

**LOVE JESUS
WITH ALL YOUR HEART**



**BECAUSE HE LOVES YOU
WITH ALL HIS HEART**

Commentary on Acts

by

Dr. Carter McKeague

More Dr. McKeague teachings at:

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INTRODUCTION

In the book of Acts, the Lord Jesus Christ has supremacy. On the following pages is a brief glimpse into the book of Acts. With the Lord's enabling, much more is to be gleaned from this awesome book. But this brief study serves as a mere photograph at a particular point in time.

If we were to come back in six months or a year later the Holy Spirit would illuminate more than what has been gleaned at this present time. As you read these pages may the Holy Spirit work in your hearts so the Lord Jesus will have greater supremacy in your life. Thank you Lord Jesus for your abundant grace.

Acts 1:1 “THE FIRST ACCOUNT I COMPOSED, THEOPHILUS,’ ABOUT ALL THAT JESUS BEGAN TO DO AND TEACH.”

With reliance upon the Holy Spirit to reveal light from these words, we shall look at the following five parts.

1. “THE FIRST ACCOUNT I COMPOSED,”

The book of Acts, or as it is commonly called, Acts of the Apostles was written by Luke. The title Acts of the Apostles is worth stopping and considering. The book of Acts focuses much on the apostle Peter up to and including chapter 12. Then from chapter 13 Paul comes on the scene and the focus is mostly on him to the end of the book. The book of Acts largely focuses on Peter and Paul and what the Holy Spirit did through them.

But as well, chapter 6 and 7 focuses on Stephen the deacon, and chapter 8 focuses on Philip the evangelist. In How To Receive A Miracle From God, Reinhard Bonnke said,

“Remember what Smith Wigglesworth told a conventional doubting clergyman,” The Acts of the Apostles were written because the apostles acted.”

The book of Acts is not just dry facts!

**Acts 1:1 “THE FIRST ACCOUNT I COMPOSED, THEOPHILUS,
ABOUT ALL THAT JESUS BEGAN TO DO AND TEACH.”**

2. “THEOPHILUS,”

This is a man Luke addressed here and also in Luke 1:3, **“MOST EXCELLENT THEOPHILUS.”** Luke wrote to a dear friend and expressed how he felt towards him. When we write to a dear friend, it is Biblical to express how we feel towards them. The name **“THEOPHILUS”** means “beloved of God.” His name describes how God feels about us. The people of the world very likely do not see you as **“MOST EXCELLENT”** or “beloved,” but in Christ, that is what we are. Each of us who the Lord Jesus has saved is a **“THEOPHILUS,”** beloved of God. Let us stop and thank the Lord that we are “beloved of God.”

Acts 1:1 “THE FIRST ACCOUNT I COMPOSED, THEOPHILUS,’ ABOUT ALL THAT JESUS BEGAN TO DO AND TEACH.”

3. “ABOUT ALL THAT JESUS”

In this first verse, we read the word “JESUS.” As we read through Acts the word, “JESUS” is mentioned some 70 times in the NASB. In the NIV the word, “JESUS” appears 74 times. This teaches us “JESUS” is the predominate person through all the book of Acts.

Throughout the book of Acts, the emphasis is always on “JESUS.” Throughout our lives, the emphasis has to be always on “JESUS.”

By contrast to this may we notice that the devil is only referred to in two passages in Acts 10:38 and Acts 13:10. Some put more emphasis on the devil rather than on Jesus, and that is seriously out of line from what is seen in the book of Acts.

Acts 1:1 “THE FIRST ACCOUNT I COMPOSED, THEOPHILUS,’ ABOUT ALL THAT JESUS BEGAN TO DO AND TEACH.”

4. “BEGAN”

In the book of Acts, we see a definite beginning. A starting point to the book. It begins by stating that Jesus began to do and teach. Now if we turn to the last verse in Acts 28 we find that there is not an end to the book of Acts.

In Acts 28:31 it says,

“PREACHING THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AND TEACHING CONCERNING THE LORD JESUS CHRIST WITH ALL OPENNESS, UNHINDERED.”

Other New Testament books have a beginning and an end. They end with an AMEN, or a salutation of some form.

The book of Acts has a starting point but not a finishing point which points us to the reality that the book of Acts is to be ongoing. That is not to say there is “new” revelation that contradicts Scripture. It means that what is experienced in the book of Acts is to be experienced today. The book of Acts is a blueprint for Christianity.

**Acts 1:1 “THE FIRST ACCOUNT I COMPOSED, THEOPHILUS,
ABOUT ALL THAT JESUS BEGAN TO DO AND TEACH.”**

4. “BEGAN”

The fact that the book of Acts has a starting point but not a finishing point, points us to the reality that Jesus kept serving right until the end. Are we willing to serve until the end?

In Genesis 5:24 it says, **“AND ENOCH WALKED WITH GOD AND HE WAS NOT, FOR GOD TOOK HIM.”**

Is this our life goal, to walk with God and then be taken up? What is your life's ambition?

In 2 Corinthians 5:9 it says, **“WE HAVE AS OUR AMBITION, WHETHER AT HOME OR ABSENT, TO BE PLEASING TO HIM.”**

The example of our Lord is for us to do likewise. With the Lord's help, we are to be busy doing His will and work right up until the day we are taken up.

**Acts 1:1 “THE FIRST ACCOUNT I COMPOSED, THEOPHILUS,
ABOUT ALL THAT JESUS BEGAN TO DO AND TEACH.”**

5. “TO DO AND TEACH.”

These words show two things, action and then speaking. Doing something rather than just talking. Each day provides us with opportunities to preach what we believe by our actions. May our actions preach and not just our mouths. We need both, doing and teaching, and not one without the other. This pattern of action then speaking is in James 1:19,

“BUT LET EVERYONE BE QUICK TO HEAR, SLOW TO SPEAK AND SLOW TO ANGER.”

Acts 1:2 "UNTIL THE DAY WHEN HE WAS TAKEN UP..."

This verse continues on from verse 1, which describes Jesus doing and teaching. Now we focus on the words

"UNTIL THE DAY WHEN HE WAS TAKEN UP."

As we shall see through Acts and all of Scripture, it is imperative to read the context of what we are learning. Jesus was doing the Father's will up to the very day He was taken up. This example Jesus gives us shows how we are to conduct ourselves in this world. We are to be doing God's will up to when we finally go home.

Next, we see this verse teaches the Biblical doctrine of the ascension of Jesus. The book of Acts clearly records the ascension of Jesus Christ.

At this point, please allow me to make the following statement. The Bible does not record any evidence that Mary ascended into Heaven.

Acts 1:2 "UNTIL THE DAY WHEN HE WAS TAKEN UP..."

The doctrine of the assumption of Mary into heaven is not Biblical and such a doctrine has no Scriptural foundation. It is imperative that as Christians we defend what the Scriptures say, rather than what the Scriptures do not say. To build a doctrine on what the Bible does not say, is to say the least building on a faulty foundation.

In John 3:13 it says,

**"AND NO ONE HAS ASCENDED INTO HEAVEN,
BUT HE WHO DESCENDED FROM HEAVEN, EVEN THE SON OF MAN."**

In the Old Testament it says in 2 Kings 2:11 that God enabled Elijah to be taken bodily into heaven by a whirlwind and in Genesis 5:24 Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him. These examples have mistakenly been used to imply that Mary ascended into heaven.

Acts 1:2 "...AFTER HE HAD BY THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVEN ORDERS..."

This verse is the first mention, the introduction of the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts.

Acts 1:3 “AFTER HIS SUFFERING, BY MANY CONVINCING PROOFS, APPEARING TO THEM OVER A PERIOD OF FORTY DAYS, AND SPEAKING OF THE THINGS CONCERNING THE KINGDOM OF GOD.”

From this part of verse three, are three main parts that apply to our lives highlighted from the following words.

1. “AFTER HIS SUFFERING,”
2. “A PERIOD OF FORTY DAYS,”
3. “SPEAKING OF THE THINGS CONCERNING THE KINGDOM OF GOD.”

Between the time of our Lord’s suffering and Him ministering to His disciples a period of time had passed. In considering this verse, we need to be careful to avoid reading into it something it does not say. What we do know is that after His suffering, forty days passed. After Jesus suffered, there was a time period, and we see Jesus speaking to His disciples.

Acts 1:3 “AFTER HIS SUFFERING, BY MANY CONVINCING PROOFS, APPEARING TO THEM OVER A PERIOD OF FORTY DAYS, AND SPEAKING OF THE THINGS CONCERNING THE KINGDOM OF GOD.”

This process of suffering, then a time element and ministering reminds us of a pattern revealed in Matthew and Mark.

1. Matthew 8:34, Jesus suffered rejection from a city.
2. Matthew 9:1, Jesus withdrew.
3. Matthew 9:2, Jesus began ministering.

This pattern is repeated in the following.

1. Matthew 14:12, Jesus heard John the Baptist died.
2. Matthew 14:13, Jesus withdrew to a lonely place.
3. Matthew 14:14, Jesus began ministering again.

This same pattern is mirrored in:

1. Mark 5:17, Jesus is rejected by an entire city.
2. Mark 5:21, Jesus left in a boat.
3. Mark 5:23-24, Jesus went to heal the daughter of Jairus.

Acts 1:3 “AFTER HIS SUFFERING, BY MANY CONVINCING PROOFS, APPEARING TO THEM OVER A PERIOD OF FORTY DAYS, AND SPEAKING OF THE THINGS CONCERNING THE KINGDOM OF GOD.”

This pattern that our Lord Jesus went through is vital for us to learn from. After we go through experiences that cause us great suffering it is vital to have time with God, and to recover before starting to minister again. Each of us experience various forms of suffering. It is also a common response to withdraw as a form of self-protection after getting hurt. What we need to learn and follow is what Jesus did. Jesus did not remain withdrawn. He returned to minister. Have you suffered because of people? Have you suffered by circumstances in life? Have you withdrawn so as to not get hurt again? It is important to give the hurts to Jesus and not continue being withdrawn.

**Acts 1:3 “AFTER HIS SUFFERING...
...SPEAKING OF THE THINGS CONCERNING THE KINGDOM OF GOD.”**

From these words, we learn what Jesus spoke about after suffering prior to and including the crucifixion. After His suffering, Jesus was not talking about the people who had betrayed Him, or Judas' conduct, or all the pain suffered on the cross. Jesus did not talk about what people did to Him. His concern was not about Himself, but about the kingdom of God.

In Mark 16:15 it says, **“GO INTO ALL THE WORLD AND PREACH THE GOSPEL TO ALL CREATION.”** Jesus spoke these words only days after going through torture we cannot imagine. Yet His concern was not about His suffering but about getting the gospel to a suffering world. Jesus' concern was concerning the kingdom of God. Another example of Jesus suffering and what He spoke about after, is found in John 5:16, **“THE JEWS WERE PERSECUTING JESUS,”** and John 5:17, **“BUT HE ANSWERED THEM, “MY FATHER IS WORKING UNTIL NOW, AND I MYSELF AM WORKING.”**

Notice after Jesus was persecuted He did not talk about the people persecuting Him. His focus was on His Father and doing the will of His Father rather than being focused on people and their wrong conduct.

**Acts 1:3 “AFTER HIS SUFFERING...
...SPEAKING OF THE THINGS CONCERNING THE KINGDOM OF GOD.”**

What do we talk about, when we go through suffering?

Do we talk about the sufferings, or about things concerning the kingdom of God? When we experience suffering the temptation is to think and talk about the things or people who caused it.

When we give in to this temptation our hearts become bitter and hard. But here, Jesus gives us the correct example to follow.

Do we talk only about the suffering, or the way people are causing the suffering? If we do, then we are led astray from talking about Jesus, who went all the way in suffering for us. Do we talk about what people did to us or about what Jesus did for us? To do as Jesus did requires grace and self-denial.

**Acts 1:4 “AND GATHERING THEM TOGETHER,
HE COMMANDED THEM NOT TO LEAVE JERUSALEM,
BUT TO WAIT FOR WHAT THE FATHER HAD PROMISED.”**

With the Holy Spirit to help us receive light from this verse, we shall study it in the following two parts.

1. “AND GATHERING THEM TOGETHER,”

From these words we learn that “HE” refers to Jesus and that it was “HE” who gathered them together. “HE” was the reason all these people were together.

They were not assembled for a social club.

They were not assembled together for business contacts.

They were not assembled to meet someone of the opposite sex.

They were assembled for Jesus.

They were there for Jesus.

When we assemble, is it for Jesus or for other motives? Why do we attend religious gatherings? In the book of Acts, the believers gathered because of their devotion to Jesus. Is our first priority to gather as believers, because of our devotion to Jesus?

**Acts 1:7 “HE SAID TO THEM,
“IT IS NOT FOR YOU TO KNOW THE TIMES OR EPOCHS
WHICH THE FATHER HAS FIXED BY HIS OWN AUTHORITY;”**

1) Here Jesus answers the question His disciples asked in the preceding verse. Jesus answered but the answer was not what they were necessarily wanting to hear. Some of the disciples wanted the kingdom of Israel restored from the oppressive control of the Romans, and to have places of authority with Jesus. We do not know with certainty how much of their motives were selfish, but we do know that selfishness wants authority not to serve but to be served. The gospel is to be promoted rather than any person being promoted! It is not important that our name is known but that the name of Jesus is known!

**Acts 1:7 “HE SAID TO THEM,
“IT IS NOT FOR YOU TO KNOW THE TIMES OR EPOCHS
WHICH THE FATHER HAS FIXED BY HIS OWN AUTHORITY;”**

Shortly after the Lord saved me, He spoke to my heart saying I would start a Christian newspaper. I was in Spain serving at a church and I told my pastor. His response was go work in a factory helping build prefabricated churches for Spanish Christians. Secretly I dreaded working there, but now realize my heart was full of selfish ambition and not ready to start a newspaper until my heart was broken and cleansed from selfish ambition. After several months of working without a salary, doing hard physical work, my heart was broken, selfishness was dealt with to some measure, then I was ready to start a Christian newspaper with clean motives.

The words in Acts 1:7 are cross-referenced with Matthew 24:36, **“BUT OF THAT DAY AND HOUR NO ONE KNOWS, NOT EVEN THE ANGELS OF HEAVEN, NOR THE SON, BUT THE FATHER ALONE.”** What Jesus said here about dates agreed with that Scripture. Jesus always spoke in agreement to Scripture. Do we speak in agreement to Scripture? Scripture does not contradict itself. If someone tells you the Bible is full of contradictions, it shows they are full of contradictions!

Acts 1:8 “AND”

2) This tiny word joins two important parts in verse 8. Let us consider three things about this word “AND” and see how it applies to us.

1. “AND” might seem insignificant because it is only a small word.
2. “AND” may be overlooked when quoting this verse about evangelism.
3. “AND” may seem unimportant compared to words in this verse like “POWER.”

Do you sometimes feel like the word “AND”?

1. Do you sometimes feel insignificant?
2. Do you sometimes feel overlooked?
3. Do you sometimes feel unimportant compared to other Christians?

If you sometimes feel like the word “AND,” then remember, the Holy Spirit included it in Scripture. The word “AND” is important because it is part of the word of God. You are important because the Lord included you in His body. You are important because the Lord has made you part of His body.

Acts 1:8 “BUT YOU WILL RECEIVE POWER WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS COME UPON YOU, AND YOU SHALL BE MY WITNESSES BOTH IN JERUSALEM, AND IN ALL JUDEA AND SAMARIA, AND EVEN TO THE REMOTEST PART OF THE EARTH.”

3) As we approach this verse, we first need to understand it is Jesus speaking. These words are the last recorded words spoken by our Lord prior to the ascension. The occasion of when He spoke gives these words even greater weight of importance. This verse is composed of two main parts.

1. The first part is, **“YOU SHALL RECEIVE POWER WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS COME UPON YOU.”**

2. The second part is, **“AND YOU SHALL BE MY WITNESSES BOTH IN JERUSALEM, AND IN ALL JUDEA AND SAMARIA, AND EVEN TO THE REMOTEST PART OF THE EARTH.”** Have you ever heard the last part of this verse quoted in referring to evangelism?

**Acts 1:8 “BUT YOU WILL RECEIVE POWER WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS COME
UPON YOU, AND YOU SHALL BE MY WITNESSES BOTH IN JERUSALEM,
AND IN ALL JUDEA AND SAMARIA,
AND EVEN TO THE REMOTEST PART OF THE EARTH.”**

Perhaps you heard “**JERUSALEM**” mentioned to refer to your family.

Perhaps you heard “**SAMARIA**” mentioned to refer to your city.

Perhaps you heard “**REMOTEST PART OF THE EARTH**” mentioned to refer to foreign missions. Perhaps you have heard the second part of this verse quoted in reference to evangelism but the first part deleted. When verses are quoted, or misquoted in this fashion it is sometimes done to try to make it fit a particular denominational belief.

Often it is mentioned but the first part is forgotten, or overlooked.

**Acts 1:8 “BUT YOU WILL RECEIVE POWER WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS COME
UPON YOU, AND YOU SHALL BE MY WITNESSES BOTH IN JERUSALEM,
AND IN ALL JUDEA AND SAMARIA,
AND EVEN TO THE REMOTEST PART OF THE EARTH.”**

But Jesus spoke these words as a clear pattern for the early church and for all following generations of Christians to follow. The first part,

“YOU SHALL RECEIVE POWER WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT COMES UPON YOU”

is speaking about Acts 2:2-4. We learn from this it was the will of the Lord Jesus for people to be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

Then after evangelize **“JERUSALEM, AND IN ALL JUDEA AND SAMARIA, AND
EVEN TO THE REMOTEST PART OF THE EARTH.”**

The pattern our Lord gave in this verse was and still is the way to follow in reference to evangelism. This verse also provides those who are baptized in the Holy Spirit to ask ourselves if we are actively involved in evangelism. The Lord baptizes Christians not so we can sit around and be complacent, but to reach the lost with the gospel. The Lord gives us power to serve Him and bring people to Him. Jesus said they were to be His witnesses after being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

**Acts 1:8 “BUT YOU WILL RECEIVE POWER WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS COME
UPON YOU, AND YOU SHALL BE MY WITNESSES BOTH IN JERUSALEM,
AND IN ALL JUDEA AND SAMARIA,
AND EVEN TO THE REMOTEST PART OF THE EARTH.”**

The principle shown here applied to the early disciples and it applies to us. Being baptized in the Holy Spirit is Biblical, and imperative in being effectual witnesses for the gospel. It is vital the pattern in this verse is followed.

If you have not yet received power from the Holy Spirit baptizing you, then ask the Lord Jesus to baptize you in the Holy Spirit. Please do not let denominational prejudices or fears block you from obeying what God’s word teaches. The world is perishing, we need the Holy Spirit’s power to reach the lost.

In The Holy my Senior Partner, Dr. Yonggi Cho said,

“Christians today are not powerless, sick and spiritless because they are not born again, but because they have not received the fullness of the Holy Spirit, the tremendous power of God for service. Without the baptism of the Holy Spirit the church today can never display God’s power as did the early church.”

Acts 1:9 “AFTER HE SAID THIS, HE WAS TAKEN UP.”

4) Jesus finished His task, and then He left. He did not leave before completing His work. Jesus was faithful to the very last second. Through life we experience leaving one situation and going on to another.

Are we consistently faithful to what the Scripture says in relationship to the circumstances we find ourselves?

Are we consistently faithful to the end?

Now divide this part of the verse in the following two parts.

1. “AFTER HE SAID THIS,”

This makes us wonder, after he said what? In verse 8, Jesus promised the disciples would receive power after the Holy Spirit came on them and they would take the gospel all over the world. Jesus was concerned the gospel would reach the lost right up to the time He went to heaven. Will we be like Jesus? Will we be concerned that the gospel reaches the lost right up to when we leave to go to heaven?

Will we be concerned about the advancement of the gospel right to the last day we are alive?

Acts 1:9 “AFTER HE SAID THIS, HE WAS TAKEN UP.”

2. “HE WAS TAKEN UP.”

These words describe the ascension of Jesus Christ. What we notice is before the ascension Jesus said in verse 8,

“BUT YOU SHALL RECEIVE POWER WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT COMES ON YOU; AND YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES IN JERUSALEM, AND IN ALL JUDEA AND SAMARIA AND TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.”

The ascension was preceded with the great commission. Now see Mark 16:15, **“GO INTO ALL THE WORLD AND PREACH THE GOOD NEWS TO ALL CREATION.”**

In Mark, these are the first words Jesus spoke after the resurrection.

The first words of Jesus after the resurrection were the great commission. The last words of Jesus before the ascension were the great commission. We have mentioned that our Lord’s great concern was the great commission prior to going to heaven

Prior to our going to heaven, will that be our great concern? Should the Lord will that we live to be elderly may He give us hearts concerned to see the great commission advancing to the nations.

Acts 1:10 “THEY WERE LOOKING INTENTLY UP.”

5) From this part of verse 10, please consider the following two parts.

1. “THEY”

The word is plural. The word tells us there was more than one person.

“THEY” were different ages.

“THEY” had various kinds of jobs.

“THEY” different types of backgrounds.

“THEY” were with other people of the same mind.

The glue that held them together was their love and commitment to Jesus Christ. What sort of people do we associate with? Do we feel comfortable or uncomfortable with people who love and are committed to Jesus Christ? In this verse, we see the disciples were looking up. Two verses prior to this Jesus had called them to be an outward looking people by advancing the gospel.

Acts 1:10 “THEY WERE LOOKING INTENTLY UP.”

Now in this verse we find they were looking upward.

“THEY” were to be an upward looking people.

“THEY” were to be an outward looking people.

Upward and outward forms the shape of a cross. To be upward and outward shows that the cross has been embraced rather than bracing against it!

Upward and outward is the opposite of being downward and inward. When a Christian’s affections and mind are upward, it will correspond with and outward gaze, wanting to see the gospel’s advancement.

In Colossians 3:2 it says,

“SET YOUR MIND ON THE THINGS ABOVE, NOT ON THE THINGS THAT ARE ON EARTH.”

When a Christian’s mind is downward on circumstances and problems, there is the tendency to be inward or self-centered. The result of being downward and inward will be little or no interest in helping advance the gospel.

Acts 1:10 “THEY WERE LOOKING INTENTLY UP.”

2. “WERE LOOKING INTENTLY UP.”

Their focus was the same.

They were intent on intently looking up.

They were not looking at and comparing themselves with each other. They were not looking at what might have been, the restoration of the kingdom of Israel. They were not looking back.

Are we intent on intently looking up?

Are we looking at and comparing ourselves with each other?

Are we looking at what might have been?

Are we looking back at the past? If we are looking at the past, we will not last!

If we are looking back, we will not stay on track!

We now conclude by asking if you **“WERE LOOKING INTENTLY UP”** in the past but now have given up. If you have given up then please look up!

Acts 1:11 “GO INTO HEAVEN.”

6) At the conclusion of verse 11, we focus on the words “GO INTO HEAVEN.”

At the conclusion of your life, will you “GO INTO HEAVEN?”

Here are five false hopes religious people cling to, to “GO INTO HEAVEN.”

1. If you are hoping your “good deeds” are the means to “GO INTO HEAVEN” then you will not “GO INTO HEAVEN.”

2. If you are trying to obey the ten commandments to “GO INTO HEAVEN” then you will not “GO INTO HEAVEN.”

3. If you are trusting in your church attendance to “GO INTO HEAVEN” then you will not “GO INTO HEAVEN.”

4. If you are trying your best “to live a good moral life” to “GO INTO HEAVEN” then you will not “GO INTO HEAVEN.”

5. If you are standing on anything but Jesus Christ to “GO INTO HEAVEN” then you will not “GO INTO HEAVEN.”

If you are not standing on the rock, then you are standing on quicksand!

In Acts 1: 9, it describes the disciples seeing Jesus “GO INTO HEAVEN.”

Acts 1:11 “GO INTO HEAVEN.”

If you are following Jesus then you will “GO INTO HEAVEN.”

If you are not following Jesus, you will not “GO INTO HEAVEN.”

If you ask God to forgive you of your sins and make Jesus your Lord and Savior, then you will go “GO INTO HEAVEN.”

Ephesians 2:8 says,

“FOR BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED THROUGH FAITH; AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES, IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD.”

Before Jesus would “GO INTO HEAVEN,” He had to go to the cross. Before the ascension was the crucifixion!

**Acts 1:14 “THESE ALL WITH ONE MIND
WERE CONTINUALLY DEVOTING THEMSELVES TO PRAYER,”**

For our study of this part of verse 14, please consider these three parts.

1. “THESE ALL WITH ONE MIND”

This verse teaches us that the people were all together devoting themselves to prayer. Our focus is on the fact that although they were all different types of people with; different ages, different personalities, different backgrounds, but they were all in agreement.

Notice the word **“ALL.”** It does not say some of them were of the same mind. They were **“ALL”** with one mind.

**Acts 1:14 “THESE ALL WITH ONE MIND
WERE CONTINUALLY DEVOTING THEMSELVES TO PRAYER,”**

2. “WERE CONTINUALLY DEVOTING THEMSELVES”

From this part of verse 14, we learn what the disciples were doing when they came together. We learn what they were continually devoting themselves to.

They were not continually devoting themselves to the internet.

They were not continually devoting themselves to watching movies. They were not continually devoting themselves to playing golf together. They were not continually devoting themselves to sporting events.

They were not continually devoting themselves to different pleasures.

**Acts 1:14 “THESE ALL WITH ONE MIND
WERE CONTINUALLY DEVOTING THEMSELVES TO PRAYER,”**

In Hosea 9:10 it says,

**“BUT THEY CAME TO BAAL-PEOR AND DEVOTED THEMSELVES TO SHAME,
AND THEY BECAME AS DETESTABLE AS THAT WHICH THEY LOVED.”**

In the book of Hosea, we see the people of Israel becoming like that which they devoted themselves to. What do we continuously devote ourselves to? We become like that which we are devoted to.

Are we **“CONTINUALLY DEVOTING”** ourselves to prayer? These words are present continuous. Are we devoting ourselves to prayer today?

If we are too busy to pray then we are too busy. When we meet other disciples what do we do together? Certainly we need to be involved in a variety of things together, but do we ever pray together? When we meet with other Christians, do we ever spend time praying together?

**Acts 1:14 “THESE ALL WITH ONE MIND
WERE CONTINUALLY DEVOTING THEMSELVES TO PRAYER,”**

3. “TO PRAYER,”

In the first chapter of Acts, the word “**PRAYER**” is found. Then in chapter two, the coming of the Holy Spirit is recorded. Prayer preceded the coming of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the early church.

All that followed in Acts followed them praying!

All that we do is to follow prayer.

Acts 1:14 “MARY THE MOTHER OF JESUS, AND WITH HIS BROTHERS.”

For our study of this part of verse fourteen, it is divided into three parts.

1. “MARY”

This verse gives us the only time in the book of Acts when “**MARY**” the mother of Jesus is referred to. She is mentioned, but she is not the focus in Acts, but rather Jesus is. Earlier in verse 1, we noticed that the word “JESUS” is mentioned some 70 times in Acts in the NASB. We recall that the book of Acts is an account of the early church and its progression. What that teaches us is Mary was mentioned but to the early Christians she was not exalted over the Lord Jesus. Any doctrine or teaching that emphasizes Mary instead of Jesus is a deviation from Scripture. In the context of this verse we learn that Mary was one of those devoting themselves to prayer. From this example Mary serves as a fine example for us to follow.

Acts 1:14 “MARY THE MOTHER OF JESUS, AND WITH HIS BROTHERS.”

2. “THE MOTHER OF JESUS,”

The Bible does not say “Mary the mother of God.” This phrase is from Catholic teaching but does not agree with what the Bible says. In the Bible, Mary is described as **“THE MOTHER OF JESUS.”** The Bible does not describe, or elevate Mary to the position of the mother of God. The Bible is to be the final authority for what we believe, and not church tradition.

3. “AND WITH HIS BROTHERS.”

From these words, we learn that the word **“HIS”** refers to Jesus. This same thought is presented in Matthew 12:47,

“BEHOLD, YOUR MOTHER AND YOUR BROTHERS ARE STANDING OUTSIDE SEEKING TO SPEAK WITH YOU.”

These verses teach us that Jesus had brothers. This observation is important because it counters false doctrine that teaches Jesus did not have any brothers.

Acts 1:15 "PETER STOOD UP.....AND SAID,"

Please give attention to these two parts, the beginning and the end of the verse.

1. "PETER STOOD UP"

These words show the action that Peter did.

2. "AND SAID,"

Then it shows Peter speaking. First is action. Second is speaking. Peter did what is described about Jesus in Acts 1:1 **"JESUS BEGAN BOTH TO DO AND TEACH."** Both are required as Christians and not one without the other.

Acts 1:16 "THE SCRIPTURE HAD TO BE FULFILLED IN WHICH THE HOLY SPIRIT SPOKE"

From this portion of verse 16 may we focus on two parts.

1. "THE SCRIPTURE HAD TO BE FULFILLED,"

2. THE HOLY SPIRIT SPOKE"

In the NASB it says, **"THE HOLY SPIRIT FORTOLD"** From this translation we learn that the Holy Spirit warned ahead of time what *would occur*.

In John 16:13 it says,

"HE WILL DISCLOSE TO YOU WHAT IS TO COME."

A vital truth the Lord teaches us from this verse is the following. Whatever the Scripture says, the Holy Spirit will always speak in agreement to what the Scriptures says. The Holy Spirit never says something that contradicts what the Scriptures say. If you think the Holy Spirit is leading you to do something contrary to what the Bible says, then you are wrong.

