
6. What specific topics did Paul address when speaking to Felix and Drusilla (**Acts 24:25**)?
7. How long did Felix keep Paul in custody before being succeeded by Porcius Festus (**Acts 24:27**)?
8. Why did Felix leave Paul in prison after being succeeded by Festus (**Acts 24:27**)?
9. What did Felix hope to receive from Paul (**Acts 24:26**)?
10. What was the reason Felix gave for delaying a decision on Paul's case (**Acts 24:22-23**)?

1. Paul Before Festus (Acts 25:1-12).

a. Arrival of Festus in the province (Acts 25:1-3):

- b. Festus' decision and Paul's defense (Acts 25:4-8):

- c. Paul's appeal to Caesar (Acts 25:9-12):

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This section of Acts highlights the complexities and political maneuvers of Paul's trial under Roman authority. Festus' handling of the case demonstrates a commitment to Roman legal principles despite the pressures from Jewish leaders. Paul's strategic appeal to Caesar not only showcases his understanding of his legal rights but also propels him toward Rome, fulfilling his mission to testify about Jesus in the heart of the Empire. This episode underscores the persistent tension between Roman law and Jewish religious fervor, while also emphasizing Paul's unwavering faith and determination to spread the Gospel.

2. Festus Consults King Agrippa (Acts 25:13-22).

In these verses, we see the arrival of King Agrippa II and his sister Bernice in Caesarea, where they meet with the new governor, Festus. Festus uses this opportunity to consult Agrippa about the perplexing case of Paul. Despite a formal hearing in Caesarea, the accusations against Paul remain unsubstantiated, leaving Festus uncertain about how to proceed. The central confusion revolves around religious disputes, particularly the claim that Jesus, whom Paul preaches, is alive. This religious nature of the case baffles Festus, prompting him to seek Agrippa's input, especially since Paul has appealed to be tried before Caesar.

a. Arrival of King Agrippa and Bernice (Acts 25:13): King Agrippa II and his sister Bernice visit Caesarea to pay their respects to the new governor, Festus.

b. Presentation of Paul's case (Acts 25:14-17):

1) Festus presents Paul's case to Agrippa (Acts 25:14-15): Festus briefs Agrippa on Paul's case, summarizing the accusations made by the Jewish leaders.

2) Festus' dilemma (Acts 25:16-17):

a) Roman legal principles: Accused must face accusers. Festus explains the Roman legal principle that an accused person must be allowed to face their accusers and defend themselves.

b) Hearing did not substantiate the charges: Festus notes that the accusations against Paul were not substantiated during the hearing.

c. Festus' uncertainty and Agrippa's interest (Acts 25:18-22).

1) Festus' confusion about the charges (Acts 25:18-19):

a) Dispute over Jewish religion and a man named Jesus: Festus expresses confusion over the nature of the charges, which revolve around Jewish religious disputes and claims about Jesus being alive.

b) Jesus was claimed to be alive: The central issue appears to be the claim that Jesus, whom Paul preaches, is alive, a matter baffling to Festus.



2) Festus' decision to keep Paul in custody (Acts 25:20):

a) Uncertain how to proceed: Festus admits his uncertainty on how to handle the case, given its religious nature.

b) Offers Paul a trial in Jerusalem: To resolve the matter, Festus had initially suggested a trial in Jerusalem.

3) Paul's appeal to Caesar (Acts 25:21): With Paul's appeal to Caesar, Festus is obligated to keep Paul in custody until he can be sent to Rome.

4) Agrippa's interest in hearing Paul (Acts 25:22): Intrigued by the case, Agrippa expresses a desire to hear from Paul directly, and Festus arranges a formal hearing.

This passage highlights Festus' struggle to navigate the complexities of Jewish religious issues within the Roman legal framework. His consultation with Agrippa underscores his uncertainty and the unusual nature of the charges against Paul. Agrippa's interest in hearing Paul's case reflects the intrigue and significance surrounding the claims about Jesus' resurrection. This consultation sets the stage for Paul's defense before Agrippa, further advancing his journey towards Rome and his mission to testify about Jesus to the highest authorities in the Roman Empire.

3. Paul Before Agrippa And Bernice (Acts 25:23-27).

In these verses, the scene is set for Paul's grand hearing before King Agrippa and Bernice. They arrive with much ceremony, underscoring the significance of the event. The gathering includes military commanders and prominent citizens, reflecting the high profile of the case. Paul is brought into this distinguished assembly to present his defense. Festus introduces the case, asserting Paul's innocence of any capital crime but emphasizing Paul's appeal to Caesar, which necessitates the current proceedings. Festus also expresses his frustration over the lack of specific charges, seeking Agrippa's assistance to better articulate the case against Paul for Caesar.

a. The grand hearing (Acts 25:23):

- 1) Agrippa and Bernice arrive with great pomp: Agrippa and Bernice arrive at the hearing with much ceremony, showcasing their royal status.
- 2) Attendees: military commanders and prominent city men: The hearing is attended by high-ranking military officers and prominent citizens, indicating the importance of the event.
- 3) Paul brought in: Paul is brought into the assembly to present his defense before Agrippa and the gathered audience.

b. Festus' introduction and summary (Acts 25:24-27):

- 1) Festus presents the case to Agrippa (Acts 25:24-25):
 - a) Asserts Paul's innocence of crimes deserving death: Festus states that he finds no crimes committed by Paul that warrant the death penalty.
 - b) Notes Paul's appeal to Caesar: Festus mentions Paul's appeal to be tried by Caesar as the reason for the current proceedings.
- 2) Festus' difficulty in drafting a report to Caesar (Acts 25:26-27):
 - a) No specific charges to write: Festus admits his difficulty in drafting a report for Caesar due to the lack of concrete charges against Paul.
 - b) Seeks Agrippa's input to clarify charges: Festus hopes that Agrippa's insights during the hearing will help clarify the charges against Paul.
 - c) Absurdity of sending a prisoner without clear charges: Festus underscores the absurdity of sending Paul to Caesar without a clear statement of charges, highlighting the legal conundrum.

This passage highlights the formal and elaborate nature of Paul's hearing before Agrippa, emphasizing the importance of Paul's case within both Jewish and Roman contexts. Festus' introduction underscores the perplexity surrounding the charges and his hope that Agrippa might provide clarity. This moment marks a crucial step in Paul's journey, demonstrating the legal complexities and political manoeuvring involved as Paul prepares to bring his testimony about Jesus to the highest levels of the Roman Empire. The hearing not only underscores the gravity of Paul's situation but also sets the stage for his continued mission to witness for Christ in Rome.

Summary:

1. **Paul Before Festus (Acts 25:1-12):** Festus, the new Roman governor, arrives in Caesarea and is immediately faced with accusations from Jewish leaders against Paul. They request Paul be transferred to Jerusalem, intending to ambush and kill him. Festus, adhering to Roman legal procedures, refuses the transfer and conducts a hearing in Caesarea. Despite serious accusations, the Jewish leaders fail to provide substantial evidence, and Paul defends his innocence. When Festus suggests a trial in Jerusalem, Paul exercises his right as a Roman citizen and appeals to Caesar, prompting Festus to grant the appeal.
2. **Festus Consults King Agrippa (Acts 25:13-22):** King Agrippa II and his sister Bernice visit Caesarea, where Festus consults Agrippa about Paul's perplexing case. Festus explains the Roman legal principles and the unsubstantiated charges against Paul, expressing his confusion over the religious disputes central to the case. Festus' uncertainty about how to proceed leads to Agrippa's interest in hearing Paul directly, setting the stage for a formal hearing to clarify the charges before Paul is sent to Caesar.

3. **Paul Before Agrippa And Bernice (Acts 25:23-27):** In a grand hearing attended by high-ranking officials and prominent citizens, Paul presents his defense before Agrippa and Bernice. Festus introduces the case, reiterating Paul's innocence of any capital crime but highlighting the necessity of the proceedings due to Paul's appeal to Caesar. Festus admits the difficulty in drafting a report for Caesar without specific charges and seeks Agrippa's assistance in clarifying the case. This hearing underscores the legal and political intricacies involved as Paul continues his journey to testify about Jesus in Rome.

This chapter highlights the legal and political challenges Paul faced as he navigated the complexities of Roman and Jewish authorities. Through his appeals and defenses, Paul not only upheld his innocence but also strategically advanced his mission to proclaim the gospel at the heart of the Roman Empire. The involvement of prominent figures like Festus and Agrippa underscores the significance of Paul's case and sets the stage for his eventual journey to Rome.

Applications:

1. **Faithfulness Under Political Pressure (Acts 25:1-12):** Paul's experience before Festus highlights the importance of remaining faithful and steadfast under political and legal pressure. Despite facing grave threats and manipulative tactics from his accusers, Paul trusted in God's sovereignty and exercised his rights wisely. This teaches us to stand firm in our faith and convictions, even when navigating complex political or legal systems. We are called to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves (**Matthew 10:16**), trusting that God is in control and will guide us through challenging situations (**Proverbs 3:5-6**).
2. **Clarity And Wisdom In Difficult Situations (Acts 25:13-22):** Festus' consultation with King Agrippa reflects the need for seeking clarity and wisdom in difficult and perplexing situations. When faced with confusing or unclear challenges, it is crucial to seek wise counsel and approach the situation with discernment. This passage encourages us to rely on the wisdom of others and, above all, seek God's guidance through prayer and His Word (**James 1:5**). It reminds us that in times of uncertainty, seeking understanding and clarity from reliable sources is essential for making informed and just decisions (**Proverbs 4:7**).
3. **Bold Witness For Christ (Acts 25:23-27):** Paul's boldness in defending his faith before Agrippa and the assembled dignitaries serves as a powerful example of being a courageous witness for Christ. Despite the grandeur and potential intimidation of the setting, Paul did not shy away from proclaiming the truth about Jesus. This challenges us to be bold in our witness, sharing the gospel with confidence regardless of our audience or circumstances (**2 Timothy 1:7-8**). It encourages us to seize every opportunity to testify about Christ, trusting that God will use our testimony to impact others (**Acts 1:8**).



These applications encourage us to remain faithful and wise under pressure, seek clarity and wisdom in challenging situations, and be bold witnesses for Christ. By doing so, we follow the example set by Paul and align ourselves with biblical principles, demonstrating integrity and courage in all areas of life. As we navigate our own challenges, may we rely on God's guidance and strength to honor Him in every aspect of our journey (**Micah 6:8**).

Key Points:

1. **Paul Before Festus (Acts 25:1-12):** Festus, the new Roman governor in Caesarea, confronts accusations brought by Jewish leaders against Paul (**Acts 25:1**). These leaders request Paul's transfer to Jerusalem under false pretenses, intending to ambush and kill him en route (**Acts 25:2-3**). Festus opts to hold a trial in Caesarea and hears the Jewish leaders' accusations against Paul, which remain unsubstantiated (**Acts 25:4-5**). Paul defends himself against these charges, asserting his innocence and appealing to Caesar when Festus suggests a trial in Jerusalem (**Acts 25:6-12**).
2. **Festus Consults King Agrippa (Acts 25:13-22):** King Agrippa II and his sister Bernice visit Festus in Caesarea, where Festus consults Agrippa regarding Paul's case (**Acts 25:13**). Festus outlines the accusations and his dilemma, struggling to understand the religious nature of the charges against Paul (**Acts 25:14-19**). Agrippa expresses interest in hearing Paul, prompting Festus to arrange a formal hearing to clarify the charges before sending Paul to Caesar (**Acts 25:20-22**).

3. **Paul Before Agrippa And Bernice (Acts 25:23-27):** In a grand assembly attended by Agrippa, Bernice, military commanders, and prominent citizens, Paul presents his defense (Acts 25:23). Festus introduces the case, affirming Paul's innocence of capital crimes but explaining the necessity of the proceedings due to Paul's appeal to Caesar (Acts 25:24-27). Festus seeks Agrippa's assistance in formulating the charges against Paul for Caesar, highlighting the legal and political complexities involved (Acts 25:26-27).

These key points illustrate the legal challenges Paul faced under Roman authority, his strategic defense and appeals, and the political dynamics influencing his journey toward Rome. Each stage of Paul's hearings showcases his commitment to proclaiming the gospel and defending his faith amidst significant opposition and legal scrutiny.

Questions:

1. Who was the new Roman governor who arrived in Caesarea (Acts 25:1)?
2. Why did the Jewish leaders request Festus to transfer Paul to Jerusalem (Acts 25:2-3)?
3. What did Festus propose to the Jewish leaders regarding Paul's trial (Acts 25:4-5)?
4. What accusations did the Jewish leaders bring against Paul before Festus (Acts 25:7-8)?
5. Why did Festus suggest that Paul be tried in Jerusalem (Acts 25:9)?
6. What did Paul do in response to Festus' suggestion to be tried in Jerusalem (Acts 25:10-11)?
7. Whom did Festus consult regarding Paul's case after Agrippa arrived in Caesarea (Acts 25:13)?
8. What intrigued King Agrippa about Paul's case (Acts 25:19)?
9. What did Festus hope to clarify with King Agrippa during Paul's hearing (Acts 25:26)?
10. What was Festus' decision regarding Paul's case after the hearing before Agrippa (Acts 25:27)?

In these verses, the stage is set for Paul's defense before King Agrippa. Granted permission to speak, Paul begins by expressing his gratitude for the opportunity to present his case. Recognizing Agrippa's extensive knowledge of Jewish customs and disputes, Paul requests a patient and attentive hearing. This introduction not only establishes a respectful and appreciative tone but also underscores the significance of Agrippa's understanding in evaluating the charges against Paul.

a. Paul's permission to speak (Acts 26:1):

- 1) Agrippa gives Paul permission to speak: Paul is formally allowed to present his case.
- 2) Paul stretches out his hand and begins his defense.

b. Paul's address to Agrippa (Acts 26:2-3):

- 1) Paul expresses gratitude for being able to speak before Agrippa.
- 2) Paul acknowledges Agrippa's familiarity with Jewish customs and controversies.
- 3) Requests a patient hearing.

This brief introduction highlights Paul's respectful approach and strategic awareness as he begins his defense. By expressing gratitude and acknowledging Agrippa's expertise, Paul seeks to establish a fair and attentive hearing, setting the stage for a thorough and thoughtful examination of his case.

2. Paul's Early Life And Persecution Of Christians (Acts 26:4-11).

In this passage, Paul recounts his early life and zealous persecution of Christians to King Agrippa. He begins by emphasizing his well-known background and strict adherence to the Pharisaic tradition, showcasing his deep roots in Jewish law and customs. Paul then connects his current hope to the promises made by God to the Jewish ancestors, underlining the collective aspiration of the twelve tribes for the fulfillment of these promises, particularly the belief in resurrection. He candidly describes his fervent opposition to Jesus and his active role in persecuting Christians, including imprisoning and condemning many, forcing them to blaspheme, and relentlessly pursuing them even to foreign cities.

a. Paul's early life (Acts 26:4-5) – Paul describes his background and strict adherence to Jewish law:

- 1) Paul's life from his youth was known to all the Jews.
- 2) Paul's strict adherence to the Pharisaic tradition – Highlights his dedication as a Pharisee.

b. The promise of God to the fathers (Acts 26:6-8): Paul's hope rooted in the promises given to the Jewish ancestors:

- 1) Paul's hope in the promise made by God to the fathers – He relates his faith to God's promises to Israel.
- 2) The twelve tribes hope to attain this promise through earnest service – He explains the collective hope of the Jewish people.
- 3) The incredulity of resurrection being questioned – He challenges the skepticism about resurrection.

c. Paul's zeal against Christians (Acts 26:9-11). Details his former persecution of Christians:

- 1) Paul's initial opposition to Jesus of Nazareth: He Admits his previous rejection of Jesus.
- 2) His authority from the chief priests to persecute Christians: He describes his official role in persecuting believers.
- 3) Imprisoning many saints and casting votes against them: Confesses to imprisoning and condemning Christians.
- 4) Punishing them in synagogues and compelling them to blaspheme: Details his efforts to force Christians to renounce their faith.
- 5) Persecuting Christians even to foreign cities: He acknowledges his efforts to hunt Christians beyond local regions.

This passage illustrates Paul's transformation from a devout Pharisee and fierce persecutor of Christians to a fervent believer in Jesus Christ. By recounting his background and actions, Paul provides a powerful testimony of his radical change and the profound impact of his encounter with Christ. This sets the stage for his defense and further elaboration on his mission and message, highlighting the depth of his conviction and the authenticity of his faith.