Acts 1:17 “FOR HE WAS COUNTED AMONG US.”

Here Peter is speaking about Judas, a man who they had known for approximately three years. The words "**AMONG US**" show Judas was with them and they knew him. They had been together in ministry and in various situations. They had all witnessed Jesus performing miracles and yet Judas turned away. As we continue on following Jesus, we will experience to some degree what Peter and the other disciples experienced, someone we know, turning away from following the Lord. In Peter's discourse he does not sound course.

Peter did not become discouraged.

Peter showed a correct heart attitude by referring in verse 20 what the Scripture said concerning Judas. How do we respond when someone among us turns away from the Lord?

**Acts 1:18 "NOW THIS MAN
ACQUIRED A FIELD WITH THE PRICE OF HIS WICKEDNESS,"**

Please begin by focusing on the words "THIS MAN." These words refer to Judas.

Next give attention to the words, "ACQUIRED A FIELD WITH THE PRICE OF HIS WICKEDNESS."

Judas betrayed Jesus and his actions are described as wickedness.

Judas paid for his betrayal of Jesus.

We learn that when Jesus Christ is rejected, there is a heavy price to pay.

Acts 1:20 "FOR IT IS WRITTEN..."

To begin, please give full attention to the words **"IT IS WRITTEN."** These are the very words Jesus spoke as recorded in Matthew 4:3, 7, 10 when faced with the devil's temptations. When face with attacks, Jesus stood firm on the word of God.

In Matthew 4:3 when Jesus said **"IT IS WRITTEN"** He quoted Deuteronomy 8:3, **"MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF GOD."**

Please consider that Deuteronomy chapter 8 was written approximately 1450 years B.C. When Jesus faced temptations He stood firmly on God's Word. The truth of God's word never changes. The word of God has no expiry date. When we face temptations, may we follow Jesus and say, **"IT IS WRITTEN."**

Acts 1:20 "...WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF PSALMS,"

In the preceding four verses Peter is speaking about Judas.

Then in verse 20, Peter quotes from Psalm 69:25, and Psalm 109:8.

What Peter said agreed with Scripture.

What we say, does it agree with Scripture? This pattern is also seen in Acts 2:14-16. Peter is making a statement, and then shows that what he is teaching agrees with Scripture. From verse 17 to 21, Peter quotes Scripture. This pattern again appears in Acts 2:22-24. Peter is making a statement, and then shows that what he is teaching agrees with Scripture. From verse 25 to 28, Peter quotes Scripture. An important lesson to learn from this is we are to be very careful about any teaching we hear. What Peter taught was thoroughly grounded in Scripture. When we read books or listen to teachings by professing Christian authors, look and listen carefully to see if what is being taught agrees with the Scriptures. It is very important that when we read or hear something, we need to look for Scriptural references to support what is being said, and to read the context to see that certain verses are not taken out of context.

Acts 1:21 “THE LORD WENT IN AND OUT AMONG US...”

These words describe our Lord continually among His disciples. He was not aloof and distant from His disciples. The apostles not only heard Jesus teach but also saw how He lived. They saw how He acted in a variety of situations. They did not just see Him on the Sabbath teaching in the synagogue. Another thought seen here is Jesus was not on some elevated position but rather He was among people. He was on the same level as people.

Now focus more closely on the word **“US.”** This word refers to the people present but is more focused on the eleven apostles. Jesus spent considerable time in public and private with just a small number of men. The model Jesus used is to be followed. If you are in leadership, do you have a small number of men you are training?

Acts 1:22 “WITNESS WITH US OF HIS RESURRECTION.”

From this part of verse 22, please consider it in the following three parts.

1. “WITNESS”

Our whole lives are to witness for Jesus Christ. Our whole lives are to bear witness that Jesus Christ is alive. Do our lives witness for the Jesus Christ or against Jesus Christ? In Mark 14:66-68 Peter's actions testified against Christ. May we carefully allow the Holy Spirit to search our lives and see if areas of our daily conduct witness against Christ. Our conduct testifies for Christ or against Him. Our lives are to witness for Christ and His glory. In Philippians 1:21 it says, **“FOR TO ME, TO LIVE IS CHRIST AND TO DIE IS GAIN.”** See the singleness of heart and purpose. Our lives are to be a witness; again look at another cross reference, 2 Corinthians 6:3, **“GIVING NO CAUSE FOR OFFENSE IN ANYTHING, IN ORDER THAT THE MINISTRY BE NOT DISCREDITED.”** Also, look at John 1:8, **“HE WAS NOT THE LIGHT, BUT CAME THAT HE MIGHT BEAR WITNESS OF THE LIGHT.”** May God's grace mold our lives into living witnesses for His glory! Next consider that for us to **“WITNESS”** does involve being a good example but also it involves speaking about Jesus. Our life is to be a **“WITNESS”** and so is our mouth! Do you **“WITNESS”** about Jesus? When was the last time you spoke to someone about Jesus Christ?

Acts 1:22 “WITNESS WITH US OF HIS RESURRECTION.”

2. “WITH US”

Notice the writer is using the word **“US”** rather than them, or you. He is including himself. He is not telling other people to do something that he is not doing. The word firstly applies to the apostles but also applies to all that were present. It is not just the leaders who are to witness but every believer. These words **“WITH US”** also conveys the meaning of being in agreement with others. Who do we find ourselves in agreement with? People who are for or people who are against Jesus?

3. “OF HIS RESURRECTION.”

Please read these words as if the person speaking is speaking directly to us as we read these words. When we read the Bible, the words need to speak directly to us. The Holy Spirit is saying we are to be involved in witnessing about Jesus and His resurrection from the dead. We are to be involved in promoting the gospel. Have you ever told anyone that Jesus died and rose from the dead and there is salvation through Him?

Acts 1:23 “AND THEY PUT FORWARD TWO MEN, JOSEPH CALLED BARSABBAS (WHO WAS ALSO CALLED JUSTUS), AND MATTHIAS.”

Here we learn two men, Barsabbas and Mathias were considered to fill the place of Judas. Why were these two men being put forward? The answer is seen in verse 20, which quotes Psalm 109:8, “...**MAY ANOTHER TAKE HIS PLACE OF LEADERSHIP.**” Up until now, this particular Scripture was not highlighted to apply. They had of course read it before but now it was very real and relevant to their situation. Now the situation with Judas made this Scripture come alive to the situation they apostles were experiencing.

The apostles were applying the Scripture to the situation they were in. We are to follow this pattern in our lives. As we read Scripture, the Holy Spirit highlights verses as if we never saw them before. We might have read areas of Scripture for years but then in particular situations and phases of life the Holy Spirit illuminates a certain verse that applies to the particular situation we are in.

Acts 1:23 “AND THEY PUT FORWARD TWO MEN, JOSEPH CALLED BARSABBAS (WHO WAS ALSO CALLED JUSTUS), AND MATTHIAS.”

Now let us consider these two men “BARSABBAS” and “MATTHIAS.” What do we know about these two men?

We know very little about them except for clues in verses 21 and 22.

We know they were together from the baptism of John to Jesus' ascension.

We know they had been with the apostles, men who loved the Lord Jesus.

We know they had accompanied the apostles from the beginning.

We know they associated with people who followed Jesus.

Up until now, they are not mentioned in Scripture, yet they followed Jesus.

Up until now, we did not know about these men, yet they followed Jesus.

How do you feel if you are not mentioned? Are you still willing to follow Jesus?

How do you feel if no one knows about you? Are you still willing to follow Jesus?

**Acts 1:24 “AND THEY PRAYED, AND SAID,
“THOU, LORD, WHO KNOWEST THE HEARTS OF ALL MEN,
SHOW WHICH ONE OF THESE THOU HAST CHOSEN.”**

From this marvelous verse are seven gems to uncover. Let us look into them in the following seven points.

1. “AND THEY PRAYED, AND SAID,”

Prayer came first. Too often prayer is the last resort instead of the first resort! Praying must precede everything we do. Do we make excuses like, “I’m too busy to pray?” If we are busy, we had better pray even more. Prepare in prayer.

2. “THOU, LORD,”

They recognized and confessed the greatness of God. Their focus was on how great God is rather than on their great need. There can be a subtle tendency to be over conscious of the devil, the devil is defeated and I say to you, do not be out of balance seeing how powerful Satan is, rather see how powerful God is, He knows the hearts of all men.

**Acts 1:24 “AND THEY PRAYED, AND SAID,
“THOU, LORD, WHO KNOWEST THE HEARTS OF ALL MEN,
SHOW WHICH ONE OF THESE THOU HAST CHOSEN.”**

3. “WHO KNOWEST”

They sought God’s guidance. God knew who would be the man to replace Judas but they did not know. They did not act smugly thinking they were pretty important or were “mighty men of God.” They just asked God to direct them. They did what Proverbs 3:5-6 says,

“TRUST IN THE LORD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND DO NOT LEAN ON YOUR OWN UNDERSTANDING, IN ALL YOUR WAYS ACKNOWLEDGE HIM AND HE WILL MAKE YOUR PATHS STRAIGHT.”

They asked God to help them make the right decision before making the decision rather than asking God to help them after making a wrong decision! Do we ask God to help us make right decisions or just ask God to help us after we have made wrong decisions?

**Acts 1:24 “AND THEY PRAYED, AND SAID,
“THOU, LORD, WHO KNOWEST THE HEARTS OF ALL MEN,
SHOW WHICH ONE OF THESE THOU HAST CHOSEN.”**

4. “THE HEARTS OF ALL MEN,”

This confession of God knowing the hearts of all men shows us that their confidence was in Him and not their own abilities, intellectual ability, strength, or past experience. In 1 Samuel 16:7 it says,

“MAN LOOKS AT THE OUTWARD APPEARANCE, BUT THE LORD LOOKS AT THE HEART.”

In John 21:17 was Peter’s confession of Christ,

“LORD, YOU KNOW ALL THINGS.”

In Acts 11:17 Peter shows his reverence and confidence in Christ by saying,

“WHO WAS I THAT I COULD STAND IN GOD’S WAY?”

There is no self-confidence, but every indication of total confidence in God.

**Acts 1:24 “AND THEY PRAYED, AND SAID,
“THOU, LORD, WHO KNOWEST THE HEARTS OF ALL MEN,
SHOW WHICH ONE OF THESE THOU HAST CHOSEN.”**

5. “SHOW”

They were asking the Lord to “**SHOW**” because they did not know.

They were being very open and honest.

They were not trying to impress, but were honest in asking for direction. They were not concerned about being criticized for being too “spiritual.” They were not concerned about being accused of being too serious. They were not afraid of what others would think if we prayed.

They were not embarrassed to openly pray.

Self-consciousness can block us from coming together to pray for guidance.

**Acts 1:24 “AND THEY PRAYED, AND SAID,
“THOU, LORD, WHO KNOWEST THE HEARTS OF ALL MEN,
SHOW WHICH ONE OF THESE THOU HAST CHOSEN.”**

6. “WHICH ONE OF THESE”

They did not know who God wanted as a replacement for Judas., but they were humble and they were willing they needed guidance and they asked for it.

Although they had been with Jesus for three years and saw Him performing miracles, and they were being used by God to perform miracles they still needed help.

No matter how long we have been Christians and no matter how many miracles we have seen, we still need to totally rely on the Lord. We cannot live on past experiences. The only way to see God do miracles in and through our lives is to totally rely on Him.

We never graduate from needing help!

If we no longer know we need help, then we really need help.

If we do not admit we need help then it is obvious we need help!

**Acts 1:24 “AND THEY PRAYED, AND SAID,
“THOU, LORD, WHO KNOWEST THE HEARTS OF ALL MEN,
SHOW WHICH ONE OF THESE THOU HAST CHOSEN.”**

7. “THOU HAST CHOSEN.”

They wanted the Lord to show them who was to replace Judas.

They did not take a vote on who should replace him.

These words also communicate expectancy the Lord would direct them. When we pray, do we really expect the Lord will answer our prayers?

**Acts 1:25 “TO OCCUPY THIS MINISTRY AND APOSTLESHIP
FROM WHICH JUDAS TURNED ASIDE TO GO TO HIS OWN PLACE.”**

With reliance upon the Lord, may we consider the person named Judas. When we read verse 25, there are three things we do not discern.

There is no anger in the words Peter spoke about Judas.

There is no hate in the words Peter spoke about Judas.

There is no sarcasm in the words Peter spoke about Judas.

Now remember that Judas had been involved in ministry. With this observation, let us consider our response to someone who has done wrong. Now let us consider this in the first person, what is my attitude towards such a person who has been in ministry. When we speak about the person is there anger, hatred, or sarcasm in our voices? As you read this, perhaps you can recall the name of a particular person in ministry who has acted in a wrong way. Perhaps in the misuse of finances. When you think about the person, do any negative attitudes arise in your heart? If they do, please quickly pray & ask the Lord to cleanse it from you.

**Acts 1:25 “TO OCCUPY THIS MINISTRY AND APOSTLESHIP
FROM WHICH JUDAS TURNED ASIDE TO GO TO HIS OWN PLACE.”**

In Proverbs 4:23 it says,

**“WATCH OVER YOUR HEART WITH ALL DILIGENCE, FOR FROM IT FLOW THE
SPRINGS OF LIFE.”**

Now consider that this verse records the last time in Acts that Judas Iscariot is mentioned. Even though Judas Iscariot did such a heinous crime, Peter did not keep on talking about what Judas had done.

When we experience someone doing something extremely wicked, or extremely hurtful, what do we do?

Do we keep on talking about what they did to us or do we talk to our Lord about what the person did to us?

**Acts 1:25 “TO OCCUPY THIS MINISTRY AND APOSTLESHIP
FROM WHICH JUDAS TURNED ASIDE TO GO TO HIS OWN PLACE.”**

Now consider two more thoughts about Judas.

1. Matthew 10:1,

**“AND HAVING SUMMONED HIS TWELVE DISCIPLES, HE GAVE THEM
AUTHORITY OVER UNCLEAN SPIRITS, TO CAST THEM OUT, AND TO HEAL EVERY
KIND OF DISEASE AND EVERY KIND OF SICKNESS.”**

Judas Iscariot was one of the twelve apostles. He had authority to heal the sick and cast out demons but he was still Judas. What this observation teaches us is having spiritual power does not necessarily mean the person is right with God or what they are teaching is correct doctrine.

2. John 12:6,

“HE HAD THE MONEY BOX, HE USED TO PILFER WHAT WAS PUT INTO IT.”

He used to pilfer before he betrayed Jesus. A seemingly small sin led to betraying Jesus. For a Christian, seemingly small sins, if not repented of, will eventually lead to betrayal of Jesus.

Acts 1:26 “AND THEY DREW LOTS FOR THEM, AND THE LOT FELL ON MATTHIAS, AN HE WAS NUMBERED WITH THE ELEVEN APOSTLES.”

This verse concludes our brief study of chapter one. Here in verse 26 they had done what the last part of verse 20 instructed. The last part of verse 20 quotes Psalm 109:8,

"MAY ANOTHER TAKE HIS PLACE OF LEADERSHIP."

The apostles were careful to apply what the Scripture said in Psalms 109:8. Their actions were in accordance to what the Scriptures say.

Are we careless and our actions disagree to what the Scriptures say?

Or are we careful that our actions agree to what the Scriptures say?

**Acts 2:4 “AND THEY WERE ALL FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT
AND BEGAN TO SPEAK WITH OTHER TONGUES,
AS THE SPIRIT WAS GIVING THEM UTTERANCE.”**

To study this verse may we give attention to the following two points.

1. “AND THEY WERE ALL FILLED”

These words tell us who and how many were filled with the Holy Spirit. The words “THEY” and “ALL” repeat what was written in verse 1, “THEY WERE ALL TOGETHER.” Now let us ask, who were “ALL” who were filled? The word “ALL” means what it says.

It does not say, “some were filled with the Holy Spirit.”

It does not say, “just the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit.”

It does not say, “the spiritual ones were filled with the Holy Spirit.”

The words, “AND THEY WERE ALL FILLED” refer to all who were present. The people who were filled were not better than other people were. They were just people who loved Jesus. In verse 15 it says,

“A GATHERING OF ABOUT ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY PERSONS WERE THERE TOGETHER.” This filling was not just for apostles. It was for “ALL” the believers and still is for “ALL” believers.

**Acts 2:4 “AND THEY WERE ALL FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT
AND BEGAN TO SPEAK WITH OTHER TONGUES,
AS THE SPIRIT WAS GIVING THEM UTTERANCE.”**

2. “AND BEGAN TO SPEAK WITH OTHER TONGUES,”

These words tell us how we know they were filled with the Holy Spirit. There was actual evidence that they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

The evidence was they spoke in other tongues.

When a person is filled with the Holy Spirit, there is evidence to verify it.

**Acts 2:11 “WE HEAR THEM IN OUR OWN TONGUES SPEAKING
OF THE MIGHTY DEEDS OF GOD.”**

The people heard disciples speaking about **“THE MIGHTY DEEDS OF GOD.”**
They were not speaking about the mighty misdeeds of men! People heard
what these disciples were talking about and it is true for us. People hear what
we talk about.

Do we talk about **“THE MIGHTY DEEDS OF GOD”** or do we talk about the
mighty misdeeds of men?

Do we talk about **“THE MIGHTY DEEDS OF GOD”** or do we talk about the
mighty depressing deeds of men?

Next, see that the disciples were speaking about God and all the great things
He is doing. What do we talk about?

Do we talk about God or anything but God?

**Acts 2:13 “BUT OTHERS WERE MOCKING
AND SAYING, ‘THEY ARE FULL OF SWEET WINE.’”**

In Acts 2:13 it says,

**“BUT OTHERS WERE MOCKING AND SAYING,
‘THEY ARE FULL OF SWEET WINE.’”**

This verse relates directly to what happened in verses 4 to 11, with particular focus on verse 4. In chapter two, the believers in Christ were baptized in the Holy Spirit. How we know this, is because there was evidence. The evidence was they spoke in tongues after being filled with the Holy Spirit. Now in this verse we learn that controversy followed their Holy Spirit baptism. It would seem controversy, as well as speaking in tongues follows being baptized in the Holy Spirit.

**Acts 2:13 “BUT OTHERS WERE MOCKING
AND SAYING, ‘THEY ARE FULL OF SWEET WINE.’”**

Now let us look at this verse in two parts.

1. “BUT OTHERS WERE MOCKING AND SAYING,”

Now consider that the people saying these words were not baptized in the Holy Spirit. They were slandering those who were baptized in the Holy Spirit. Their suggestion that they were **“FULL OF SWEET WINE”**

is a lie. They were slandering and speaking lies against those who the Lord had baptized in the Holy Spirit. This same conduct can be seen in books written against Christians who are baptized in the Holy Spirit. Please notice in this verse that those who had been baptized in the Holy Spirit were not slandering people who were not baptized in the Spirit. People baptized in the Holy Spirit are not superior to those not baptized.

**Acts 2:13 “BUT OTHERS WERE MOCKING
AND SAYING, ‘THEY ARE FULL OF SWEET WINE.’”**

2. “THEY ARE FULL OF SWEET WINE.”

Next, consider why this presumptuous statement would be voiced.

Why would they be falsely accused of being “**FULL OF SWEET WINE?**” May we consider that their actions might have appeared similar to people who are drunk.

Perhaps some were wobbly.

Perhaps some were laughing.

Perhaps some were falling down.

Perhaps some were crawling around.

**Acts 2:13 “BUT OTHERS WERE MOCKING
AND SAYING, ‘THEY ARE FULL OF SWEET WINE.’”**

We do not know for certain because Scripture does not say. But their actions caused those who were not baptized to say they were acting as if they were drunk. This writer has personally witnessed similar manifestations of the Holy Spirit; that to someone not baptized in the Holy Spirit might have a similar critical response as in this verse.

In God’s presence there is fullness of gladness and joy. In Psalms 16:11 it says, **“IN THY PRESENCE IS FULLNESS OF JOY.”** Such a fact is expressed in people laughing, sometimes to the point where it is difficult to stop. This verse is a reaction to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Those who were partakers of the outpouring were glad, and those who did not experience it were mad. Have you heard of places where there has been a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit?

How have you responded?

Have you been glad, or mad?

**Acts 2:14 “BUT PETER, TAKING HIS STAND WITH THE ELEVEN,
RAISED HIS VOICE AND DECLARED TO THEM:”**

We shall look more closely at the beginning words “**BUT PETER.**” When we see these words, we might recall when Peter betrayed Jesus. Mark 14:54 says, “**AND PETER HAD FOLLOWED HIM AT A DISTANCE, RIGHT INTO THE COURTYARD OF THE HIGH PRIEST; AND HE WAS SITTING WITH THE OFFICERS, AND WARMING HIMSELF AT THE FIRE.**”

When we read about Peter and his betrayal of Jesus, and how he was following Jesus at a distance, and in the company of those who were against Jesus and making himself comfortable with a nice warm fire we might think this man is a lost cause. Yet in Acts 2:14, we read of Peter introducing the first sermon right after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. If we only knew about Peter from Mark 14:54 (above) and not how Jesus had changed him we might think the man was totally lost. But Jesus brought him back and restored him. The lesson we can learn from this is when we see a fellow Christian in a very unhealthy spiritual condition let us be careful to avoid thinking they are lost or will never come back to the Lord. We are to pray for them to have such an encounter with the risen Christ as Peter did.

Acts 2:22 “LISTEN TO THESE WORDS:”

For our study of this part of verse 22, we shall divide it into two parts.

1. “LISTEN”

To begin notice this word is in the present tense. We will be tense if we do not listen “TO THESE WORDS” in the present tense. Peter was speaking to those present and it speaks to us present.

The word “LISTEN” is an active word, the opposite of being passive.

The word “LISTEN” is a command, rather than a polite suggestion.

In Mark 4:24 Jesus said, “TAKE CARE WHAT YOU LISTEN TO.”

Jesus warns us through this verse that we are to be very careful what we listen to. What we choose to listen to has either a positive or a negative effect on us. Our faith is either helped or hurt by what we choose to listen to.

Acts 2:22 “LISTEN TO THESE WORDS:”

2. “TO THESE WORDS:”

As we consider “THESE WORDS” we realize that there are other words that try to get us to listen to them instead of the words in Scripture. The voices we hear daily in the world are contrary to what the Scriptures say. As we read what Peter said after “THESE WORDS” we are not just to read them but listen to them. What words do we listen to? All of us listen to words. Words come from people, and words can come in the form of thoughts in our minds. The writer is quoting Peter addressing his audience. Peter is getting their attention and these words get our attention. Often we are listening to words that are not in agreement to Scripture. We need to cultivate an attitude to “LISTEN TO THESE WORDS” in respect to listening to the words of Scripture. Jesus takes us through tribulations.

Not around them.

Not avoiding them.

But through them.

**Acts 2:36 “THEREFORE LET ALL THE HOUSE OF ISRAEL KNOW FOR CERTAIN
THAT GOD HAS MADE HIM BOTH LORD AND CHRIST
– THIS JESUS WHOM YOU CRUCIFIED.”**

At the end of this powerful verse are the words

“WHOM YOU CRUCIFIED.”

Peter is speaking directly to his listeners, not about other people but about them.

Peter did not say, “whom they crucified” or “who other people crucified.”

Peter did not tone down or dilute his message out of fear of offending.

Peter is addressing their sin and not some other people’s sin. The result of this type of preaching was the hearers were convicted of their sin in verse 37.

Acts 2:38 “PETER REPLIED, “REPENT AND BE BAPTIZED.”

Here we see a clear Scriptural pattern for anyone who is truly born-again.

First, a person has to **“REPENT.”**

Second, a person has to **“BE BAPTIZED.”**

Baptism is of no value if a person has not first repented of their sins.

A person gets baptized because they are saved, and not to get saved! This verse is contrary to the doctrine of infant baptism.

The doctrine of infant baptism is not supported in Scripture. Some try to twist Acts 16:31 but this verse refers to a household, and there is no mention of infants. An infant is too young to know about repentance. Some cults promote baptism as a means of joining their group, but do not repent of sins. We do not know exactly how long between when a person repents to when that person is baptized.

Acts 2:38 “PETER REPLIED, “REPENT AND BE BAPTIZED.”

In Acts 8:36-38 the Ethiopian eunuch was baptized soon after his conversion. When a genuine conversion is evident, as was the case with the Ethiopian eunuch, then baptism can come soon after.

Acts 2:39 says, **“THIS PROMISE IS FOR YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN AND FOR ALL WHO ARE FAR OFF-FOR ALL WHOM THE LORD OUR GOD WILL CALL.”**

The promise spoken about here is referring to what is described in verse 38, **“AND YOU WILL RECEIVE THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.”**

The Lord made a promise and He kept His word. When we make a promise, do we keep our word? The gift of the Holy Spirit was not just for that time period, but also for every generation. Although there are no shortage of conflicting opinions and teachings about the gift of the Holy Spirit, it seems from verse 38 that it comes after repentance and baptism.

Acts 2:38 “PETER REPLIED, “REPENT AND BE BAPTIZED.”

Earlier in this chapter, the believers received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Some say the gift comes at conversion.

Some say it comes after.

Whichever doctrine you adhere to it is real that there is evidence to receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, and that evidence is speaking in tongues. In my Christian experience, it came after as verse 38 describes. I repented of my sins, then I was baptized in water, and after I received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Now back to verse 39. The promise was for then and now. Salvation was not just for then, but also for all generations that followed. Also, the gift of the Holy Spirit was not just for then but,

“FOR YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN AND FOR ALL WHO ARE FAR OFF-FOR ALL WHOM THE LORD OUR GOD WILL CALL.”

Acts 2:40 “HE SOLEMNLY TESTIFIED”

From verse 14, Peter had been preaching about salvation through Jesus Christ. Here in this verse we learn the method by which he was preaching. Continuing through the book of Acts the Lord reveals that this word **“SOLEMNLY”** appears seven more times in reference to the preaching of the gospel. The seven include:

1. Acts 8:25 **“SOLEMNLY TESTIFIED AND SPOKEN THE WORD...”**
2. Acts 10:42 **“SOLEMNLY TO TESTIFY THAT THIS IS THE ONE...”**
3. Acts 18:5 **“SOLEMNLY TESTIFYING TO THE JEWS THAT JESUS...”**
4. Acts 20:21 **“SOLEMNLY TESTIFYING TO BOTH JEWS AND GREEKS...”**
5. Acts 20:24 **“SOLEMNLY OF THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.”**
6. Acts 23:11 **“SOLEMNLY WITNESSED TO MY CAUSE AT JERUSALEM...”**
7. Acts 28:23 **“SOLEMNLY TESTIFYING ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD...”**

Acts 2:40 “HE SOLEMNLY TESTIFIED”

Peter “SOLEMNLY TESTIFIED” at the beginning of Acts.

Paul “SOLEMNLY TESTIFIED” at the end of Acts.

The ministers changed but the method and message did not change. Time had passed from Acts 8:25 to Acts 28:23

but the message did not pass.

In the church where we are, is the gospel still “SOLEMNLY TESTIFIED” that Jesus is the only way of salvation?

Or has the gospel been diluted or spoken with levity?

As time passes away, has the gospel once “SOLEMNLY TESTIFIED” also passed away?

Do we speak about the cross or are we afraid of making people cross?

Acts 2:40 “CORRUPT GENERATION.”

The above part of verse 40 is quoting from the NIV translation of the Bible.

KJV says, **“CROOKED GENERATION.”**

RSV says, **“CROOKED GENERATION.”**

NASB says, **“PERVERSE GENERATION.”**

Wuest N.T. says, **“PERVERSE GENERATION.”**

J.B. Philips N.T. says, **“PERVERTED GENERATION.”**

Amplified says, **“CROOKED, PERVERSE, WICKED, UNJUST GENERATION.”**

The original audience these words were addressed to lived in the first century but we notice they are written in the present tense. These words applied then and they apply now. The early church was in a corrupt, crooked, perverse, perverted, wicked, and unjust world. As believers we still live in the same kind of world, if in fact not magnified from the first century. The only hope for those hearing Peter preaching was the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the only hope from this corrupt, crooked, perverse, perverted, wicked, unjust world. Do you think the country and society you are living in is as Scripture describes? If you do not then you need your mind renewed according to the word of God.

Acts 2:41 “THERE WERE ADDED THAT DAY ABOUT THREE THOUSAND SOULS.”

To study this verse may we prayerfully look at the following three parts.

1. “THERE WERE ADDED THAT DAY”

In this verse and also Acts 4:4 large numbers of conversions were being added to the church. In both cases, Peter was involved in preaching the gospel where people were getting saved. But notice carefully that it was not Peter talking about the growth happening through his ministry.

It was Luke, the writer of the book of Acts saying it and not Peter.

What Peter talked about was Jesus, and not about the number of conversions or how large the church was growing through his ministry.

In Proverbs 27:2 it says, **“LET ANOTHER PRAISE YOU, AND NOT YOUR OWN MOUTH; SOMEONE ELSE, AND NOT YOUR OWN LIPS.”**

When we read books or ministry magazines that describe someone preaching the gospel and large numbers of people getting saved but does not mention that God is the One who causes the increase, then realize that it does not comply with Acts 2:41 or Proverbs 27:2.

**Acts 2:41 “THERE WERE ADDED THAT DAY
ABOUT THREE THOUSAND SOULS.”**

With thousands of people getting saved this was the first Christian mega church. It seems the Lord does not have a problem with mega churches, since it was He who saved each and every person in it. But look at this mega church in context from verse 36 and see the gospel was clearly preached and there was strong conviction of sin.

Verse 36, preaching Jesus Christ as Lord and not just as “personal Savior.”

Verse 37, there was conviction of sin in the hearts of the audience.

Verse 38, there was a clear undiluted call to total repentance.

Verse 38, receiving forgiveness and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 40, Peter preached solemnly. He did not tell jokes to make the audience more comfortable.

This mega church was a church filled with people who had repented of their sins and not just people who were coming for business contacts or any number of other selfish motives.

Acts 2:41 “THERE WERE ADDED THAT DAY ABOUT THREE THOUSAND SOULS.”

2. “ABOUT”

The writer here gives an approximate number of conversions to the church. May we ask ourselves a question? In writing this, do you think Luke was exaggerating the total number of conversions? The answer of course is no, he was not exaggerating the number of people added to the church.

Luke did not exaggerate numbers and we are not to exaggerate numbers in a church. Exaggerating is lying. This sort of thing is at times seen in evangelism, or in short term missions. It is often done with the intent of making someone or something appear better or more successful than it really is.

**Acts 2:41 “THERE WERE ADDED THAT DAY
ABOUT THREE THOUSAND SOULS.”**

3. “THREE THOUSAND SOULS.”

Now consider the various kinds of people who were being saved.

The people would have various ages.

The people would have various incomes.

The people would have various personalities.

The people would have various family backgrounds.

The people would have various educational backgrounds.

The people would all be different, but the Lord chose & saved them all.

In Let God Arise, Judson Cornwall said,

*“ God has not merely redeemed many individuals;
He has formed them into a family. ”*

Acts 2:42 “AND THEY WERE CONTINUALLY DEVOTING THEMSELVES TO THE APOSTLES TEACHING AND TO FELLOWSHIP, TO THE BREAKING OF BREAD AND TO PRAYER.”

In verse 41, it describes three thousand new converts. The Lord had saved them but that was not the end of the issue but rather just the beginning. They had not arrived but rather had just started! When a person becomes a Christian, they need to grow. In this verse is outlined what steps were taken to help these new believers grow in their faith. This pattern is imperative for not just making converts but for making disciples.

1. “CONTINUALLY DEVOTING THEMSELVES”

These words show the new Christians were hungry to grow. They were not just going to church on Sundays. To put this in a modern context, they were not continually devoting themselves to watching TV or spending hours on the internet. If there is no passion, there is distraction!

2. “TO THE APOSTLES TEACHING”

They were continually devoting themselves to what would help them grow in their faith rather than devoting themselves to what would undermine their faith. They were being taught sound doctrine. They were getting a correct grounding in the Scriptures as opposed to running after some new wind of doctrine.

Acts 2:42 “AND THEY WERE CONTINUALLY DEVOTING THEMSELVES TO THE APOSTLES TEACHING AND TO FELLOWSHIP, TO THE BREAKING OF BREAD AND TO PRAYER.”

3. “AND TO FELLOWSHIP,”

The new believers were spending time with other believers rather than with unbelievers. The kind of people we choose to associate with tells a lot about our spiritual condition. What kind of people do we choose to spend time with? It is interesting to notice in this verse that fellowship is mentioned right after the apostles teaching. It may be fair to suggest their fellowship was about or included what they were learning about the Lord and His word. Do we talk about the Lord or everything but the Lord when we are with other believers? After we hear a Bible teaching, do we talk about it or forget about it?

4. “TO THE BREAKING OF BREAD”

These words may refer to the Lord’s Supper or to the new believers spending time eating together. The people they were spending time with were people who were of a like mind and wanted to follow Jesus. What kind of people do we spend time with? Do the people we choose to spend time with encourage us to have a passion for Jesus or is their influence a distraction from Jesus!

5. “AND TO PRAYER.”

The new believers were praying. They were not going out to sporting events together or some other form of pleasure seeking but rather were seeking God in prayer! They were learning the importance of prayer.

Acts 2:47 “AND THE LORD WAS ADDING TO THEIR NUMBER DAY BY DAY THOSE WHO WERE BEING SAVED.”

For our study, we shall look at the first five words and the last five words.

1. “AND THE LORD WAS ADDING”

The writer does not just say that their numbers were being added day by day. If this verse had merely stated people were being saved it would tend to take the emphasis off the Lord and put it on men. It would put emphasis on the person preaching instead of the person Jesus Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 3:7 it says, **“SO THEN NEITHER THE ONE WHO PLANTS NOR THE ONE WHO WATERS IS ANYTHING, BUT GOD WHO CAUSES THE GROWTH.”** The emphasis was on the Savior, not the sermon!

2. “THOSE WHO WERE BEING SAVED.”

The writer does not just say a certain number of people came to church. The writer does not just say the people were merely church members.

People might come to a church for social or business contacts.

People might come to a church because their friends invited them.

People might come to a church because they find acceptance.

People might be members of a church but are they members of the body of Christ? The gospel must be preached.

**Acts 3:5 “AND HE BEGAN TO GIVE THEM HIS ATTENTION,
EXPECTING TO RECEIVE SOMETHING FROM THEM.”**

In verse 2, we learn the beggar was brought every day to the gate of the temple to beg. In verse 3, the beggar asked Peter and John for alms. Then in verse 6, we learn that Peter did not give him any alms. In The Message translation, verse 6 reads,

“PETER SAID, “I DON’T HAVE A NICKEL TO MY NAME.”

Imagine this poor beggar wanting money, and two spiritual men of God did not have, nor give him any. Peter and John did not give a beggar money. If we see someone begging for money, how do we respond? Sometimes we give out of guilt. We need to realize the person might spend the money on alcohol or cigarettes rather than on food.

We can help someone but it does not mean giving them money.

**Acts 3:6 “BUT PETER SAID, “I DO NOT POSSESS SILVER AND GOLD,
BUT WHAT I DO HAVE I GIVE TO YOU:
IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST, THE NAZARENE - WALK!”**

In this verse and also verse 7 and 8 was a situation that was happening in Peter's present situation. The healing was part of Peter's present testimony as a Christian.

It was not a testimony of something that had occurred several years in the past. It was not a testimony of something that had occurred to someone else. This verse and those immediately following provide a valuable lesson that we are to expect the Lord to do miracles today and not just remember what He did many years in the past. Are you experiencing the supernatural now? Or do you only hear of such things as something that happened in the past?

What is happening now, not five, ten or twenty years ago?

**Acts 3:6 “BUT PETER SAID, “I DO NOT POSSESS SILVER AND GOLD,
BUT WHAT I DO HAVE I GIVE TO YOU:
IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST, THE NAZARENE - WALK!”**

Another thought expressed in this verse is Peter's honesty.

Peter said, **“I DO NOT POSSESS SILVER AND GOLD.”**

The order is significant.....

First, Peter was honest.

Second, Peter prayed for the man to be healed.

Peter's life was right with the Lord and prayed for the man to be healed. Is your life right with the Lord? If so then pray for people to be healed! Would we be as honest if we did not have any money or would we be too embarrassed to admit it? Peter's focus was not on what he did not have, which was silver and gold, but rather on what he did have, which was authority to heal in Jesus' name. What do our thoughts focus on? What we do not have or what we do have?

Acts 3:8 “AND HE ENTERED THE TEMPLE WITH THEM,”

As we see in this account that Peter and John continued on their way into the temple, from verse 1 we learn that they were going there to pray.

Now in verses 6 and 7 a miracle just occurred, and here are Peter and John continuing on with their main objective, to pray. Talking to the Lord was their priority. Notice that neither of them told anyone what just occurred, they did not go into the temple telling everyone how God had used them. As we read verses 8 and 9, we see that it was the beggar who was talking. In Proverbs 27:2 says,

“LET ANOTHER PRAISE YOU, AND NOT YOUR OWN MOUTH.”

The beggar was right in praising God because it was God who had healed him. Finally when Peter did speak in verse 12, he corrects the people for mistakenly exalting him instead of God. For him to receive their praise would be usurping what belonged to God.

Acts 3:8 “AND HE ENTERED THE TEMPLE WITH THEM,”

Peter was used by God to heal this person. He did not know this story was being recorded in the Bible.

Peter did not know Christians would read this event in the Bible all over the world for the next twenty centuries.

Peter did not do it for the recognition.

Peter did not do it for fame among Christians.

Peter did it because he was obeying and trusting the Lord.

May we seriously ask ourselves, what motivates us to do work for the Lord?

Is it supremely and only governed by a love for Him or is it mixed with secret desires to “look good” to the Pastor or to other Christians?

If our motive for serving Christ is to look “super spiritual” to other Christians and if we secretly desire their praise then we must be honest and realize that we are sick with spiritual pride and deep repentance is desperately needed.

Acts 3:9 “AND ALL THE PEOPLE SAW HIM WALKING AND PRAISING GOD.”

Now divide this part of the verse into ten points. Then let us ask ourselves questions that compare with that of the man who was formerly lame.

1. “AND ALL THE PEOPLE SAW HIM”

From these words, we learn that people saw what this man was doing. The people undoubtedly saw he was different from how he was before God healed him. Do you think the man was happy God healed him? Obviously he was because in the previous verse walking, jumping and praising God! He was ecstatic about what God had done for him. Are we like him? Has God done something marvelous in your life? Has God healed an area of your life? Has God healed you physically or emotionally? Then stop right now and praise Him for what He has done in your life.

**Acts 3:9 “AND ALL THE PEOPLE SAW HIM
WALKING AND PRAISING GOD.”**

2. “WALKING AND PRAISING GOD.”

First the man was “WALKING.”

Second, the man was “PRAISING GOD.”

When a Christian is walking right with God there will be a heart praising God whether outwardly or inwardly. If we are not praising God is it because we are bracing against God? How does a Christian walk right with God?

In 1 John 1:7 it says,

“BUT IF WE WALK IN THE LIGHT AS HE HIMSELF IS IN THE LIGHT, WE HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH ONE ANOTHER, AND THE BLOOD OF JESUS HIS SON CLEANSSES US FROM ALL SIN.”

To walk right means to walk in the light of God’s word. Walk in light to walk right! When you go for a walk, do you praise God?

**Acts 3:9 “AND ALL THE PEOPLE SAW HIM
WALKING AND PRAISING GOD.”**

3. “WALKING”

The man was obviously thankful to God for being able to walk. For us who can walk we might take it for granted. Are we thankful or do we take good health for granted?

4. “WALKING”

The man was doing something he never did before.

We know because verse 2 says, **“AND A CERTAIN MAN WHO HAD BEEN LAME FROM HIS MOTHER’S WOMB WAS BEING CARRIED ALONG.”**

The man did not say, “I cannot walk, I am just a poor crippled beggar.” Are we willing to let God take our lives and have us do things we have never done before?

**Acts 3:9 “AND ALL THE PEOPLE SAW HIM
WALKING AND PRAISING GOD.”**

5. “PRAISING GOD.”

The man was excited about what God had done for him. Are we excited about what God has done for us? Perhaps we are not walking and jumping around every day in a continual state of euphoria. But are we excited about what God has done for us? In our daily circumstances, do we praise the Lord?

6. “PRAISING GOD.”

The man was praising God for healing him. He was not praising Peter for healing him. The emphasis is where it should be, on God and not a man. Do we talk more about a famous preacher than we talk about the Lord?

7. “PRAISING GOD.”

The man was formerly lame, but God healed him. When he was lame, he was not praising God. Are you presently walking with God? Or is there something wrong in your life that is making you spiritually lame?

**Acts 3:9 “AND ALL THE PEOPLE SAW HIM
WALKING AND PRAISING GOD.”**

8. “PRAISING GOD.”

The man had a positive attitude. He was not worrying about having to find a job now that he was healed. Praising is positive. Is your heart filled with praise or filled with worry, anger, unforgiveness, self-pity or other negative emotions?

9. “PRAISING GOD.”

The man was focused on God. When the heart is praising it shows the focus is on God and not on self or circumstances. It shows we are not thinking about how bad people are but how good God is!

Do you think about how bad people are or about how good God is?

**Acts 3:9 “AND ALL THE PEOPLE SAW HIM
WALKING AND PRAISING GOD.”**

10. “PRAISING GOD.”

The man was praising God for enabling him to do what he was doing. The man was walking because God gave him the ability to walk.

He was doing something that previously he was not able to do by Himself, but God enabled him.

Do we know that God enables us to do what we do?

Do we admit that God gave us the ability to do what we do?

Do we praise God for giving us the ability to do what we do?

Do we thank God for helping us do what we cannot do alone?

**Acts 3:11 “AND WHILE HE WAS CLINGING TO PETER AND JOHN,
ALL THE PEOPLE RAN TOGETHER TO THEM
AT THE SO-CALLED PORTICO OF SOLOMON, FULL OF AMAZEMENT.”**

As we study this verse, try to picture the scene in your mind. We shall study verse 11 in the following three parts.

1. “HE WAS CLINGING TO PETER AND JOHN,”

The Lord had healed the lame beggar through Peter. Now the man was clinging to Peter and John, but they were not clinging to the man. The word cling means, hold fast to, not let go of, and grip. Why were they not clinging to the man? The reason is because they were clinging to the Lord.

In 2 Kings 18:6 it says,

“FOR HE CLUNG TO THE LORD; HE DID NOT DEPART FROM FOLLOWING HIM.”

The Lord healed him, and he would need to cling to the Lord and not to people. The Lord healed him at the gate of the temple but he would need to cling to the Lord and not a memory of a place where he was healed.

What do we cling to?

Do we cling to people?

Do we cling to places?

**Acts 3:11 “AND WHILE HE WAS CLINGING TO PETER AND JOHN,
ALL THE PEOPLE RAN TOGETHER TO THEM
AT THE SO-CALLED PORTICO OF SOLOMON, FULL OF AMAZEMENT.”**

2. “THE PEOPLE RAN TOGETHER TO THEM”

Peter and John were Christian leaders and the people were exalting them.
Now consider Luke 22:31-32,

**“SIMON, SIMON, BEHOLD, SATAN HAS DEMANDED PERMISSION TO SIFT YOU
LIKE WHEAT; BUT I HAVE PRAYED FOR YOU, THAT YOUR FAITH MAY NOT FAIL.”**

The only reason that Peter, (then called Simon) was able to do anything was because Jesus had interceded for him. It was Jesus who sustained Peter. Today when we see a Christian leader doing mighty things for God let us remember it is only because of God giving him the grace to accomplish anything.

**Acts 3:11 “AND WHILE HE WAS CLINGING TO PETER AND JOHN,
ALL THE PEOPLE RAN TOGETHER TO THEM
AT THE SO-CALLED PORTICO OF SOLOMON, FULL OF AMAZEMENT.”**

3. “FULL OF AMAZEMENT.”

What sort of people were in the crowd? In verse 12 Peter said, “**MEN OF ISRAEL.**” There were men present. Were there women? It is possible some of the people were but we are not sure. It is one thing to be praised by men but quite another matter when women are thinking you are something special. In Acts 3:6-8 the Lord used Peter to heal a crippled man. Now in this verse we see what happened to Peter & John.

Suddenly they were famous!

Suddenly they were celebrities!

Suddenly they were successful!

Suddenly they were superstars!

With success come two extremes. Either hatred and jealousy, or praise from men. Both of these dangers are defused by humility. In this situation, the people were mistaken and gave the praise to men rather than to God. In verse 8, the healed man was praising the Lord rather than Peter but here the people were praising Peter rather than the Lord.

**Acts 3:11 “AND WHILE HE WAS CLINGING TO PETER AND JOHN,
ALL THE PEOPLE RAN TOGETHER TO THEM
AT THE SO-CALLED PORTICO OF SOLOMON, FULL OF AMAZEMENT.”**

The higher people lift you up on a pedestal the further you can fall. Remember the following three things.

1. Go slow
2. Don't blow
3. Stay low

When we stay low, it is less distance to fall! The corrupt nature of fallen man would rather praise a man of God rather than praise God! In Weak People, Mighty God, Terry Virgo said,

“ We think in a totally different way from God. Impressed by human personality and magnetism, our ideal Christians are prominent sportsmen, famous pop stars and attractive media people - because of what they are in themselves. “

With all the people focused on them, they redirected the people to focus on Jesus as the source for the healing of the crippled man. In this verse, the healed man was clinging to them. But the praise did not cling to them.

**Acts 3:11 “AND WHILE HE WAS CLINGING TO PETER AND JOHN,
ALL THE PEOPLE RAN TOGETHER TO THEM
AT THE SO-CALLED PORTICO OF SOLOMON, FULL OF AMAZEMENT.”**

We are to be like Hezekiah in 2 Kings 18:6,

**“FOR HE CLUNG TO THE LORD; HE DID NOT DEPART FROM FOLLOWING HIM,
BUT KEPT HIS COMMANDMENTS.”**

When someone wants to cling to you, cling to the Lord! Acts 3:12 says,

“BUT WHEN PETER SAW THIS, HE REPLIED TO THE PEOPLE,”

From this verse we can see and learn a pattern for us to pray concerning our own lives. Here we learn how Peter handled success and it should be beneficial for us when apparent success comes into our lives. Please read verses 6 to 10 to see the context to this story. Peter was careful to avoid receiving glory from men, just as Jesus was in John 5:44, where He says,

“I DO NOT RECEIVE GLORY FROM MEN.”

A similar example is also seen by Joseph in Genesis 41:16,

**“JOSEPH THEN ANSWERED PHARAOH, SAYING, “IT IS NOT IN ME; GOD WILL
GIVE PHARAOH A FAVORABLE ANSWER.”**

**Acts 3:11 “AND WHILE HE WAS CLINGING TO PETER AND JOHN,
ALL THE PEOPLE RAN TOGETHER TO THEM
AT THE SO-CALLED PORTICO OF SOLOMON, FULL OF AMAZEMENT.”**

Peter immediately turned the attention towards God in verse 13 and away from himself. This pattern is then repeated in Acts 4:8-10.

Peter did not allow people to keep exalting him.

Peter did not remain silent, and savor the moment.

Peter knew what was happening and instantly replied to the people.

Peter knew only God was deserving of the glory and not him or John.

Peter knew he was nothing apart from the grace of God.

Peter knew he had betrayed Jesus before the crucifixion.

Peter knew as well that Jesus had restored him.

Whatever we have done or ever will do for Christ, it is only because He enables us. If people praise you for something you have done in obedience to God, be quick to make it clear that whatever the accomplishment may be, it is only because of God's enabling power.

The flesh loves to savor praise from people. Guard your thoughts from clinging onto praise.

Praise belongs to God and not to us. It is His property and not ours.

May God renew our minds to speak as Peter spoke in the midst of success.

**Acts 3:12 “WHY DO YOU GAZE AT US,
AS IF BY OUR OWN POWER OR PIETY WE HAD MADE HIM WALK?”**

In verses 6 to 8 is where the Lord used Peter to heal a crippled man.

In verse 11, people were amazed with the miracle that had just happened.

In verse 12, the people were gazing at Peter as if he was the source of this miracle rather than him merely being the instrument for God to use to heal the crippled man. Peter knew he could not heal anyone, but he also knew God could heal anyone! Isaiah 10:15 says,

“IS THE AXE TO BOAST ITSELF OVER THE ONE WHO CHOPS WITH IT?

IS THE SAW TO EXALT ITSELF OVER THE ONE WHO WIELDS IT?”

In the time of the early church God healed people. Today God still heals people, and what is needed is for us to be willing to allow Him to use us as instruments as He did with Peter.

Peter knew it was not because of him that the man was healed. Do not to hide behind excuses that you are not spiritual enough for God.

Acts 3:15 “YOU KILLED THE AUTHOR OF LIFE, BUT GOD RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD.”

This verse has two distinct parts. With God’s help, consider each part.

1. “YOU KILLED THE AUTHOR OF LIFE,”

The people were lifting up Peter for the miracle of healing that had occurred but here Peter lifts up their sin! Imagine these people all running to Peter after the crippled man is healed. People were gazing thinking Peter was amazing, but Peter came out blazing against their sin! Peter did not savor the flavor of recognition. Do we savor the flavor of recognition? If we do then we need to repent from that sin! Peter knew that he was nothing apart from the grace of God. Do we know we are nothing apart from the grace of God? From verses 13 to 15 Peter clearly tells the people what their sin was.

Verse 13, **“YOU HANDED HIM OVER TO BE KILLED.”**

Verse 13, **“YOU DISOWNED HIM BEFORE PILATE.”**

Verse 14, **“YOU DISOWNED THE HOLY AND RIGHTEOUS ONE.”**

Verse 15, **“YOU KILLED THE AUTHOR OF LIFE,”**

When the Holy Spirit convicts us of a sin, He is always very specific and clear as we read in these verses. The Holy Spirit is never vague or confusing.

When sin is committed, Jesus is omitted!

When sin is accepted, Jesus is rejected!

**Acts 3:15 “YOU KILLED THE AUTHOR OF LIFE,
BUT GOD RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD.”**

2. “BUT GOD RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD.”

In the first point, the focus is on the death of Christ. But the verse does not end there. If the verse stopped there, it would leave us feeling hopeless. But the Lord never leaves hopeless. Here the word “BUT” brings hope to the hearers. Voices from people or in our thoughts that only tell us what we have done wrong without offering us hope, do not come from God.

Peter told the people what they did.

Peter also told the people what God did!

In these words, Peter proclaimed the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The first part of the verse refers to Jesus being crucified.

The second part of the verse refers to the resurrection of Jesus. Scripture speaks about both, and not just the crucifixion. If there is only an emphasis on the death and not the life that follows then that is not a correct view of Scripture.

Acts 3:17 “NOW BROTHERS, I KNOW THAT YOU ACTED IN IGNORANCE.”

In this verse is a pattern for a healthy church. The verse is in two parts.

1. “NOW BROTHERS,”

First, we realize who Peter was speaking to. He was talking to Jews rather than Christian **“BROTHERS.”** But we can learn from this word and how it can apply to **“BROTHERS”** in Christ.

“BROTHERS” communicates a close relationship between people. We remember that Peter was a leader in the early church.

“BROTHERS” communicates no hint of superiority. Peter was a leader but he was not lording it over them.

“BROTHERS” communicates a very personal and warmer sound than impersonal terms like “church members,” or “the laity.”

“BROTHERS” communicates being on the same level as the person being spoken to rather than talking down to someone.

“BROTHERS” communicates that people would know each other. In your church, do you know other people? How do we get to know other people? One simple way is spending time together.

“BROTHERS” communicates that there is friendship and love from which to bring correction and this brings us to the second point.

**Acts 3:17 “NOW BROTHERS,
I KNOW THAT YOU ACTED IN IGNORANCE.”**

2. “I KNOW YOU ACTED IN IGNORANCE.”

This statement addresses a particular sin that has been committed. Please note the word **“YOU.”**

Peter did not talk to them about sins other people had done.

Peter did speak to them about sins they had done.

Peter did not talk about their sins behind their backs.

Peter did talk to them face to face about their sins.

Do **“YOU”** find it easy talking to people about people’s sins?

Do **“YOU”** find it difficult talking to people about their sins?

Do **“YOU”** talk about people’s sins behind their backs?

Do **“YOU”** talk face to face to the person who sinned?

**Acts 3:17 “NOW BROTHERS,
I KNOW THAT YOU ACTED IN IGNORANCE.”**

None of us is exempt from doing something wrong. We all need correction. Friendship and love between Christian brothers provides a foundation from which to give correction. Correcting someone is certainly not pleasant, but when there is friendship and love the task is much easier. It is easier to receive correction when you know the person correcting really does love you.

In Galatians 6:1 it says,

“BROTHERS, IF SOMEONE IS CAUGHT IN A SIN, YOU WHO ARE SPIRITUAL SHOULD RESTORE HIM GENTLY.”

Peter did not avoid giving correction. Do we avoid giving correction?

In Proverbs 27:5 it says,

“BETTER IS OPEN REBUKE THAN HIDDEN LOVE.”

Avoiding, shows the heart is void.

**Acts 3:19 “REPENT, THEN, AND TURN TO GOD,
SO THAT YOUR SINS MAY BE WIPED OUT,
THAT TIMES OF REFRESHING MAY COME FROM THE LORD.”**

In verse 11, the people were astonished by what the Lord had done. Now they were astonished when they saw what they had done to the Lord! Now consider the verse in three parts.

1. “REPENT, THEN, AND TURN TO GOD.”

We learn from these words that repentance means turning to God. Peter not only told them they had sinned but he also told them how to correct what they had done wrong. We consider the words **“TURN TO GOD”** show that a person is making a choice to change what they are doing. These words tell us the human will is involved in repentance. Peter did not say, “If you feel like repenting, turn to God.” Repentance is not just based on how you feel. When the Holy Spirit convicts a person of sin, the person likely feels horrible or very sad for what they have done. But here the words give the impression of making a willful decision. The people knew they had sinned because Peter clearly stated their sin in verses 13 to 15.

**Acts 3:19 “REPENT, THEN, AND TURN TO GOD,
SO THAT YOUR SINS MAY BE WIPED OUT,
THAT TIMES OF REFRESHING MAY COME FROM THE LORD.”**

2. “SO THAT YOUR SINS MAY BE WIPED OUT,”

These words tell us that when a person has repented their sin is wiped out. It means the person no longer practices the sin they repented from. Peter corrected then he comforted. When the Lord wipes away sin there is a sense of being clean inside.

3. “THAT TIMES OF REFRESHING MAY COME FROM THE LORD.” Refreshing comes after repentance. The Lord provides refreshment in His presence only after the heart is clean from sin. This pattern is reflected in 2 Kings 23:21 where King Josiah commanded the people to celebrate the Passover. What is seen prior to 2 Kings 23:4 to 20 is extensive denouncing and forsaking of idolatrous sins. The person harboring secret sins will not experience the beauty of the Lord’s refreshing presence. In Protection From Deception, Derek Prince said,

“ Any refreshing that bypasses repentance is not Scriptural. ”

Acts 3:22 “LISTEN TO EVERYTHING HE TELLS YOU.”

In verse 22, it records the prophetic words that Moses spoke about Jesus. The words applied to his audience and every generation up to now.

1. “LISTEN”

This is a command rather than a suggestion. This is in the present tense. There are many voices in the world. Many try to distract our minds, so it is imperative we are discerning about what we listen to.

2. “TO EVERYTHING”

This means 100%, rather than “listen to some things He tells you.”

We are not to pick and choose what we want to hear. When a person is in rebellion, they will find someone who will tell them what they want to hear.

Acts 3:22 “LISTEN TO EVERYTHING HE TELLS YOU.”

3. “HE”

This word is referring to Jesus. This word is singular. This word tells us there is one voice. Jesus is Truth, there are not many truths. Does what we listen to agree with the Bible? If it does not agree with the Bible, it is not from God.

4. “TELLS YOU.”

These words teach us we have a personal responsibility to listen to and obey Jesus regardless of whether anyone else does or not! When you read the Bible, it is speaking to you.

**Acts 3:23 “ANYONE WHO DOES NOT LISTEN TO HIM
WILL BE COMPLETELY CUT OFF FROM AMONG HIS PEOPLE.”**

In verse 22, there is a clear warning to listen very carefully to what the Lord Jesus says. We need to not rush over such a verse as this but stop and soberly read it and prayerfully let it sink deep inside.

This verse teaches us that there are consequences of not listening.

The consequences are deadly. Now divide this verse into four parts.

1. “ANYONE”

The word means exactly what it says. There is no favoritism or partiality. It matters not if one is rich. It matters not if one is poor. It matters not if one is educated or illiterate. It does not matter if one is young or old.

2. “WHO DOES NOT LISTEN”

These words tell us we all make decisions whether to listen or not. Listening with an attitude to obey or disobey is our choice. We choose either self-will or God's will.

**Acts 3:23 “ANYONE WHO DOES NOT LISTEN TO HIM
WILL BE COMPLETELY CUT OFF FROM AMONG HIS PEOPLE.”**

3. “WILL BE”

These words speak with absolute certainty. It does not say “maybe.” These words should put the fear of God in us if it was not there already!

4. “COMPLETELY CUT OFF FROM AMONG HIS PEOPLE.”

These words soberly tell us there are very real consequences to disobeying God. The verse does not mention when a person will be completely cut off. Is it sudden or delayed?

Perhaps a person sinning and refusing to listen to and obey God will deceive himself into thinking he has gotten away with his sin because punishment is not immediate.

**Acts 3:26 “FOR YOU FIRST, GOD RAISED UP HIS SERVANT,
AND SENT HIM TO BLESS YOU
BY TURNING EVERY ONE OF YOU FROM YOUR WICKED WAYS.”**

With the Lord to help us, please seriously consider this verse in the following seven parts.

1. “FOR YOU FIRST,”

The word “YOU” is first mentioned here. In total, it is used three times in this verse and the word “YOUR” is mentioned once in this verse. What Peter was about to say was for the people present. He was speaking to them about themselves and not about other people.

In Revival Lectures, Charles G. Finney said,

“ Preaching should be direct. The Gospel should be preached to men, and not about men. The minister must address his listeners. He must preach to them about themselves, and not leave the impression that he is preaching to them about others. ”

**Acts 3:26 “FOR YOU FIRST, GOD RAISED UP HIS SERVANT,
AND SENT HIM TO BLESS YOU
BY TURNING EVERY ONE OF YOU FROM YOUR WICKED WAYS.”**

2. “GOD RAISED UP HIS SERVANT,”

These words speak about Jesus Christ but they also apply to us. God did the raising up and not the servant. God raises up someone in a low position. God was in charge and not the servant.