3. Paul's Dramatic Experience (Acts 26:12-18).

In this passage, Paul narrates his dramatic experience on the road to Damascus, a pivotal moment that transformed his life. This account begins with Paul's mission to persecute Christians, setting the stage for his extraordinary encounter with Jesus. He vividly describes a bright light from heaven that caused him and his companions to fall to the ground, followed by a divine voice questioning his persecution of Jesus. Jesus then reveals Himself and commissions Paul to a new mission, appointing him as a witness to the resurrection and promising protection from opposition. Paul's mission is to lead people from darkness to light, offering forgiveness of sins and sanctification through faith in Jesus.

- a. The journey to Damascus (Acts 26:12): He begins with Paul's mission to persecute Christians in Damascus - This sets the context for his encounter with Jesus.
- b. The heavenly vision (Acts 26:13-15): He describes his supernatural encounter with Jesus:
 - 1) A bright light from heaven at midday.
 - 2) Paul and his companions fall to the ground.
 - 3) The voice in Hebrew addressing Saul, questioning his persecution of Jesus.
 - 4) Jesus identifies Himself and instructs Saul.
- c. Paul's commission from Jesus (Acts 26:16-18): Jesus appoints Paul to a new mission:
 - 1) Appointed as a servant and witness of what he has seen: Paul is commissioned as a witness to Jesus' resurrection.
 - 2) The promise of rescue from Jewish and Gentile opposition: Assurance of divine protection.
 - 3) Commission to open their eyes, turn them from darkness to light, and from Satan to God: Mission to lead people to spiritual enlightenment and conversion.
 - 4) The goal of receiving forgiveness of sins and a place among those sanctified by faith in Jesus: The purpose of his mission is salvation and sanctification.



This passage highlights the profound and supernatural encounter that led to Paul's conversion and subsequent mission. The vision of Jesus and the divine commission transformed Paul from a persecutor of Christians to a dedicated apostle. His testimony underscores the power of divine intervention and the call to spread the gospel, emphasizing the themes of spiritual enlightenment, forgiveness, and the transformative grace of faith in Jesus.

4. Paul's Obedience To The Heavenly Vision (Acts 26:19-23).

In these verses, Paul recounts his unwavering obedience to the divine vision he received on the road to Damascus. He details his immediate response to Jesus' command by preaching a message of repentance and transformation, first in Damascus and then throughout Jerusalem, Judea, and to the Gentiles. Despite facing fierce opposition and violent attempts on his life by the Jews, Paul credits God's help for his perseverance and continued testimony. He emphasizes that his teachings are consistent with the Jewish scriptures, proclaiming the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning Christ's suffering, resurrection, and the message of salvation to both Jews and Gentiles.

- a. Paul's immediate response (Acts 26:19-20): Paul's quick obedience to Jesus' command:
 - 1) Obedience to the heavenly vision: This emphasizes his compliance with the divine instruction.
 - 2) Declaration first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, and to the Gentiles: This describes the widespread scope of his ministry.
 - 3) Call to repentance, turning to God, and performing deeds worthy of repentance: This summarizes his message of repentance and transformation.
- b. The reaction of the Jews (Acts 26:21): Jewish opposition to Paul's preaching - Seizure by the Jews in the temple and attempts to kill him: This highlights the violent reaction to his message.

- c. God's help and Paul's testimony (Acts 26:22-23): Despite opposition, Paul continues to testify with divine assistance:
 - 1) Continued help from God: Paul credits God for his endurance and perseverance.
 - 2) Standing firm to testify to both small and great: His consistent witness to people of all statuses.
 - 3) Affirmation of nothing beyond what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: Paul asserts that his teaching aligns with Jewish scriptures.
 - 4) The prophecy of the Christ's suffering, resurrection, and proclamation of light to Jews and Gentiles: Paul reiterates the fulfillment of messianic prophecies through Jesus.

This passage highlights Paul's steadfast obedience to the heavenly vision and his commitment to spreading the gospel despite severe opposition. His immediate and widespread proclamation of repentance and transformation underscores his dedication to his divine commission. Paul's reliance on God's help for endurance and his alignment with the Jewish scriptures emphasize the legitimacy of his message. This section concludes with Paul affirming the fulfillment of prophetic scriptures through Christ, illustrating the profound impact of his obedience and testimony on the mission to bring light to both Jews and Gentiles.

5. Reaction Of Festus And Agrippa (Acts 26:24-32).

In this passage, the reaction of Festus and Agrippa to Paul's defense underscores the tension and complexity of Paul's situation. Festus interrupts Paul's speech, accusing him of madness due to his intense learning, but Paul calmly defends the rationality and truth of his words. He directly appeals to King Agrippa's knowledge of the events and prophecies, seeking acknowledgment of the truth. Agrippa's near-conversion and Paul's heartfelt wish for everyone's salvation highlight the profound impact of his testimony. The leaders' subsequent discussion and conclusion reveal that they find no basis for Paul's imprisonment or death, recognizing that his appeal to Caesar was the only obstacle to his release.

- a. Festus's interruption (Acts 26:24): Festus reacts to Paul's speech - Festus exclaims that Paul's great learning has driven him mad.
- b. Paul's response to Festus (Acts 26:25-26): Paul defends his sanity and the truth of his message.
 - 1) Assertion of speaking truth and rational words: Paul insists on the reasonableness of his words.
 - 2) Appeal to Agrippa's knowledge of these events: Paul seeks Agrippa's acknowledgment of the known facts.
- c. Paul's direct appeal to Agrippa (Acts 26:27-29):
 - 1) Question to Agrippa regarding belief in the prophets.
 - 2) Agrippa's response of almost being persuaded to become a Christian: Agrippa's reluctant acknowledgment of Paul's persuasion.
 - 3) Paul's wish for all present to become like him, except for the chains: Paul expresses his desire for their salvation without suffering his imprisonment.
- d. Conclusion and decision (Acts 26:30-32): The leaders discuss Paul's case:
 - 1) King Agrippa, Festus, Bernice, and others rise and confer.
 - 2) They conclude that Paul has done nothing deserving death or imprisonment: They find no legal basis for his punishment.
 - 3) Agrippa's statement to Festus that Paul could have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar: He acknowledges the procedural complication of Paul's appeal to Caesar.

The passage concludes with a clear validation of Paul's innocence by Festus, Agrippa, and the other leaders. Despite Festus's initial outburst, Paul successfully defends the truth and rationality of his message. Agrippa's almost persuaded response and Paul's desire for their salvation illustrate the powerful and sincere nature of his testimony. The leaders' final discussion confirms that Paul has committed no crime deserving punishment, emphasizing the procedural irony that only his appeal to Caesar prevents his release. This section underscores the legal and spiritual complexities surrounding Paul's trial and the undeniable impact of his unwavering witness to Christ.

Summary:

1. **Paul's Respectful Introduction To Agrippa (Acts 26:1-3):** Paul begins his defense before King Agrippa by expressing his gratitude for the opportunity to present his case, recognizing Agrippa's extensive knowledge of Jewish customs and controversies. This respectful and appreciative approach sets the stage for a fair hearing, highlighting Paul's strategic awareness and intent to provide a thorough examination of the charges against him.
2. **Paul's Dramatic Conversion Experience (Acts 26:12-18):** Paul recounts his life-changing encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, detailing the heavenly vision and his subsequent commission from Jesus. This profound experience transforms him from a fierce persecutor of Christians to a dedicated apostle, emphasizing the power of divine intervention and the call to spread the gospel.
3. **The Mixed Reactions Of Festus And Agrippa (Acts 26:24-32):** The reactions of Festus and Agrippa illustrate the tension and complexity of Paul's situation. Festus accuses Paul of madness, but Paul calmly defends the rationality of his message. Agrippa's near-conversion and the leaders' ultimate conclusion that Paul has committed no crime deserving death or imprisonment underscore the spiritual and legal complexities of Paul's trial, highlighting the undeniable impact of his unwavering witness to Christ.

This chapter provides a compelling account of Paul's defense before King Agrippa, showcasing his respectful and strategic introduction, his transformative conversion experience, and the varied reactions of his audience. Paul's respectful approach and acknowledgment of Agrippa's expertise set the stage for a thoughtful hearing. His vivid recounting of his dramatic encounter with Jesus highlights the profound change in his life and mission. Despite Festus's scepticism and Agrippa's near-conversion, Paul's unwavering testimony and the ultimate recognition of his innocence underscore the powerful and transformative nature of his faith. This narrative not only illustrates the depth of Paul's conviction but also the broader impact of the gospel message on diverse audiences.

Applications:

1. **Courage In Sharing Testimony (Acts 26:1-3):** Paul's defense before King Agrippa shows the importance of boldly sharing our personal testimonies, even in challenging or intimidating situations. Like Paul, Christians today can draw courage from their faith and the truth of their experiences with Christ to speak boldly about their faith.
2. **Respectful Engagement (Acts 26:2-3):** Paul's respectful approach to Agrippa, acknowledging his knowledge and authority, demonstrates the value of engaging with others courteously and respectfully, regardless of their position or beliefs. This application emphasizes the importance of respectful dialogue when discussing matters of faith or when facing opposition.
3. **Trust In God's Plan (Acts 26:19-23):** Throughout his defense, Paul remains confident in God's plan and his mission, despite opposition and persecution. This teaches Christians to trust in God's purpose for their lives, even when circumstances are difficult or when facing misunderstandings and false accusations.

These applications remind us that sharing our faith with courage, engaging with others respectfully, and trusting in God's plan are vital aspects of a Christian's life. By following Paul's example, we can navigate our own challenges and opportunities to witness with faithfulness and integrity.

Key Points:

1. **Paul's Respectful Introduction And Defense (Acts 26:1-3).** Paul begins his defense before King Agrippa with gratitude and respect, acknowledging Agrippa's familiarity with Jewish customs and requesting a patient hearing. This respectful approach aims to ensure a fair and attentive evaluation of his case.
2. **Paul's Background And Persecution Of Christians (Acts 26:4-11).** Paul recounts his strict adherence to Pharisaic traditions and his fervent persecution of Christians. He details his actions, including imprisoning believers and compelling them to blaspheme, showcasing his zealous opposition to Jesus prior to his conversion.
3. **Paul's Conversion And Divine Commission (Acts 26:12-18).** Paul narrates his dramatic encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, which transforms him from a persecutor to a proponent of the Christian faith. Jesus appoints him as a servant and witness, commissioning him to lead people from darkness to light and offer forgiveness through faith.

- 4. Reactions To Paul's Testimony (Acts 26:24-32).** Festus accuses Paul of madness, but Paul defends the rationality of his message. Agrippa's near-conversion and the leaders' discussion reveal that Paul has done nothing deserving death or imprisonment, acknowledging that his appeal to Caesar is the only obstacle to his release.

These key points illustrate the profound transformation in Paul's life, his unwavering commitment to his divine commission, and the varied reactions to his testimony. They highlight the importance of respectful dialogue, the power of personal testimony, and the fulfillment of divine purpose in the face of opposition.

Questions:

1. Who gave Paul permission to speak in his defense before King Agrippa (Acts 26:1-2)?
2. What did Paul express gratitude for at the beginning of his defense (Acts 26:2)?
3. According to Paul, what did King Agrippa understand well (Acts 26:3)?
4. What does Paul recount about his early life and strict adherence to Jewish customs (Acts 26:4-5)?
5. What hope did Paul emphasize regarding the promises made by God to the Jewish ancestors (Acts 26:6-7)?
6. How does Paul describe his persecution of Christians (Acts 26:9-11)?
7. What does Paul recount happening on his journey to Damascus (Acts 26:12-13)?
8. Who spoke to Paul in the heavenly vision on the road to Damascus (Acts 26:14)?
9. What did Jesus commission Paul to do during the heavenly vision (Acts 26:16-18)?
10. How did King Agrippa respond to Paul's defense (Acts 26:28-29)?

1. The Decision To Sail For Rome (Acts 27:1-8).

PAUL'S TRIP TO ROME: 58-61 AD

- These verses highlight the initial phase of Paul's journey to Rome, marked by both human kindness and natural adversity. Julius' favorable treatment of Paul and the arduous conditions at sea set the tone for the trials and resilience that will unfold in the ensuing narrative. The early struggles and strategic decisions made during this part of the journey underline the complexities of travel in the ancient world, preparing the reader for the dramatic events that lie ahead.

In these verses, the journey to Rome becomes perilous as Paul foresees disaster. Despite his warning that continuing the voyage would result in significant loss, the centurion Julius opts to heed the advice of the ship's pilot and owner. As they sail on, hoping to winter in Phoenix, they encounter a violent storm. This section vividly describes the escalating danger and the crew's desperate attempts to secure the ship, ultimately leaving them hopeless and adrift in the relentless tempest.

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c. The storm (Acts 27:13-20):

- 1) A gentle south wind begins, and they think they can reach Phoenix, so they sail along the shore of Crete (Acts 27:13).
- 2) A violent northeaster, called the "Northeaster," sweeps down from the island (Acts 27:14).
- 3) The ship is caught by the storm and cannot head into the wind, so they give way to it and are driven along (Acts 27:15).
- 4) They pass under the lee of a small island called Cauda and manage to secure the lifeboat (Acts 27:16).
- 5) They pass ropes under the ship to hold it together, fearing they would run aground on the sandbars of Syrtis (Acts 27:17).
- 6) They lower the sea anchor and are driven along, severely battered by the storm (Acts 27:18-19).
- 7) Neither sun nor stars appear for many days, and the storm continues raging; all hope of being saved is abandoned (Acts 27:20).

These verses depict a dramatic escalation in the peril faced by Paul and his companions. Paul's initial warning is ignored, leading to a confrontation with nature's fury as a powerful storm threatens their very survival. The crew's struggle against the storm, their efforts to keep the ship intact, and the ensuing despair highlight the vulnerability of human endeavors against the elements. This passage sets the stage for the divine intervention and hope that will follow in the narrative.

3. Paul's Encouragement And God's Promise (Acts 27:21-38).

In this passage, amidst the dire circumstances of the storm, Paul emerges as a beacon of hope and encouragement to the crew. He reminds them of his earlier warning and urges them to keep their courage, sharing a divine message he received from an angel that assures their survival. Despite the impending shipwreck, Paul's faith and leadership provide a crucial source of reassurance and practical guidance as the crew prepares for the inevitable crash.

a. Paul addresses the crew (Acts 27:21-26):

- 1) After long abstinence from food, Paul stands up and reminds them that they should have taken his advice and not sailed from Crete (Acts 27:21).
- 2) He urges them to keep up their courage because there will be no loss of life, only the ship (Acts 27:22).
- 3) Paul shares the angel's message that he must stand trial before Caesar and that God has graciously given him the lives of all who sail with him (Acts 27:23-24).
- 4) Paul reassures them to keep their courage, having faith in God that it will happen as he was told, but they must run aground on some island (Acts 27:25-26).

b. The ship's crew prepares for shipwreck (Acts 27:27-32):

- 1) On the fourteenth night, they are driven across the Adriatic Sea when sailors sense land approaching (Acts 27:27).
- 2) They take soundings and find the water 120 feet deep; later, they find it 90 feet deep (Acts 27:28).
- 3) Fearing they will be dashed against the rocks, they drop four anchors from the stern and pray for daylight (Acts 27:29).
- 4) Some sailors attempt to escape in the lifeboat, but Paul warns the centurion and soldiers that they must stay with the ship to survive (Acts 27:30-31).
- 5) The soldiers cut the ropes to the lifeboat, letting it drift away (Acts 27:32).

c. Paul's final encouragement and action (Acts 27:33-38):

- 1) Just before dawn, Paul urges everyone to eat for their survival, assuring them that not a hair will perish from their head (Acts 27:33-34).

- 2) He takes bread, gives thanks to God, and begins to eat, encouraging others to do the same (Acts 27:35-36).
- 3) All 276 on board eat and are encouraged (Acts 27:37).
- 4) They lighten the ship by throwing the grain into the sea (Acts 27:38).

This passage highlights Paul's pivotal role in maintaining morale and fostering hope among the desperate crew. By sharing God's promise of their safety, he transforms their outlook from despair to cautious optimism. Paul's actions, from urging them to eat to giving thanks, exemplify his unwavering faith and trust in God's word. His leadership ensures that the crew stays united and prepared for the trials ahead, showcasing the power of faith and divine assurance in the face of overwhelming adversity.