In Proverbs 18:12 it says, **“HUMILITY GOES BEFORE HONOR.”** God does raise up a person with a servant’s heart. If a person demands they be raised up, they are not ready to be raised up. God does not raise up a proud person.

In James 4:6 it says, **“GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.”** God wants someone who wants to serve rather than being served. What do you like doing more, serving or being served?

In Mark 10:45 it says, **“FOR EVEN THE SON OF MAN DID NOT COME TO BE SERVED, BUT TO SERVE, AND TO GIVE HIS LIFE A RANSOM FOR MANY.”**

How do we recognize who is a servant?

We recognize a servant by seeing them serving. God raises up a person in a close relationship with Himself. The words **“HIS SERVANT”** convey closeness in a relationship. It conveys it is someone He has known for some time.

**Acts 3:26 “FOR YOU FIRST, GOD RAISED UP HIS SERVANT,
AND SENT HIM TO BLESS YOU
BY TURNING EVERY ONE OF YOU FROM YOUR WICKED WAYS.”**

3. “AND SENT HIM”

Again, we remember this is primarily referring to Jesus Christ. The words **“SENT HIM”** tell us Jesus did not act independently from God. The words show submission. Jesus never went anywhere without it being God’s will.

4. “TO BLESS YOU”

Here we learn why Jesus was sent. Jesus was sent to bless others. Jesus went to help. Jesus went for the benefit of others and not for His own benefit. To bless others rather than get blessed shows unselfishness. When we hear this word **“BLESS”** what sort of thoughts come to your mind? Do thoughts related to material prosperity come to your mind? But here the meaning of being blessed is not what you can get from God. Each person who Jesus saves is blessed because they no longer are living according to their former wicked ways.

**Acts 3:26 “FOR YOU FIRST, GOD RAISED UP HIS SERVANT,
AND SENT HIM TO BLESS YOU
BY TURNING EVERY ONE OF YOU FROM YOUR WICKED WAYS.”**

5. “BY TURNING”

These words show Jesus went with a specific purpose. Jesus was purpose driven rather than driven. These words tell us the people being addressed were going the wrong direction in life. All needed to turn from the course they were on. These words show a change in direction. When Jesus saves someone, there will be a change in the direction their life is on.

6. “EVERY ONE OF YOU”

These words mean all, and not just some of you. In Romans 3:23 it says,
“FOR ALL HAVE SINNED AND FALL SHORT OF THE GLORY OF GOD.”

These words show there is no partiality with God. It mattered not what their educational background was, or how wealthy or poor they were.

**Acts 3:26 “FOR YOU FIRST, GOD RAISED UP HIS SERVANT,
AND SENT HIM TO BLESS YOU
BY TURNING EVERY ONE OF YOU FROM YOUR WICKED WAYS.”**

7. “FROM YOUR WICKED WAYS.”

Peter said “**YOUR WICKED WAYS**” and not other people’s wicked ways. He spoke to the people about themselves rather than speak to the people about someone else. Now consider what types of people were present when Peter was preaching. Do you think they were thieves, terrorists, drug addicts, criminals and prostitutes? Very likely they were not.

According to verse 1, Peter and John were entering the temple. The temple was the place where religious people went. Many of the people may have outwardly looked very respectable.

Certainly some were generous, because in verse 2 we learn a lame man used to sit and ask for charitable gifts from those entering the temple. Although some were charitable towards a person who was lame, Peter said “**YOUR WICKED WAYS.**”

**Acts 3:26 “FOR YOU FIRST, GOD RAISED UP HIS SERVANT,
AND SENT HIM TO BLESS YOU
BY TURNING EVERY ONE OF YOU FROM YOUR WICKED WAYS.”**

Very likely those entering the temple would be just ordinary looking people. Yes, they were just ordinary sinners. Perhaps we would not think of them as “WICKED.” Perhaps we might think using the word “WICKED” is too strong a language. Today all who are not in Christ are living “WICKED” lives. Certainly they are not viewed as “WICKED” by the world’s standards. But to the Holy God, all who have not repented from their sins are “WICKED.”

No matter how nice people seem, in light of Scripture, they are “WICKED.”

In Isaiah 64:6 it says, “AND ALL OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS ARE AS FILTHY RAGS.” Peter did not say “your ways” but rather inserted the word “WICKED.”

Peter did not water down or dilute the message for fear of offending people, especially wealthy people. Peter feared God rather than people. Are we like him? If we are not then we need to repent.

In Know What You Believe, Paul E. Little said,

“He is free to carry out the desires of his nature - but since his nature itself is corrupt, he is really free only to do evil.”

Augustine used the phrase, “The will is free, but not freed. Though he has a choice, man chooses a perverse course.”

Acts 4:10 “WHOM YOU CRUCIFIED, WHOM GOD RAISED FROM THE DEAD.”

From this part of verse 10 let us study the following two parts.

1. “WHOM YOU CRUCIFIED,”

Peter told the rulers of the people to their face about their sin.

Peter did not talk to other people behind their back about their sin. Peter spoke to people of influence but did not dilute the message.

The word “**CRUCIFIED**” speaks of death, but we see there is a comma after the word “**CRUCIFIED,**” which brings us to the second point.

Acts 4:10 “WHOM YOU CRUCIFIED, WHOM GOD RAISED FROM THE DEAD.”

2. “WHOM RAISED FROM THE DEAD.”

The words “WHOM RAISED FROM THE DEAD” speak of life. The sentence does not end, is not finished after Jesus was crucified. If it had finished it would leave a hopelessness, but God never leaves us hopeless.

As Christians it is vital we testify that Jesus was crucified for our sins, and God raised Him from the dead. In Romans 4:25 it says,

“HE WHO WAS DELIVERED OVER BECAUSE OF OUR TRANSGRESSIONS, AND WAS RAISED BECAUSE OF OUR JUSTIFICATION.”

The cross comes before the resurrection. Death comes before life in the Christian experience. Before God can safely use us for His glory, we need to go through this process. For example, if a person has a gifting in an area the gift will have to be surrendered to God. Very often the gift will have to die. The reason is the motives behind the gift are selfish and self-glorifying. After the heart has been dealt with in that area, then the Lord can give it back and resurrect it if He so chooses.

God uses our gifts for His glory. We misuse our gifts for our glory.

Before God can use us, we need to know it is all through for us!

Whatever we do that is not motivated for His glory is gory!

**Acts 4:13 “NOW AS THEY OBSERVED THE CONFIDENCE
OF PETER AND JOHN, AND UNDERSTOOD THAT THEY WERE UNEDUCATED
AND UNTRAINED MEN, THEY WERE MARVELING,
AND BEGAN TO RECOGNIZE THEM AS HAVING BEEN WITH JESUS.”**

In this verse, we learn Peter and John were uneducated and untrained men.
They did not spend years in Seminary studying theology.
They had a confidence not in what they were but in who Jesus is!
They had confidence not in what they had but in who had them.
They did not have confidence derived from their education or training.
They could not brag about having a PhD from a “famous” University.
Trusting in our education instead of Jesus is idolatry and pride.
Peter and John had something the religious leaders did not have.
Peter and John had been with Jesus and it was recognizable.
Peter and John were leaders who prayed.
When we spend time with Jesus people will begin to recognize it.
Do we spend time each day alone in prayer?

Acts 4:20 “FOR WE CANNOT STOP SPEAKING WHAT WE HAVE SEEN AND HEARD.”

For this present study, we shall focus on two parts to this verse.

1. “FOR WE CANNOT STOP SPEAKING”

Peter and John knew Jesus was real and that He had healed the lame man described in verse 14. In verse 18, Peter and John had been warned not to speak about Jesus. Have you ever noticed how people can freely speak about any religious figure? People can speak about Buddhism, Hinduism, or Islam and there is no opposition. But if you dare mention Jesus, you are quickly stereotyped as an extreme religious fanatic.

If a person speaks about a false religion, that person is often esteemed for being open-minded.

If a person speaks about the true Christianity, that person is often criticized for being narrow minded.

Next, consider that people speak about the things they love. People speak about themselves, food, clothes, and money. Peter and John loved Jesus and they spoke about Him. What do we speak about? What do we not speak about? What we speak about shows where our affections are. Peter and John were excited about Jesus and what He did. Are we excited about Jesus and what He did?

Acts 4:20 “FOR WE CANNOT STOP SPEAKING WHAT WE HAVE SEEN AND HEARD.”

2. “WHAT WE HAVE SEEN AND HEARD.”

Now let us focus on the three small one-syllable words **“SEEN AND HEARD.”** These words provide us with insight into how our lives as Christians are to be lived. As born-again Christians we need to first be seen living God’s word before we are heard telling others how to live God’s word.

Today while thinking about these words, the Holy Spirit brought John 3:16 to mind. In this verse, the words **“SEEN AND HEARD”** are revealed. Before the Holy Spirit inspired John 3:16 to be written, God had already done what John 3:16 records. God sent His Son to die for our sins.

He demonstrated His love, it was seen, then later on it was recorded by John for us to hear about. Before God teaches you and me truth, He has already done it. We are to follow His example. We must live truth before we tell others to. God’s word has to first be seen applied in our lives before we are heard telling others to live by it.

A man cannot lead where he has not been led.

Acts 4:21 “THEY WERE ALL GLORIFYING GOD FOR WHAT HAD HAPPENED.”

When we read these words we need to ask, what happened for these people to glorify God? Back in Acts 3:6-9 we learn God had done a miraculous healing through Peter. The people were glorifying God for healing a man. Notice that it was God, and not Peter who was glorified for the healing.

When we look at this verse, it serves as an important example of how Scripture never contradicts itself.

This verse 21 is not an isolated verse but is confirmed.

From the following five portions of Luke are examples of God receiving the glory for healing & not the human instrument He used:

Luke 5:25-26, Luke 7:14-16, Luke 13:12-13, Luke 17:14-15, Luke 18:42-43

**Acts 4:23 “AND WHEN THEY HAD BEEN RELEASED,
THEY WENT TO THEIR OWN COMPANIONS...”**

This verse is speaking about what had happened to Peter and John. What took place with them has a principle that applies to each of us. Please note that this part of verse 23 is composed of two parts.

1. “AND WHEN THEY HAD BEEN RELEASED,”

2. “THEY WENT TO THEIR COMPANIONS.”

They were free to do whatever they wanted to do.

They were free to go wherever they wanted to go.

They went to be with people they chose to be with.

They went to be with people who loved the Lord Jesus.

They went to be with people they felt comfortable with.

They went to be with people they had a lot in common with.

They went to be with people who were very much like themselves.

**Acts 4:23 “AND WHEN THEY HAD BEEN RELEASED,
THEY WENT TO THEIR OWN COMPANIONS...”**

We learn from this verse that when people are free to do as they choose, they go to be with people like themselves. Now we need to examine ourselves in light of this Scripture.

When we are on our own, where do we go?

When we are on our own, what do we do with our free time?

Where we go and how we choose to spend our free time is a very good discernor of our spiritual condition.

Who do we choose to associate with on our free time?

In Song of Solomon 8:13 it says,

“MY COMPANIONS ARE LISTENING FOR YOUR VOICE.”

Are the people we choose to have as our companions, people who listen to God’s voice?

In How to Keep from Going Blind, Daniel Del Vecchio said,

“Your spiritual fellowship is a clear indication of your spiritual state.”

Acts 4:24 "...O LORD, IT IS THOU WHO DIDST MAKE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM."

These words introduce a prayer that continues on until verse 30. It is important to consider the context of this prayer in relationship to what has previously occurred.

In verse 3 Peter and John were arrested and imprisoned for teaching Jesus. In verse 9, Peter and John were put on trial for teaching about Jesus. In verse 18, Peter and John were then firmly ordered to stop teaching about Jesus. Peter and John suffered for teaching about Jesus, but hardships did not harden their hearts against the Lord. Please realize it begins with words that exalt the Lord. They began praying by focusing on how great God was rather than focusing on how great their problems were.

In verse 29, they began stating their need for God's help. They did not mention needing help at the beginning but near the end. Do our prayers follow this Biblical pattern, or do we blurt out our needs at the beginning with little or no mention of words exalting the Lord?

We are to focus first on the greatness of our Lord, and not on the greatness of our load.

Acts 4:25 “...DAVID, THY SERVANT...”

Here eight thoughts come to mind when we think about David.

1. David was a King.
2. David was humble.
3. David was handsome.
4. David was very famous.
5. David was a great leader.
6. David did great exploits for God.
7. David is one of our favorite Bible heroes.
8. David was fearless when he fought Goliath.

Acts 4:25 “...DAVID, THY SERVANT...”

But David was “**THY SERVANT.**” A Christian might:

1. Be in authority.
2. Be humble.
3. Be handsome.
4. Be very famous.
5. Be a great leader.
6. Be doing great exploits for God.
7. Be a favorite character.
8. Be a fearless person.

Acts 4:25 “...DAVID, THY SERVANT...”

In 2 Samuel 7, David simply refers to himself as “THY SERVANT.”

2 Samuel 7:19, “THY SERVANT.”

2 Samuel 7:20, “THY SERVANT.”

2 Samuel 7:21, “THY SERVANT.”

2 Samuel 7:25, “THY SERVANT.”

2 Samuel 7:26, “THY SERVANT.”

2 Samuel 7:27, “THY SERVANT.”

2 Samuel 7:28, “THY SERVANT.”

2 Samuel 7:29, “THY SERVANT.”

It does not matter who or what we are, what does matter is we are “THY SERVANT.” Is that how we view ourselves? Do we like people to think of us as something other than “THY SERVANT?” If we do, then such an attitude needs to die

Acts 4:29 “NOW LORD, CONSIDER THEIR THREATS AND ENABLE YOUR SERVANTS TO SPEAK YOUR WORD WITH GREAT BOLDNESS.”

For our study of this verse, please give attention to the following five parts.

1. “NOW LORD,”

The Lord is spoken to in the present tense.

The Lord is not just the Lord of the past or future but now, in our present circumstances. In this verse, the disciples were praying. When faced with a problem they sought the face of God.

The problem was big, but not bigger than God. The problem was the chief priests were commanding them not to teach about Jesus.

This is seen in verse 18, **“THEY CALLED THEM IN AGAIN AND COMMANDED THEM NOT TO SPEAK OR TEACH AT ALL IN THE NAME OF JESUS.”**

Do our prayers often sound like this? Do our prayers amount to only talking about our problems? If we look **closer at this prayer and its context we see this prayer actually started in verse 24, “SOVEREIGN LORD,” THEY SAID, “YOU MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND EVERYTHING IN THEM.”** It is important to see the context to a particular verse. In verse 24, the prayer began with the believers focusing on how great God is instead of how great the problem was. Their focus was on the problem solver instead of the problem.

Acts 4:29 “NOW LORD, CONSIDER THEIR THREATS AND ENABLE YOUR SERVANTS TO SPEAK YOUR WORD WITH GREAT BOLDNESS.”

This pattern is seen in 2 Kings 19:15,

“O LORD, THE GOD OF ISRAEL, WHO ART ENTHRONED ABOVE THE CHERUBIM, THOU ART THE GOD, THOU ALONE, OF ALL THE KINGDOMS OF THE EARTH. THOU HAST MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH.”

Then the same pattern is seen in 2 Chronicles 20:6,

“O LORD, GOD OF OUR FATHERS, ARE YOU NOT THE GOD WHO IS IN HEAVEN? YOU RULE OVER ALL THE KINGDOMS OF THE NATIONS.”

This verse also starts off expressing the greatness of God, rather than the greatness of the problem. May we follow these examples of exalting the Lord in prayer and not merely exalting the problems we need help from.

Acts 4:29 “NOW LORD, CONSIDER THEIR THREATS AND ENABLE YOUR SERVANTS TO SPEAK YOUR WORD WITH GREAT BOLDNESS.”

2. “CONSIDER THEIR THREATS”

As we meditate on this Scripture, we find that the threats being directed towards them had one purpose. That purpose was to stop them from speaking the word of God. In whatever form threats come, they are designed to stop a person from speaking the word of God. Threats can be thoughts that exaggerate things we did or might have done wrong.

These disciples were being threatened because they were speaking about Jesus. This is seen in verse 18, **“THEN THEY CALLED THEM IN AGAIN AND COMMANDED THEM NOT TO SPEAK OR TEACH AT ALL IN THE NAME OF JESUS.”** They were not being threatened because they were talking about what denomination they belonged to or what church they attended. They were not being threatened because they were talking about some false religion. Neither were they being attacked because they were talking about some sporting event. Such topics do not raise such opposition as speaking about Jesus does! May we also note that it was the disciples who were being threatened, but they were not threatening anyone. The only one threatened by the disciple’s preaching was the devil.

Are we being threatened by the devil or are we a threat to the devil?

Acts 4:29 “NOW LORD, CONSIDER THEIR THREATS AND ENABLE YOUR SERVANTS TO SPEAK YOUR WORD WITH GREAT BOLDNESS.”

3. “AND ENABLE”

For these disciples to be able to continue preaching while being verbally attacked required needing God's help. They could not do it without God's help, and they were acknowledging that fact. This is true for us as well. We constantly need the Lord's help to be able to proclaim the gospel.

In John 15:5 it says,

“APART FROM ME YOU CAN DO NOTHING.”

In the midst of negative responses, we need to pray for God's help.

We cannot do it without His help. If we try to go all through a single day without His help, soon it will be all through for us! If we think we are able without Him, we are actually incapable without Him.

Acts 4:29 “NOW LORD, CONSIDER THEIR THREATS AND ENABLE YOUR SERVANTS TO SPEAK YOUR WORD WITH GREAT BOLDNESS.”

4. “YOUR SERVANTS”

Peter and John were not just servants but servants of the Lord! The word “YOUR” shows they belonged to Jesus. In 1 Corinthians 6:20 it says, “FOR YOU HAVE BEEN BOUGHT WITH A PRICE: THEREFORE GLORIFY GOD IN YOUR BODY.”

In Peter's life, he experienced incredible things as he followed Jesus.

In Matthew 14:29, Peter experienced walking on water.

In Mark 9:2, Peter and John had seen the transfiguration.

In Luke 9:16, Peter and the disciples saw Jesus feed thousands of people.

In Acts 3:8, Peter experienced the healing a crippled man.

Yet here they describe themselves as “YOUR SERVANTS.” They had seen how great God is and also how small they were. When we see how great God is we also see how small we are. Please realize that according to Acts 4:23 Peter and John were in the company of their friends when they described themselves as “YOUR SERVANTS.” They did not say they were apostles when they were with Christians, but servants.

When we are with other Christians, how do we describe ourselves?

Do we describe our profession or that we are His possession?

Acts 4:29 “NOW LORD, CONSIDER THEIR THREATS AND ENABLE YOUR SERVANTS TO SPEAK YOUR WORD WITH GREAT BOLDNESS.”

5. “TO SPEAK YOUR WORD WITH GREAT BOLDNESS.”

In this verse, we see the disciples were not praying for the threats to stop, but that in the midst of being attacked they would be able to speak the word of God with all confidence. From these words we see the disciples were not trying to avoid the severe problems they faced. Within us is the tendency to want to avoid difficulties. But here they were not asking for the difficulties to go away but for the strength to obey God's way.

To do God's will we need God's strength. Is your strength your god or is God your strength?

If God had not enabled them, they would not have been able.

If God does not enable, we will not be able.

Opposition is to make us go opposite to God's will.

In the face of opposition, they chose not to go opposite to God's will.

**Acts 4:30 “WHILE THOU DOEST EXTEND THY HAND TO HEAL,
AND SIGNS AND WONDERS TAKE PLACE
THROUGH THE NAME OF THY HOLY SERVANT JESUS.”**

This verse goes along with and is part of a complete package of the gospel as we read in the preceding verse.

In verse 29, the disciples were praying for the confidence to preach about Jesus Christ. This verse completes their prayer that healing, signs and wonders to take place along with the preaching of the gospel. Both verses 29 and 30 applied to then and apply to now. Some say healing, signs and wonders ceased with the death of the apostles or at the completion of Scripture being written.

But if they ceased, does this mean the preaching of the gospel also ceased? Of course not! If it had, we would not be saved today. Preaching the word did not cease and neither did what is described in this verse.

This verse is part of what the disciples were praying, and it is to be part of what we pray for.

Acts 4:33 “GIVING WITNESS TO THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD JESUS, AND ABUNDANT GRACE WAS UPON THEM ALL.”

For our study of this incredible verse, please consider three parts.

1. “GIVING WITNESS”

The apostles witnessed that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead. Do you witness about the Lord Jesus being alive? In the preaching we hear, is the resurrection of the Lord Jesus ever mentioned? If it is mentioned then that is very good. If it is not mentioned, why is it not mentioned? Sinners need to come to terms that they need to come to Jesus on His terms.

2. “LORD JESUS,”

Is Jesus your Lord? To answer that question here is a way to see if He is or not. Say aloud the words “**LORD JESUS.**” The way the words “**LORD JESUS,**” are said shows if Jesus really is our Lord. If we say the words “**LORD JESUS,**” in a respectful tone of voice, then it does show He really is our “**LORD JESUS.**” If we say the words “**LORD JESUS**” in a frivolous tone of voice, then it does show He really is not our “**LORD JESUS.**” Do we do what the “**LORD JESUS**” says or do we want Him to do what we say?

**Acts 4:33 “GIVING WITNESS TO THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD JESUS,
AND ABUNDANT GRACE WAS UPON THEM ALL.”**

3. “AND ABUNDANT GRACE WAS UPON THEM ALL”

Please notice that these words follow the words “LORD JESUS.”

Notice that there was not just barely enough grace upon them all, but “ABUNDANT GRACE WAS UPON THEM ALL.” The word “ABUNDANT” means plenty or to abound exceedingly. When we surrender and stop trying to do something in our own strength, then the “LORD JESUS” will pour into our hearts His abundant grace. God gives grace to the humble and the only way for us to experience the abundant grace of God is to surrender our whole lives to the “LORD JESUS.”

**Acts 4:33 “GIVING WITNESS TO THE RESURRECTION OF THE LORD JESUS,
AND ABUNDANT GRACE WAS UPON THEM ALL.”**

In Acts 4:34 it says, “FOR ALL WHO WERE OWNERS OF LAND OR HOUSES
WOULD SELL THEM AND BRING THE PROCEEDS OF THE SALES,”

What were the names of these people who sold their land and houses and gave away their money? They must have given an awful lot.

They must have made a huge sacrifice. But we do not even know who they were. Have we given an awful lot? Have we made huge sacrifices? How do you feel if no one even knows who you are? We are not to talk about what great sacrifices we have done for God but rather we are to talk about what a great sacrifice God has done for us.

In John 3:16 it says,

**“FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORLD, THAT HE GAVE HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON,
THAT WHOEVER BELIEVES IN HIM SHOULD NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE ETERNAL
LIFE.”**

It seems the names of the owners are not important, but what is important is the One who owned them.

Acts 4:37 “AND WHO OWNED A TRACT OF LAND, SOLD IT AND BROUGHT THE MONEY AND HE LAID IT AT THE APOSTLES’ FEET.”

Barnabas sold some land and brought the money to the apostles. Then that is the end of Acts 4 and the end of talking about Barnabas giving money. As we read through Acts, the sum of money that Barnabas gave is never mentioned. Throughout Acts, it is Jesus who is exalted and not any person. Scripture does not mention if other people were present when Barnabas presented his present. The apostles knew he donated the money but we do not know if other people knew. How much money was given to the apostles? Scripture mentions that money was donated but it does not mention the amount.

When a person donates money to our church, do we follow this example? When we give money, do we want people to know how much we gave? When we secretly give money, do we secretly desire the pastor tells other people how generous we are?

**Acts 5:1 “BUT A CERTAIN MAN NAMED ANANIAS,
WITH HIS WIFE SAPPHIRA, SOLD A PIECE OF PROPERTY,”**

In the first four chapters of Acts, the Holy Spirit did incredible miracles. In the first four chapters of Acts is the blueprint for the church to emulate. In the first four chapters of Acts is emphasis on prayer and conversions.

In the first four chapters of Acts is an atmosphere of revival we long for. Now the scene changes in Acts 5:1 with the word “**BUT.**”

Suddenly in the midst of revival fire are two people committing grievous sin. We might think, how could such sin exist in such a spiritual environment?

**Acts 5:1 “BUT A CERTAIN MAN NAMED ANANIAS,
WITH HIS WIFE SAPPHIRA, SOLD A PIECE OF PROPERTY,”**

Sin was present then and we are naive to think that sin is not present in the greatest of spiritual environments. If we think we want to be where God is really working, we are to soberly realize that sin is more than likely present in some form, whether we like to admit it or not.

We should not be shocked if we hear of some kind of sin happening even in the midst of the strongest church. Remember in the ministry of Jesus there was still a Judas.

Remember in Acts 8, there was a revival but also Simon, a corrupt man. Remember the Corinthian church had the gifts of the Spirit but also immorality. This example in Acts 5:1 to 3, helps protect us from becoming bitter and angry against the church should sin unfortunately manifest. In each of these cases, those who were sinning were dealt with.

Acts 5:2 “...HE LAID IT AT THE APOSTLES’ FEET.”

These words are almost exactly the same to what we read in the following verses. The actions were the same but the hearts were not.

In Acts 4:35 it says, **“AND LAY THEM AT THE APOSTLES’ FEET;”**

Acts 4:37, **“AND LAID IT AT THE APOSTLES’ FEET;”**

Acts 5:2, **“HE LAID IT AT THE APOSTLES’ FEET.”**

In Acts 4:35 and 37 the people had convictions.

In Acts 5:2, the people would be convicted!

The outward appearance looked almost the same in all these three cases, but in 1 Samuel 16:7 it says, **“GOD SEES NOT AS MAN SEES, FOR MAN LOOKS AT THE OUTWARD APPEARANCE, BUT THE LORD LOOKS AT THE HEART.”** In the church, some had convictions and helped others. In the church, some were cons and helped themselves. Which do we choose to be like, the ones with convictions or the convicted cons?

In Acts 5:4 it says, **“YOU HAVE NOT LIED TO MEN, BUT TO GOD.”**

In verse 3, Peter told Ananias that he was guilty of lying to the Holy Spirit. Lying to the Holy Spirit and lying to God is the same.

Acts 5:2 “...HE LAID IT AT THE APOSTLES’ FEET.”

Now picture this situation in your minds. In verse 1, Ananias sold property. In verse 2, Ananias with his wife donated money to the church. Was a large amount of money given? We do not know because the Bible does not tell us. But they did sell property so the amount may have been fairly large. To a person lacking discernment, they may have appeared very generous. If Ananias donated money to our church, the response might be quite the opposite to that of Peter. Their apparent generosity might even be broadcast for others to know how generous they were. Some would respect them for their seeming generosity. We might have even congratulated Ananias for being generous and helping needy people in the church. Peter did not congratulate but was grated by the con! Imagine you have two sweaters. One sweater you like and the other you do not like. You give away the one you do not like, knowing the person you gave it to will tell others that you gave it to them. You keep back the best one for yourself. You will seem very generous and kind and some people will think that you are, but in fact are very selfish.

Acts 5:2 “...HE LAID IT AT THE APOSTLES’ FEET.”

This pattern is seen in 1 Samuel 15:9 where Saul and the people kept the best for themselves and destroyed what they did not want.

In the book, Sodom had no Bible Leonard Ravenhill said,

“ If this unhappy couple could live so near the cauldron heat of the apostolic outpouring and play the hypocrite, then in our day it must be a thousand times easier to do the same thing. If judgment began so early in the church of the living God (when only two of the believers were false), one wonders why judgment is withheld today. ”

When we read these words, “YOU HAVE NOT LIED TO MEN, BUT TO GOD,” we need to ask ourselves four questions.

Do we lie before God because we think we can get away with it?

Do we lie before God because we think nothing will happen to us?

Do we not lie to people because we fear we will get in trouble?

Do we lie to people to make ourselves look better than we really are?

Acts 5:2 “...HE LAID IT AT THE APOSTLES’ FEET.”

We deceive ourselves when we think we can lie to God get away with it.

We are believing a lie when we believe we can get away with lying!

In lying, lies a trap!

Peter spoke to a man named Ananias about a sin he committed.

Peter did not speak to other people about a sin Ananias committed. Peter spoke to his face and not behind his back about a sin committed. Do we speak to a person about a sin they have committed?

Do we not speak to other people about a sin they have committed?

Do we speak to their face or behind their back about a sin committed?

In Breaking Up The Fallow Ground Charles Finney defined lying,

“ Any form of designed deception is lying. If you purpose to make an impression other than the naked truth, you lie. Think of all your words, looks, and actions designed to make an impression on others contrary to the truth, for selfish reasons. ”

Acts 5:7 "NOW THERE ELAPSED AN INTERVAL OF ABOUT THREE HOURS, AND HIS WIFE CAME IN, NOT KNOWING WHAT HAD HAPPENED."

In verse 2, Ananias came and gave a portion of money to the apostles.

In verse 5, Ananias fell down and died after lying to the Holy Spirit.

In verse 6, young men came and buried him. The apostles knew Ananias was dead. The young men knew Ananias was dead. Three hours went by and it seems one of the few people who did not know Ananias was dead was his wife. People knew but she did not know.