4. The Shipwreck And Safe Arrival On Land (Acts 27:39-44).

In this section, the dramatic culmination of the journey unfolds as the shipwrecked crew makes a desperate attempt to reach land. With daylight revealing an unknown bay with a sandy beach, the crew decides to beach the ship. Despite their efforts, the vessel is torn apart by the surf after striking a sandbar, leading to a tense moment where the soldiers plan to kill the prisoners to prevent their escape. However, due to the centurion's intervention to save Paul, all on board are ordered to swim or cling to debris, ensuring that everyone arrives safely on land.

a. Attempt to beach the ship (Acts 27:39-41):

- 1) When daylight comes, they do not recognize the land but see a bay with a sandy beach (Acts 27:39).
- 2) They decide to run the ship aground if they can, cutting loose the anchors and heading for the beach (Acts 27:40).
- 3) The ship strikes a sandbar, runs aground, and begins to break apart by the surf (Acts 27:41).

b. The soldiers' plan and Paul's intervention (Acts 27:42-43):

- 1) The soldiers plan to kill the prisoners to prevent any from swimming away and escaping (Acts 27:42).
- 2) The centurion, wanting to spare Paul's life, stops them and orders those who can swim to jump overboard first and get to land (Acts 27:43).

c. Safe arrival on land (Acts 27:44):

- 1) The rest follow on planks or pieces of the ship.
- 2) Everyone reaches land safely, fulfilling God's promise of no loss of life.

This section underscores the fulfillment of God's promise of safety, as all the ship's occupants reach land unscathed despite the harrowing shipwreck. Paul's influence and the centurion's decisive actions prevent a potential massacre, demonstrating the providence and protection that accompany obedience to divine guidance. The safe arrival on land not only fulfills the angel's prophecy but also highlights themes of trust, leadership, and divine faithfulness amidst life-threatening adversity.

Summary:

1. **The Decision To Sail For Rome (Acts 27:1-8):** The journey to Rome begins with Paul and other prisoners handed over to a centurion named Julius. They board a ship from Adramyttium, intending to sail along the coast of Asia. They arrive at Sidon, where Julius allows Paul to visit his friends. Despite sailing under difficult conditions, they eventually reach Fair Havens near the city of Lasea, after struggling with contrary winds and transferring to an Alexandrian ship bound for Italy.
2. **Warning Of Danger And Continued Voyage (Acts 27:9-20):** Paul warns that continuing the voyage will bring disaster, but the centurion is more persuaded by the pilot and the ship's owner. Deciding to sail on, they encounter a violent storm called the Northeaster, which drives the ship uncontrollably. Despite efforts to secure the vessel and lighten the load, they are battered by the storm and lose all hope of being saved.
3. **Paul's Encouragement And God's Promise (Acts 27:21-38):** Paul urges the crew to keep their courage, sharing that an angel assured him that there will be no loss of life. He emphasizes his faith in God's promise that they must run aground on some island. As they prepare for shipwreck, Paul encourages everyone to eat, assuring them of their survival. They follow his lead, lightening the ship by throwing the grain into the sea.

4. **The Shipwreck And Safe Arrival On Land (Acts 27:39-44):** When daylight reveals a bay with a sandy beach, the crew attempts to beach the ship but it runs aground and begins to break apart. The soldiers plan to kill the prisoners to prevent escape, but the centurion intervenes to save Paul. Those who can swim jump overboard, and the rest follow on debris. Remarkably, everyone reaches land safely, fulfilling God's promise of no loss of life.

This chapter highlights the perilous journey of Paul and his companions as they sail for Rome, facing warnings, a fierce storm, and ultimately a shipwreck. Despite the dire circumstances, Paul's leadership, faith, and the fulfillment of God's promise ensure the survival of all aboard, showcasing themes of divine protection, courage, and the importance of heeding godly wisdom.

Applications:

1. **Trusting God's Promises (Acts 27:23-25):** In the midst of a life-threatening storm, Paul reassures the crew by sharing God's promise that all on board would be safe. This teaches us the importance of trusting in God's promises, even when circumstances appear dire. We can find peace and hope in knowing that God is faithful and His word is true, guiding us through our own storms in life.
2. **Leadership In Crisis (Acts 27:33-36):** Paul's actions during the storm - urging everyone to eat and maintain their strength - demonstrate the value of providing calm and encouraging leadership during times of crisis. This application highlights the need for Christians to step up as leaders, offering practical support and reassurance to those around us when facing challenging situations.
3. **Heeding Godly Wisdom (Acts 27:9-11):** The centurion's decision to ignore Paul's initial warning about the dangers of continuing their voyage led to severe consequences. This serves as a reminder of the importance of listening to godly wisdom and advice. By seeking and heeding counsel rooted in faith, we can make more informed and spiritually guided decisions, avoiding unnecessary hardships.

These applications encourage us to rely on God's promises, take on leadership roles during crises, and seek godly wisdom in our decisions. By applying these lessons, we can navigate life's challenges with faith, courage, and discernment.

Key Points:

1. **The Decision To Sail For Rome (Acts 27:1-8):** Paul and other prisoners are placed under the care of a centurion named Julius. Their journey begins from Adramyttium and includes a stop at Sidon where Paul is treated kindly. They face difficult sailing conditions due to contrary winds and eventually transfer to an Alexandrian ship bound for Italy.
2. **Warning Of Danger And Continued Voyage (Acts 27:9-20):** Paul warns the crew about the dangers of continuing their voyage after the Day of Atonement, but his advice is ignored. Julius listens to the ship's pilot and owner, leading to disastrous consequences as they encounter a violent storm that threatens their lives and destroys hope.
3. **Paul's Encouragement And God's Promise (Acts 27:21-38):** In the midst of the storm, Paul reassures the crew with a message from an angel that they will all survive, though the ship will be lost. His leadership and encouragement lead the crew to eat and regain their strength, demonstrating his faith in God's promise and his ability to inspire hope in others.
4. **The Shipwreck And Safe Arrival On Land (Acts 27:39-44):** As daylight reveals an unknown land with a sandy beach, the crew attempts to beach the ship, but it strikes a sandbar and begins to break apart. The soldiers plan to kill the prisoners to prevent escape, but the centurion intervenes to save Paul. All aboard manage to reach land safely, fulfilling God's promise of no loss of life.

These key points highlight the challenges and divine guidance Paul and his companions faced during their perilous journey to Rome. They emphasize the importance of trusting in God's promises, providing leadership in crises, and heeding godly wisdom.



Questions:

1. Who was responsible for Paul and the other prisoners during the voyage to Rome (**Acts 27:1**)?
2. Where did the ship first stop after leaving on the voyage (**Acts 27:3**)?
3. How did Julius treat Paul at Sidon (**Acts 27:3**)?
4. What warning did Paul give about continuing the voyage (**Acts 27:9-10**)?
5. Whose advice did the centurion follow instead of Paul's warning (**Acts 27:11**)?
6. What happened shortly after the ship set sail from Crete (**Acts 27:13-14**)?
7. How did Paul encourage the crew during the storm (**Acts 27:22-24**)?
8. What measures did the crew take to secure the ship during the storm (**Acts 27:16-17**)?
9. What did Paul urge the crew to do as dawn approached on the fourteenth night (**Acts 27:33-34**)?
10. How did everyone reach land safely after the shipwreck (**Acts 27:44**)?

1. Paul's Stay On Malta (Acts 28:1-10).

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3. Paul's Ministry In Rome (Acts 28:17-31).

In this passage, Paul begins his ministry in Rome by first reaching out to the local Jewish leaders to clarify his position and the reasons for his imprisonment. Despite mixed reactions to his message about the kingdom of God, Paul remains steadfast, citing Isaiah to explain the spiritual blindness of some of his listeners. Over the next two years, Paul continues to preach the gospel boldly and without hindrance, welcoming all who come to hear him and solidifying his role as a pivotal figure in the early Christian church.

a. Meeting with Jewish leaders (Acts 28:17-22):

- 1) Paul calls together the local Jewish leaders to explain his situation, stating that he has done nothing against the Jewish people or customs and is a prisoner because of the hope of Israel (Acts 28:17-20).
- 2) The Jewish leaders respond that they have not received any letters from Judea concerning him and want to hear his views because people everywhere are talking against this sect (Acts 28:21-22).

b. Paul's testimony about the kingdom of God (Acts 28:23-24):

- 1) They arrange to meet Paul on a certain day; a large number of people come to his lodging, and he explains and testifies about the kingdom of God from morning till evening, trying to persuade them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and the Prophets (Acts 28:23).
- 2) Some are convinced by what he says, but others do not believe (Acts 28:24).

c. Paul's final warning to the Jews (Acts 28:25-28):

- 1) Paul quotes the prophecy of Isaiah (Isaiah 6:9-10), declaring that the Holy Spirit spoke the truth about the people's hardened hearts and inability to understand (Acts 28:25-27).
- 2) He declares that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen (Acts 28:28).

d. Paul's two-year ministry in Rome (Acts 28:30-31):

- 1) Paul stays in his own rented house for two full years, welcoming all who come to see him (Acts 28:30).
- 2) He proclaims the kingdom of God and teaches about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance (Acts 28:31).

Paul's ministry in Rome demonstrates his unwavering commitment to spreading the gospel, despite being under house arrest. His engagement with the Jewish leaders, his bold proclamation of the kingdom of God, and his continuous welcoming of visitors underline the relentless nature of his mission. This period of his life in Rome highlights the resilience and dedication necessary for effective ministry, serving as an inspiration for believers to persevere in their faith and witness, regardless of circumstances.

Summary:

1. **Paul's Stay On Malta (Acts 28:1-10):** After surviving the shipwreck, Paul and the other survivors discover they are on the island of Malta. The islanders show them unusual kindness, and Paul is miraculously unharmed after being bitten by a viper, leading the locals to believe he is a god. Paul also heals the father of Publius, the island's chief official, and many others who are sick, resulting in the people honoring them and providing the supplies needed for their journey.
2. **Journey To Rome (Acts 28:11-16):** After three months on Malta, Paul and his companions set sail on an Alexandrian ship and make their way to Rome. They stop at various ports, including Syracuse and Rhegium, before reaching Puteoli, where they stay with local believers for seven days. Upon arriving in Rome, Paul is met by brethren from the city, and he is allowed to live by himself with a soldier guarding him.
3. **Paul's Ministry In Rome (Acts 28:17-31):** In Rome, Paul calls together the local Jewish leaders to explain his situation. Despite some scepticism, he passionately shares his testimony and teaches about the kingdom of God from the Law of Moses and the Prophets. Some are convinced, while others are not. Citing Isaiah, Paul addresses the spiritual blindness of some Jews and declares that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles. Over the next two years, Paul continues to preach boldly and without hindrance, welcoming all who come to hear him.

This chapter chronicles the final stages of Paul's journey to Rome, his impactful stay on Malta, and his unwavering commitment to ministry in the heart of the Roman Empire. Paul's experiences on Malta highlight God's protection and healing power, while his ministry in Rome showcases his dedication to spreading the gospel despite being under house arrest. This section emphasizes themes of divine provision, the power of testimony, and the spread of the Christian message to both Jews and Gentiles.

Applications:

1. **Demonstrating Faith In God's Protection (Acts 28:3-6):** When Paul was bitten by a viper, he showed no fear or panic, trusting in God's protection. This application encourages us to remain calm and faithful when facing unexpected dangers or challenges. By trusting in God's power and protection, we can navigate through life's uncertainties with confidence and peace.
2. **Extending Kindness To Strangers (Acts 28:2):** The unusual kindness shown by the islanders of Malta to the shipwrecked survivors highlights the importance of hospitality and compassion. This teaches us to extend kindness and support to strangers and those in need, reflecting Christ's love through our actions and creating a welcoming environment for others.
3. **Sharing God's Healing Power (Acts 28:8-9):** Paul's healing of Publius' father and others on Malta demonstrates the impact of sharing God's healing power. This application encourages us to pray for and support those who are sick or suffering, believing in God's ability to heal and bring comfort. Our prayers and acts of service can be powerful testimonies of God's love and power in our communities.

These applications encourage us to live out our faith with trust in God's protection, kindness toward strangers, and a commitment to sharing God's healing power. By demonstrating faith in God's promises, extending hospitality and compassion, and actively participating in the ministry of healing, we can reflect Christ's love in tangible ways. Through these actions, we not only strengthen our own faith but also create a positive impact on those around us, showcasing the transformative power of God's love and grace.

Key Points:

1. **Paul's Stay On Malta (Acts 28:1-10):** After being shipwrecked, Paul and the other survivors find themselves on the island of Malta. The islanders show them unusual kindness by building a fire to welcome and warm them (Acts 28:1-2). While gathering brushwood, Paul is bitten by a viper. The islanders initially think he is a murderer destined to die, but when he suffers no ill effects, they change their minds and believe he is a god (Acts 28:3-6). Paul then heals the father of Publius, the chief official of the island, who is suffering from fever and dysentery. Following this miracle, other sick people on the island come to Paul and are healed. The islanders honor Paul and his companions and provide them with supplies for their journey (Acts 28:7-10).
2. **Journey To Rome (Acts 28:11-16):** After three months, Paul and his companions set sail on an Alexandrian ship with the figurehead of the twin gods Castor and Pollux. They stop at Syracuse for three days, then sail to Rhegium and finally to Puteoli (Acts 28:11-13). In Puteoli, they find some brothers who invite them to stay for seven days. Upon arriving in Rome, the believers there come to meet Paul at the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns. Paul is allowed to live by himself with a soldier to guard him (Acts 28:14-16).
3. **Paul's Ministry In Rome (Acts 28:17-31):** Paul calls together the local Jewish leaders to explain his situation, stating that he is a prisoner because of the hope of Israel (Acts 28:17-20). They express interest in hearing his views, as they are aware that the Christian sect is spoken against everywhere (Acts 28:21-22). On an appointed day, many come to Paul's lodging, where he explains and testifies about the kingdom of God, trying to persuade them about Jesus from the Law of Moses and the Prophets. Some are convinced, but others do not believe (Acts 28:23-24). Paul then quotes the prophecy of Isaiah, declaring that the people's hearts are hardened and they are unable to understand. He states that God's salvation has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will listen (Acts 28:25-28). Paul stays in his own rented house for two full years, welcoming all who come to see him. He proclaims the kingdom of God and teaches about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance (Acts 28:30-31).

These key points highlight the themes of divine protection, unwavering faith, and the spread of the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles through Paul's ministry. They emphasize the resilience and dedication of Paul in fulfilling his mission despite the numerous challenges he faced.

Questions:

1. Where did Paul and his companions land after being shipwrecked (**Acts 28:1**)?
2. How did the islanders initially respond to the survivors from the shipwreck (**Acts 28:2**)?
3. What happened to Paul when he gathered a bundle of brushwood on Malta (**Acts 28:3-5**)?
4. Whose father did Paul heal when he reached the home of Publius on Malta (**Acts 28:7-8**)?
5. How long did Paul and his companions stay in Syracuse (**Acts 28:12**)?
6. Where did Paul and his companions find brothers in Puteoli who invited them to stay for seven days (**Acts 28:14**)?
7. Who came to meet Paul as he journeyed toward Rome (**Acts 28:15**)?
8. How did Paul describe his situation to the Jewish leaders when he called them together (**Acts 28:17-20**)?
9. What did Paul teach and proclaim to the Jews in Rome during his two-year stay (**Acts 28:30-31**)?
- 10 According to Paul, who would listen to the salvation of God after the Jews rejected it (**Acts 28:28**)?

ARTICLES

HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISM

Eugene Britnell

Those who believe that miraculous gifts are in evidence today contend that people other than the apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Some say this included the 120 (Acts 1:15). Others say that all who were converted on that day received Holy Spirit baptism. Some even contend that the new birth today includes Holy Spirit baptism.

The Bible teaches that only the apostles received the baptismal measure of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

In the first place, the Lord promised the Holy Spirit to the apostles only. Read John chapters 14, 15 and 16. Speaking to the apostles (Acts 1:2) just before his ascension, Jesus said, "... but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence" (Acts 1:5). They were sent to Jerusalem (Acts 1:4) to wait for that promise which was fulfilled on Pentecost.

In addition, the language of Acts 1 and 2 proves that to be true. We are told in Acts 2:1, "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place." Who were the "they"? When chapter one closes, the subjects are Matthias and the eleven apostles. We know that a personal pronoun refers to the antecedent noun. The "they" of Acts 2:1 refers to the apostles. Note the following: The sound filled the house where "they" were; there appeared unto "them" tongues; "they" were all filled with the Holy Spirit; the multitude heard "them" speak. They said "these men," but there were women among the 120 (Acts 1:14). "But Peter, standing up with the eleven" (Acts 2:14), not the 120 or the thousands who gathered. When the people wanted to know what to do for the remission of sins, they addressed their question to "Peter and to the rest of the apostles" (Acts 2:37). Evidently they believed that the apostles only had received power and knowledge through the Holy Spirit, and, therefore, could answer their question.

When the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles, they were able to "speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). The result was: "Every man heard them speak in his own language" (v. 6). The people discussed what this could mean, and asked, "How hear we, every man in our own language, wherein we were born?" (v. 8).

The crowd was composed of "Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven" (v. 5). There would have been many different languages represented (Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, etc.). But what amazed the people was that they could hear and recognize the languages spoken by the apostles as "their own language" yet they knew that the apostles were all Galileans (Acts 2:7) and therefore, unaided by miraculous power, could speak only the same language - their native tongue.

The people today who claim to speak in tongues will not give honest consideration to these facts. They know that they cannot speak in foreign languages which they have never learned. So, to deceive people (and perhaps themselves on some cases), they speak gibberish; a meaningless jargon which is not a recognized language of any people, and unknown to both God and man!

The Spirit enabled the apostles to speak in languages which were known to the hearers but which had not been learned by the speakers. No man or woman living today can do that!

I now invite your consideration to a clear lesson from Acts chapter eight.

Because of persecution in Jerusalem, the disciples were scattered. Philip went to Samaria and preached Christ. He confirmed his message by miracles (verses 7-8). As a result, those who believed "were baptized, both men and women" (v. 12). Thus the church was established in Samaria. But then we read, "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost" (verses 14-17).

Now some questions and conclusions are in order. Since Philip could perform miracles, why didn't he impart the Holy Spirit to the new disciples through his hands? Answer: Only an apostle could do this. Where did Philip get his power? Answer: From the apostles. Why did the apostles in Jerusalem send Peter and John to Samaria to lay hands on some? Answer: Only apostles, who had received Holy Spirit baptism, could lay hands on others and thus enable them to perform miracles. But those who had received such power from the apostles could not pass it on to others (as we see in the case of Philip). Therefore, the conclusion must be: When the apostles and those upon whom they had laid their hands all died, miracles ceased!

Did Simon The Sorcerer Fall From Grace?

Heath Rogers

Many religious minded people around us believe that a saved person can never be lost. In fact, some have gone so far as to claim that a Christian can denounce their faith, commit heinous sins, and beg to go to Hell, but they will still be saved forever by God's grace. This false doctrine goes by different designations, but most identify it as "Once Saved, Always Saved."

When studying this error with people, I have repeatedly heard the affirmation, "If a Christian ever loses his salvation and ends up in Hell he was never saved to begin with." That is a desperate claim with no support from Scripture. In fact, the conversion and fall of Simon the Sorcerer shows this claim to be false.

In Acts chapter 8, Philip traveled to Samaria and preached Christ. The multitudes believed his preaching and were baptized. Among them was a notorious sorcerer named Simon who had fooled the people of that area into believing he was the great power of God. He was converted and was numbered among the believers (Acts 8:5-13).

The apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the gospel. Peter and John were sent to give them the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit. When Simon saw the apostles performing this great act, he offered them money to be able to perform this deed as well. Peter rebuked Simon and told him to repent and pray for the forgiveness of his sins (Acts 8:14-24).

According to Peter, Simon was in a lost condition. Read verses 20-23 very carefully. Simon was destined to perish (saved people do not perish – John 3:16), his heart was not right in the sight of God, he was involved in wickedness, he was poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity. He needed to repent and pray for forgiveness.

Now, our "Once Saved, Always Saved" friends would agree that Simon was lost, but they would insist that he never was saved to begin with. However, a careful reading of the text shows otherwise. Luke records Simon's conversion with the following words: "But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. Then Simon himself also believed; and when he was baptized he continued with Philip, and was amazed, seeing the miracles and signs which were done" (Acts 8:12-13).

Please notice that Simon did the same exact things as the rest of the Samaritans – "Simon himself also believed... he was baptized." If Simon was not saved, neither were any of the rest of the Samaritans.

The New Testament is filled with teachings that contradict the false doctrine of "Once Saved, Always Saved." The clearest passage is when Paul told the Galatians, "You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4). You cannot be estranged from someone to whom you were not first joined, and you cannot fall from something you do not have.

The only safe course to follow is to allow the Bible to mean what it says. Eternal security is available to every Christian – on the grounds that we remain faithful until death (Hebrews 10:36; Revelation 2:10).

The First Council Of Churches

Acts 15

Hugh DeLong

First Council of Churches - Acts 15

Acts 15 is often used as 'authority' for having 'universal church councils' to decide orthodox teaching. The problem is that what happened in Acts 15 is NOT what takes place in any of these councils.

First, as Gareth Reese wrote in his commentary on Acts, “this meeting was not to figure out what they were going to believe. That had already been determined for them by revelation!” (pg. 536). This refers back to the fact that God had revealed such thru Peter and the case of Cornelius.

This meeting wasn't a universal church council – it was made up of specific members of the church in Antioch and the leaders of the church in Jerusalem, which included the apostles. Even as early as this meeting took place there were many other churches scattered throughout Judea, Samaria, Syria, and Galatia. They were not included in this meeting.

Apostles were in the foundation of the church and were not replaced. They were unique in both the requirements of their office and the work that they did. Acts 1 shows that the replacement for Judas (the only recorded replacement of any apostle) was to have 1) accompanied the other apostles during the lifetime of Jesus beginning from the baptism of John until the ascension; and 2) to have been a witness of the resurrected Jesus. There are no such qualified men since the 1st century. There can then be no council like the meeting in Acts 15.

Apostles were the primary men used to reveal the Word of God. Paul wrote that God was now revealing the new teachings “through the apostles and prophets by the Spirit” (Ephesians 3:3-5). The revelation is complete and needs no further additions. The writings of modern councils may be seen as 'church law' by some but are never to be held as the Word of God.

This council came to an inspired conclusion given by the Holy Spirit. They could write that “it seemed good to us, and to the Holy Spirit” (Acts 15:28). The best that modern councils can do is give a studied opinion, and such opinions are often based more on worldly issues than the word of God.

The meeting in Jerusalem came about BECAUSE “some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions” (Acts 15:24). Teaching is shown to be truth by showing it is what the apostles instructed and NOT by a vote of men. Any teaching today is only authoritative in that it reflects and shows the teachings that we have from the apostles. In the end, it is the word of God that we must be guided by and not the decrees and edicts of men. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4).

This meeting then wrote inspired directives for ALL the churches. Such were NOT just the studied opinions of men on what the bible teaches about some subject. The decrees were to be taught to ALL believers.

These councils often purposely excluded those who disagreed with the opinion of those who made up the council. This gave the appearance of unanimous orthodox teaching, but such was deceptive. Later councils often changed such 'accepted' teaching. While such councils often claim to be guided by the Spirit (or claiming that they are under the guidance of an infallible leader in the pope), they have no authority to write inspired scripture. Their edicts and commands at best influence those that are aligned with their group but have no authority over all of God's people.

The whole concept of modern church councils is built upon the faulty concept of modern church structure. While acknowledging the 'universal church' (i.e., ALL those who are in Christ) and the 'local church' (those who live and worship together), there has been added a level of organization above the local level but admittedly is not the whole of believers. Such further organizes its self into geographical and political areas. There develops an authority ladder where each level is seen as 'above' the other. Such structure developed after the time of the apostles and has no basis in the word of God.

The disciples continued steadfastly in the Apostle's teaching (Acts 2:42). If anyone taught differently they were considered accursed (Galatians 1:18-19). We are to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly, not the edicts of men (cp. Colossians 3:16-17). If we follow any of the teachings of such councils, it is only because they are in agreement with what the apostles had already revealed. As such then, we are NOT following the writings of the councils, but the word of God. Prove all things and hold fast to that which is good (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

THE CONVERSION OF LYDIA

Jack McNiel

We are thankful that the Bible not only gives us commandments but also shows us how these were applied. All throughout the book of Acts we have various acts of conversion. One of the least known is that of Lydia. We want to look at the background and conversion of Lydia.

The Open Door - Acts 16:6-8

The Holy Spirit forbade that Paul and his company should go to the right hand or the left. So, they went forward until they came to Troas, thus stopped by the Aegean Sea. Paul had in mind one thing and the Holy Spirit had something else in mind.

Paul was going to evangelize a province, but the Holy Spirit had in mind an entire continent.

The Open Opportunity - Acts 16:9-10

Instructions are given to Paul on where he is to go next by means of a vision. He saw a man in Macedonia saying, "*Come over and help us.*"

When Paul told his company what he had seen, here was their conclusion, "*assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.*"

The Lord is doing for Lydia and others what he had done previously for others.

"And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert. And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship, Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet. Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot."

- Acts 10:19-22
- John 7:17

God saw the honesty of Lydia, the other women, the jailer, and others.

We sing a song based upon this event, *Send the Light*, #572 in our hymn book.

"There's a call comes ringing o'er the restless wave, 'Send the light! Send the light' There are souls to rescue, there are souls to save, Send the light! Send the light!

Chorus: Send the light the blessed gospel light; Let it shine from shore to shore! Send the light the blessed gospel light; Let it shine forevermore!

We have heard the Macedonian call today, 'Send the light! Send the light!' And a golden offering at the cross we lay, Send the light! Send the light!" - by Charles H. Gabriel, 1890.

The Open Ship - Acts 16:11-12

Now that Paul and his company know where they are going, how are they going to get there? No doubt there would be ships going to Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, etc., but would there be one going to Macedonia?

Not only was there one going to Macedonia, but it is going to get there in record time. Later, it took them five days to retrace these steps, Acts 20:6. The waters were probably very rough. So, after the return to Troas, Paul decides to walk to the next location, Acts 20:13.

On this initial trip across the Aegean Sea, the question was, would there be room for Paul and his company? Thus, we see the providential care of God in all of this.

The Open Assembly - Acts 16:13

Where were the men of the city?

She could have reasoned, *“Well, there are no men here so we will forget about worship.”* Lydia was some three hundred miles away from home. She could do like many so-called Christians and have the attitude that, *“No one will know if I have worshiped God or not while out of town.”*

A true Christian is one *“on location.”* This means that no matter what the location, one is a Christian first.

Lydia was a businesswoman, but on the Sabbath she closed down her work to remember the God who had created her. She was a great influence on those of her household.

The Open Heart - Acts 16:14-15

The purple dye was the costliest of that day. Only the finest of linens were dyed purple. Royalty wore purple. To be arrayed in purple and fine linen, was to be rich.

Her business would have required much capital. She was either a Jewess or a proselyte. We do not know which one and it does not matter.

She worshipped God! The Lord opened her heart.

Brother J.W. McGarvey asked a man what this statement meant.

He replied that Lydia was totally depraved and could not understand anything spiritually until God opened her heart. Brother McGarvey answered, *“You do not know much about this woman for she was observing the Sabbath and worshiping God before she had her heart open. How could a totally depraved woman do this?”*

Many believe that it takes a direct operation of the Holy Spirit to open the heart before one can be converted. Notice, she heard AND UNDERSTOOD the word Paul before her heart was opened.

“But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me” - Acts 26:16-18.

What is the difference between opening eyes and opening hearts?

How did God open her heart?

She knew only the teachings of Moses. Paul taught her about Jesus and the kingdom so that her eyes and heart could be opened to New Testament Christianity.

● Matthew 13:15

Jesus gave the order, they see with their eyes, they hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, then they would be converted. Once we have an understanding heart, once we have understood God's word we can be converted, and healed.

The Eunuch, Cornelius, Saul and Lydia all needed to have their eyes and hearts opened. The same is true of Apollos, me, you and others.

We need to have our hearts open. We need to be like the Bereans, who received the word and searched the scriptures, Acts 17:11.

We must hear the word of God, with understanding. It's not enough to be a hearer only, but also we must be a doer. We must believe in Jesus as the Son of God, and repent of our sins, and confess His name to be baptized for cleansing of our sins so we can be converted and walk a new and faithful life, like Lydia.

The Sons Of Sceva: A Cautionary Tale Of Spiritual Authority And Authentic Faith

David Cambridge

In the bustling city of Ephesus, amidst Paul's impactful ministry, an extraordinary incident unfolded that highlighted the critical nature of genuine spiritual authority and authentic faith. This episode, involving the seven sons of Sceva, provides profound lessons on the dangers of attempting spiritual feats without true divine empowerment.

Context And Background

Acts 19:13-16:

Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. One day the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?" Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding.

Attempted Exorcism By The Sons Of Sceva

The sons of Sceva were itinerant Jewish exorcists who sought to harness the power associated with the name of Jesus. They attempted to cast out demons by saying, "In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out" (Acts 19:13). Their actions reveal an awareness of the effectiveness of invoking Jesus' name, yet it also exposes their lack of a personal relationship with Him. Notably, their father, Sceva, is identified as a Jewish chief priest, suggesting that the sons held some religious authority or background. However, their use of Jesus' name was purely formulaic, lacking genuine faith or understanding.

The Evil Spirit's Response

During one of their exorcism attempts, the evil spirit responded, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?" (Acts 19:15). This chilling reply underscores the spirit's recognition of the true authority of Jesus and His apostle Paul, while simultaneously dismissing the sons of Sceva as having no real spiritual power. This moment highlights a crucial truth: spiritual authority is not something that can be second-hand or superficially appropriated. It is intrinsically linked to a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ.

The Violent Outcome

The encounter escalated dramatically when the possessed man, empowered by the evil spirit, attacked and overpowered the seven sons of Sceva. The beating was so severe that they fled the house naked and bleeding (Acts 19:16). This violent and humiliating outcome serves as a stark warning about the dangers of engaging in spiritual warfare without proper authority and faith. The incident reveals the stark contrast between the true divine empowerment Paul exhibited and the reckless and misguided attempts of those lacking genuine spiritual grounding.

Significance And Implications

The incident of the sons of Sceva reverberated throughout Ephesus, impacting both the Jewish and Greek communities. The event instilled a heightened sense of reverence for the name of the Lord Jesus. As news of the failed exorcism spread, it led to a dramatic public repentance among those who practiced sorcery. Many brought their scrolls and burned them publicly, symbolizing their renunciation of former practices and their commitment to the Christian faith (Acts 19:17-19). This collective act of repentance not only reflected the transformative power of genuine faith but also underscored the purifying effect such events can have on a community.

Furthermore, the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power, demonstrating that even a negative incident can result in positive spiritual growth and deeper commitment among believers (Acts 19:20). This passage serves as a powerful reminder that the authority of Jesus' name is not a tool to be used lightly or without proper reverence and relationship.

Lessons On Spiritual Warfare

The narrative of the sons of Sceva offers several key lessons on spiritual warfare:

1. **Authenticity Of Spiritual Authority:** True spiritual authority comes from a genuine relationship with Jesus Christ. The sons of Sceva's failure highlights the futility of attempting to wield spiritual power without this foundational relationship.
2. **The Reality Of Spiritual Warfare:** The violent reaction of the possessed man underscores the real and dangerous nature of spiritual warfare. It is not a realm for the unprepared or insincere.
3. **Impact Of Genuine Faith:** The transformative power of authentic faith is evident in the widespread repentance and the burning of sorcery scrolls. True faith leads to genuine change and growth within the community.

Conclusion

The account of the sons of Sceva is more than a dramatic story; it is a profound lesson on the necessity of genuine faith and divine authority in spiritual matters. It underscores the peril of superficial or second-hand spirituality and highlights the power and reverence due to the name of Jesus Christ. This incident not only serves as a cautionary tale but also as a catalyst for deeper faith and commitment among the early Christians in Ephesus, leading to the continued spread and strengthening of the early church.

Questions And Answers

Lesson 0

1. Who is traditionally believed to be the author of the book of Acts (**Acts 1:1-4**)?

The author of the book of Acts is traditionally believed to be Luke, the physician (**Acts 1:1-4**).

2. What is the purpose and theme of the book of Acts (**Acts 1:8**)?

The book of Acts chronicles the early history of the Christian Church, with an emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit and the spread of the Gospel (**Acts 1:8**).

3. What relationship does the book of Acts have with the Gospel of Luke (**Acts 1:1-3; Luke 1:1-4**)?

Acts is a sequel to the Gospel of Luke, continuing the narrative and likely written by Luke. Both books are addressed to Theophilus (**Acts 1:1-3; Luke 1:1-4**).

4. When is the estimated date of the writing of the book of Acts (see lesson)?

The book of Acts is believed to have been written around A.D. 62-63 (Estimated date based on historical context).