It would seem such a shocking event would be quickly talked about, and news would spread. It seems all too often bad news spreads fast. In this part of Scripture, we learn people did not repeat something that had happened. Scripture does not mention the apostles saying Ananias was struck dead. Scripture does not mention the young men saying what had happened. Are we like them? Do we want to tell people the gospel or tell people gossip? This conduct of not gossiping is in stark contrast to what we see in Esther 1:17, **"FOR THE QUEEN'S CONDUCT WILL BECOME KNOWN TO ALL THE WOMEN."**

Acts 5:8 “YES, THAT WAS THE PRICE.”

This verse quotes a lie that the wife of Ananias spoke to Peter.

In verse 1, Ananias and his wife sold land and kept back some of the money.

In verse 8, she lied to cover up their secret sinful actions.

In verse 10, she fell down dead.

She lied, then died.

Ananias and his wife had said the amount was different than it actually was.

Exaggeration is a form of lying. This woman's testimony was that before dying she was lying against the Holy Spirit. What sort of testimony will we have prior to dying? Will we be in line with God or lying against God?

**Acts 5:11: “AND GREAT FEAR CAME UPON THE WHOLE CHURCH,
AND UPON ALL WHO HEARD THESE THINGS.”**

With the Lord to help us receive light, let us reverently pray and ask the Holy Spirit to teach us from these words.

Now please study the following two parts.

1. “AND GREAT FEAR CAME UPON”

This verse begins with words we need to stop and heed.

This verse does not merely say, “And fear came upon the whole church.” The early church experienced tremendous growth and witnessed miracles. The power of God was known and here we see the fear of God was known in God's people.

In Acts 2:4, the believers were baptized in the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 2:41 God saved and added about three thousand souls.

In Acts 2:42 they hungered for healthy teaching, fellowship, and prayer.

In Acts 3:8 God performed a miracle of healing through Peter.

In Acts 5:12, signs and wonders were taking place.

In Acts 6:8, signs and wonders were taking place.

**Acts 5:11: “AND GREAT FEAR CAME UPON THE WHOLE CHURCH,
AND UPON ALL WHO HEARD THESE THINGS.”**

This was an exciting time “AND GREAT FEAR CAME UPON” the church. The church had the correct doctrine concerning Holy Spirit baptism.

The church had considerable numerical growth.

The church had solid Biblical teaching and signs and wonders.

Now we read again the words “AND GREAT FEAR CAME UPON.”

The church also had a great fear of God.

We might have the right doctrine about the Holy Spirit baptism.

We might have seen people get saved and see signs and wonders.

But do we fear God or is there a casualness or carelessness in how we view God? Do we hear about the love of God but not the fear God?

In Job 1:8 it says, “FEARING GOD AND TURNING AWAY FROM EVIL.”

In Psalms 4:4 it says, “TREMBLE, AND DO NOT SIN;”

In Acts 9:31 it says, “LIVING IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD.

The fear of God protects us from sinning, and gives us an abundant life.

**Acts 5:11: “AND GREAT FEAR CAME UPON THE WHOLE CHURCH,
AND UPON ALL WHO HEARD THESE THINGS.”**

2. “THE WHOLE CHURCH, AND UPON ALL WHO HEARD THESE THINGS.” In this part of the verse, the words “**WHOLE**” and “**ALL**” arrest our attention. It is extremely unlikely that anyone would be harboring secret sins in their lives. Everyone feared God. Now days, does anyone fear God? Do you have secret sins in your heart? The Holy Spirit knew the sin of Ananias and his wife. The Holy Spirit knows the sin you are doing even if other people do not. Ananias and his wife lied against the Holy Spirit to cover up their sin and as a result, they were struck dead. When the believers heard what happened they were greatly afraid. When we read what happened to them, does it cause us to fear God?

If we can read Acts 5:1 to 10 and not have any fear of God, that should cause us to fear for our spiritual condition. The fear of God had an affect on the whole church. Does then fear of God have an affect on your church?

Acts 5:16 “BRINGING PEOPLE WHO WERE SICK OR AFFLICTED WITH UNCLEAN SPIRITS; AND THEY WERE ALL BEING HEALED.”

Up until now in chapter 5 there has been a lot happening yet there was no persecution. But here we see a power encounter happening with evil spirits being cast out. Then persecution erupted soon after in verse 18 with religious people throwing the apostles in jail. In the New Testament, there is a pattern of persecution following people being set free from evil spirits rather than being healed. In the ministry of Jesus, after He cast out a demon, there was an immediate backlash. This is seen in Matthew 9:33-34, Matthew 12:24 and Mark 3:22. Then in Acts 16:18-20 is the same pattern with Paul. Be aware that in spiritual warfare there is often a backlash after the Lord has used a person or a team to expel demons.

**Acts 5:17 “BUT THE HIGH PRIEST ROSE UP,
ALONG WITH ALL HIS ASSOCIATES (THAT IS THE SECT OF THE SADDUCEES),
AND THEY WERE FILLED WITH JEALOUSY;”**

With the Holy Spirit to help us, please consider the following five parts.

1. “BUT”

This word joins what has been taking place in Acts 5:16, which is the first mention in the book of Acts of people being delivered from evil spirits.

2. “THE HIGH PRIEST”

Now the tone of Acts starts to shift as opposition arises.

There were the seeds of opposition in Acts 4:18 and here the seeds are growing. The opposition is from the high priest, a religious person.

Often it is religious people who oppose a genuine move of God.

**Acts 5:17 “BUT THE HIGH PRIEST ROSE UP,
ALONG WITH ALL HIS ASSOCIATES (THAT IS THE SECT OF THE SADDUCEES),
AND THEY WERE FILLED WITH JEALOUSY;”**

3. “ROSE UP,”

These words are found here and in Acts 6:9.

In both cases, the preceding verses record the manifested power of God. In both cases, these words show pride in the heart.

In both cases where pride is seen, there is the intent to hurt servants of the Lord. Pride is present when there is the intention to harm others. Jesus was harmed but Jesus harmed no one.

4. “ALONG WITH ALL HIS ASSOCIATES”

The high priest and his associates were opposed to the apostles. It was not just the high priest who was against the truth; he had others in agreement to his sinful actions.

This pattern is repeated in Acts 6:9, **“BUT SOME MEN.”** Notice it is plural. There were men against the truth that Stephen preached. This teaches us that when a person is in rebellion against the truth of God’s word he or she will find others to agree with them.

**Acts 5:17 “BUT THE HIGH PRIEST ROSE UP,
ALONG WITH ALL HIS ASSOCIATES (THAT IS THE SECT OF THE SADDUCEES),
AND THEY WERE FILLED WITH JEALOUSY;”**

5. “AND THEY WERE FILLED WITH JEALOUSY;”

The high priest and his associates felt threatened by the success of Peter and the apostles, and they were jealous of them. The actions that jealousy produced were not good. In verse 18, it records they arrested the apostles and threw them in jail. Jealousy always produces negative actions.

Why were these religious people so jealous?

They were jealous because Peter and the other apostles were greatly used by God and many people were being saved, healed and delivered from demons. When people get saved, healed, and demons cast out there will be religious people who are jealous and strongly oppose servants of the Lord. By the grace of God, Peter and the apostles were being successful, and religious people were jealous of their success.

**Acts 5:17 “BUT THE HIGH PRIEST ROSE UP,
ALONG WITH ALL HIS ASSOCIATES (THAT IS THE SECT OF THE SADDUCEES),
AND THEY WERE FILLED WITH JEALOUSY;”**

This same type of jealousy against a successful servant of the Lord is found in Judges 8:1,

“NOW THE EPHRAIMITES ASKED GIDEON, “WHY HAVE YOU TREATED US LIKE THIS? WHY DIDN’T YOU CALL US WHEN YOU WENT TO FIGHT MIDIAN?” AND THEY CRITICIZED HIM SHARPLY.”

People get jealous of people who are successful rather than people who are failures. Praise God for when we fail, for it protects us from people being jealous of us!

Acts 5:20 “STAND AND SPEAK TO THE PEOPLE IN THE TEMPLE THE WHOLE MESSAGE OF THIS LIFE.”

These words quote the angel of the Lord speaking to the apostles. These words spoke to them and they speak to us. Notice the angel did not say, “Speak some of the message of this life.” When we hear preaching that says, “Christ-less eternity” instead of “hell” we regrettably realize,

“THE WHOLE MESSAGE OF THIS LIFE” is being watered down. Further on in Acts 5:28 it says, “WE GAVE YOU STRICT ORDERS NOT TO CONTINUE TEACHING IN THIS NAME...” Here we see the temptation fueled by the fear of man or being a men pleaser would cause a person to not obey the injunction, “STAND AND SPEAK TO THE PEOPLE IN THE TEMPLE THE WHOLE MESSAGE OF THIS LIFE.” The temptation to water down the gospel is insidious. If we water it down, we drown! In Acts 5:20 it says, “GO YOUR WAY, STAND AND SPEAK TO THE PEOPLE IN THE TEMPLE THE WHOLE MESSAGE OF THIS LIFE.” These are the words spoken by an angel of the Lord. In this verse, the angel was instructing the apostles to continue proclaiming the gospel.

Acts 5:20 “STAND AND SPEAK TO THE PEOPLE IN THE TEMPLE THE WHOLE MESSAGE OF THIS LIFE.”

Here are seven examples of angels speaking to people in the book of Acts.

As we read the context of these instances, we see angels appeared and were involved with directing or helping to make sure that the gospel was proclaimed.

1. Acts 5:20 the apostles
2. Acts 8:26 Philip
3. Acts 10:22 Cornelius
4. Acts 11:13 Peter
5. Acts 12:7 Peter
6. Acts 12:23 Herod
7. Acts 27:23 Paul

**Acts 5:20 “STAND AND SPEAK TO THE PEOPLE IN THE TEMPLE
THE WHOLE MESSAGE OF THIS LIFE.”**

Any angel that does not direct people towards Jesus Christ and the salvation message of the gospel is not from God.

Any angel that exalts the virgin Mary is not from God.

Any angel that says to pray to dead saints is not from God.

Any angel that lessens Jesus as the only means of salvation is not from God!

Any angel that speaks about God but excludes Jesus Christ is a deception.

Any angel that speaks of an afterlife but excludes repentance of sin and faith in the Jesus Christ is not from God.

**Acts 5:20 “STAND AND SPEAK TO THE PEOPLE IN THE TEMPLE
THE WHOLE MESSAGE OF THIS LIFE.”**

In Galatians 1:8 it says,

“BUT EVEN THOUGH WE, OR AN ANGEL FROM HEAVEN, SHOULD PREACH TO YOU A GOSPEL CONTRARY TO THAT WHICH WE HAVE PREACHED TO YOU, LET HIM BE ACCURSED.”

What we read in the book of Acts is relevant to us today. While serving as a missionary the Lord sent an angel on two different occasions to save my life.

In Psalm 34:7 it says,

“THE ANGEL OF THE LORD ENCAMPS AROUND THOSE WHO FEAR HIM, AND RESCUES THEM.”

**Acts 5:20 “GO YOUR WAY, STAND AND SPEAK TO THE PEOPLE
IN THE TEMPLE THE WHOLE MESSAGE OF THIS LIFE.”**

In verse 19, the angel of the Lord opened the gate of the prison and set the apostles free. They were set free for a purpose. Here in this verse we learn what the purpose was for them being set free from prison. They were set free to proclaim the **“WHOLE MESSAGE OF THIS LIFE.”** This true situation serves as an illustration concerning us. Before the Lord saved us, we were in prison to sin and death. The Lord Jesus purposely died and rose again to set us free. He also gave us a purpose in this life. The purpose was not just to conform to the world. The purpose, of paramount importance, is for us to actively help advance the **“WHOLE MESSAGE OF THIS LIFE.”**

Do we use our time to advance the **“WHOLE MESSAGE OF THIS LIFE?”** Do we use our gifts to advance the **“WHOLE MESSAGE OF THIS LIFE?”** Do we use our money to advance the **“WHOLE MESSAGE OF THIS LIFE?”** Do we use our life to advance the **“WHOLE MESSAGE OF THIS LIFE?”**

We belong to Jesus, so if we do not use these things we are being used.

Acts 5:21 “AND UPON HEARING THIS, THEY ENTERED INTO THE TEMPLE ABOUT DAYBREAK, AND BEGAN TO TEACH.”

In the preceding verse, an angel of the Lord had released them from prison and immediately the following day they kept on teaching. What were they teaching? In verse 28 it says,

“WE GAVE YOU STRICT ORDERS NOT TO CONTINUE TEACHING IN THIS NAME.”

We know from verse 28 they were teaching about Jesus. Now consider what has taken place prior to them talking about Jesus. From verse 1 to 10 is the account of Ananias and his wife Sapphira lying against the Holy Spirit and as a result were struck down dead.

The apostles saw hypocrisy in the church with Ananias and Sapphira. The apostles suffered because of religious people being jealous of them. The apostles suffered imprisonment because the high priest and his henchmen. But they were not talking about the hypocrites in the church or the high priest. Their talk was about Jesus Christ.

Their focus was not on what people did. Their focus was on what Jesus did! Their conduct mirrored what is described about Jesus in Acts 1:3 that after His sufferings He was speaking about the things concerning the Kingdom of God.

**Acts 5:24 “NOW WHEN THE CAPTAIN OF THE TEMPLE GUARD
AND THE CHIEF PRIESTS HEARD THESE WORDS,
THEY WERE GREATLY PERPLEXED...”**

Now, our attention focuses on the words “**GREATLY PERPLEXED.**”

The captain and chief priests heard words that made them greatly perplexed. What they heard is described in Acts 5:23.

The officers found the prison locked, and prison guards standing at the doors, but the apostles were not inside.

The prison was locked.

The guards were on duty.

The apostles were gone.

What they were hearing sounded impossible.

What they were hearing made them greatly perplexed.

Surely, people cannot just disappear from a prison. There was no record in Scripture of such a situation ever happening before this. A miracle had happened and these ungodly men were greatly perplexed, but there is no mention that the apostles were perplexed.

**Acts 5:24 “NOW WHEN THE CAPTAIN OF THE TEMPLE GUARD
AND THE CHIEF PRIESTS HEARD THESE WORDS,
THEY WERE GREATLY PERPLEXED...”**

We now fast-forward to Acts 5:28 and the apostles being brought before the men who had been greatly perplexed. When they saw the apostles, they never asked them how they disappeared from prison.

They never asked them how they got through locked doors and past the guards. They showed no interest in the fact that God had done a miracle. Now let us try to apply this. What would be our reaction if someone told us Christians in a prison just disappeared even though the doors were locked and guards on duty? Would we be perplexed or not perplexed?

If we thought that is impossible then our thinking is wrong. If we were perplexed, we would be like these ungodly people.

**Acts 5:24 “NOW WHEN THE CAPTAIN OF THE TEMPLE GUARD
AND THE CHIEF PRIESTS HEARD THESE WORDS,
THEY WERE GREATLY PERPLEXED...”**

If we do not believe God does miracles today then our view of the Bible is wrong. Some years ago, I attended a conference in Malaga, Spain. There was a pastor from Argentina teaching. Prior to starting to teach, he spent considerable time praying, and binding demons in the name of Jesus.

After teaching, he prayed for people to be healed in the name of Jesus. Several people who had missing teeth instantly had brand new white teeth appear. I saw one elderly woman from the church to whom this happened. I was greatly perplexed to say the least.

In my mind I was thinking, “This is impossible, this cannot happen.” Then the Lord gently spoke to my heart and said, “I created the heavens and the earth, so what are a few teeth!” If we do not believe God does miracles today, we have a wrong theology.

Acts 5:29 “WE MUST OBEY GOD RATHER THAN MEN.”

This verse is interesting when comparing it to what is said about the captain and the officers in verse 26,

“FOR THEY WERE AFRAID OF THE PEOPLE, LEST THEY SHOULD BE STONED.”

The captain and the officers were afraid of people but Peter and the apostles were not afraid of people hearing about Jesus! Are we afraid what might happen to us if we tell people about Jesus? If we are, we need to repent.

The apostles were not afraid of what might happen to them for preaching about Jesus. They were not concerned about the opinions of men but were concerned about God’s opinion!

They were not afraid of fear.

Acts 5:29 “WE MUST OBEY GOD RATHER THAN MEN.”

God had made Peter and the apostles leaders, and they were to proclaim Jesus as the Christ. Another example of a person put in a leadership role was Queen Esther. In Esther 4:14 it says,

**“AND WHO KNOWS WHETHER YOU HAVE NOT ATTAINED ROYALTY
FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS?”**

She was Queen to help save the Jewish people from being killed.

She had authority to not just wear nice clothes, and live in luxury.

She was put in authority to save lives. God put Peter and the apostles in leadership positions to preach Jesus so people could be saved.

When God puts us in leadership positions, we are to not be afraid of losing our jobs but use it to help save lives.

**Acts 5:30 “THE GOD OF OUR FATHERS RAISED UP JESUS,
WHOM YOU HAD PUT TO DEATH BY HANGING HIM ON A CROSS.”**

With the Holy Spirit’s help, we shall receive light and life from these words.

1. “THE GOD OF OUR FATHERS RAISED UP JESUS,”

The words “**RAISED UP JESUS**,” refer to the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. The resurrection followed the death on the cross. Peter clearly preached about the cross and resurrection. Any preaching that does not emphasize the cross and resurrection needs cross-examining! These words “**RAISED UP JESUS**” are in sharp contrast to Acts 5:17, “**THE HIGH PRIEST ROSE UP.**”

Jesus was raised up by God.

The high priest rose up but not by God.

Jesus was raised up to save people.

The high priest rose up to slay people.

Jesus was raised up to help hurt people.

The high priest rose up to hurt people.

Jesus was raised up and was concerned about others.

The high priest rose up and was concerned about himself.

**Acts 5:30 “THE GOD OF OUR FATHERS RAISED UP JESUS,
WHOM YOU HAD PUT TO DEATH BY HANGING HIM ON A CROSS.”**

2. “WHOM YOU HAD PUT TO DEATH BY HANGING HIM ON A CROSS.”

Peter spoke specifically using the word “YOU” and not “other people.” Peter spoke to them about being guilty for Jesus dying on the cross. Peter spoke to them about their sin and not about other people’s sins. Peter spoke to them about their sin even though they were influential. Peter spoke to them about their sin even though they were prominent. Peter did not dilute the word for fear of losing them.

They were lost already!

Acts 5:33 “BUT WHEN THEY HEARD THIS, THEY WERE CUT TO THE QUICK AND WERE INTENDING TO SLAY THEM.”

With the Holy Spirit's enabling, we will briefly ponder these three parts.

1. “BUT WHEN THEY HEARD THIS,”

This word “BUT” connects what is recorded previously.

In Acts 5:30, 31, and 32 is a short shocking sermon! It was a three verse, three-point sermon pointing to their sin. When the high priest and those with him heard the sermon there was a strong reaction. The result of this sermon was the hearers wanted to kill Peter and the apostles.

Do sermons we hear cause a reaction or no action?

Do sermons we hear cause a reaction or action?

When a point in a sermon makes us angry, it shows the Holy Spirit is pointing to that area in our hearts needing to be dealt with.

**Acts 5:33 “BUT WHEN THEY HEARD THIS, THEY WERE CUT TO THE QUICK
AND WERE INTENDING TO SLAY THEM.”**

2. “THEY” “THEM.”

The word “THEY” refers to the high priest and the Counsel.

The word “THEM” refers to Peter and the apostles.

The intention of “THEY” was “TO SLAY THEM.” Those of the false religion wanted to kill those of the true religion. The intent shows murderers and martyrs. This pattern through human history can be traced back to Genesis 4:8 with Cain and Abel. Cain offered to God from the work of his hands. Abel offered to God a sacrifice from his flock.

3. “INTENDING TO SLAY THEM.”

In Acts 5:30 the high priest and his associates heard that they were guilty for the death of Jesus on the cross. Their response was more than cross! Do we get cross and say we should not talk about the cross because modern, sophisticated, educated people do not want to hear about it? If we become cross about the cross then we have crossed the line.

Acts 5:36 “THEUDAS ROSE UP, CLAIMING TO BE SOMEBODY;”

Here is a man who rose up. This type of behavior is a picture of boastful pride. Pride and claiming to be somebody go together. Humility and claiming to be nobody also go together. The words **“CLAIMING TO BE SOMEBODY;”** are manifested through boasting in what one has or does. Now notice the last words in this verse, **“CAME TO NOTHING.”** This is the result of **“CLAIMING TO BE SOMEBODY.”** This man’s behavior was the opposite of David who was a somebody. David was king, yet when he referred to himself said in 2 Samuel 7:19, **“THY SERVANT.”**

Take the lowest seat, because it will always be empty.”

Acts 5:37 “JUDAS OF GALILEE ROSE UP... HE TOO PERISHED...”

In this verse is a similar pattern that repeats what is read in the previous verse. In Acts 5:36 it says, **“THEUDAS ROSE UP...AND HE WAS SLAIN...”**

In both cases an individual **“ROSE UP”** and in both cases they were killed. These words **“ROSE UP”** convey a meaning of boastful, arrogant behavior. The end result of pride is death. Pride comes before a fall.

In Proverbs 16:18 it says,
**“PRIDE GOES BEFORE DESTRUCTION,
AND A HAUGHTY SPIRIT BEFORE STUMBLING.”**

Acts 5:40 “AND THEY TOOK HIS ADVICE;”

In verse 34, a certain Pharisee named Gamaliel stood up and began to give advice to the Council concerning the apostles. He then spoke and verses 35 to 39 recorded his advice. The NASB records 140 words spoken by this man. Then the hearers took his advice. When Gamaliel was speaking these 140 words of advice not one person interrupted him. The hearers listened to him instead of interrupting him.

When someone tries to give us advice, even if it is a lot of words as was the case here, do we listen or do we interrupt? Then in this verse, we learn the hearers took his advice. He offered advice and it was received. Do you like to receive things? Usually we like to receive things that are offered to us. But how many times do we honestly like to receive advice? Do we like to receive advice or give advice?

Giving advice without receiving advice is the wrong device!

Giving advice without taking advice is a vice.

Acts 5:41 “SO THEY WENT ON THEIR WAY FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE COUNCIL, REJOICING THAT THEY HAD BEEN CONSIDERED WORTHY TO SUFFER SHAME FOR HIS NAME.”

This Scripture expresses the attitude that the apostles were in agreement with what Jesus taught in Matthew 5:11 and 12,

“BLESSED ARE YOU WHEN PEOPLE INSULT YOU, PERSECUTE YOU AND FALSELY SAY ALL KINDS OF EVIL AGAINST YOU BECAUSE OF ME. REJOICE AND BE GLAD, BECAUSE GREAT IS YOUR REWARD IN HEAVEN.”

The apostles were rejoicing just as Jesus had taught. To rejoice and be glad goes completely opposite to what our human nature wants to do. The flesh wants to be sad or mad when suffering and certainly not rejoicing. What do we rejoice in?

What fills our hearts with joy?

Rejoicing is the feeling or expression of joy!

Acts 5:41 “SO THEY WENT ON THEIR WAY FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE COUNCIL, REJOICING THAT THEY HAD BEEN CONSIDERED WORTHY TO SUFFER SHAME FOR HIS NAME.”

In Philippians 4:4 it says, **“REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS.”**

It is easy to rejoice in church, but do we rejoice in chains?

In Acts 5:40 it says,

“THEY CALLED THE APOSTLES IN AND HAD THEM FLOGGED.”

To be flogged means to be beaten with a strap or whip. The apostles had just experienced a very difficult, painful circumstance.

Yet their attitudes and actions were in agreement with what the Scriptures say.

Theirs was, is ours?

Are our attitudes and actions in agreement to what the Scriptures say, even when we suffer terrible, painful circumstances.

Acts 5:42 “THEY KEPT RIGHT ON TEACHING AND PREACHING JESUS AS THE CHRIST.”

This is the last verse in chapter 5. These words and actions carry a lot of weight when we consider all that Peter and the apostles went through. Chapter 5 is power packed and plenty of persecution. Yet at the end, after all that they had been through, their focus was not on all that they had been through, but rather on going throughout, teaching and preaching Jesus Christ.

Acts 5:42 “THEY KEPT RIGHT ON TEACHING AND PREACHING JESUS AS THE CHRIST.”

Let us briefly look through chapter 5.

In verse 5, we read of God striking a man dead for lying.

In verse 10, we read of God striking dead the wife of the man for lying.

In verse 12, we read of signs and wonders done by the apostles.

In verse 13, we read of people holding the apostles in high esteem.

In verse 14, we read of a massive growth of conversions.

In verse 15, we read of Peter being empowered to heal the sick.

In verse 16, we read of evil spirits being expelled.

In verse 17, we read of the Sadducees being jealous of the apostles.

In verse 18, we read of the apostles being imprisoned.

In verse 19, we read of an angel delivering them from prison.

In verse 20, we read of an angel instructing to continue preaching.

Acts 5:42 “THEY KEPT RIGHT ON TEACHING AND PREACHING JESUS AS THE CHRIST.”

The theme of, “PREACHING JESUS AS THE CHRIST” is a theme woven through the book of Acts in the following references:

1. Acts 3:20 “JESUS, THE CHRIST”
2. Acts 5:42 “PREACHING JESUS AS THE CHRIST”
3. Acts 8:5 “PROCLAIMING CHRIST”
4. Acts 8:35 “PREACHED JESUS”
5. Acts 9:22 “JESUS IS THE CHRIST”
6. Acts 11:20 “PREACHING THE LORD JESUS”
7. Acts 16:31 “BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS”
8. Acts 18:5 “JESUS WAS THE CHRIST”
9. Acts 18:28 “JESUS WAS THE CHRIST”
10. Acts 20:21 “FAITH IN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST”
11. Acts 24:24 “FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS”
12. Acts 28:31 “THE LORD JESUS CHRIST”

Acts 5:42 “THEY KEPT RIGHT ON TEACHING AND PREACHING JESUS AS THE CHRIST.”

As we read Acts 5:42 we can pause and consider what has taken place in the two preceding verses. In verse 40, the apostles were flogged. The word means “to skin, to thrash, beat, to receive lashes, strike, to hit.” Imagine them bleeding and bruised. These men had just experienced tremendous physical suffering. Why were they beaten so viciously?

The reason is because they were preaching Jesus as the Christ.

Although the apostles experienced sadistic attack, they were not sidetracked from their commission of proclaiming Jesus Christ.

In verse 41, they rejoiced for being counted worthy to suffer for Jesus. Where was their focus? It was not that they were cross because of the suffering. Their focus was on the One who suffered on the cross!

Where is our focus? Are we focused on being cross, or on the One who suffered on the cross?

Acts 5:42 “THEY KEPT RIGHT ON TEACHING AND PREACHING JESUS AS THE CHRIST.”

The apostles were beaten and ordered not to preach about Jesus Christ. They were not beaten for telling people about their church or denomination. Have you ever noticed the name “Jesus” almost gets stuck in your throat when speaking to unbelievers? It is a temptation to talk about your church or denomination instead of Jesus. There is no opposition to talking about anything but Jesus! Boasting in our denomination instead of Jesus Christ is idolatry! When attack comes, keep doing the will of the Father!

In verse 41, they were rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer for Jesus. When we compare our lives with people in Scripture rather than with each other, we gain correct discernment of our spiritual condition. It is like a spiritual thermometer to see if we are healthy or not. May we ask ourselves a question. Have we ever suffered in some way for sharing our faith in Jesus Christ?

**Acts 5:42 “AND EVERY DAY, IN THE TEMPLE
AND FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE, THEY KEPT RIGHT ON TEACHING
AND PREACHING JESUS AS THE CHRIST.”**

For our study of this verse, please look at it in the following five parts.

1. “AND EVERY DAY,”

These men spoke about Jesus every day. This is not an exaggeration or lying. There was this tremendous fervency in the apostles. The Holy Spirit was empowering them. They spoke about Jesus every day even when they faced the most severe opposition. Even when faced with the strongest of opposition they never gave up. It is always too early to give up! They spoke about Jesus every day.

Do we talk about Jesus everyday? Is Jesus mentioned in our daily conversation? What we talk about tells much about our spiritual condition. Do we find it easy to talk about people but difficult to talk about Jesus?

**Acts 5:42 “AND EVERY DAY, IN THE TEMPLE
AND FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE, THEY KEPT RIGHT ON TEACHING
AND PREACHING JESUS AS THE CHRIST.”**

2. “IN THE TEMPLE AND FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE,”

In the temple would be larger crowds that would recognize them and in houses would be smaller gatherings. The apostles were not focused on the number of people listening but rather focused on Jesus. To the worldly mind it seems more appealing to speak to larger gatherings rather than small groups. Worldly success says the larger the number the more successful a person is.

Now imagine what sort of houses they preached in. Some houses would be large and owned by rich people and other houses smaller and occupied by poorer people. The rich and the poor both needed the gospel. Even the rich are poor if they do not know Jesus! There is no partiality with God. When they went house to house they did not just sit around eating, talking about sports, politics, or the latest news. When the apostles visited people, they talked about Jesus. When we visit people, do we also include Jesus in our conversation?

**Acts 5:42 “AND EVERY DAY, IN THE TEMPLE
AND FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE, THEY KEPT RIGHT ON TEACHING
AND PREACHING JESUS AS THE CHRIST.”**

3. “THEY KEPT RIGHT ON”

Even though they had just been flogged and suffering injuries, they did not stop. When we are faced with hurtful circumstances, we are tempted to stop testifying for Jesus Christ. The temptation is to cool off. When attack came, they kept proclaiming Jesus Christ. When attack comes in our lives, it is imperative we continue to share the gospel. It is a vital part of spiritual warfare. It is part of the armor of God described in Ephesians 6:15,

“AND WITH YOUR FEET FITTED WITH THE READINESS THAT COMES FROM THE GOSPEL OF PEACE.”