5. What key event does the book of Acts begin with (**Acts 1:9-11**)?

The book of Acts begins with the account of the Ascension of Jesus into heaven (**Acts 1:9-11**).

6. What is the significance of the Day of Pentecost in Acts (**Acts 2:1-41**)?

The Day of Pentecost is significant as it marks the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles, accompanied by speaking in tongues, leading to the conversion of thousands (**Acts 2:1-41**).

7. Why was Matthias chosen to replace Judas Iscariot (**Acts 1:15-26**)?

Matthias was chosen to replace Judas Iscariot to restore the number of apostles to twelve, fulfilling the symbolic significance of the twelve tribes of Israel (**Acts 1:15-26**).

8. What significant event led to the scattering of the early disciples (**Acts 7:54-8:1**)?

The martyrdom of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, led to the scattering of the early disciples (**Acts 7:54-8:1**).

9. Who was the persecutor of Christians turned apostle, and what happened on the road to Damascus (**Acts 9:1-9**)?

Saul (later known as Paul) was the persecutor turned apostle. On the road to Damascus, he had a life-changing encounter with Jesus, leading to his conversion (**Acts 9:1-9**).

10. What decision was made at the Council of Jerusalem, and why was it significant (**Acts 15:1-29**)?

At the Council of Jerusalem, it was decided that Gentile believers did not need to be circumcised to join the Christian community. This decision was significant in defining the relationship between Jewish and Gentile followers of Christ (**Acts 15:1-29**).

Lesson 1

1. What did Jesus command the apostles before His ascension (**Acts 1:4**)?

Jesus commanded the apostles not to depart from Jerusalem but to wait for the promise of the Holy Spirit (**Acts 1:4**).

2. What did the apostles witness on the Mount of Olives (**Acts 1:9-11**)?

The apostles witnessed Jesus ascending into heaven from the Mount of Olives (**Acts 1:9-11**).

3. What specific mission did Jesus assign to the apostles before His ascension (**Acts 1:8**)?

Jesus assigned the apostles the mission to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (**Acts 1:8**).

4. How many apostles were gathered in the upper room, waiting for the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:15)?

There were about 120 disciples, including the apostles, gathered in the upper room (Acts 1:15).

5. What did Peter propose to address the vacancy left by Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:15-20)?

Peter proposed selecting a replacement for Judas Iscariot to bring the apostolic group back to twelve members (Acts 1:15-20).

6. What qualifications were required for someone to replace Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:21-22)?

The replacement needed to have been with the apostles from the beginning of Jesus' ministry until His ascension (Acts 1:21-22).

7. How was the choice made between the two nominated candidates to replace Judas (Acts 1:23-26)?

The apostles prayed and then cast lots to determine God's choice between the two candidates (Acts 1:23-26).

8. What was the method used to seek God's guidance in making decisions in the Old Testament (Acts 1:26; Proverbs 16:33)?

Casting lots was a method commonly used to seek God's guidance in the Old Testament (Acts 1:26; Proverbs 16:33).

9. Where did the apostles return after witnessing Jesus' ascension (Acts 1:13)?

The apostles returned to the upper room in Jerusalem (Acts 1:13).

10. What were the apostles doing in the upper room while waiting for the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:14)?

The apostles were devoted to prayer and supplication in the upper room, demonstrating their unity (Acts 1:14).

Lesson 2

1. What significant event marks the beginning of the Church (Acts 2:1-13)?

Answer: The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles on the Day of Pentecost.

2. How did the crowd react to the apostles speaking in tongues on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:6-8, 13)?

Answer: Some were amazed and marvelled, while others mocked, accusing the apostles of drunkenness.

3. What Old Testament prophecy did Peter cite to explain the events of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21)?

Answer: Peter quoted Joel's prophecy about the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the last days.

4. According to Peter's sermon, who did he declare Jesus to be (Acts 2:36)?

Answer: Peter declared Jesus as both Lord and Christ (Messiah).

5. What explanation did Peter provide for Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection (Acts 2:23-32)?

Answer: Peter explained that although Jesus was crucified by human hands, God raised Him from the dead, fulfilling the prophecy of King David.

6. What was the response of the crowd to Peter's sermon (Acts 2:37)?

Answer: The crowd was convicted of their sins and asked Peter what they should do.

7. What were the two actions Peter instructed the crowd to take in response to his sermon (Acts 2:38)?

Answer: Peter instructed them to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins.

8. To what does the term "fellowship" (koinōnia) refer (Acts 2:42)?

Answer: Fellowship refers to sharing in common, including spiritual activities, communal meals, and mutual support among believers.

9. How did the early Christians demonstrate their radical generosity and compassion (Acts 2:44-45)?

Answer: They shared their possessions and resources with one another, selling their belongings to meet the needs of those in the community.

10. What was the result of the early believers' devotion to teaching, fellowship, and generosity (Acts 2:47)?

Answer: The early church experienced rapid growth, with new believers being added daily, demonstrating the transformative power of their faith and community life.

Lesson 3

1. What was the significance of the Gate Beautiful in Jerusalem, and why was it a notable location for the miraculous healing (Acts 3:1-3)?

Answer: The Gate Beautiful was one of the entrances to the temple in Jerusalem, renowned for its grandeur and significance. It served as a focal point for worshippers entering the temple for prayers and sacrifices. The location was also significant for acts of charity and almsgiving, highlighting the intersection of religious devotion and social responsibility (Acts 3:2-3).

2. How did Peter and John respond to the lame beggar's plea for alms, and what did their response reveal about their faith and authority (Acts 3:6-8)?

Answer: Peter and John, upon encountering the beggar, acknowledged their lack of material wealth but offered something far greater: healing in the name of Jesus Christ. Their response demonstrated their faith in the power of Jesus and their authority as His disciples to bring about miraculous change (Acts 3:6).

3. What was the immediate reaction of the formerly lame beggar to his healing, and what significance did it hold for the witnesses (Acts 3:8-10)?

Answer: The beggar, overwhelmed by the sudden restoration of his mobility, exhibited joy and astonishment. He leaped up, walked, and praised God, demonstrating the immediate and complete nature of his healing. His reaction served as a public testimony to the power of God and the reality of Jesus' resurrection, inspiring awe and belief among the witnesses (Acts 3:9-10).

4. How did Peter redirect the crowd's amazement at the miraculous healing toward a deeper understanding of Jesus' role in the event (Acts 3:12-15)?

Answer: Peter clarified that the healing was not through his own power or piety but through the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. He emphasized Jesus' identity as the Holy and Righteous One, whom the crowd had rejected and crucified but whom God had raised from the dead. By attributing the miracle directly to Jesus, Peter redirected the crowd's focus to the divine authority and sovereignty of Christ (Acts 3:13-15).

5. What was the central message of Peter's sermon in Solomon's Portico, and how did he call the crowd to respond (Acts 3:17-19)?

Answer: Peter accused the crowd of acting in ignorance in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ but offered them hope and redemption through repentance. He urged them to turn from their sins, repent, and seek forgiveness, promising times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord as a result (Acts 3:17-19).

6. What prophetic fulfillment did Peter emphasize in his sermon, and how did he connect it to Jesus Christ (Acts 3:22-24)?

Answer: Peter affirmed Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of Moses' prophecy regarding a prophet like himself whom God would raise up. He highlighted Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah foretold by all the prophets since Samuel, proclaiming Him as the ultimate source of blessing and redemption for all who believe (Acts 3:22-24).

7. How did Peter emphasize the role of faith in Jesus Christ for spiritual healing and restoration (Acts 3:16)?

Answer: Peter underscored that it was through faith in the name of Jesus that the beggar had been made strong and whole. He highlighted the inseparable connection between faith and miraculous intervention, challenging the crowd to recognize the transformative power of belief in Jesus Christ (Acts 3:16).

8. What promise did Peter offer to those who repented, and what was its significance (Acts 3:20-21)?

Answer: Peter promised “times of refreshing” from the presence of the Lord to those who repented and turned to God. This promise signified spiritual renewal and revitalization, rooted in the prophetic expectation of the restoration of all things through Jesus Christ. It offered hope for a transformed future for those who embraced repentance and faith (Acts 3:20-21).

9. How did the formerly lame beggar's response to his healing serve as a testimony to the crowd (Acts 3:9-11)?

Answer: The beggar's exuberant response of walking, leaping, and praising God served as a public testimony to the power of God and the reality of Jesus' resurrection. His visible transformation not only changed his physical condition but also ignited a spiritual awakening within him, leading him to glorify God and bear witness to His mighty deeds (Acts 3:9-11).

10. What invitation did Peter extend to the crowd at the conclusion of his sermon, and what was the significance of this invitation (Acts 3:26)?

Answer: Peter invited the crowd to participate in the blessings of the new covenant established in Jesus Christ, emphasizing that God had sent His Son to bless them by turning them from their wicked ways. This invitation signified the offer of salvation and restoration to all who would believe in Jesus Christ, emphasizing the universal scope of God's grace and mercy (Acts 3:26).

Lesson 4

1. What characterized the unity among the early Christians (Acts 4:32-35)?

Answer: The early Christians were of one heart and soul, and they shared everything they had, ensuring that no one among them lacked basic necessities.

2. Who was Barnabas, and what did he do according (Acts 4:36-37)?

Answer: Barnabas, also known as Joseph, was called the “son of encouragement” by the apostles. He sold a field he owned and brought the proceeds to the apostles' feet to support the needs of the brethren.

3. What was the response of the brethren after Peter and John's report (Acts 4:23-24)?

Answer: The brethren responded with prayer and praise to God, acknowledging His sovereignty and seeking His empowerment to continue their mission in the face of opposition.

4. For what did the brethren pray (Acts 4:29-30)?

Answer: The brethren prayed for boldness to continue speaking the word of God while God performed signs and wonders in the name of Jesus.

5. How did God respond to the brethren's prayer (Acts 4:31)?

Answer: After the brethren prayed, the place where they were gathered was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, enabling them to speak the word of God with boldness.

6. What characterized the response of Peter and John to the council's command not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:19-20)?

Answer: Peter and John asserted that they must obey God rather than men, demonstrating their unwavering commitment to proclaiming the Gospel despite opposition.

7. Why were the religious leaders unable to find a way to punish Peter and John (Acts 4:21)?

Answer: The religious leaders were unable to punish Peter and John because of the people, who witnessed the miraculous healing and supported the apostles.

8. What did Peter proclaim about salvation (**Acts 4:12**)?

Answer: Peter proclaimed that there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved, emphasizing the exclusivity of Jesus Christ as the Savior.

9. How did the council respond to Peter and John's boldness (**Acts 4:13-18**)?

Answer: The council was astonished by the boldness of Peter and John, recognizing them as having been with Jesus. Despite their recognition, the council commanded Peter and John not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus.

10. What characterized the brethren's generosity (**Acts 4:32-35**)?

Answer: The brethren shared everything they had, ensuring that there were no needy persons among them. They voluntarily sold their possessions and brought the proceeds to the apostles' feet for distribution to anyone who had need.

Lesson 5

1. What was the sin committed by Ananias and Sapphira (**Acts 5:1-2**)?

Answer: Ananias and Sapphira lied about the proceeds from the sale of their property and withheld a portion of the money, deceiving the apostles and the church.

2. What were the consequences of Ananias and Sapphira's deception (**Acts 5:5-10**)?

Answer: Both Ananias and Sapphira fell dead after being confronted by Peter about their deceitful actions regarding the sale of their property. Their deception resulted in divine judgment.

3. How did the apostles perform signs and wonders among the people (**Acts 5:12-16**)?

Answer: The apostles performed signs and wonders through the power of the Holy Spirit, including healings and the expulsion of demons, which captivated the attention of the people.

4. Why were the religious authorities threatened by the apostles (**Acts 5:17-18**)?

Answer: The religious authorities were threatened by the apostles' growing popularity and the miraculous works they performed among the people, which challenged their authority and control.

5. How did God intervene to rescue the apostles from prison (**Acts 5:19-21**)?

Answer: God intervened by sending an angel to miraculously open the prison doors during the night, allowing the apostles to escape and continue preaching the Gospel.

6. What was Peter's response when questioned by the council (**Acts 5:27-32**)?

Answer: Peter boldly proclaimed the apostles' allegiance to God rather than men and affirmed Jesus' exaltation as Savior and Prince, accusing the council of crucifying Jesus.

7. Who advised caution to the council regarding their treatment of the apostles (**Acts 5:33-39**)?

Answer: Gamaliel, a respected Pharisee and teacher of the Law, advised caution to the council, warning them against opposing the work of God and citing historical precedents.

8. How did the apostles react to the council's command not to speak in the name of Jesus (**Acts 5:40-42**)?

Answer: The apostles rejoiced in their suffering for Christ, considering it a privilege to suffer for His sake, and continued to preach the name of Jesus despite persecution.

9. What lessons can believers learn from Ananias and Sapphira's deception (Acts 5:1-11)?

Answer: Believers can learn the importance of honesty, integrity, and transparency in their dealings with God and fellow believers, as demonstrated by the severe consequences of Ananias and Sapphira's deception.

10. How can believers apply the examples of the apostles' boldness and endurance in their own lives (Acts 5:27-32)?

Answer: Believers can apply the examples of the apostles' boldness and endurance by standing firm in their faith, boldly proclaiming the Gospel, and rejoicing in the privilege of suffering for Christ's sake, even in the face of opposition and persecution.

Lesson 6

1. Who were the individuals chosen to oversee the distribution of food in the early church (Acts 6:3-6)?

Answer: The individuals chosen were Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus.

2. What were the qualifications required for those selected to be servants (Acts 6:3)?

Answer: The qualifications required were that they should be men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit, and wisdom.

3. How did the apostles address the issue of equitable resource distribution in response to complaints within the church (Acts 6:2-3)?

Answer: The apostles summoned the disciples and proposed the selection of seven men to oversee the task.

4. What significant growth did the early church experience after the appointment of the seven servants (Acts 6:7)?

Answer: The word of God continued to spread, and the number of disciples in Jerusalem multiplied greatly.

5. Who were among those who became obedient to the faith as a result of the church's growth and the appointment of the seven servants (Acts 6:7)?

Answer: Even a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

6. What miraculous works and signs did Stephen perform among the people (Acts 6:8)?

Answer: Stephen performed great wonders and signs among the people.

7. How did Stephen respond to the opposition he faced concerning his teachings and miracles (Acts 6:10)?

Answer: Despite the opposition, Stephen remained steadfast in his faith and commitment to proclaiming the Gospel.

8. What false accusations were levelled against Stephen by certain individuals (Acts 6:11-14)?

Answer: False accusations of speaking blasphemous words against Moses and God were made against Stephen.

9. What supernatural phenomenon accompanied Stephen as he appeared before the Sanhedrin (Acts 6:15)?

Answer: Stephen's face shone like that of an angel as he stood before the Sanhedrin.

10. What significance does Stephen's testimony hold for the early church in facing challenges and opposition (Acts 6:15)?

Answer: Stephen's testimony demonstrates the unwavering faith and divine empowerment available to believers, inspiring them to stand firm in their convictions amidst adversity.

Lesson 7

1. Who is Stephen, and why is he before the Sanhedrin (Acts 7:1)?

Answer: Stephen was a prominent early Christian leader filled with the Holy Spirit who was brought before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish ruling council, to answer accusations.

2. How does Stephen begin his defense speech (Acts 7:2)?

Answer: Stephen addresses the council respectfully, calling them “Brethren and fathers” and inviting them to listen attentively with the phrase “Hear ye” (Acts 7:2).

3. According to Stephen, whom did God call to leave his homeland and travel to a new land (Acts 7:2-4)?

Answer: According to Stephen, God called Abraham to leave his homeland and travel to a new land (Acts 7:2-4). Stephen recounts the story highlighting God's appearance to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-2).

4. What reason does Stephen give for the Israelites' migration to Egypt (Acts 7:5-16)?

Answer: Stephen explains the Israelites' journey to Egypt due to a famine in Canaan, referencing Jacob and his family (Acts 7:5-16). They migrated to Egypt seeking sustenance (Genesis 41:54-57; 42:1-5).

5. Who rose to power in Egypt and helped the Israelites during their time there (Acts 7:9-16)?

Answer: Joseph, sold into slavery by his brothers, rose to power in Egypt and helped the Israelites during their time there (Acts 7:9-16). His God-given abilities granted him a position of influence (Genesis 37:23-36; 41:41-44).

6. According to Stephen, who did God send to liberate the Israelites from Egypt (Acts 7:35-36)?

Answer: Stephen emphasizes Moses' divinely appointed role as the leader who brought the Israelites out of Egypt (Acts 7:35-36). He highlights Moses as the one sent by God (Exodus 3:1-12).

7. What does Stephen mention about the Israelites' behavior in the wilderness after their exodus from Egypt (Acts 7:43)?

Answer: Despite God's faithfulness, Stephen acknowledges the Israelites' rebellion and idolatry while wandering in the wilderness after their exodus from Egypt (Acts 7:43). They turned away from God despite His deliverance (Exodus 32).

8. What point does Stephen make about the temple, referencing the prophet Isaiah (Acts 7:47-50)?

Answer: Stephen challenges the centrality of the physical temple, arguing that God's presence is not limited to such structures (Acts 7:47-50). He cites the prophet Isaiah's words about God not dwelling in temples made by human hands (Isaiah 66:1-2).

9. How does Stephen conclude his defense speech before the Sanhedrin (Acts 7:51-53)?

Answer: Stephen intensifies his tone, accusing the Sanhedrin of hypocrisy, comparing their rejection of him to the Israelites' rejection of prophets throughout history (Acts 7:51-53).

10. What significant event occurs after Stephen's speech (Acts 7:57-60)?

Answer: The enraged Sanhedrin condemns Stephen to death by stoning (Acts 7:57). Despite this brutality, Stephen demonstrates Christ-like forgiveness by praying for his killers, solidifying his place as the first Christian martyr (Acts 7:60).

Lesson 8

1. Who was the prominent figure responsible for the persecution against the early church in Jerusalem (Acts 8:1)?

Answer: Saul, later known as Paul.

2. What was the response of the believers following Stephen's martyrdom (Acts 8:1)?

Answer: The believers were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria, except for the apostles.

3. What miraculous signs accompanied Philip's ministry in Samaria (Acts 8:6-7)?

Answer: Philip performed signs and wonders, including healing the paralyzed and lame, and casting out unclean spirits.

4. Who was Simon the Sorcerer, and what did he seek to obtain (Acts 8:9-11)?

Answer: Simon was a sorcerer in Samaria who sought to obtain spiritual power for personal gain.

5. How did Simon react when he saw the apostles laying hands on the Samaritans to receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:18-19)?

Answer: Simon offered them money, wanting to obtain the power to impart the Holy Spirit himself.

6. What was Peter's response to Simon's offer (Acts 8:20-23)?

Answer: Peter rebuked Simon, telling him to repent of his wickedness and pray for forgiveness.

7. What prompted Philip to approach the Ethiopian eunuch's chariot (Acts 8:29-30)?

Answer: The Holy Spirit prompted Philip to approach the eunuch's chariot as he was reading from the book of Isaiah.

8. What passage was the Ethiopian eunuch reading from, and how did Philip use it to preach Jesus to him (Acts 8:32-35)?

Answer: The eunuch was reading from Isaiah 53, and Philip used this passage to preach Jesus to him, starting from there and explaining the good news about Jesus.

9. What was the response of the Ethiopian eunuch when they came to some water along the road (Acts 8:36-37)?

Answer: The eunuch asked Philip what prevented him from being baptized, expressing his belief that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

10. What happened to Philip after baptizing the eunuch (Acts 8:39)?

Answer: The Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch continued on his way rejoicing.

Lesson 9

1. How did Saul's conversion impact his immediate actions and identity as a follower of Jesus (Acts 9:19-20)?

Answer: Saul's conversion led to an immediate change in his behavior as he began preaching Jesus as the Son of God in the synagogues of Damascus, astonishing those who heard him (Acts 9:19-20).

2. What reactions did Saul's preaching evoke among those who heard him in the synagogues of Damascus (Acts 9:21)?

Answer: Those who heard Saul's preaching were amazed and astonished at the transformation in his life, recognizing him as the one who formerly persecuted the followers of Jesus in Jerusalem (Acts 9:21).

3. Why did the Jews in Damascus plot to kill Saul (Acts 9:22)?

Answer: Saul's preaching provoked the Jews in Damascus, leading them to conspire to kill him for his newfound faith and bold proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah (Acts 9:22).

4. How did Saul escape from Damascus, and what does this event reveal about the early Christian community's response to persecution (Acts 9:23-25)?

Answer: The disciples in Damascus helped Saul escape by lowering him in a basket through an opening in the city wall. This event demonstrates the early Christian community's solidarity with persecuted believers and their willingness to take risks to protect one another (Acts 9:23-25).

5. Why were the disciples in Jerusalem initially hesitant to accept Saul into their midst (Acts 9:26)?

Answer: The disciples in Jerusalem were afraid of Saul, knowing his reputation as a persecutor of Christians, and were sceptical of his sudden conversion (Acts 9:26).

6. Who intervened on Saul's behalf in Jerusalem, and how did this individual's action influence Saul's acceptance by the disciples (Acts 9:27)?

Answer: Barnabas intervened on Saul's behalf, vouching for him and affirming Saul's genuine conversion. His intervention helped alleviate the disciples' concerns and fostered Saul's acceptance into the Christian community (Acts 9:27).

7. What did Saul do immediately upon his arrival in Jerusalem, and how did this action reflect his commitment to his newfound faith (Acts 9:28)?

Answer: Saul immediately began preaching boldly in the name of the Lord in Jerusalem, demonstrating his unwavering commitment to his newfound faith despite facing opposition and danger (Acts 9:28).

8. Who conspired against Saul in Jerusalem, and why (Acts 9:29)?

Answer: Certain Hellenistic Jews conspired against Saul in Jerusalem because his preaching drew opposition from them, likely due to their allegiance to the synagogue of the Freedmen and their rejection of Jesus as the Messiah (Acts 9:29).

9. How did Saul's fellow believers ensure his safety in the face of the plot against him in Jerusalem (Acts 9:30)?

Answer: Saul's fellow believers escorted him to Caesarea, a coastal city northwest of Jerusalem, to ensure his safety and enable him to continue his ministry under divine protection (Acts 9:30).

10. What summarizes Saul's conversion and its impact on the church (Acts 9:31)?

Answer: Acts 9:31 summarizes Saul's conversion by highlighting the church's growth and encouragement during a time of peace, emphasizing the interconnectedness of internal spiritual vitality and outward evangelistic fervor within the Christian community.

Lesson 10

1. Who is Cornelius, and what distinguishes him (Acts 10:1-8)?

Answer: Cornelius is a centurion stationed in Caesarea, portrayed as a devout and God-fearing man known for his acts of charity towards the Jewish people. Despite being a Gentile and a military leader, he is characterized by his integrity, piety, and reverence for God.

2. What vision does Cornelius receive, and what instructions does he receive as a result (Acts 10:3-6)?

Answer: Cornelius receives a vision where an angel instructs him to send men to Joppa to bring back Simon Peter, who is lodging with Simon, a tanner, by the sea. This vision prompts Cornelius to obey and send his servants to Joppa as instructed.

3. What vision did Peter experience and what was its significance (Acts 10:9-16)?

Answer: Peter receives a vision of a great sheet descending from heaven containing all kinds of animals, both clean and unclean according to Jewish dietary laws. This vision challenges Peter's understanding of ritual purity and prepares him for the inclusivity of God's plan of salvation, which extends beyond traditional boundaries.

4. How does Peter respond to the voice commanding him to eat (Acts 10:13-14)?

Answer: Peter objects to the voice's command, citing Jewish dietary laws that prohibit the consumption of certain animals deemed unclean. This reflects Peter's strict adherence to Jewish customs and his initial reluctance to embrace the radical inclusivity of God's redemptive plan.

5. What prompts Peter to go downstairs and meet Cornelius' messengers (Acts 10:19-20)?

Answer: The Spirit prompts Peter to go downstairs and meet Cornelius' messengers, who have arrived at the gate of Simon the tanner's house in Joppa. This divine prompting indicates the importance of Peter's encounter with Cornelius in advancing God's plan of salvation to the Gentiles.

6. How does Peter describe Jesus' ministry and resurrection in his sermon to Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:34-43)?

Answer: Peter summarizes Jesus' ministry, emphasizing His baptism by John, anointing with the Holy Spirit, acts of healing and deliverance, sacrificial death on the cross, and resurrection from the dead. He declares Jesus as Lord of all, the Judge of the living and the dead, and affirms forgiveness of sins through His name.

7. What astonishes the Jewish believers accompanying Peter (Acts 10:45)?

Answer: The Jewish believers are astonished to witness the Gentiles receiving the Holy Spirit, evidenced by speaking in tongues and praising God. This miraculous manifestation challenges their preconceived notions and confirms the inclusion of Gentiles in the community of faith.

8. How does Peter respond to the manifestation of the Holy Spirit among Cornelius and his household (Acts 10:47)?

Answer: Peter witnesses the Gentiles receiving the Holy Spirit and acknowledges its significance. Recognizing God's acceptance of the Gentiles into the community of faith, Peter commands them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, affirming their newfound status as members of the Christian community.

9. What significance does baptism hold in the narrative of Cornelius and his household, and how does it underscore their acceptance into the Christian community (Acts 10)?

Answer: Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ represents a tangible act of obedience and identification with the Christian faith for Cornelius and his household. It signifies their repentance, forgiveness of sins, and incorporation into the body of Christ, highlighting the transformative nature of their conversion experience. This act underscores their acceptance and full inclusion into the Christian community, marking a profound shift in the early church's understanding of God's inclusive plan of salvation.

10. How did the events in this chapter challenge the traditional understanding of God's chosen people and the boundaries of salvation, and what does this suggest about the universality of God's grace (Acts 10)?

Answer: The events in this chapter challenged the traditional Jewish understanding of God's chosen people by demonstrating that God's grace extends beyond ethnic and cultural boundaries. The inclusion of Gentiles like Cornelius into the Christian community shattered the notion that salvation was exclusive to the Jews. This suggests that God's grace is universal, available to all who believe in Jesus Christ, regardless of their background or ethnicity. It emphasizes the transformative power of the gospel to reconcile people to God and to one another, transcending human divisions and prejudices.

Lesson 11

1. What pivotal moment occurs in the early church in this chapter regarding the inclusion of Gentiles (Acts 11:1-18)?

Answer: Peter explains his encounter with Cornelius and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles to the church in Jerusalem.

2. Where does the expansion of the church beyond Jerusalem to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch signify a significant shift in the church's mission (Acts 11:19-21)?

Answer: The expansion to Antioch marks a pivotal shift towards inclusivity, as believers from diverse backgrounds begin sharing the gospel with Gentiles.

3. Who plays a central role in encouraging and strengthening the believers in Antioch (Acts 11:22-24)?

Answer: Barnabas demonstrates qualities of encouragement, spiritual strength, and steadfast faith.

4. Who retrieves Saul from Tarsus, initiating a significant partnership in ministry in Antioch (Acts 11:25-26)?

Answer: Barnabas retrieves Saul, setting the stage for the growth and development of the Christian community in Antioch.

5. What prophetic prediction prompts the disciples in Antioch to provide relief for Judea (**Acts 11:27-30**)?

Answer: Agabus prophesies a severe famine, prompting the disciples to demonstrate compassion and solidarity by sending relief to Judea.

6. What internal tensions arise in the early church concerning the inclusion of Gentiles (**Acts 11:1-3**)?

Answer: The circumcision party challenges Peter regarding his association with uncircumcised Gentiles, prompting a crucial dialogue about the extent of God's grace.

7. What significant shift occurs in the church's mission as believers begin sharing the gospel with Gentiles in Antioch (**Acts 11:19-21**)?

Answer: The expansion to Antioch signifies a move towards inclusivity, breaking down cultural and ethnic barriers in the spread of the gospel.

8. What character qualities are attributed to Barnabas (**Acts 11:24**)?

Answer: Barnabas is described as "a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith," exemplifying encouragement and spiritual strength.

9. What milestone event in the early church's development occurs in Antioch (**Acts 11:26**)?

Answer: It is in Antioch that the disciples are first called Christians, signifying a distinctive identity as followers of Christ.

10. How do the disciples in Antioch respond to Agabus' prophecy of the famine (**Acts 11:29-30**)?

Answer: They collect resources and send relief to Judea, demonstrating compassion and solidarity within the early Christian community.

Lesson 12

1. What miraculous event happens to Peter, and how does it illustrate divine intervention (**Acts 12:6-11**)?

Answer: Peter is miraculously freed from prison by an angel of the Lord, illustrating God's power to deliver His faithful servants in times of need.

2. How does the church respond to Peter's release from prison, and what does this reveal about the power of communal prayer (**Acts 12:12-16**)?

Answer: The church initially struggles to believe Rhoda's report of Peter's release but is filled with joy and amazement when they see him, highlighting the importance and effectiveness of communal prayer in times of crisis.

3. What fate befalls King Herod Agrippa, and what is the reason for his downfall (**Acts 12:20-23**)?

Answer: King Herod Agrippa is struck down by an angel of the Lord and dies a gruesome death because he does not give glory to God, illustrating the consequences of pride and blasphemy.

4. How does the death of Herod Agrippa demonstrate the sovereignty of God and the swift justice of divine judgment (**Acts 12:23**)?

Answer: Herod's death, as a result of divine judgment, showcases God's sovereignty and swift justice, emphasizing the biblical principle that God will not be mocked and that pride precedes destruction.

5. Despite persecution and opposition, what encouraging aspect of the church's growth is highlighted (**Acts 12:24**)?

Answer: Despite persecution and opposition, the word of God continues to spread and grow, demonstrating the unstoppable nature of God's message and the resilience of the early church.

6. Who returns to Antioch after delivering aid to believers in Judea, and what is significant about their ministry there (**Acts 12:25**)?

Answer: Barnabas and Saul return to Antioch after delivering aid to believers in Judea, signifying the continuation of their ministry and teaching activities, which contribute to the expansion and strengthening of the church.

7. What key role does Antioch play in the early Christian movement, and how does this reflect the inclusive nature of the gospel message (Acts 11:19-26)?

Answer: Antioch becomes a significant center for the early Christian movement, where believers from diverse backgrounds share the gospel message with Gentiles, highlighting the inclusive nature of God's grace and the universal appeal of the gospel.

8. How does Peter's miraculous escape from prison parallel earlier events in Acts, such as the release of Paul and Silas (Acts 12:6-11; Acts 16:25-26)?

Answer: Both instances involve divine intervention, where God supernaturally frees His faithful servants from imprisonment, underscoring the theme of God's power to deliver His people from seemingly impossible situations.

9. What role does communal prayer play, and how does it contribute to the unfolding narrative of divine intervention (Acts 12:5, 12)?

Answer: Communal prayer serves as a powerful force, as the church fervently prays for Peter's safety, leading to his miraculous release from prison and highlighting the importance of prayer in seeking God's intervention.

10. What lesson can Christians today learn from the events in this chapter regarding the sovereignty of God, the power of prayer, and the perseverance of the church in the face of adversity (Acts 12:5, 24)?

Answer: Christians today can be encouraged by the events in this chapter, recognizing God's sovereignty over all circumstances, the efficacy of prayer in seeking His intervention, and the resilience of the church in continuing to spread the gospel message despite persecution and opposition.

Lesson 13

1. What was the significance of the church at Antioch in the commissioning of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:1)?

Answer: The church at Antioch was characterized by its diversity and spiritual vitality, serving as the launching pad for the mission endeavor. It was in this vibrant community that Barnabas and Saul were set apart for their specific mission.

2. How did the prophets and teachers contribute to the church at Antioch (Acts 13:1)?

Answer: The prophets and teachers enriched the church at Antioch with their spiritual leadership, guiding and nurturing believers in their faith journey. Each individual, including Barnabas, Simeon called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen, and Saul, brought unique gifts and experiences to the community, contributing to its richness and depth of leadership.

3. What was the significance of fasting and prayer in the commissioning of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:2)?

Answer: Fasting and prayer were integral to the discernment process as the prophets and teachers sought divine guidance for the mission endeavor. Through fasting and prayer, they received specific instructions from the Holy Spirit, providing clarity and divine authority for setting apart Barnabas and Saul.

4. What does the laying on of hands signify in the commissioning of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:3)?

Answer: The laying on of hands symbolizes endorsement, empowerment, and divine blessing for Barnabas and Saul's ministry endeavors. It signifies the church's formal commissioning and support, highlighting the collaborative nature of ministry in the early church.