4. “TEACHING AND PREACHING”

Notice they did both teaching and preaching, and not one without the other. Sometimes it seems much easier to teach than preach. Teaching is often to Christians and preaching to non-Christians. With teaching the audience is with you but with preaching the gospel some will be against you. The apostles did both and the servant of the Lord is to do both.

**Acts 5:42 “AND EVERY DAY, IN THE TEMPLE
AND FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE, THEY KEPT RIGHT ON TEACHING
AND PREACHING JESUS AS THE CHRIST.”**

5. “JESUS AS THE CHRIST.”

In their teaching and preaching, Jesus Christ is exalted.

When you hear a teaching what or who is being exalted?

Are there references to Jesus as the Christ?

The Holy Spirit always exalts Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit is never to be exalted over Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit always exalts Jesus.

Acts 6:1 “IN THOSE DAYS WHEN THE NUMBER OF DISCIPLES WAS INCREASING, THE GRECIAN JEWS AMONG THEM COMPLAINED AGAINST THE NATIVE HEBREWS BECAUSE THEIR WIDOWS WERE BEING OVERLOOKED IN THE DAILY DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD.”

In this verse, we learn that there was a large increase of new disciples into the early church. It would be a revival type of situation. In the midst of the excitement of seeing so many people coming to the Lord for salvation we find people complaining about widows being neglected. As we read on to the next two verses, we see the apostles quickly dealing with the problem by having the congregation select seven brethren of good reputation. Here are three things the apostles did not do!

1. The apostles did not just hope the problem would go away.
2. The apostles did not avoid the problem of people complaining.
3. The apostles did not give in to guilt for not looking after widows. When we hear people complain, how do we respond?

Do we do what the apostles did not do?

Acts 6:2 “IT IS NOT DESIRABLE FOR US TO NEGLECT THE WORD OF GOD IN ORDER TO SERVE TABLES.”

For this study we divide this part of the verse into two parts.

1. “IT IS NOT DESIRABLE FOR US TO NEGLECT THE WORD OF GOD”

These words are spoken in the context of a revival and a mighty outpouring of the Holy Spirit. There were healings and conversions happening. Yet in this incredible spiritual environment, they would not succumb to the temptation to neglect the word of God. No matter what the spiritual environment we find ourselves in, we need to be very vigilant and not **“NEGLECT THE WORD OF GOD.”**

We need to ask ourselves, are we neglecting the word of God? If the work of God is causing you to neglect the word of God then correct your priorities. We need to ask ourselves, are we reading the Bible daily?

If we are too busy to read the Bible, then we are too busy.

**Acts 6:2 “IT IS NOT DESIRABLE FOR US TO NEGLECT
THE WORD OF GOD IN ORDER TO SERVE TABLES.”**

2. “TO SERVE TABLES.”

These short words introduce a situation in the life of the church. The situation might not seem important but it is because Scripture makes clear reference to it. Serving tables was a responsibility given to seven men, including Stephen. When we think of the words **“TO SERVE TABLES”** we might think such a task is not important, not glamorous, not prestigious, and something that we should not be doing! To serve requires being a servant. Jesus is the perfect servant. In Matthew 20:28 it says,
“JUST AS THE SON OF MAN DID NOT COME TO BE SERVED, BUT TO SERVE, AND TO GIVE HIS LIFE A RANSOM FO MANY.”

Acts 6:2 “IT IS NOT DESIRABLE FOR US TO NEGLECT THE WORD OF GOD IN ORDER TO SERVE TABLES.”

Here are seven thoughts about “TO SERVE TABLES.”

1. “TO SERVE TABLES.”

For some this is not the sort of job we can brag to our friends that we are doing. We might even feel embarrassed to say we do that type of work. Perhaps that is why it is not appealing to many! Now we read to Acts 6:8, **“AND STEPHEN, FULL OF GRACE AND POWER, WAS PERFORMING GREAT WONDERS AND SIGNS AMONG THE PEOPLE.”**

Stephen waited on tables before God used him to do attesting miracles. Serving came before the grace and power, and it still does! For some, signs and wonders sounds attractive but waiting on tables quite the opposite! If we think waiting on tables is beneath our dignity, it shows we think we are above it.

2. “TO SERVE TABLES.”

When we think of these words, we can picture a waiter coming and bending over to give food to the people seated. Bending shows a posture of humbling oneself to serve others. We cannot serve if we do not bend!

**Acts 6:2 “IT IS NOT DESIRABLE FOR US TO NEGLECT
THE WORD OF GOD IN ORDER TO SERVE TABLES.”**

3. “TO SERVE TABLES.”

When we think of these words let us ask ourselves a question.

Would we like to wait on tables or be waited on at a table?

Do we like to be served or to serve?

Stephen could handle responsibilities.

Stephen proved faithful in a task some might think was not important.

Stephen was faithful in a job that some would consider a low, degrading job.

Are we faithful in a job that is considered low or degrading?

4. “TO SERVE TABLES.”

When we think of these words, we do not think of a waiter wearing the latest fashions to work. A servant of the Lord is not preoccupied about thinking of the latest fashions, but longs to be fashioned into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

**Acts 6:2 “IT IS NOT DESIRABLE FOR US TO NEGLECT
THE WORD OF GOD IN ORDER TO SERVE TABLES.”**

5. “TO SERVE TABLES.”

When we think about these words, there was no mention of a promotion. Scripture does not say he served tables until a better job came along. Stephen waited on tables not knowing for how long he would be doing it. Stephen received his promotion in Acts 7:60 when he went to heaven. A servant is the one holding the ladder rather than climbing the ladder! Responsibility is given, not taken.

6. “TO SERVE TABLES.”

In verse 5, there are seven men who were chosen for this task.

They did not complain about having to serve tables.

They did not complain about not being given more important jobs.

They did not complain or become despondent knowing things were more exciting elsewhere than being in some back room serving tables.

Do we complain when we have to serve?

**Acts 6:2 “IT IS NOT DESIRABLE FOR US TO NEGLECT
THE WORD OF GOD IN ORDER TO SERVE TABLES.”**

7. “TO SERVE TABLES.”

We learn from verse 5 that these men were chosen rather than them volunteering. How would you feel if someone told you to wait on tables if you did not volunteer?

There is a vast difference between being told to do something rather than volunteering to do something!

When we volunteer to do something, it means we are in a sense still in charge because we say when and for how long and we can volunteer. When we volunteer it is when it suits our time schedule and can quit when we want to. However, when we are told to do something it means someone else is in charge and we are not in charge.

**Acts 6:3 “BUT SELECT FROM AMONG YOU, BRETHREN,
SEVEN MEN OF GOOD REPUTATION, FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND OF
WISDOM, WHOM WE MAY PUT IN CHARGE OF THIS TASK.”**

Here are the Scriptural qualifications for serving tables. The qualifications are very high standards. We might be tempted to think serving tables is not a very important job compared to preaching or teaching God's word.

But here we learn it is a vital task in the body of Christ.

In Acts 28:3 it says, **“PAUL HAD GATHERED A BUNDLE OF STICKS.”** Here is a man who under the Holy Spirit's enabling wrote a significant part of the New Testament doing what might seem like an insignificant task.

In the Kingdom of God, there is not a task that is insignificant!

Acts 6:3 “BUT SELECT FROM AMONG YOU, BRETHREN, SEVEN MEN OF GOOD REPUTATION, FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AND OF WISDOM, WHOM WE MAY PUT IN CHARGE OF THIS TASK.”

Now consider the words “FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.”

In verse one there was a huge increase of disciples and very likely they had a huge appetite! Stephen needed the Holy Spirit to help him do the task assigned to him.

We need the Holy Spirit to help us serve in the Kingdom of God.

Our physical strength is limited.

We need help to help!

Either we cry out for help or we burn out!

Acts 6:4 “AND WILL GIVE OUR ATTENTION TO PRAYER AND THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD.”

From this verse we learn the correct pattern and priority for those involved in preaching and teaching the word of God.

1. “AND WILL GIVE OUR ATTENTION TO PRAYER”

2. “AND THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD.”

In the context to this verse it is important to read from verse one.

We find there was a large increase in new disciples coming to the Lord. It would be a revival type situation. In the midst of the move of God, some widows were being neglected in the distribution of food. People were complaining about the situation.

Rather than running around trying to meet the pressing needs of the people, the apostles kept their focus intact. They delegated authority to care for the needs because their priority was prayer and teaching God’s word. The apostles did not get sidetracked doing very important tasks that the Lord was not leading them to do. If the devil cannot make you bad, he will make you busy!

**Acts 6:5 “AND THEY CHOSE STEPHEN, A MAN FULL OF FAITH
AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND PHILIP,
PROCHORUS, NICANOR, TIMON, PARMENAS AND NICOLAS,”**

With the Lord's help, we will look into this verse to learn what the Holy Spirit reveals. It is helpful to read from verse 2 through 8 and divide the verse into the following four parts.

1. “AND THEY CHOSE STEPHEN,”

Notice this verse does not say, “He chose.” Stephen was under spiritual authority. The apostles delegated authority. Stephen was under authority and thus had authority.

A man under authority will have authority.

From the following five points we learn about Stephen's character before God used him in signs and wonders.

1. He was obedient.
2. He did not complain.
3. He worked with others.
4. He was willing to serve.
5. He was under authority.

**Acts 6:5 “AND THEY CHOSE STEPHEN, A MAN FULL OF FAITH
AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND PHILIP,
PROCHORUS, NICANOR, TIMON, PARMENAS AND NICOLAS,”**

If we desire to be used by God, we need to exhibit similar characteristics as Stephen had. Stephen was chosen along with six other men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. The word of God governed his life and conduct. Stephen had a servant's heart. How do we compare?

Do we return things we borrow?

Do we have good reputations?

Do we want to give or get?

Do we keep our promises?

Many want the power. Many want the miracles. Many want the signs and wonders. But how many want to serve? God only gives His power to those who know they are powerless! If you think you do not need help, you really need help!

**Acts 6:5 “AND THEY CHOSE STEPHEN, A MAN FULL OF FAITH
AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND PHILIP,
PROCHORUS, NICANOR, TIMON, PARMENAS AND NICOLAS,”**

2. “A MAN FULL OF FAITH AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT,”

From these words we learn how the writer of Acts described Stephen. The writer did not tell us if Stephen was handsome.

The writer did not tell us if Stephen was rich or poor.

The writer did not tell us if Stephen was highly educated.

The writer did not tell us if Stephen wore designer fashions.

The writer did not tell us if Stephen had a great sense of humor.

The writer did not tell us if Stephen lived in an expensive part of town.

What the writer did tell us is Stephen was

“A MAN FULL OF FAITH AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.”

These words show us how another believer described Stephen.

**Acts 6:5 “AND THEY CHOSE STEPHEN, A MAN FULL OF FAITH
AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND PHILIP,
PROCHORUS, NICANOR, TIMON, PARMENAS AND NICOLAS,”**

How do other Christians describe us?

Are we described by what kind of job we have?

Are we described by what kind of car we drive?

Are we described by what kind of house we own?

Are we described by what kind of clothes we wear?

Are we described by what kind of education we have?

Are we described by what kind of physical appearance we have?

Or are we described by what kind of spiritual condition we are in?

**Acts 6:5 “AND THEY CHOSE STEPHEN, A MAN FULL OF FAITH
AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND PHILIP,
PROCHORUS, NICANOR, TIMON, PARMENAS AND NICOLAS,”**

Stephen faithfully waited on tables in the midst of a mighty move of God. In verse 7, it describes revival by saying,

“THE NUMBER OF DISCIPLES IN JERUSALEM INCREASED RAPIDLY.”

Imagine this exciting revival.

Imagine this exciting powerful explosion in the Kingdom of God.

Imagine this man Stephen waiting on tables and remember that verse 1 says,
“THE DISCIPLES WERE INCREASING IN NUMBER.”

That means they were new Christians.

That means some might have acted carnal and worldly.

That means some might have complained the food was too hot.

That means some might have complained the food was too cold.

That means some might have complained about waiting to be served. Even if these things happened, Stephen was still willing to wait on tables and not just waiting for a better job to open up.

**Acts 6:5 “AND THEY CHOSE STEPHEN, A MAN FULL OF FAITH
AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND PHILIP,
PROCHORUS, NICANOR, TIMON, PARMENAS AND NICOLAS,”**

As we ponder this, some questions come to mind.

Did Stephen get paid for serving?

Did Stephen get tips for all his serving?

Did Stephen get any thanks him for all his serving?

There is no mention of Stephen receiving a salary.

There is no mention of Stephen ever getting any tips.

There is no mention of Stephen being thanked for serving.

However, Stephen was faithful. He did not know how long he would be waiting on tables. Remember it was an exciting time to be in Jerusalem.

**Acts 6:5 “AND THEY CHOSE STEPHEN, A MAN FULL OF FAITH
AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND PHILIP,
PROCHORUS, NICANOR, TIMON, PARMENAS AND NICOLAS,”**

Serving may be exciting and a novelty for a time but how do we respond when the excitement has worn off? A true test of being faithful is once the excitement has long since faded. Stephen is mentioned away from serving tables in verse 8,

**“AND STEPHEN, FULL OF GRACE AND POWER, WAS PERFORMING GREAT
WONDERS AND SIGNS AMONG THE PEOPLE.”**

In this verse, God used Stephen in a dramatic way. Stephen had waited on tables. This experience was a solid foundation to prepare him for the next step in the plan God had for him. The natural was a springboard for the spiritual.

**Acts 6:5 “AND THEY CHOSE STEPHEN, A MAN FULL OF FAITH
AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND PHILIP,
PROCHORUS, NICANOR, TIMON, PARMENAS AND NICOLAS,”**

As we read on to verse 9, we find opposition arose against Stephen. When he was waiting on tables, he was not exposed to attack.

In reading from verses 2 until 8 there is no mention of Stephen in a rush to be used more by God. As far as we know, he was content with where God put him. Are we content where God has put us? Are we more excited about what God does than we are about God? Some want to rush to be in the limelight. But those who know attack comes once in the limelight often want to simply serve tables. If you want to be seen, you need to spend more time behind the scenes! Rely on the Lord in small hardships; they are preparation for larger hardships! Go slow, do not blow, stay low! In Proverbs 15:33 it says,
“HUMILITY COMES BEFORE HONOR.”

**Acts 6:5 “AND THEY CHOSE STEPHEN, A MAN FULL OF FAITH
AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND PHILIP,
PROCHORUS, NICANOR, TIMON, PARMENAS AND NICOLAS,”**

3. “AND PHILIP,”

In verse 5 seven men are mentioned. When we read the description of Stephen and Philip four things stand out.

1. Stephen was put first before Philip.
2. Stephen was praised more than Philip.
3. Stephen was talked about more than Philip.
4. Stephen was given more attention than Philip.

**Acts 6:5 “AND THEY CHOSE STEPHEN, A MAN FULL OF FAITH
AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND PHILIP,
PROCHORUS, NICANOR, TIMON, PARMENAS AND NICOLAS,”**

Here are four questions related to observations about Stephen & Philip.

1. How do we feel when someone is put first before us?
2. How do we feel when someone is praised and we are not?
3. How do we feel when someone is talked about more than we are?
4. How do we feel when someone gets more attention than we do?

If we feel a certain negative response inside, such as envy or jealousy, that is an area we need to immediately pray and ask the Lord to change in us.

**Acts 6:5 “AND THEY CHOSE STEPHEN, A MAN FULL OF FAITH
AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND PHILIP,
PROCHORUS, NICANOR, TIMON, PARMENAS AND NICOLAS,”**

4. “PROCHORUS, NICANOR, TIMON, PARMENAS AND NICOLAS,”

When we think of “famous” people in the Bible, names like Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, David, Gideon, and Daniel come to mind. But here are five people we likely have never heard of before and who are not mentioned with the “famous” people in Hebrews 11.

Now let us look at seven questions:

1. Do you recognize any of these five people?
2. Do you even care who these five people are?
3. Do you even know what these five people did?
4. Do you even remember these five people’s names?
5. Do you even think these five people are important?
6. Do you find it very easy to overlook these five people?
7. Do you even wonder about who these five people are?

**Acts 6:5 “AND THEY CHOSE STEPHEN, A MAN FULL OF FAITH
AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND PHILIP,
PROCHORUS, NICANOR, TIMON, PARMENAS AND NICOLAS,”**

We have looked at seven questions about these people.

Now let us apply them.

1. People might not recognize you but the Lord does.
2. People might not care who you are but the Lord does.
3. People might not know what you did but the Lord does.
4. People might not remember your name but the Lord does.
5. People might not think you are important but the Lord does.
6. People might very easily overlook you but the Lord does not.
7. People might wonder about who you are, but the Lord does not.

**Acts 6:7 “THE NUMBER OF DISCIPLES IN JERUSALEM INCREASED RAPIDLY,
AND A LARGE NUMBER OF PRIESTS BECAME OBEDIENT TO THE FAITH.”**

From this magnificent verse, please give your attention in the following manner.

The first four words, **“THE NUMBER OF DISCIPLES”**

The last four words, **“OBEDIENT TO THE FAITH.”**

A disciple of Christ means being obedient to the faith. A true disciple increasingly becomes more obedient to the faith. Notice this verse does not use “the number of converts.” They were not merely converts, they were **“DISCIPLES.”**

What is a disciple? A disciple is a person who is **“OBEDIENT TO THE FAITH.”**

**Acts 6:7 “THE NUMBER OF DISCIPLES IN JERUSALEM INCREASED RAPIDLY,
AND A LARGE NUMBER OF PRIESTS BECAME OBEDIENT TO THE FAITH.”**

Next, we give attention to the words “PRIESTS BECAME OBEDIENT TO THE FAITH.” It is amazing to realize that the “PRIESTS” were not “OBEDIENT TO THE FAITH” prior to this encounter with the gospel.

They may have worn a particular type of religious clothing.

They may have acted very religious.

They had been religious but not saved.

They had been serving in the synagogue but were not saved!

Being religious does not save anyone.

Going to a church does not save anyone.

Singing in the choir does not save anyone.

It is only Jesus Christ who can save anyone.

**Acts 6:8 “NOW STEPHEN,
A MAN FULL OF GOD’S GRACE AND POWER,”**

This verse is from the NIV and the order it is written is of great importance.
May we look at it in three parts and receive light and life from it.

1. “NOW STEPHEN,”

From this verse to Acts 7:60 is recorded one day in Stephen’s life.

That day he was proclaiming Jesus Christ!

That day was his last!

Are we proclaiming Jesus Christ today?

Are we living “NOW” as if it is our last day?

Stephen proclaimed Christ to his last day of life.

Stephen did not know that would be his last day.

Do we intend to proclaim Jesus Christ to our last day of life?

**Acts 6:8 “NOW STEPHEN,
A MAN FULL OF GOD’S GRACE AND POWER,”**

2. “A MAN”

Scripture tells us Stephen was just a man.

Scripture does not tell us Stephen was famous.

Scripture does not tell us Stephen was wealthy.

Scripture does not tell us Stephen was handsome.

Scripture does not tell us Stephen was a spiritual giant.

Scripture does not tell us Stephen was someone of great intelligence. Stephen was not a great man of God but rather a man of a great God. Stephen was just a man who had waited on tables.

What he did sounded very ordinary.

Do you feel ordinary? If you do then God can do extraordinary things through you. God uses the ordinary to do the extraordinary!

**Acts 6:8 “NOW STEPHEN,
A MAN FULL OF GOD’S GRACE AND POWER,”**

3. “FULL OF GOD’S GRACE AND POWER.”

Notice the verse does not say “Stephen a man full of power.”

If “**GOD'S GRACE**” is not mentioned then the emphasis is wrongly placed on a mere human being. Nothing in Stephen made him great.

But what is great about Stephen is he was full of God’s grace and power. Notice the grace and the power was not even Stephen’s, they were God’s. He could not take credit for being full of grace and power. There is a simple, profound lesson found in the order these words are written. First is “**GOD’S GRACE**”

Second is “**POWER.**”

God’s grace comes before God’s power. God does not give His power without first giving us His grace. The simple reason God does this is because we could not handle it. How do we receive God’s grace?

The answer is in 1 Peter 5:5, “**GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.**” God only gives His grace to one type of a person, the one who humbles himself.

**Acts 6:8 “NOW STEPHEN,
A MAN FULL OF GOD’S GRACE AND POWER,”**

May we read the last part of verse 8,

“WAS PERFORMING GREAT WONDERS AND SIGNS AMONG THE PEOPLE.”

Why was Stephen able to do these great wonders and signs? The reason is because of God’s grace and power. Both belong to God, not to a mere mortal or his ministry. When we see or read about tremendous accomplishments made by men of God there can be a temptation to put these men on a spiritual pedestal as if they had done great things for God on their own merits.

**Acts 6:8 “NOW STEPHEN,
A MAN FULL OF GOD’S GRACE AND POWER,”**

Remember Peter’s words after God had performed a miracle through him in Acts 3:12,

“MEN OF ISRAEL, WHY DO YOU MARVEL AT THIS, OR WHY DO YOU GAZE AT US, AS IF BY OUR OWN POWER OR PIETY WE HAD MADE HIM WALK?”

Peter was sufficiently humble to acknowledge that it was God who was to be exalted and not himself. No matter what you or I can ever do for God, it is only by His grace and power.

Before we can accomplish anything for God, we need to first realize we cannot accomplish anything for God and then ask Him to enable us to accomplish anything for Him.

Acts 6:8 “WAS PERFORMING GREAT WONDERS AND SIGNS AMONG THE PEOPLE.”

For this brief look into the subject of wonders and signs may we, with the Holy Spirit to help us look more closely at the type of person God used in performing wonders and signs, or as some would say, signs and wonders. Here are three indications of a person God uses in signs and wonders.

1. Verse 2, “SERVE TABLES.”

Stephen was chosen to serve tables. This task indicates Stephen had a servant's heart. The task indicates he had a humble spirit.

2. Verse 5, “AND THEY CHOSE STEPHEN”

The word “THEY” refers to the apostles. Stephen was under spiritual authority, or some would call, spiritual covering.

3. Verse 10, “WISDOM AND THE SPIRIT”

Stephen had a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. As we read through Acts 7, we find he had a profound depth in the word of God. The three things to look for are:

1. God uses a person with a servant's heart.
2. God uses a person who is under spiritual authority.
3. God uses a person who has thorough knowledge of the Scriptures.

Acts 6:9 “ROSE UP AND ARGUED WITH STEPHEN.”

This last part of verse 9 shows two things and the order they in is important.

1. “ROSE UP”

These words convey a picture of pride and an attitude of superiority.

A picture of exalting themselves.

2. “AND ARGUED”

Pride manifests itself with an argumentative spirit. Pride expressed itself in wanting to argue. Humility and arguing are not compatible.

Acts 6:15 “AND FIXING THEIR GAZE ON HIM, ALL WHO WERE SITTING IN THE COUNCIL SAW HIS FACE LIKE THE FACE OF AN ANGEL.”

As we study this verse, it is most helpful to consider the context from verse 9 to verse 14 as opposition against Stephen was increasing.

People were arguing with him in verse 9.

People were slandering him in verse 11.

People were mistreating him in verse 12.

People were lying about him in verses 13 and 14.

Now we come to this verse and find all the Council **“FIXING THEIR GAZE ON HIM.”** Everyone had their gaze fixed on Stephen, yet in the last part of the verse it says,

“ALL WHO WERE SITTING IN THE COUNCIL SAW HIS FACE LIKE THE FACE OF AN ANGEL.”

All the people had their eyes fixed on Stephen but Stephen did not have his eyes fixed on them. Stephen had his eyes fixed elsewhere.

Acts 6:15 “AND FIXING THEIR GAZE ON HIM, ALL WHO WERE SITTING IN THE COUNCIL SAW HIS FACE LIKE THE FACE OF AN ANGEL.”

In Hebrews 12:2 it says, **“FIXING OUR EYES ON JESUS, THE AUTHOR AND PERFECTER OF FAITH.”** The face of Stephen was radiant.

In Psalm 34: 5 it says, **“THEY LOOKED TO HIM AND WERE RADIANT.”**

Stephen kept his eyes fixed on Jesus in the midst of terrible sufferings from people. When we get slandered and lied about what does our face look like? Does our face look like Stephen's? Or does our face look troubled, worried and angry?

What our face looks like tells where we are looking. When we look at the people who are hurting us, our faces will be full of hurt or anger. But when we look at Jesus rather than the people our faces will look radiant. When we suffer from people wanting to argue with us, and slander us, and lie about us, let us do like Stephen.

Acts 7:1 “AND THE HIGH PRIEST SAID, “ARE THESE THINGS SO?”

What is the high priest referring to when he asked Stephen this question? In Acts 6:11, 13, 14 people made false accusations against Stephen. Now in this verse we read **“ARE THESE THINGS SO?”** The slanderous accusations against Stephen very likely sounded convincing.

Just because something said about someone sounds convincing, we still need to do what Proverbs 18:17 says,

“THE FIRST TO PRESENT HIS CASE SEEMS RIGHT, UNTIL ANOTHER COMES FORWARD AND QUESTIONS HIM.”

**Acts 7:2 “TO THIS HE REPLIED;
“BROTHERS AND SISTERS, LISTEN TO ME!”**

With the Holy Spirit to help, let us look at this verse in three parts.

1. “TO THIS HE REPLIED;”

These words introduce what Stephen would say to the Council up to and including the final verse of this chapter. We learn from these words Stephen waited for the high priest to finish speaking before he began speaking. Stephen did not interrupt. After this, we examine the chapter and see it is composed of 60 verses. It is the longest chapter in the book of Acts. His sermon is the longest in the book of Acts.

From verse 2 until verse 53, Stephen taught an overview of the Old Testament from Abraham on through to Isaiah the prophet, highlighting examples of the coming of Jesus Christ.

**Acts 7:2 “TO THIS HE REPLIED;
“BROTHERS AND SISTERS, LISTEN TO ME!”**

Stephen had a heart filled with Scriptures.

He knew & spoke the Scriptures.

Do Scriptures fill our hearts?

Do we know the Scriptures? Do we speak the Scriptures?

As we look at these words **“TO THIS HE REPLIED;”** we need to consider the context to which they are found. In chapter 6:5 Stephen was among those chosen to wait on tables.

In chapter 6, we see what Stephen was doing.

In chapter 7, we read what Stephen was saying.

Doing preceded saying. Stephen’s life preached before his mouth.

This pattern of doing, then saying is seen in how Jesus ministered.

Acts 1:1 says, **“JESUS BEGAN TO DO AND TEACH.”** We are to apply this same pattern in our lives. Our life is to preach before our mouth does.

**Acts 7:2 “TO THIS HE REPLIED;
“BROTHERS AND SISTERS, LISTEN TO ME!”**

2. “BROTHERS AND SISTERS,”

The use of these words show warmth in the way Stephen spoke to people. Stephen used terms of a family. Later in verse 54, they would be his foes. Stephen showed respect towards people who did not show respect for him.

Stephen did what is reflected in the words of Jesus in Matthew 7:12,
**“THEREFORE, HOWEVER YOU WANT PEOPLE TO TREAT YOU, SO TREAT THEM,
FOR THIS IS THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS.”**

This is the Biblical model for us to follow in our interaction with people.

**Acts 7:2 “TO THIS HE REPLIED;
“BROTHERS AND SISTERS, LISTEN TO ME!”**

3. “LISTEN TO ME,”

Here Stephen is asking the Council to listen to him. The Council had listened to lies in Acts 6:13-14 & now they would hear the truth.

Listening to lies causes a negative response while listening to the truth produces a positive response.

Do we listen to people who are passionate about the Scriptures?

Do we listen to people when they talk about people?

Do we listen to positive or negative people?

To listen requires discipline.

To listen requires self-denial.

To listen requires being near.

To listen requires attentiveness.

To listen requires not being passive.

To listen requires not thinking what to say as the other person is speaking.

**Acts 7:2 “TO THIS HE REPLIED;
“BROTHERS AND SISTERS, LISTEN TO ME!”**

Now look at five things about Stephen and compare yourself with him.

1. Stephen spoke passionately about the Scriptures.

Do we speak passionately about the Scriptures?

2. Stephen spoke to people and not about people.

Do we speak to people or about people?

3. Stephen spoke to non-Christians about Jesus Christ.

Do we speak to non-Christians about Jesus Christ?

4. Stephen spoke to faces instead of speaking behind their backs.

Do we speak to people's faces or behind their backs?

5. Stephen spoke positively; people in Acts 6:13-14 spoke negatively.

Do we speak positively or negatively?

Acts 7:2 “THE GOD OF GLORY APPEARED TO OUR FATHER ABRAHAM...”

From this part of verse 2, with the Holy Spirit to help us, seek to unearth glorious truth about God and His actions. Let us study it in two parts.

1. “THE GOD OF GLORY”

The most important person in Stephen’s life and teaching was **“THE GOD OF GLORY.”** Stephen starts his sermon by exalting God. It is vital to take notice that although people had been viciously slandering and falsely accusing Stephen in Acts 6:11, then 13 and 14 he did not speak to defend himself but rather his attention was on the greatness of God. Stephen loved with an undivided heart the **“THE GOD OF GLORY”** and further on in verse 55 it says he saw **“THE GLORY OF GOD.”** All who desire more than anything in life **“THE GOD OF GLORY”** will see and will experience in their lives **“THE GLORY OF GOD.”**

Acts 7:2 “THE GOD OF GLORY APPEARED TO OUR FATHER ABRAHAM...”