5. How did Barnabas and Saul demonstrate resilience in their ministry in Cyprus (Acts 13:4-12)?

Answer: Despite encountering opposition from a Jewish sorcerer named Elymas, Barnabas and Saul remained steadfast in their mission. They confronted spiritual conflict with confidence in God's power to overcome opposition, ultimately witnessing miraculous interventions that affirmed the authority of the Gospel.

6. What was the response to Paul's sermon in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:42-43)?

Answer: After Paul's sermon, many Jews and devout converts to Judaism expressed interest and invited Paul and Barnabas to speak more on the following Sabbath. This initial response indicated a positive reception among both Jews and Gentiles in the synagogue.

7. How did Paul connect Jesus to Old Testament prophecies in his sermon (Acts 13:23-25)?

Answer: Paul declared Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promise to send a Savior, citing Old Testament prophecies to support his proclamation. He highlighted John the Baptist's role as the forerunner preparing the way for Jesus, emphasizing continuity between the Old Testament prophecies and their fulfillment in Jesus.

8. What was the consequence of Paul's pronouncement of blindness upon Elymas (Acts 13:11)?

Answer: Paul's pronouncement of blindness upon Elymas served as a divine judgment against his deceit and opposition to the Gospel. It demonstrated God's intolerance of spiritual deception and His commitment to upholding His truth and righteousness.

9. How did Paul and Barnabas respond to opposition in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:51)?

Answer: Despite facing persecution and expulsion from the region, Paul and Barnabas shook the dust off their feet as a testimony against those who rejected the Gospel and proceeded to Iconium. Their response reflected their resilience and commitment to continue spreading the Gospel despite challenges.

10. What empowered Paul and Barnabas to continue their mission despite opposition and persecution (Acts 13:52)?

Answer: Paul and Barnabas were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit, enabling them to persevere in their mission despite facing adversity. This empowerment demonstrated their reliance on God's strength and the sustaining presence of the Holy Spirit in their ministry endeavors.

Lesson 14

1. What challenges did Paul and Barnabas face while preaching in Iconium (Acts 14:1-2)?

Answer: They encountered opposition from both Jews and Gentiles, yet they continued to preach boldly in the synagogue.

2. How did the people of Lystra respond to the miraculous healing of the lame man (Acts 14:8-10)?

Answer: The people of Lystra were astonished and mistook Paul and Barnabas for gods, wanting to offer sacrifices to them.

3. What cultural misunderstanding occurred in Lystra, and how did Paul and Barnabas respond (Acts 14:11-15)?

Answer: The people of Lystra mistook Paul and Barnabas for gods, with Paul as Hermes and Barnabas as Zeus. Paul and Barnabas tore their clothes and declared themselves as mere men, urging the people to turn from idolatry to the living God.

4. What violent opposition did Paul face in Lystra (Acts 14:19-20)?

Answer: Jews from Antioch and Iconium stirred up the crowd against Paul, leading to his stoning and near-death experience.

5. How did Paul and Barnabas respond to persecution in Lystra (Acts 14:20-21)?

Answer: They departed to Derbe, recognizing the need to regroup and continue their mission in a safer environment.

6. What strategic actions did Paul and Barnabas take during their return journey (Acts 14:21-23)?

Answer: They strengthened the disciples, appointed elders in every church, and encouraged believers to remain firm in the faith.

7. What significance did the appointment of elders hold for the early churches (Acts 14:23)?

Answer: Elders were entrusted with the responsibility of shepherding and overseeing the spiritual welfare of the local churches, ensuring their growth and stability.

8. How did Paul and Barnabas conclude their missionary journey (Acts 14:24-26)?

Answer: They returned to Syrian Antioch, the city from which they had been sent out, and reported back to the church, sharing about their mission trip.

9. How did the church in Antioch respond to Paul and Barnabas's report (Acts 14:27)?

Answer: The church rejoiced and celebrated the work that God had accomplished through them among the Gentiles.

10. What lessons can we learn from Paul and Barnabas's missionary journey (Acts 14:22-28)?

Answer: We learn the importance of perseverance, reliance on God's guidance, strategic ministry responses to adversity, and nurturing Christian communities for spiritual growth and stability.

Lesson 15

1. How did the early church handle the theological dispute over circumcision, and why was it significant (Acts 15:1-5)?

Answer: The early church addressed the dispute through dialogue and discernment, recognizing the potential threat to unity and the core message of salvation by faith. This conflict highlighted the tension between Jewish and Gentile believers and emphasized the need for collective decision-making within the church.

2. What key testimony did Peter provide during the Jerusalem council, and how did it shape the discussion (Acts 15:6-11)?

Answer: Peter recounted his experience with Cornelius, emphasizing God's acceptance of Gentiles through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. He rejected the imposition of circumcision on Gentile believers, affirming salvation through faith in Christ. Peter's testimony challenged traditional views and underscored the universal accessibility of salvation.

3. How did Paul and Barnabas contribute to the discussion at Jerusalem, and what was the essence of their witness (Acts 15:12)?

Answer: Paul and Barnabas testified to the transformative work of the Holy Spirit among Gentile believers, demonstrating God's acceptance regardless of adherence to Jewish customs. Their witness affirmed the central message of salvation by faith in Christ and challenged cultural barriers, emphasizing the universal scope of God's redemptive plan.

4. What judgment did James deliver during the Jerusalem council, and what was its theological basis (Acts 15:13-21)?

Answer: James affirmed Gentile inclusion based on Peter's testimony and Scripture, providing a theological foundation for embracing Gentile believers without imposing Jewish customs. His judgment promoted unity within the diverse Christian community and emphasized the principles of inclusivity and solidarity.

5. How did the brethren communicate its decision to the Gentile believers, and what was the response in Antioch (Acts 15:22-35)?

Answer: The church sent representatives with a letter affirming Gentile inclusion, bringing joy and encouragement to Gentile believers in Antioch. The letter reinforced their status within the Christian community and provided clarity on the issue of circumcision, fostering unity and mutual support among believers.

6. What disagreement arose between Paul and Barnabas after the Jerusalem council, and how did they resolve it (Acts 15:36-41)?

Answer: Paul proposed revisiting churches to nurture believers' faith, while Barnabas suggested taking John Mark along, leading to disagreement. Unable to reach a compromise, they parted ways, with Barnabas taking Mark to Cyprus and Paul choosing Silas as his companion.

7. Why was circumcision such a contentious issue in the early church, and how did it reflect broader tensions within the Christian community (Acts 15:1-5)?

Answer: Circumcision symbolized adherence to Jewish Law and identity, leading to disputes over whether Gentile believers needed to observe it for salvation. This controversy reflected deeper tensions between Jewish and Gentile believers and highlighted the challenge of integrating diverse cultural backgrounds within the Christian community.

8. How did Peter's testimony regarding Cornelius challenge traditional views within the early church (Acts 15:7-11)?

Answer: Peter's recounting of Cornelius' experience demonstrated God's acceptance of Gentiles apart from Jewish customs, challenging the notion that Gentile believers must become Jewish proselytes. His testimony emphasized salvation through faith in Christ and affirmed the universal accessibility of salvation.

9. What role did Scripture play in James' judgment during the meeting, and how did it shape the decision-making process (Acts 15:13-21)?

Answer: James appealed to Scripture, specifically quoting from the prophet Amos, to support Peter's testimony and demonstrate God's plan for Gentile inclusion. This provided a solid theological foundation for embracing Gentile believers without imposing Jewish customs, promoting unity and clarity within the Christian community.

10. How did the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas after the meeting reflect broader challenges in ministry partnerships within the early church (Acts 15:36-41)?

Answer: The disagreement over including John Mark highlighted differing perspectives on ministry priorities and personnel. Despite their commitment to the gospel, Paul and Barnabas faced challenges in navigating personal differences, illustrating the complexities of ministry partnerships within the early church.

Lesson 16

1. What prompted Paul to circumcise Timothy, and what was the significance of this act (Acts 16:3)?

Answer: Paul circumcised Timothy because of the Jews in those places, knowing that his father was Greek. This act facilitated their ministry among Jewish communities, demonstrating sensitivity to cultural contexts.

2. How did the Holy Spirit guide Paul and his companions in their missionary journey (Acts 16:6-10)?

Answer: The Holy Spirit forbade them from speaking the word in Asia and redirected them to Macedonia through a vision of a man pleading for help, demonstrating divine guidance in mission endeavors.

3. What impact did Lydia's conversion have on the early church in Philippi (Acts 16:14-15)?

Answer: Lydia's conversion led to her household's baptism and hospitality towards Paul and his companions, contributing to the growth and strengthening of the early church in Philippi.

4. How did Paul and Silas respond to persecution and imprisonment in Philippi (Acts 16:25)?

Answer: Paul and Silas responded by praying and singing hymns to God, demonstrating unwavering faith and resilience amidst adversity.

5. What miraculous event occurred while Paul and Silas were imprisoned (Acts 16:26)?

Answer: A great earthquake shook the prison, opening all the doors and loosening everyone's bonds, illustrating divine intervention in response to their faithful worship.

6. How did the Philippian jailer react to the earthquake (Acts 16:27)?

Answer: The jailer, fearing the prisoners had escaped, drew his sword to kill himself, reflecting the severity of the consequences he faced under Roman law for such an event.

7. What question did the jailer ask Paul and Silas, and how did they respond (Acts 16:30-31)?

Answer: The jailer asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas responded by telling him to believe in the Lord Jesus, and he would be saved, along with his household.

8. How did Paul assert his legal rights as a Roman citizen after his release from prison (Acts 16:37-38)?

Answer: Paul insisted on a public apology and proper release, asserting his Roman citizenship and upholding principles of justice and dignity.

9. How did the magistrates respond to Paul's assertion of his legal rights (Acts 16:38)?

Answer: The magistrates were alarmed when they learned that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, recognizing the seriousness of the situation.

10. What actions did Paul and Silas take after their release from prison in Philippi (Acts 16:40)?

Answer: Paul and Silas visited Lydia, encouraged the brethren, and then departed from the city, continuing their missionary journey.

Lesson 17

1. What cities did Paul and Silas travel through before arriving in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1)?

Answer: Paul and Silas travelled through Amphipolis and Apollonia before arriving in Thessalonica.

2. Where did Paul go to preach when he arrived in Thessalonica, and for how long (Acts 17:2)?

Answer: Paul went into the synagogue to preach, and he reasoned with them for three Sabbaths.

3. What was Paul's main message in the synagogue in Thessalonica (Acts 17:3)?

Answer: Paul explained and proved that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead, proclaiming that Jesus is the Christ.

4. Who were some of the groups of people that were persuaded by Paul's message in Thessalonica (Acts 17:4)?

Answer: Some Jews, a large number of God-fearing Greeks, and quite a few prominent women were persuaded by Paul's message.

5. Why did the Jews in Thessalonica become jealous, and what did they do in response (Acts 17:5)?

Answer: The Jews became jealous of the success of Paul and Silas, so they gathered some wicked men from the marketplace, formed a mob, and set the city in an uproar.

6. What accusation did the mob make against Paul and Silas before the city officials in Thessalonica (Acts 17:7)?

Answer: The mob accused Paul and Silas of defying Caesar's decrees by claiming that there is another king, Jesus.

7. How did the Bereans respond to Paul's message compared to the Thessalonians (Acts 17:11)?

Answer: The Bereans were more noble, receiving the message with great eagerness and examining the Scriptures daily to see if what Paul said was true.

8. What happened when the Jews from Thessalonica learned that Paul was preaching in Berea (Acts 17:13)?

Answer: The Jews from Thessalonica came to Berea, agitating the crowds and stirring them up against Paul.

9. Where was Paul sent after the trouble in Berea, and what did he do upon arrival (Acts 17:15-16)?

Answer: Paul was sent to Athens, and upon arrival, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols.

10. What was the reaction of the Athenians when Paul spoke about the resurrection at the Areopagus (Acts 17:32)?

Answer: Some sneered, but others said they wanted to hear more about the subject.

Lesson 18

1. From which city did Paul travel to Corinth (Acts 18:1)?

Answer: Paul travelled to Corinth from Athens.

2. Who were the Jewish couple Paul met in Corinth, and why had they recently left Italy (**Acts 18:2**)?

Answer: Paul met Aquila and Priscilla, who had recently left Italy because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome.

3. What trade did Paul, Aquila, and Priscilla share that allowed them to work together (**Acts 18:3**)?

Answer: They were all tentmakers by trade.

4. Where did Paul reason and try to persuade people every Sabbath in Corinth (**Acts 18:4**)?

Answer: Paul reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath.

5. What change occurred in Paul's ministry focus after Silas and Timothy arrived in Corinth (**Acts 18:5**)?

Answer: Paul began to devote himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah.

6. What was Paul's response to the opposition from the Jews in Corinth (**Acts 18:6**)?

Answer: Paul declared that he would go to the Gentiles.

7. Who was the synagogue leader in Corinth who believed in the Lord along with his entire household (**Acts 18:8**)?

Answer: Crispus, the synagogue leader, believed in the Lord along with his entire household.

8. What encouragement did the Lord give Paul in a vision in Corinth (**Acts 18:9-10**)?

Answer: The Lord told Paul not to be afraid but to keep on speaking and not be silent because He was with him and no one would attack or harm him, for He had many people in the city.

9. How long did Paul stay in Corinth, teaching the word of God (**Acts 18:11**)?

Answer: Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and six months.

10. Who was the learned and eloquent Jew from Alexandria that came to Ephesus and later received further instruction from Priscilla and Aquila (**Acts 18:24-26**)?

Answer: Apollos was the learned and eloquent Jew from Alexandria who came to Ephesus and received further instruction from Priscilla and Aquila.

Lesson 19

1. What was the response of the Ephesian disciples when Paul asked if they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed (**Acts 19:2**)?

Answer: They replied that they had not even heard there was a Holy Spirit.

2. What significant event occurred when Paul baptized the disciples in the name of the Lord Jesus and laid his hands on them (**Acts 19:5-6**)?

Answer: The Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied.

3. What was the duration of Paul's teaching in the synagogue and the hall of Tyrannus (**Acts 19:8-10**)?

Answer: Paul preached boldly in the synagogue for three months, and then continued teaching daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus for two years.

4. What was the response of the Jews when they attempted to invoke the name of Jesus over those possessed by evil spirits (**Acts 19:13**)?

Answer: The evil spirit answered, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?"

5. Who were the sons of Sceva, and what happened when they tried to cast out an evil spirit using the name of Jesus (**Acts 19:14-16**)?

Answer: The sons of Sceva were Jewish exorcists. When they tried to cast out the evil spirit using the name of Jesus, the spirit overpowered them and attacked them.

6. What was the outcome of the incident with the sons of Sceva concerning the Ephesians (Acts 19:17-20)?

Answer: Many believers confessed their practices and burned their sorcery books, leading to the spread and strengthening of the word of the Lord.

7. Who stirred up a riot in Ephesus and why (Acts 19:23-27)?

Answer: Demetrius, a silversmith, incited a riot because he feared that Paul's message would harm the trade of making shrines of Artemis, thus threatening their livelihood.

8. What was the reaction of the city of Ephesus when they heard Demetrius' speech (Acts 19:28-29)?

Answer: The city was filled with confusion, and the people rushed to the theatre, dragging Paul's travelling companions with them.

9. Why did the city clerk intervene in the riot in Ephesus (Acts 19:35-41)?

Answer: The city clerk intervened to restore order and prevent the rioters from facing charges of rioting by pointing out that there were proper legal channels for addressing grievances.

10. What was the ultimate outcome of the riot in Ephesus (Acts 19:41)?

Answer: The assembly was dismissed, and the riot came to an end without further escalation.

Lesson 20

1. To where was Paul travelling (Acts 20:3)?

Answer: Jerusalem

2. Did Paul know what would happen to him in Jerusalem (Acts 20:23)?

Answer: No, but he knew he would face trouble.

3. What motivated Paul to continue his journey despite the dangers (Acts 20:24)?

Answer: His desire to complete his ministry and share the gospel.

4. About what did Paul warn the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:29-30)?

Answer: False teachers who would mislead the church.

5. How did Paul describe the church (Acts 20:28)?

Answer: The flock of God, purchased by His blood.

6. What responsibility did Paul place on the elders (Acts 20:28)?

Answer: To shepherd and watch over the church.

7. What did Paul say about his own work in Ephesus (Acts 20:27)?

Answer: He preached the whole will of God without hesitation.

8. How did Paul provide for himself and his companions during his ministry (Acts 20:34)?

Answer: He worked with his own hands.

9. What did Jesus say according to Paul, that is more blessed than receiving (Acts 20:35)?

Answer: Giving.

10. What was the emotional response of the Ephesian disciples when Paul said goodbye (Acts 20:37-38)?

Answer: They wept and embraced him, sorrowful they would not see him again.

Lesson 21

1. What cities did Paul and his companions visit on their journey from Miletus to Jerusalem (Acts 21:1-8)?

Answer: They visited Cos, Rhodes, Patara, Phoenicia, Tyre, Ptolemais, and Caesarea.

2. How did the disciples in Tyre respond to Paul's intention to go to Jerusalem (Acts 21:4)?

Answer: The disciples, guided by the Spirit, urged Paul not to go to Jerusalem.

3. What significant event took place during Paul's stay in Caesarea at the house of Philip the evangelist (Acts 21:10-11)?

Answer: A prophet named Agabus came from Judea and prophesied that Paul would be bound by the Jews in Jerusalem and handed over to the Gentiles.

4. How did Paul's companions and the local believers react to Agabus's prophecy (Acts 21:12-14)?

Answer: They pleaded with Paul not to go to Jerusalem, but Paul remained determined, stating he was ready to be bound and even to die for the name of the Lord Jesus.

5. Who did Paul and his companions meet upon their arrival in Jerusalem (Acts 21:17-18)?

Answer: They were received warmly by the brethren and met with James and all the elders of the Jerusalem church.

6. What concerns did James and the elders express regarding Paul's presence in Jerusalem (Acts 21:20-21)?

Answer: They were concerned about the Jewish believers who were zealous for the law and had heard that Paul was teaching Jews living among the Gentiles to abandon the Law of Moses.

7. What solution did James and the elders propose to address the concerns of the Jewish believers (Acts 21:23-24)?

Answer: They suggested that Paul join four men in their purification rites to show that he still observed the law.

8. How did the Jews from Asia stir up the crowd against Paul in the temple (Acts 21:27-28)?

Answer: They saw Paul in the temple and accused him of teaching against the Jewish people, the law, and the temple, and of bringing Gentiles into the temple, defiling it.

9. What was the Roman commander's initial response to the uproar involving Paul (Acts 21:31-33)?

Answer: The Roman commander took soldiers and centurions, stopped the beating of Paul, arrested him, and ordered him to be bound with two chains.

10. What request did Paul make to the Roman commander, and what language did he use to address the crowd (Acts 21:37-40)?

Answer: Paul asked for permission to speak to the people and, after receiving permission, he addressed the crowd in Aramaic.

Lesson 22

1. What language did Paul use to address the Jewish crowd in Jerusalem (Acts 22:1-2)?

Answer: Paul addressed the Jewish crowd in Aramaic, which immediately captured their attention and demonstrated his cultural connection with them.

2. How did Paul identify himself at the beginning of his defense (Acts 22:3)?

Answer: Paul identified himself as a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in Jerusalem and educated under Gamaliel, emphasizing his strict adherence to the law and his zeal for God.

3. What significant event occurred to Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 22:6-7)?

Answer: On the road to Damascus, a bright light from heaven suddenly shone around Paul, and he heard the voice of Jesus asking, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"

4. What was the reaction of Paul's companions when the bright light appeared on the road to Damascus (Acts 22:9)?

Answer: Paul's companions saw the light but did not understand the voice of the one speaking to him.

5. Who restored Paul's sight in Damascus, and what did he tell Paul about God's plan for his life (Acts 22:12-13)?

Answer: Ananias, a devout man according to the law, restored Paul's sight and told him that God had chosen him to know His will, see the Righteous One, and hear words from His mouth.

6. What did Ananias instruct Paul to do after restoring his sight (Acts 22:16)?

Answer: Ananias instructed Paul to be baptized and wash away his sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

7. What vision did Paul have while praying in the temple in Jerusalem (Acts 22:17-18)?

Answer: Paul had a vision of Jesus while praying in the temple, in which Jesus told him to leave Jerusalem quickly because the people would not accept his testimony about Him.

8. How did the crowd react when Paul mentioned his mission to the Gentiles (Acts 22:22)?

Answer: The crowd listened until Paul mentioned his mission to the Gentiles, at which point they raised their voices, demanded his death, and expressed their outrage by throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air.

9. What did Paul reveal to the Roman commander to prevent being flogged (Acts 22:25)?

Answer: Paul revealed that he was a Roman citizen, questioning the legality of flogging a Roman citizen without a trial, which alarmed the commander and led to Paul's release from the chains.

10. Why did the Roman commander bring Paul before the Sanhedrin the next day (Acts 22:30)?

Answer: The Roman commander brought Paul before the Sanhedrin to understand the charges against him more clearly, setting the stage for Paul's defense before the Jewish religious leaders.

Lesson 23

1. Who ordered Paul to be struck on the mouth during his defense before the Sanhedrin (Acts 23:2-3)?

Answer: The High Priest Ananias ordered Paul to be struck on the mouth after Paul declared that he had lived his life with a clear conscience before God.

2. What did Paul cite from the Scriptures to acknowledge the command not to speak evil of a ruler of the people (Acts 23:5)?

Answer: Paul cited Exodus 22:28, which commands not to revile God or curse a ruler of the people, showing his respect for authority despite the unjust treatment.

3. Why did Paul declare himself a Pharisee during his defense before the Sanhedrin (Acts 23:6)?

Answer: Paul declared himself a Pharisee to create division among the members of the Sanhedrin, knowing that the Pharisees believed in the resurrection of the dead, which the Sadducees denied.

4. What did the Pharisees say in defense of Paul during the dispute with the Sadducees (Acts 23:9)?

Answer: Some Pharisees stood up and argued in Paul's defense, saying, "We find nothing wrong with this man. What if a spirit or an angel spoke to him?"

5. How many men were involved in the conspiracy to kill Paul, and what did they swear not to do until Paul was dead (Acts 23:12-14)?

Answer: More than forty Jews were involved in the conspiracy to kill Paul, and they swore an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed him.

6. Who informed Paul about the plot to kill him (Acts 23:16)?

Answer: Paul's nephew overheard the Jews discussing their plot to ambush and kill Paul and reported it to him.

7. Whom did Paul ask to take his nephew to the Roman commander to inform him about the plot (Acts 23:17-19)?

Answer: Paul called one of the centurions and asked him to take his nephew to the Roman commander, Claudius Lysias, to report the conspiracy against his life.

8. How did the Roman commander ensure the secrecy of the information about the plot against Paul (Acts 23:22)?

Answer: Claudius Lysias instructed Paul's nephew not to tell anyone that he had revealed the plot, ensuring that the conspirators would not be alerted and could be apprehended.

9. Why did the Roman commander decide to transfer Paul to Caesarea (Acts 23:23-24)?

Answer: The Roman commander decided to transfer Paul to Caesarea to ensure his safety from the conspiracy to kill him and to present him before Governor Felix for a fair trial.

10. Upon Paul's arrival in Caesarea, who did Governor Felix decide to hear Paul's case in the presence of (Acts 23:35)?

Answer: Governor Felix decided to hear Paul's case in the presence of his accusers who would come from Jerusalem, ensuring a fair legal process and proper examination of the charges against Paul.

Lesson 24

1. Who presented the accusations against Paul before Governor Felix in Caesarea (Acts 24:1)?

Answer: Ananias the high priest, accompanied by some elders and Tertullus the lawyer, presented the accusations against Paul before Governor Felix in Caesarea.

2. What flattering remarks did Tertullus make about Governor Felix at the beginning of his speech (Acts 24:2-3)?

Answer: Tertullus praised Felix for his rule and reforms, which he said had brought peace and prosperity to the Jewish people under Roman authority.

3. What specific charges did Tertullus bring against Paul (Acts 24:5-6)?

Answer: Tertullus accused Paul of being a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews worldwide, and being a ringleader of the Nazarene sect. He also claimed that Paul attempted to desecrate the Temple.

4. How did Felix respond to Paul's defense after Tertullus presented the accusations (Acts 24:22-23)?

Answer: Felix adjourned the hearing and kept Paul under guard, allowing him some freedom and permitting his friends to care for his needs while awaiting further testimony from Commander Lysias.

5. Who did Felix and his wife Drusilla summon to hear Paul speak about faith in Christ Jesus (Acts 24:24)?

Answer: Felix and Drusilla summoned Paul to hear him speak about faith in Christ Jesus.

6. What specific topics did Paul address when speaking to Felix and Drusilla (Acts 24:25)?

Answer: Paul spoke about righteousness, self-control, and the coming judgment.

7. How long did Felix keep Paul in custody before being succeeded by Porcius Festus (Acts 24:27)?

Answer: Felix kept Paul in custody for two years before being succeeded by Porcius Festus.

8. Why did Felix leave Paul in prison after being succeeded by Festus (Acts 24:27)?

Answer: Felix left Paul in prison to gain favor with the Jews.

9. What did Felix hope to receive from Paul (Acts 24:26)?

Answer: Felix hoped that Paul would offer him a bribe for his release.

10. What was the reason Felix gave for delaying a decision on Paul's case (Acts 24:22-23)?

Answer: Felix delayed a decision on Paul's case until Commander Lysias could arrive to provide further information and testimony regarding the accusations against Paul.

Lesson 25

1. Who was the new Roman governor who arrived in Caesarea (Acts 25:1)?

Answer: Festus, the new Roman governor, arrived in Caesarea.

2. Why did the Jewish leaders request Festus to transfer Paul to Jerusalem (Acts 25:2-3)?

Answer: The Jewish leaders requested Festus to transfer Paul to Jerusalem under the pretence of wanting to bring charges against him there, but their real intention was to ambush and kill Paul on the way.

3. What did Festus propose to the Jewish leaders regarding Paul's trial (Acts 25:4-5)?

Answer: Festus proposed that the Jewish leaders accompany him to Caesarea to bring charges against Paul there.

4. What accusations did the Jewish leaders bring against Paul before Festus (Acts 25:7-8)?

Answer: The Jewish leaders accused Paul of serious offenses related to their religious law and customs, but they could not substantiate these charges with evidence.

5. Why did Festus suggest that Paul be tried in Jerusalem (Acts 25:9)?

Answer: Festus suggested a trial in Jerusalem to appease the Jewish leaders and gain their favor.

6. What did Paul do in response to Festus' suggestion to be tried in Jerusalem (Acts 25:10-11)?

Answer: Paul asserted his rights as a Roman citizen and appealed to Caesar.

7. Whom did Festus consult regarding Paul's case after Agrippa arrived in Caesarea (Acts 25:13)?

Answer: Festus consulted King Agrippa II regarding Paul's case.

8. What intrigued King Agrippa about Paul's case (Acts 25:19)?

Answer: King Agrippa was intrigued by the religious aspects of the accusations against Paul, particularly the claim that Jesus, whom Paul preached, had risen from the dead.

9. What did Festus hope to clarify with King Agrippa during Paul's hearing (Acts 25:26)?

Answer: Festus hoped that King Agrippa's insights would help him articulate the charges against Paul more clearly for the report to Caesar.

10. What was Festus' decision regarding Paul's case after the hearing before Agrippa (Acts 25:27)?

Answer: Festus decided to send Paul to Rome to be tried before Caesar, respecting Paul's appeal as a Roman citizen.

Lesson 26

1. Who gave Paul permission to speak in his defense before King Agrippa (Acts 26:1-2)?

Answer: King Agrippa gave Paul permission to speak, and Paul stretched out his hand to begin his defense.

2. What did Paul express gratitude for at the beginning of his defense (Acts 26:2)?

Answer: Paul expressed gratitude for being able to speak before King Agrippa.

3. According to Paul, what did King Agrippa understand well (Acts 26:3)?

Answer: Paul stated that King Agrippa understood well the Jewish customs and controversies.

4. What does Paul recount about his early life and strict adherence to Jewish customs (Acts 26:4-5)?

Answer: Paul recounts that his life from youth was known to all the Jews and his strict adherence to the Pharisaic tradition.

5. What hope did Paul emphasize regarding the promises made by God to the Jewish ancestors (Acts 26:6-7)?

Answer: Paul emphasized his hope in the promise made by God to the fathers, which the twelve tribes hoped to attain through earnest service.

6. How does Paul describe his persecution of Christians (Acts 26:9-11)?

Answer: Paul describes how he persecuted Christians by imprisoning them, casting votes against them, punishing them in synagogues, and compelling them to blaspheme.

7. What does Paul recount happening on his journey to Damascus (Acts 26:12-13)?

Answer: Paul recounts seeing a bright light from heaven at midday that caused him and his companions to fall to the ground.

8. Who spoke to Paul in the heavenly vision on the road to Damascus (Acts 26:14)?

Answer: Jesus spoke to Paul in the heavenly vision, questioning him in Hebrew about his persecution of Jesus.

9. What did Jesus commission Paul to do during the heavenly vision (Acts 26:16-18)?

Answer: Jesus commissioned Paul to be a servant and witness of what he had seen and to open people's eyes, turn them from darkness to light, and from Satan to God.

10. How did King Agrippa respond to Paul's defense (Acts 26:28-29)?

Answer: King Agrippa responded by saying, "You almost persuade me to become a Christian," acknowledging the power of Paul's testimony.

Lesson 27

1. Who was responsible for Paul and the other prisoners during the voyage to Rome (Acts 27:1)?

Answer: A centurion named Julius was responsible for Paul and the other prisoners.

2. Where did the ship first stop after leaving on the voyage (Acts 27:3)?

Answer: The ship first stopped at Sidon.

3. How did Julius treat Paul at Sidon (Acts 27:3)?

Answer: Julius treated Paul kindly and allowed him to visit his friends to be cared by them.

4. What warning did Paul give about continuing the voyage (Acts 27:9-10)?

Answer: Paul warned that the voyage would be disastrous and bring great loss to the ship, cargo, and possibly lives.

5. Whose advice did the centurion follow instead of Paul's warning (Acts 27:11)?

Answer: The centurion followed the advice of the pilot and the owner of the ship.

6. What happened shortly after the ship set sail from Crete (Acts 27:13-14)?

Answer: A violent northeaster, called the "Northeaster," swept down from the island, catching the ship in a severe storm.

7. How did Paul encourage the crew during the storm (Acts 27:22-24)?

Answer: Paul told the crew to keep their courage because an angel had assured him that there would be no loss of life, only the ship, and that he must stand trial before Caesar.

8. What measures did the crew take to secure the ship during the storm (Acts 27:16-17)?

Answer: The crew passed ropes under the ship to hold it together and lowered the sea anchor to slow it down.

9. What did Paul urge the crew to do as dawn approached on the fourteenth night (Acts 27:33-34)?

Answer: Paul urged everyone to eat for their survival, assuring them that not a hair would perish from their heads.

10. How did everyone reach land safely after the shipwreck (Acts 27:44)?

Answer: Those who could swim jumped overboard first and got to land, and the rest followed on planks or pieces of the ship, ensuring that everyone reached land safely.

Lesson 28

1. Where did Paul and his companions land after being shipwrecked (Acts 28:1)?

Answer: Paul and his companions landed on the island of Malta.

2. How did the islanders initially respond to the survivors from the shipwreck (Acts 28:2)?

Answer: The islanders showed unusual kindness by building a fire to warm them because of the rain and the cold.

3. What happened to Paul when he gathered a bundle of brushwood on Malta (Acts 28:3-5)?

Answer: A viper came out because of the heat and fastened itself onto Paul's hand. The islanders expected him to swell up or suddenly fall dead but changed their minds when he suffered no harm, believing him to be a god.

4. Whose father did Paul heal when he reached the home of Publius on Malta (Acts 28:7-8)?

Answer: Paul healed Publius' father, who was suffering from fever and dysentery.

5. How long did Paul and his companions stay in Syracuse (Acts 28:12)?

Answer: They stayed in Syracuse for three days.

6. Where did Paul and his companions find brothers in Puteoli who invited them to stay for seven days (Acts 28:14)?

Answer: Paul and his companions found brothers in Puteoli on their journey to Rome.

7. Who came to meet Paul as he journeyed toward Rome (Acts 28:15)?

Answer: Believers from Rome came to meet Paul at the Forum of Appius and the Three Taverns.

8. How did Paul describe his situation to the Jewish leaders when he called them together (Acts 28:17-20)?

Answer: Paul explained that he was a prisoner because of the hope of Israel and that he had done nothing against the Jewish people or customs.

9. What did Paul teach and proclaim to the Jews in Rome during his two-year stay (Acts 28:30-31)?

Answer: Paul proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

10 According to Paul, who would listen to the salvation of God after the Jews rejected it (Acts 28:28)?

Answer: Paul declared that God's salvation had been sent to the Gentiles, and they would listen.