When we desire more than anything else “THE GOD OF GLORY” then the grating of selfish people is nothing. “THE GLORY OF GOD” is to fill my mind and not the gory of men! What does “GLORY” mean? The words magnificence, majesty, brilliance, beauty, grandeur, perfection and radiance are a few words that attempt to capture the meaning of this incredible word. More importantly, it is the “presence of God Himself.” Have you ever been in a church service and experienced the presence of God falling on you? People begin to say, “Glory”. It means, the presence of God Himself!!

Acts 7:2 “THE GOD OF GLORY APPEARED TO OUR FATHER ABRAHAM...”

2. “APPEARED TO OUR FATHER ABRAHAM...”

Try to imagine the magnificence of God appearing to a minuscule man. Try to imagine “**THE GOD OF GLORY**” allowing a mortal to see God's glory. Abraham expressed the correct attitude in Genesis 18:27,

“I HAVE VENTURED TO SPEAK TO THE LORD, ALTHOUGH I AM BUT DUST AND ASHES.”

Abraham knew he was nothing before almighty God.

Do we know that apart from the grace of God we are nothing?

Do we dare to think we are really something?

From these words “**APPEARED TO OUR FATHER ABRAHAM**” is action taking place. Then in verse 3, it records God speaking to Abraham. Action preceded speaking. Our actions are to precede our speaking.

Acts 7:4 “THEN HE DEPARTED FROM THE LAND OF THE CHALDEANS,”

In this verse, Stephen spoke about Abraham obeying God and leaving the land of the Chaldeans. The Chaldeans are referred to in Habakkuk 1:11, **“THEY WHOSE STRENGTH IS THEIR GOD.”** Abraham obeyed God and left a place where people trusted in their own strength as their god.

What sort of a people are we?

Is our strength in our ability?

Is our strength in our training?

Is our strength in our education?

Is our strength in our experience?

Is our strength our god or is God our strength?

David provides the correct role model in 1 Samuel 30:6,

“...DAVID STRENGTHENED HIMSELF IN THE LORD HIS GOD.”

Anything that is a substitute to the Lord being our source of strength is a form of idolatry. We are to depart from the place of self-reliance and trusting in ourselves and depend totally upon the Lord as our source of strength.

**Acts 7:9 “AND THE PATRIARCHS, MOVED WITH ENVY,
SOLD JOSEPH INTO EGYPT: BUT GOD WAS WITH HIM.”**

In the King James Version, verse 9 is translated in the following two parts.

1. “AND THE PATRIARCHS, MOVED WITH ENVY, SOLD JOSEPH INTO EGYPT:”

The NAS Bible says, “AND THE PATRIARCHS BECAME JEALOUS OF JOSEPH AND SOLD HIM INTO EGYPT.”

Why did they become jealous of Joseph? The answer is in Genesis 37:3,

“...HE MADE HIM A COAT OF MANY COLORS.” Joseph’s father loved him more than his brothers and made a special coat for him and not for his other sons. Favoritism towards Joseph was a rejection to the Patriarchs. Rejection often produces jealousy. These men acted in a negative way towards their brother because of jealousy. Negative actions are born out of jealousy.

The Patriarchs rejected Joseph, yet God had chosen Joseph to help those who had rejected him. People hurt, but God helps. Joseph was disowned but he was owned by the Lord. When you are disowned by people, remember you are owned by the Lord. Joseph serves as a type of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament as does Moses is described in Acts 7:35.

**Acts 7:9 “AND THE PATRIARCHS, MOVED WITH ENVY,
SOLD JOSEPH INTO EGYPT: BUT GOD WAS WITH HIM.”**

2. “BUT GOD WAS WITH HIM.”

If there was only the first part of this verse it would have left Joseph in a hopeless situation. But God never left Joseph in a hopeless situation, and He never leaves us in a hopeless situation. Remember these words are written in God's word. God's word never leaves us feeling hopeless.

This rule teaches us how to discern God's voice. Any thoughts or voices that leave us feeling hopeless or discouraged are not from God.

In Genesis 37:18 to 36 is the plot against Joseph by his brothers. In these verses, there is no mention of the Lord being with Joseph as they threw him into a pit and then sold him as a slave. All we read in these verses is hatred, violence, and rejection from his brothers.

**Acts 7:9 “AND THE PATRIARCHS, MOVED WITH ENVY,
SOLD JOSEPH INTO EGYPT: BUT GOD WAS WITH HIM.”**

Then Genesis 37 ends with Jacob grieving for Joseph.

Then Genesis 38 is completely silent concerning Joseph.

Then about two years in Genesis 39, we read about Joseph.

Then continuing on to Genesis 39:21 the Lord was with Joseph.

How do you think Joseph felt when he knew his brothers hated him?

How do you think Joseph felt when he knew his brothers rejected him?

How do you think Joseph felt being left alone and abandoned in a dark pit?

He certainly would have been aware of their hatred, but was he aware that the Lord loved him?

We know the Lord was with him because we can read it in the Bible.

But was Joseph aware that the Lord was with him in such a dark time? Have you experienced hatred, violence, and rejection? Perhaps you have, even from your family. When you do not know if the Lord is with you in a dark time, be comforted because He is. In Hebrews 13:5 it says,

“I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU.”

Acts 7:10 “AND RESCUED HIM FROM ALL HIS AFFLICTIONS, AND GRANTED HIM FAVOR AND WISDOM IN THE SIGHT OF PHARAOH, KING OF EGYPT; AND HE MADE HIM GOVERNOR OVER EGYPT AND ALL HIS HOUSEHOLD.”

From this magnificent verse may we give our attention at this present time to the first and last parts.

1. “AND RESCUED HIM FROM ALL HIS AFFLICTIONS,”

This verse is referring to Joseph. He had been rejected by his brothers and sold as a slave into Egypt. Then he and suffered being wrongfully put in prison. As we read this verse, it is imperative to see the order the words are written in. Notice the word **“AFFLICTIONS**, comes before the words **“FAVOR AND WISDOM.”** Joseph experienced afflictions before favor. In the Christian life afflictions come before favor. If favor comes too fast, we likely will not last! Fast favor has a bad flavor!

Acts 7:10 “AND RESCUED HIM FROM ALL HIS AFFLICTIONS, AND GRANTED HIM FAVOR AND WISDOM IN THE SIGHT OF PHARAOH, KING OF EGYPT; AND HE MADE HIM GOVERNOR OVER EGYPT AND ALL HIS HOUSEHOLD.”

Afflictions deal with our hearts so the Lord can bless us with favor and wisdom.

The deeper the dealing the higher the calling.

Joseph did not know why he was being afflicted.

Joseph did not know how long he would be afflicted but it stopped.

When we go through afflictions, we may not know why they happen.

When we go through afflictions, we may not when they will stop.

When we go through afflictions they seem never to end, but they do.

Many want favor. Many want wisdom. But few want afflictions.

Many want to be happy. But few want to be holy.

Seek holiness, not happiness!

Acts 7:10 “AND RESCUED HIM FROM ALL HIS AFFLICTIONS, AND GRANTED HIM FAVOR AND WISDOM IN THE SIGHT OF PHARAOH, KING OF EGYPT; AND HE MADE HIM GOVERNOR OVER EGYPT AND ALL HIS HOUSEHOLD.”

2. “HE MADE HIM GOVERNOR OVER EGYPT AND ALL HIS HOUSEHOLD.”

In verse 9 is seen Joseph suffering terribly by the hands of his brothers.

But God was with Joseph in his afflictions. After time had passed, Joseph was promoted to a place of leadership.

Before the pomp was the prison.

Before the power was the prison.

Before the prestige was the prison.

Before the pinnacle was the prison.

Before the presents was the prison.

Before the promotion was the prison.

Before the prominence was the prison.

Acts 7:10 “AND RESCUED HIM FROM ALL HIS AFFLICTIONS, AND GRANTED HIM FAVOR AND WISDOM IN THE SIGHT OF PHARAOH, KING OF EGYPT; AND HE MADE HIM GOVERNOR OVER EGYPT AND ALL HIS HOUSEHOLD.”

Now we need to ask, why was Joseph made **“GOVERNOR OVER EGYPT AND ALL HIS HOUSEHOLD?”**

Was it just for the pomp?

Was it just for the power?

Was it just for the prestige?

Was it just for the pinnacle?

Was it just for the presents?

Was it just for the promotion?

Was it just for the prominence?

The answer is God saved Joseph from great affliction so he could be used by God to save others from great affliction. In verse 11 it says, **“NOW A FAMINE CAME OVER ALL EGYPT AND CANAAN, AND GREAT AFFLICTION WITH IT; AND OUR FATHERS COULD FIND NO FOOD.”**

God placed Joseph in a place of authority to save lives.

Acts 7:10 “AND RESCUED HIM FROM ALL HIS AFFLICTIONS, AND GRANTED HIM FAVOR AND WISDOM IN THE SIGHT OF PHARAOH, KING OF EGYPT; AND HE MADE HIM GOVERNOR OVER EGYPT AND ALL HIS HOUSEHOLD.”

Another example of the Lord enabling someone to be in a place of prominence is found in Esther 4:14, **“AND WHO KNOWS BUT THAT YOU HAVE COME TO ROYAL POSITION FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS?”** Why did God allow Esther to be in a prominent position?

Was it just so she could be rich?

Was it just so she could be happy?

Was it just so she could be famous?

Was it just so she could be respected?

Was it just so she could be eating fancy food?

Was it just so she could be wearing expensive clothes?

Was it just so she could be enjoying a very comfortable life?

Of course not! God allowed Esther to be in a royal position to save lives. God enables Christians to be in places of authority for the overall vision to save lives. Jesus has saved us from great affliction so He can work through us to save others from great affliction.

**Acts 7:12 “BUT WHEN JACOB HEARD THAT THERE WAS GRAIN IN EGYPT,
HE SENT OUR FATHERS THERE THE FIRST TIME.”**

From this verse may we focus on three vital parts that apply to us.

1. “JACOB HEARD” 2. “THERE WAS GRAIN IN EGYPT,” 3. “HE SENT”

From these words we learn Jacob heard there was grain in Egypt.

He then believed there was grain in Egypt because he acted promptly upon what he heard. Jacob HEARD, BELIEVED, THEN SAW there was grain in Egypt.

Jacob did not see the grain and then believe.

Jacob acted in accordance to what he believed.

Jacob believed, and after he saw.

Jacob walked by faith not by sight. Jacob HEARD, BELIEVED, and THEN SAW there was grain in Egypt. These three steps that Jacob did apply to our walking by faith. In 2 Corinthians 5:7 it says, **“FOR WE WALK BY FAITH, NOT BY SIGHT.”** What Jacob did is the opposite of how the world operates. This corrupt world says, “Seeing is believing.”

If we believe the Bible then it will be seen by how we conduct our lives.

Acts 7:14 “AND JOSEPH SENT WORD AND INVITED JACOB HIS FATHER AND ALL HIS RELATIVES TO COME TO HIM, SEVENTY-FIVE PERSONS IN ALL.”

Please give attention to the words **“SEVENTY-FIVE PERSONS IN ALL.”**

Now we refer back in Genesis 15:5 where God promised Abraham that his descendants would be like the stars of heaven in number. But here we learn that after a very long time there were only seventy-five relatives.

If we compare **“SEVENTY-FIVE PERSONS IN ALL”** to the promise God made to Abraham about having descendants as numerous as the stars in heaven we might be tempted to think the promise did not happen. Remember the words of Habakkuk 2:3,

“FOR THE VISION IS YET FOR THE APPOINTED TIME; IT HASTENS TOWARD THE GOAL, AND IT WILL NOT FAIL. THOUGH IT TARRIES, WAIT FOR IT; FOR IT WILL CERTAINLY COME, IT WILL NOT DELAY.”

The promises of God come according to His time schedule and not ours.

**Acts 7:17 “AS THE TIME DREW NEAR FOR GOD
TO FULFILL HIS PROMISE TO ABRAHAM,
THE NUMBER OF OUR PEOPLE IN EGYPT GREATLY INCREASED.”**

This verse is composed of two parts and here are two phrases from each.

1. “HIS PROMISE TO ABRAHAM,”

The Lord made a promise to Abraham in Genesis 15:5 about his descendants. This promise was over two hundred years before Moses was born. Time passed but the promise God made did not pass. God kept His promise. God did what He said He would do.

Do we keep our promises?

Do we do what we say we will do?

Do we remember the promises of God or broken promises of people?

**Acts 7:17 “AS THE TIME DREW NEAR FOR GOD
TO FULFILL HIS PROMISE TO ABRAHAM,
THE NUMBER OF OUR PEOPLE IN EGYPT GREATLY INCREASED.”**

2. “THE NUMBER OF OUR PEOPLE IN EGYPT GREATLY INCREASED.”

In verse 14, we learn that Jacob, along with his relatives only numbered seventy- five persons who came to Egypt. Now in this verse and over one hundred and thirty years later there is a massive increase in population. What is seen reflects the words of Job 8:7,

**“THOUGH YOUR BEGINNING WAS INSIGNIFICANT, YET YOUR END WILL
INCREASE GREATLY.”**

Acts 7:19 “IT WAS HE WHO TOOK SHREWD ADVANTAGE OF OUR RACE, AND MISTREATED OUR FATHERS SO THAT THEY WOULD EXPOSE THEIR INFANTS AND THEY WOULD NOT SURVIVE.”

In Genesis 47:11 it says,

“SO JOSEPH SETTLED HIS FATHER AND HIS BROTHERS IN EGYPT AND GAVE THEM PROPERTY IN THE BEST PART OF THE LAND THE DISTRICT OF RAMESES, AS PHARAOH DIRECTED.”

The people were given the very best place to live.

Living in Egypt was good.

Living in Egypt was comfortable.

Now in verse 18 another king arose in Egypt who oppressed the sons of Israel. As a result, the people desired to be delivered from such hardships. What do you think would have happened had such an evil king not arisen in Egypt? The people may have continued enjoying a comfortable life in the best part of Egypt.

Acts 7:19 “IT WAS HE WHO TOOK SHREWD ADVANTAGE OF OUR RACE, AND MISTREATED OUR FATHERS SO THAT THEY WOULD EXPOSE THEIR INFANTS AND THEY WOULD NOT SURVIVE.”

But hardships made them want to be set free from Egypt. We can learn from this lesson.

Hardships wean us from the world.

Hardships help us to want to go to heaven.

In Hebrews 9:28 it refers to Jesus by saying,

“SHALL APPEAR A SECOND TIME FOR SALVATION WITHOUT REFERENCE TO SIN, TO THOSE WHO EAGERLY AWAIT HIM.”

Do you eagerly await Him? If not, why not? If you are too comfortable in this world, you may not eagerly want to be with the Lord. Hardships make us want to leave this Egypt and go to the Promised Land.

**Acts 7:20 “AT THAT TIME MOSES WAS BORN,
AND HE WAS NO ORDINARY CHILD.”**

When we read the words “AT THAT TIME” we need to ask ourselves what time was it when “MOSES WAS BORN?” The answer is in verse 19, which describes the king of Egypt having all male babies murdered. This slaughter of male babies strikes a chilling similarity to when Jesus was born.

Exodus 1:16 describes all male babies being killed by a king.

Matthew 2:16 describes all male babies two years and younger killed by a king. The birth of Moses is a type or foreshadowing of the birth of Jesus.

**Acts 7:22 “MOSES WAS EDUCATED IN ALL THE WISDOM OF THE EGYPTIANS
AND WAS POWERFUL IN SPEECH AND ACTION.”**

In this verse we see Moses as an educated person and powerful in speech. Then after in verses 23 and 24 we read of him going to help his brothers who were mistreated by the Egyptians. But when we read Exodus 4:10 it says, “PLEASE, LORD, I HAVE NEVER BEEN ELOQUENT, NEITHER RECENTLY NOR IN THE PAST, NOR SINCE THOU HAST SPOKEN TO THY SERVANT; FOR I AM SLOW OF SPEECH AND SLOW OF TONGUE.”

Before the Lord called him, he was going to help. After God called him, he knew he was helpless. Before Moses could help, he needed to see he was helpless. Are we aware of being helpless? Before Moses could help, he needed help! Before we can help, we need help!

Acts 7:23 “HE DECIDED TO VISIT HIS FELLOW ISRAELITES.”

In this verse, Moses is seen making a decision to do something. He decided to visit his brothers, the sons of Israel. The words **“HE DECIDED”** indicate his making a decision independently from the Lord. In verse 22 it says,

“MOSES WAS EDUCATED IN ALL THE WISDOM OF THE EGYPTIANS AND WAS POWERFUL IN SPEECH AND ACTION.”

Moses had education, wisdom, and powerful in words and actions. As we consider this about Moses at this time in his life, we sense his reliance was on his ability rather than reliance upon the Lord. There is no mention of him praying and asking the Lord if he should visit the Israelites. Then in the next verse, Moses killed an Egyptian. The decision he made had consequences. The decisions we make have consequences. Do we make decisions dependent on or independent from the word of God?

**Acts 7:24 “AND WHEN HE SAW ONE OF THEM BEING TREATED UNJUSTLY,
HE DEFENDED HIM AND TOOK VENGEANCE FOR THE OPPRESSED BY
STRIKING DOWN THE EGYPTIAN.”**

As we prayerfully approach this verse, we need to as always consider the context to which it is found. In verse 22 it describes Moses as a highly educated man and powerful in speech.

In verse 23, Moses went to visit his brethren, but there is no mention of him praying and asking the Lord if he should go. It appears his reliance was on himself rather than in the Lord. Now we come to this verse and focus on the words,

“HE SAW ONE OF THEM BEING TREATED UNJUSTLY.”

Now compare this with verse 34,

“I HAVE CERTAINLY SEEN THE OPPRESSION OF MY PEOPLE.”

**Acts 7:24 “AND WHEN HE SAW ONE OF THEM BEING TREATED UNJUSTLY,
HE DEFENDED HIM AND TOOK VENGEANCE FOR THE OPPRESSED BY
STRIKING DOWN THE EGYPTIAN.”**

Now when Moses was relying on his own ability he tried to help one person. But God wanted to help an entire nation! What Moses was able to do in his own strength was nothing compared to what God would do.

In a way, Moses was in the way.

In John 6:7 Philip said, **“EIGHT MONTHS’ WAGES WOULD NOT BUY ENOUGH
BREAD FOR EACH ONE TO HAVE A BITE!”**

What it would take man to do in eight months could not compare to what Jesus can do in a few hours. Man’s ability is nothing compared to what God can do.

What we are able to do in our own strength is nothing compared to what God can do. If we rely on our education, experience or denomination rather than relying on the Holy Spirit then we are in the way. Get out of the way!

Acts 7:30 “AFTER FORTY YEARS HAD PASSED,”

In verse 20, the birth of Moses is described. Then in verse 23, Moses was forty years of age. Now, forty more years had passed. To read from verse 20 to 30 takes about forty seconds, yet the time span covers eighty years. Time passes quickly. In Job 9:25 it says, **“NOW MY DAYS ARE SWIFTER THAN A RUNNER; THEY FLEE AWAY.”** The quick passing of life is illustrated in nature. Spring brings new flowers. Trees bring bright green leaves.

They look fresh and clean.

Then comes summer and autumn.

Then leaves die and fall to the ground.

Then they are swept up and burned.

In 1 John 2:17 it says, **“AND THE WORLD IS PASSING AWAY, AND ALSO ITS LUSTS; BUT THE ONE WHO DOES THE WILL OF GOD ABIDES FOREVER.”**

It is imperative we do all we can for the glory of God each day of our lives because the day we are now in will not pass by again.

**Acts 7:32 “...AND MOSES SHOOK WITH FEAR
AND WOULD NOT VENTURE TO LOOK.”**

When we think of Moses, we recall how God used him to perform miracles. We might think of him authoring the first five books of the Old Testament. We might think of him as a man greatly used by God.

But here Moses is just a mere man shaking with fear.

In Deuteronomy 34:5 Moses is described as, **“THE SERVANT OF THE LORD.”** What caused him to shake with fear?

In Acts 7:31 it says, **“THERE CAME THE VOICE OF THE LORD;”** and verse 33 records what the Lord said. A characteristic of a servant of the Lord is a person who trembles at the word of God.

In Isaiah 66:2 it says, **“BUT TO THIS ONE I WILL LOOK, TO HIM WHO IS HUMBLE AND CONTRITE OF SPIRIT, AND WHO TREMBLES AT MY WORD.”**

Then in Isaiah 66:5 it says, **“HEAR THE WORD OF THE LORD, YOU WHO TREMBLE AT HIS WORD.”**

In Jeremiah 2:19 it warns us, **“AND THE DREAD OF ME IS NOT IN YOU.”**

**Acts 7:32 “...AND MOSES SHOOK WITH FEAR
AND WOULD NOT VENTURE TO LOOK.”**

If we have lost the fear or dread of God we need to repent!

Humility listens to the word of God.

Pride does not listen to the word of God.

Humility trembles at the word of God.

Pride trembles at the words of people.

Moses, a man greatly used by God greatly shook with fear at the Lord's voice.

What causes us to shake with fear?

Is it the Lord's voice or the voice of people?

In Galatians 1:10 it says, **“FOR AM I NOW SEEKING THE FAVOR OF MEN, OR OF GOD? OR AM I STRIVING TO PLEASE MEN? IF I WERE STILL TRYING TO PLEASE MEN, I WOULD NOT BE A BOND-SERVANT OF CHRIST.”**

Moses shook with fear at God's voice.

Then God used him mightily.

A person who shakes at the voice of God will be used mightily by God.

A person who shakes at the voice of people will not be used by God.

**Acts 7:33 “BUT THE LORD SAID TO HIM,
“TAKE OFF THE SANDALS FROM YOUR FEET, FOR THE PLACE ON WHICH YOU
ARE STANDING IS HOLY GROUND.”**

With the Holy Spirit's help, we shall learn from the words **“TAKE OFF THE SANDALS FROM YOUR FEET.”** In Exodus 3:2 to 10 God appeared to Moses and called him to lead His people out of bondage into the Promised Land. Now we see God calling Moses to remove his sandals. Let's consider 4 things about sandals.

1. They protect the flesh.
2. They cover the flesh.
3. They touch the dirt.
4. They are not clean.

God called Moses to remove those things that protect the flesh.

God called Moses to remove those things that cover the flesh.

God called Moses to remove those things that touch the dirt.

God called Moses to remove those things that are not clean.

God calls us to remove those things that protect the flesh.

God calls us to remove those things that cover the flesh.

God calls us to remove those things that touch the dirt.

God calls us to remove those things that are not clean.

**Acts 7:34 “I HAVE INDEED SEEN THE OPPRESSION
OF MY PEOPLE IN EGYPT,”**

In this verse we learn that God saw the sufferings of His people.

In this verse, we learn how God spoke to Moses about His people.

The tone of the words spoken about His people was filled with concern. There was compassion in the words the Lord spoke about His people.

How do speak about the Lord's people?

Is the tone of our words filled with concern?

Is there compassion in the words we speak about the Lord's people, or is there criticism in the tone of words we speak about the Lord's people?

Acts 7:34 “I HAVE HEARD THEIR GROANINGS AND HAVE COME DOWN TO SET THEM FREE.”

The Lord spoke these words to Abraham. With the Lord's help, let us divide them into three parts for further study.

1. “I HAVE HEARD THEIR GROANINGS”

The Lord was concerned for His people. He could hear them groaning. Can we hear when people are groaning? In Job 12:11 it says,

“DOES NOT THE EAR TEST WORDS AS THE TONGUE TASTES FOOD?”

To hear means we are listening. Do we carefully listen to people?

When we hear people having trouble, does it trouble us, or do we think, “I cannot be troubled.”

**Acts 7:34 “I HAVE HEARD THEIR GROANINGS
AND HAVE COME DOWN TO SET THEM FREE.”**

2. “AND HAVE COME DOWN”

The Lord came down to help His people. The Lord's concern for His people preceded Him coming down to help them. The words “**COME DOWN**” reflect humbling oneself to help others. Since we belong to the Lord, we are to follow the pattern outlined in this verse.

We are to be concerned and not just curious when it comes to seeing people in need of help. Curiosity is not compassion. We cannot help anyone unless we humble ourselves.

3. “TO SET THEM FREE.”

We are to be concerned, and we are to humble ourselves. The reason is to set people free. Humbling precedes helping. We need help from the Lord before we can give help to people. We need help before giving help.

The fact that people need to be set free is because they are in bondage.

Acts 7:35 “THIS IS THE SAME MOSES WHOM THEY HAD REJECTED WITH THE WORDS, “WHO MADE YOU A RULER AND JUDGE?” HE WAS SENT TO BE THEIR RULER AND DELIVERER BY GOD HIMSELF,”

In the Old Testament Moses is a type or foreshadowing of Jesus Christ.

Moses was rejected by people in Egypt but God sent him to be their ruler and deliverer from Egypt. In 1 Peter 2:4 it says,

“AND COMING TO HIM AS TO A LIVING STONE, REJECTED BY MEN, BUT CHOICE AND PRECIOUS IN THE SIGHT OF GOD.”

The people disowned a man who was owned by God. When you are owned by God, often men will disown you. Does the fear of being disowned by people cause you to deny you are owned by God?

Acts 7:35 “THEY HAD REJECTED WITH THE WORDS,”

In this verse, Stephen was describing how Moses was rejected by people when they spoke the words, **“WHO MADE YOU RULER AND JUDGE?”**

The people’s words were very rude.

The people’s words were very critical.

The people’s words were very hurtful.

The people’s words were very hateful.

The people’s words were very insulting.

The people’s words were very insensitive.

The people’s words communicate rejection.

The people who spoke these words were his own brethren.

The words his brethren spoke sounded very rude, critical, hurtful, hateful, insulting, and insensitive. Such words convey rejection.

Acts 7:35 “THEY HAD REJECTED WITH THE WORDS,”

As we read through Exodus chapter 1, we learn that the sons of Israel were rejected by Pharaoh. Then in Exodus 2:14 is found the sons of Israel rejecting Moses. Rejected people reject people! Hurt people hurt people! The words that conveyed rejection to Moses came from his own brethren. The very people he felt closest to. Words that convey rejection often come from those closest to us. Words that convey rejection come in many forms.

Some come in the form of thoughts like,

“You will never amount to anything.”

“You are good for nothing.”

“You are ugly.”

There are few if any who do not experience some form of rejection.

Often through parent-child relationship. Rejection needs healing.

Healing comes through Jesus.

Acts 7:35 “HE WAS SENT TO BE THEIR RULER AND DELIVERER BY GOD HIMSELF,”

From this part of verse 35, the Lord teaches us that Moses was sent to save people from the bondage of Egypt. Before proceeding further, it is vital we look at the background of Moses. In Exodus 1:16 and 22 Pharaoh commanded all male babies to be killed.

Then in Exodus 2:5 and 6 it describes Moses as a helpless baby getting saved. Moses had been delivered from death and after the passing of time, God used him to save people. In our lives, Jesus has saved us. The reason is so we too can be used by God to help deliver people. Moses was saved so God could use him to save people. God has saved us so we can share in the progress of the gospel so others are saved.

Acts 7:36 “THIS MAN LED THEM OUT, PERFORMING WONDERS AND SIGNS IN THE LAND OF EGYPT AND IN THE RED SEA AND IN THE WILDERNESS FOR FORTY YEARS.”

With the Lord to help us, we can study this verse in the following three parts.

1. “THIS MAN”

This verse begins with words that refer to Moses. The sentence does not say, “This mighty man of faith,” or “This mighty man of God,” or “this anointed leader.” Moses is merely called **“THIS MAN.”**

The words sound so ordinary.

In Exodus 2:17 Moses watered some sheep.

In Exodus 2:21 Moses got married.

In Exodus 2:22 Moses had a son.

Acts 7:36 “THIS MAN LED THEM OUT, PERFORMING WONDERS AND SIGNS IN THE LAND OF EGYPT AND IN THE RED SEA AND IN THE WILDERNESS FOR FORTY YEARS.”

Helping some women water their sheep, getting married, and becoming a father all sounds pretty much like an average, ordinary life. Before God called him, he was doing an ordinary job of pasturing his father-in-law's sheep in Exodus 3:1. What Moses did before God called him to deliver the people from Egypt seemed very ordinary. God chose someone whose life seemed ordinary to do the extraordinary! God still does this today.

If you are just ordinary, God can use you to do the extraordinary!

Acts 7:36 “THIS MAN LED THEM OUT, PERFORMING WONDERS AND SIGNS IN THE LAND OF EGYPT AND IN THE RED SEA AND IN THE WILDERNESS FOR FORTY YEARS.”

2. “LED THEM OUT”

In this verse it says Moses led the people for forty years. As Moses led the people there were often terrible difficulties he had to face as a leader.

Yet he continued leading them and did not give up. Sometimes, when we are young in the faith we might desire to be in a place of leadership.

But once in leadership, and having to face terrible difficulties, some want to give up.

What sort of person was Moses that God would use him in such an incredible way? It is important we consider the context to this verse to answer such a question.

Acts 7:36 “THIS MAN LED THEM OUT, PERFORMING WONDERS AND SIGNS IN THE LAND OF EGYPT AND IN THE RED SEA AND IN THE WILDERNESS FOR FORTY YEARS.”

1. Great fear of God, Verse 32, **“MOSES SHOOK WITH FEAR.”**

2. Great grace of God, Verse 36, **“THIS MAN LED THEM OUT,”**

Before the Lord used Moses he shook with fear at the sound of the Lord's voice. Moses shook with fear at the voice of God, and after experienced the grace of God. With the grace of God, he was greatly used.

What sort of person does God use?

The person who trembles at the Lord's word is the person God uses.

The person who trembles at the Lord's word is the person who experiences God's grace.

In the Root Of The Righteous, A.W. Tozer said,

“ No one can know the true grace of God who has not known the fear of God. ”

Acts 7:36 “THIS MAN LED THEM OUT, PERFORMING WONDERS AND SIGNS IN THE LAND OF EGYPT AND IN THE RED SEA AND IN THE WILDERNESS FOR FORTY YEARS.”

3. “FOR FORTY YEARS.”

Over this period of time, Moses continued to experience God’s power, protection and provision. Moses experienced God at work in his life all through the forty years and not just something that happened in the past. As we go on as Christians, is our experience of God fresh and alive or is it only something that happened years ago?

Moses kept obeying God all those forty years.

Are we obeying God the same today as we did years ago?

**Acts 7:37 “THIS IS THE MOSES WHO SAID TO THE SONS OF ISRAEL, “GOD
SHALL RAISE UP FOR YOU
A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN.”**

May we prayerfully look into this verse in the following seven parts.

1. “THIS IS THE MOSES”

As we approach this verse it is vital we consider the context of it.

Verse 35 begins with, **“THIS MOSES”** then describes Moses being rejected by people. Yet God chose him to deliver & rule the people who had rejected him. Verse 36 begins with, **“THIS MAN”** referring to Moses doing signs and wonders in Egypt, the Red Sea and in the wilderness during forty years. Verse 37 begins with, **“THIS IS THE MOSES”** and continues on to quote what Moses prophesied about the One whom God would raise up.

Moses said this prophet would be like him and the two previous verses 35 and 36 indicate how this prophet would be recognized.

He would be rejected by own people yet raised up to deliver and rule them.

He would perform attesting miracles to validate God had called Him.

These words prophesied by Moses point to the coming of Jesus Christ.

Acts 7:37 “THIS IS THE MOSES WHO SAID TO THE SONS OF ISRAEL, “GOD SHALL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN.”

2. “WHO SAID TO THE SONS OF ISRAEL,”

We begin by noticing the word “**MOSES**” comes before the words “**WHO SAID.**” The words “**WHO SAID**” introduce what Moses spoke.

Moses is mentioned first and what Moses said is mentioned second.

The person Moses comes before the preaching of Moses.

The person comes before the person’s performance! Or we can say a person is more important than his performance. This is clearly modeled through Jesus as seen in Mark 1:11, “**THOU ART MY BELOVED SON, IN THEE I AM WELL-PLEASED.**” This verse describes Jesus as a beloved Son.

Then in verse 14 it says, “**JESUS CAME INTO GALILEE, PREACHING THE GOSPEL OF GOD.**” The Person Jesus came before the preaching of Jesus.

3. “GOD”

In this prophecy, “**GOD**” comes before the word “**YOU.**” In your life, does “**GOD**” come before “**YOU**” or do “**YOU**” come before “**GOD?**”

Acts 7:37 “THIS IS THE MOSES WHO SAID TO THE SONS OF ISRAEL, “GOD SHALL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN.”

4. “SHALL RAISE UP”

These words convey certainty. They do not say, “God might raise up a prophet.” For God to raise someone up means the person is first in a lowly place. In Proverbs 18:12 it says, **“HUMILITY COMES BEFORE HONOR.”**

If a person raises himself up then God cannot raise him up!

5. “GOD SHALL RAISE UP”

These words tell us what God would do but they do not tell us when He would do it. The time when Moses spoke this prophecy was in Deuteronomy 18:15. It was about 1,450 years before Jesus came into this world. These words are a promise made for His people. This prophecy is extraordinary in that Jesus would be born at a time when a king would be having male babies slaughtered just as was happening when Moses was born into the world. In this example, the promise did not happen immediately. There is a temptation to think that when God gives a promise it will happen immediately. But often there is a waiting time for the promise to be fulfilled. The waiting serves to cleanse our hearts from wrong motives and deepen our faith.

Acts 7:37 “THIS IS THE MOSES WHO SAID TO THE SONS OF ISRAEL, “GOD SHALL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN.”

6. “FOR YOU”

Here we learn why God would raise up this prophet. The verse does not say, “God shall raise up a person for himself.” God raises up a person for the benefit of others. God raises up a person to serve, rather than be served! If a person raises himself up it is for himself and not for others. Such a person is interested in serving himself rather than serving others.

7. “A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN.”

Moses knew God would raise up someone else to lead His people.

Moses was not threatened with the prospect of someone else leading the people. Are you in a leadership position? Do you feel threatened thinking of someone else in charge rather than you?

Acts 7:39 “BUT OUR FATHERS REFUSED TO OBEY HIM. INSTEAD, THEY REJECTED HIM AND IN THEIR HEARTS TURNED BACK TO EGYPT.”

Within this verse are described three clear stages of backsliding. The three stages can be summarized in the following three words.

1. Refusing “BUT OUR FATHERS REFUSED TO OBEY HIM.”
2. Rejecting “INSTEAD, THEY REJECTED HIM.”
3. Returning “AND IN THEIR HEARTS TURNED BACK TO EGYPT.”

With the Lord’s help, we shall now study these three vital steps and compare our lives with each of these steps.

Acts 7:39 “BUT OUR FATHERS REFUSED TO OBEY HIM. INSTEAD, THEY REJECTED HIM AND IN THEIR HEARTS TURNED BACK TO EGYPT.”

1. Refusing “BUT OUR FATHERS REFUSED TO OBEY HIM,”

The first step towards backsliding is a willful refusal to obey the light a person has from Scripture. The word “**REFUSED**” communicates that people willfully make a choice, or a decision. This action shows willful defiance.

The will is in operation. Each day we have choices to make. Either we choose life or we choose death. When our hearts to want to disobey or refuse to obey God’s word we have to quickly humble ourselves and repent. We need to pray as David, in Psalm 51:12,

“GRANT ME A WILLING SPIRIT, AND SUSTAIN ME.”

It is God’s abundant grace that enables each Christian to follow Jesus. It is His ability to lead us rather than our ability to follow Him that is of great importance to understand.

Acts 7:39 “BUT OUR FATHERS REFUSED TO OBEY HIM. INSTEAD, THEY REJECTED HIM AND IN THEIR HEARTS TURNED BACK TO EGYPT.”

2. Rejecting “INSTEAD, THEY REJECTED HIM”

The word “INSTEAD” is a key word. We see two options are presented.

When life is rejected, death is accepted.

When light is rejected, darkness is accepted.

When truth is rejected, deception is accepted.

In Romans 1:25 it says,

“FOR THEY EXCHANGED THE TRUTH OF GOD FOR A LIE.”

We are either with Jesus or against Him. We are either gathering or scattering.

When we willfully reject what the Bible says we are inviting deception into our hearts. There is no middle ground.

Acts 7:39 “BUT OUR FATHERS REFUSED TO OBEY HIM. INSTEAD, THEY REJECTED HIM AND IN THEIR HEARTS TURNED BACK TO EGYPT.”

3. Returning “AND IN THEIR HEARTS TURNED BACK TO EGYPT.”

These words reflect a people backsliding in their hearts. In this part of the verse the word “**EGYPT**” is a key word. In the Bible, Egypt is a type of the world. In the Old Testament “**EGYPT**” was a place of captivity and bondage for God’s people. When a person refuses to obey the Lord, and rejects the truth, certain consequences are set in motion.

The person chooses enslavement instead of freedom.

The person chooses captivity rather than Jesus Christ!

The person chooses curses and not blessings.

The person chooses to go back to the world.

The person chooses death rather than life.

In 2 Timothy 4:10 it says,

“FOR DEMAS, HAVING LOVED THIS PRESENT WORLD, HAS DESERTED ME.

Acts 7:40 “SAYING TO AARON, “MAKE FOR US GODS WHO WILL GO BEFORE US; FOR THIS MOSES WHO LED US OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT - WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO HIM.”

These words refer to Exodus 32:1 when the people saw that Moses had delayed coming down from the mountain where God was giving him the Ten Commandments. With the Holy Spirit to help, let us look at six parts.

1. “SAYING”

This word is present continuous, which means, the people were telling Aaron, in a most demanding way to make gods for them. As we meditate on this word **“SAYING,”** it brings to mind an example of where we see it in Mark 5:8, **“FOR HE HAD BEEN SAYING TO HIM, “COME OUT OF THE MAN YOU UNCLEAR SPIRIT.”**

In that situation Jesus dealt with demons. We find Him commanding them more than once and likely for quite some time. The word communicates saying it more than once and for some time. The insistent, demanding tone by which the people were speaking, and likely shouting, would likely have the effect of wearing Aaron down to the point where he would finally give in to their rebellious demands.

Acts 7:40 “SAYING TO AARON, “MAKE FOR US GODS WHO WILL GO BEFORE US; FOR THIS MOSES WHO LED US OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT - WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO HIM.”

2. “TO AARON,”

We begin with a sobering look at Aaron who was a Levite and brother of Moses.

Aaron was in leadership (Exodus 4:14-16).

Aaron spoke face to face with Pharaoh (Exodus 5:1).

Aaron was used as a prophet for Moses (Exodus 7:1).

Aaron saw God do incredible miracles (Exodus 7:20).

Aaron experienced all this but was unstable (Exodus 32:1).

Aaron then gave in to the rebellious people (Exodus 32:2).

Aaron told the people what they wanted to hear (Exodus 32:2).

Aaron made an idol and exchanged the truth for a lie (Exodus 32:4).

Aaron kept a religious front by having a festival to the Lord (Exodus 32:5).

Acts 7:40 “SAYING TO AARON, “MAKE FOR US GODS WHO WILL GO BEFORE US; FOR THIS MOSES WHO LED US OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT - WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO HIM.”

When we consider what happened to Aaron we might be tempted to think negatively about him. What happened to Aaron serves as a sober warning to us. In Exodus 7:7 it mentions Aaron was eight-three years old. Yet even at that age, he was still susceptible to compromising with sin. The lesson to learn from this is:

We may be in a leadership position.

We may have spoken to people of influence.

We may have spoken prophetically.

We may have seen God do incredible miracles.

But those things do not mean we cannot fall. If I think, “I will never fall,” I will. In Protection From Deception, Derek Prince said,

“ I find it hard to understand how Aaron could do that. But if Aaron could do it, you and I can do it. We are no better than Aaron. Probably most of us are not nearly of his caliber. ”

Aaron erred, and without the grace of God so will we.

Acts 7:40 “SAYING TO AARON, “MAKE FOR US GODS WHO WILL GO BEFORE US; FOR THIS MOSES WHO LED US OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT - WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO HIM.”

3. “MAKE FOR US GODS”

When we read these words and listen to the tone they were spoken in, we can discern a demanding, pushy attitude in the people. In the NIV it says, **“THEY TOLD AARON, “MAKE US GODS.”** Although Aaron was a leader, the people did not show respect towards him. They did not ask Aaron what to do. They told Aaron what to do. People who have a problem with human authority first have a problem with God’s authority.

This is seen in Jonah 1:3 where Jonah first had a problem with God’s authority. Then in Jonah 1:6 Jonah had a problem with the captain who was a human authority. Where there is a no respect for authority there is the presence of rebellion. Where there is a demanding, pushy behavior then we discern a rebellious heart. The people turned to false gods. When the true God is rejected, false gods are accepted! When truth is rejected, error is accepted.

Acts 7:40 “SAYING TO AARON, “MAKE FOR US GODS WHO WILL GO BEFORE US; FOR THIS MOSES WHO LED US OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT- WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO HIM.”

4. “WHO WILL GO BEFORE US;”

The people wanted an idol to go before them. The idol would be in front and they would be following behind. In Jeremiah 2:5 it says,

“THEY FOLLOWED WORTHLESS IDOLS AND BECAME WORTHLESS THEMSELVES.”

They wanted to follow a lifeless idol. The people made a choice to follow something other than the real God. Anything we put before the true God is an idol.

5. “FOR THIS MOSES WHO LED US OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT”

The people were only looking to Moses rather than God for being their source of deliverance from Egypt.

They were looking at a man rather than the Lord.

They were following a man rather than the Lord.

Do you follow the Lord or a man? If we quote what a Bible teacher says more than what the Bible says then this should be cause for concern.

Acts 7:40 “SAYING TO AARON, “MAKE FOR US GODS WHO WILL GO BEFORE US; FOR THIS MOSES WHO LED US OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT - WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO HIM.”

6. “WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO HIM.”

These words are an excuse the people used to justify themselves for disobeying God. They blamed Moses to justify their actions. Blaming someone is often a smokescreen for covering or justifying a particular sin. As we look deeper into these words consider that the people might have thought something tragic had happened to Moses because he was gone for so long. When a tragedy comes into our life, a temptation comes to use the tragic experience as an excuse to rationalize sinning. In this case, the people pressured Aaron to join them in sinning against God.

Acts 7:40 “SAYING TO AARON, “MAKE FOR US GODS WHO WILL GO BEFORE US; FOR THIS MOSES WHO LED US OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT - WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO HIM.”

When we experience a tragedy in life, we might be tempted to look for another person to join us in sinning against God. When things did not turn out as the people thought they should they turned away from God. When things do not turn out as we think they should the temptation is to turn away from God.

When things do not turn out how we think they should, how do we respond? The people had to wait for Moses to return. They had to wait longer than they had expected. Waiting longer than they thought they would have to wait revealed what was dormant in their hearts.

Waiting longer than we think we should have to wait reveals what is dormant in our hearts.

Acts 7:41 “AND AT THAT TIME THEY MADE A CALF AND BROUGHT A SACRIFICE TO THE IDOL,”

With the Holy Spirit to help us, we shall study this part of verse 41 in three parts.

1. “AND AT THAT TIME THEY MADE A CALF”

Here is described something man made. The people willfully chose to reject God. In the previous verse, the people had made an excuse to justify their sin by saying they did not know what had happened to Moses. The people made a calf and Exodus 32:3 and 4 describes the calf being made of gold. The calf was made from a precious metal.

The idol was more precious to them than the Lord.

Do we consider anything in life more precious than the Lord Jesus?

Acts 7:41 “AND AT THAT TIME THEY MADE A CALF AND BROUGHT A SACRIFICE TO THE IDOL,”

2. “AND BROUGHT A SACRIFICE TO THE IDOL,”

The people made a calf and then sacrificed to what they had made. They made a sacrifice for the thing they worshipped. Their conduct is reflected in Romans 1:25,

“FOR THEY EXCHANGED THE TRUTH OF GOD FOR A LIE, AND WORSHIPPED AND SERVED THE CREATURE RATHER THAN THE CREATOR, WHO IS BLESSED FOREVER. AMEN.”

They worshipped something made rather than the Maker. People make sacrifices for the things they worship.

**Acts 7:41 “AND AT THAT TIME THEY MADE A CALF
AND BROUGHT A SACRIFICE TO THE IDOL,”**

3. “AND WERE REJOICING IN THE WORKS OF THEIR HANDS.”

While in the wilderness, the people turned away from God and made a golden calf as recorded in Exodus 32:1. Their pride, their joy, their delight, and their satisfaction was in their works rather than in their Lord. They were rejoicing in what they had done rather than what God had done. What do we rejoice in?

Do we rejoice in our jobs?

Do we rejoice in our money?

Do we rejoice in our abilities?

Do we rejoice in our education?

Do we rejoice in our favorite sport?

Do we rejoice in our children or grandchildren?

Anything that is our source of rejoicing instead of the Lord is an idol.

In Philippians 4:4 it says, **“REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS.”**

Acts 7:42 “THIS AGREES WITH WHAT IS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK”

These words provide us with the correct measurement to evaluate all that we read or listen to. Does what we read agree with what is written in the Book? Does what we listen to agree with what is written in the Book?

In Acts 17:11 it says,

“THEY RECEIVED THE MESSAGE WITH GREAT EAGERNESS AND EXAMINED THE SCRIPTURES EVERY DAY TO SEE IF WHAT PAUL SAID WAS TRUE.”

We need to continuously look at our conduct and ask ourselves if how we are living agree with what is written in the Book.

If it does not go by the Book, it does not go! Whatever we do in life we can ask ourselves if it agrees with what is written in the Book.

Acts 7:43 “YOU ALSO TOOK ALONG THE TABERNACLE OF MOLOCH AND THE STAR OF THE GOD ROMPHA, THE IMAGES THAT YOU MADE TO WORSHIP THEM. I ALSO WILL REMOVE YOU BEYOND BABYLON.”

These words refer to Amos 5:26 and 27. In these verses, the prophet Amos challenged the hypocrisy and blindness of the religious leaders in his day. It is significant Stephen would quote this prophet because he was facing a similar type of religious people. Now consider this verse is comprised of two sentences.

1. “YOU ALSO TOOK ALONG THE TABERNACLE OF MOLOCH AND THE STAR OF THE GOD ROMPHA, THE IMAGES THAT YOU MADE TO WORSHIP THEM.”

This sentence describes the sins that the people committed against God.

Acts 7:43 “YOU ALSO TOOK ALONG THE TABERNACLE OF MOLOCH AND THE STAR OF THE GOD ROMPHA, THE IMAGES THAT YOU MADE TO WORSHIP THEM. I ALSO WILL REMOVE YOU BEYOND BABYLON.”

2. “I ALSO WILL REMOVE YOU BEYOND BABYLON.”

This sentence describes the consequences for sins the people did against God. These words show there are consequences for rebelling against God. From Acts 7:39 Stephen’s sermon focused on the willful rebellion of people against God. The sinful behavior of the people became even more defiant towards God. Rebellious humans are quick to blame God when horrible things happen, rather than realize they are suffering the consequences of their rebellion for rejecting Him.

People are quick blame God when horrible things happen.

People blame God to take the light of the gospel off of their own sinfulness.

People are quick to blame God by saying, “If God is a God of love why does He allow all the suffering in the world?”

Acts 7:43 “YOU ALSO TOOK ALONG THE TABERNACLE OF MOLOCH AND THE STAR OF THE GOD ROMPHA, THE IMAGES THAT YOU MADE TO WORSHIP THEM. I ALSO WILL REMOVE YOU BEYOND BABYLON.”

In 2 Kings 3:10 it says, “THEN THE KING OF ISRAEL SAID, “ALAS! FOR THE LORD HAS CALLED THESE THREE KINGS TO GIVE THEM INTO THE HANDS OF MOAB,” The king of Israel was doing evil in the sight of God, as 2 Kings 3:2 says, “AND HE DID EVIL IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD.” When difficulties arose, Israel's king Jehoram was quick to blame God. A heart not right with God blames God. In the time of Amos people suffered for rejecting God. Today, people suffer for rejecting God.

In Authentic Christianity, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said,
“ Stephen makes it abundantly clear that the state of the world is all due to the fact that men and women turn away from God and His holy laws. ”

Acts 7:47 “BUT IT WAS SOLOMON WHO BUILT A HOUSE FOR HIM.”

In verse 46 it describes David as desiring and praying about wanting to build a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. In 2 Samuel 7:3 the prophet Nathan even encouraged David to build a temple for God. Then we return to this verse which says, **“BUT IT WAS SOLOMON WHO BUILT A HOUSE FOR HIM.”**

David had a desire to do something for God.

David had a godly man saying that what he wanted to do was alright.

But it did not work out.

But it did not happen.

How do you feel when things do not work out when you were sure it was God's will?

Do you become abandoned?

Do you become discouraged?

Have you ever had a desire in your heart to do something for God and it has not worked out? Be encouraged, you are in good company with David!

Acts 7:47 “BUT IT WAS SOLOMON WHO BUILT A HOUSE FOR HIM.”

In 2 Samuel 7:18-29 David humbled himself and prayed. David's prayer provides great comfort for times when things do not workout in our life as we thought they were supposed to. God used Solomon to do what David had wanted to do. How do we feel when God chooses someone instead of us to do what we wanted to do?

Do we resent them or do we pray for them?

Acts 7:48 “HOWEVER, THE MOST HIGH DOES NOT DWELL IN HOUSES MADE BY HUMAN HANDS; AS THE PROPHET SAYS:”

Throughout chapter 7, Stephen is making numerous references to the Old Testament. Here Stephen is about to quote the prophet Isaiah.

In chapter 7 we learn that Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit and well grounded in the word of God. Stephen serves as a wonderful example for all of us. Now we come to the context of the verse we are studying.

In verse 46 it describes David asking to establish a dwelling place for the God of Jacob.

Then verse 47 says,

“BUT IT WAS SOLOMON WHO BUILT A HOUSE FOR HIM.”

Then we come to 48 and hear Stephen say,

“HOWEVER, THE MOST HIGH DOES NOT DWELL IN HOUSES MADE BY HUMAN HANDS.”

Acts 7:48 “HOWEVER, THE MOST HIGH DOES NOT DWELL IN HOUSES MADE BY HUMAN HANDS; AS THE PROPHET SAYS:”

What Stephen said almost appears to contradict the preceding verse until we read the final four words of verse 48, **“AS THE PROPHET SAYS.”** The main thought emphasized is Stephen, a man full of the Holy Spirit, a man well grounded in the Scriptures, taught what we read in verse 48 and he supported his teaching by Scripture. He quoted from Isaiah 66:1-2. When we read, or hear teaching, we need to see if the person teaching is supporting what they say by the Scriptures, or just quoting people.

We need to do what 1 Thessalonians 5:21 says,

“BUT EXAMINE EVERYTHING CAREFULLY; HOLD FAST TO THAT WHICH IS GOOD.”

**Acts 7:51 “YOU STUBBORN AND STIFF-NECKED PEOPLE,
STILL HEATHENISH AND UNCIRCUMCISED IN HEART AND EARS,
YOU ARE ALWAYS ACTIVELY RESISTING THE HOLY SPIRIT.
AS YOUR FOREFATHERS WERE, SO YOU ARE AND SO YOU DO!”**

In chapter 7 Stephen preached an overview of the Old Testament.

Now we shall examine four parts from this verse.

1. “YOU”

Stephen referred to people here that would lead up to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Verse 2 Abraham

Verse 8 Isaac

Verse 9 Joseph

Verse 12 Jacob

Verse 20 Moses

Verse 40 Aaron

Verse 45 Joshua

Verse 45 David

Verse 47 Solomon

Verse 48 the prophet Isaiah.

**Acts 7:51 “YOU STUBBORN AND STIFF-NECKED PEOPLE,
STILL HEATHENISH AND UNCIRCUMCISED IN HEART AND EARS,
YOU ARE ALWAYS ACTIVELY RESISTING THE HOLY SPIRIT.
AS YOUR FOREFATHERS WERE, SO YOU ARE AND SO YOU DO!”**

Up until now, Stephen spoke about other people and his audience was listening to him. Now his preaching turns from them, to “YOU.”

The Amplified Bible quotes Stephen saying “YOU” seven times and “YOUR” two times in verses 51 to 53. Now Stephen judges his judges! As long as the sermon was about other people, the audience was not opposed.

As they heard the sermon was about them it did not take long to oppose.

As the sermon turned to their sin, they turned on the preacher.

As the attention turned to the listeners, they turned on Stephen.

Do the sermons we hear cause reactions in us? If they do not, we are hearing the wrong sermons. We need to listen to that which causes a reaction or action. Wrong reactions cause wrong actions.

Right reactions cause right actions!

**Acts 7:51 “YOU STUBBORN AND STIFF-NECKED PEOPLE,
STILL HEATHENISH AND UNCIRCUMCISED IN HEART AND EARS,
YOU ARE ALWAYS ACTIVELY RESISTING THE HOLY SPIRIT.
AS YOUR FOREFATHERS WERE, SO YOU ARE AND SO YOU DO!”**

2. “STUBBORN AND STIFF-NECKED PEOPLE,”

Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit spoke about these men to their face rather than speaking about them behind their backs. Let us ask ourselves this question.

What we say about people, would we say it to their faces?

If we would not say it to their faces then we should not say it behind their backs. Stephen told them what they were even though it is highly unlikely they thought of themselves as Stephen described.

**Acts 7:51 “YOU STUBBORN AND STIFF-NECKED PEOPLE,
STILL HEATHENISH AND UNCIRCUMCISED IN HEART AND EARS,
YOU ARE ALWAYS ACTIVELY RESISTING THE HOLY SPIRIT.
AS YOUR FOREFATHERS WERE, SO YOU ARE AND SO YOU DO!”**

3. “ALWAYS ACTIVELY RESISTING THE HOLY SPIRIT.”

We begin with the word “ALWAYS” and see it means “ALWAYS.” It means exactly what it says. The words “HOLY SPIRIT” are in this verse and in verse 55, “FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.” These two verses describe two types of people, those who resisted the Holy Spirit were not saved, and Stephen, who was saved. Those who are not saved, those who are not born-again, are “ALWAYS RESISTING THE HOLY SPIRIT.” When we read these words, they might almost sound too severe. After all, these were religious people Stephen was addressing. They were not drug addicts or something even more sordid. It does not matter if people are religious, educated, rich or poor. If a person is not submitted to the Lord Jesus Christ then they are not submitted to the Lordship of Jesus Christ! We need to honestly ask, is there any part of my life where I am “RESISTING THE HOLY SPIRIT?”

When the Word of God is not obeyed, the Holy Spirit is resisted.

**Acts 7:51 “YOU STUBBORN AND STIFF-NECKED PEOPLE,
STILL HEATHENISH AND UNCIRCUMCISED IN HEART AND EARS,
YOU ARE ALWAYS ACTIVELY RESISTING THE HOLY SPIRIT.
AS YOUR FOREFATHERS WERE, SO YOU ARE AND SO YOU DO!”**

4. “SO YOU ARE AND SO YOU DO!”

The kind of people they were was seen in how they acted. The actions a person does shows what kind of person he or she is.

In Matthew 7:17 Jesus said,

**“EVEN SO, EVERY GOOD TREE BEARS GOOD FRUIT; BUT THE BAD TREE BEARS
BAD FRUIT.”**

**Acts 7:54 “THEY WERE CUT TO THE QUICK,
AND THEY BEGAN GNASHING THEIR TEETH AT THEM.”**

These words describe the response of religious leaders when they were being corrected by Stephen.

In the J. B. Philips translation it says, “**THEY GROUND THEIR TEETH AT HIM IN RAGE.**” As we read through Acts 7 we have no hint, no indication that these people were consumed with such violent anger.

In fact, in Acts 6:15 it says, “**ALL WHO WERE SITTING IN THE COUNCIL.**”

The Council members were sitting. Their body language did not communicate any form of anger. They would have looked quite professional, businesslike, and well dressed.

May we realize that at the end of Acts 6 is a description of Stephen’s face. Then near the end of Acts 7 is a description of Councils’ faces.

Let us compare these two examples:

1. Stephen’s face in Acts 6:15, “**HIS FACE LIKE THE FACE OF AN ANGEL.**”
2. The Councils’ faces in Acts 7:54, “**GNASHING THEIR TEETH AT THEM.**”

**Acts 7:54 “THEY WERE CUT TO THE QUICK,
AND THEY BEGAN GNASHING THEIR TEETH AT THEM.”**

People said wrong things about Stephen but his face was right.

Stephen said right things about people but their faces were wrong. Stephen's countenance was right because his life was right.

People's countenances were wrong because their lives were wrong.

When they heard what Stephen said about them, what was in their hearts quickly manifested.

These people were not right with God and when they were corrected, what was wrong in their hearts manifested.

Their very response proved their guilt.

In The Respectful Leader, Dr. Costa S. Deir said,

“Rebellious leaders are easily incensed and are explosive to deal with. ”

**Acts 7:55 “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.”**

For our study of this magnificent verse, consider the following two parts.

1. “BUT STEPHEN, FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT,”

This verse begins by saying Stephen as a man “FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.”

What a remarkable testimony. Are we “FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?”

We know very little about Stephen, except he waited on tables in chapter 6.

We might think his life was very ordinary.

We do not know if he was rich.

We do not know if he was educated.

We do not know if he lived in an expensive home.

What we do know is he was “FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.”

Do we share this same testimony as Stephen had?

**Acts 7:55 “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.”**

Whether we are rich, educated, or live in an expensive home does not matter if we are not **“FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.”**

How do we know Stephen was **“FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT?”**

When we read Acts 7, we find Stephen is speaking in a way that constantly points to Jesus Christ. His entire teaching is focused on Jesus Christ.

When a person is **“FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT”** it will be evident by their words continually focused on Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit always exalts Jesus Christ. In verse 55, Stephen was having a vision of heaven. In the vision, Jesus was exalted. If someone or something else is exalted rather than Jesus Christ then know with certainty that it is not of the Holy Spirit.

**Acts 7:55 “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.”**

2. “LOOKED UP TO HEAVEN”

In verse 54 it describes the audience Stephen was speaking to as **“THEY WERE FURIOUS AND GNASHED THEIR TEETH AT HIM.”** In a very difficult time Stephen looked up rather than looked down.

If he had been looking down it would convey a hopeless or discouraged posture. No doubt Stephen saw how furious the people were because of what he was saying.

Yet here it says, **“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.”**

He was not focused on people but on the Lord Jesus.

His eyes were not on the people but on the person Jesus Christ.

He was not preoccupied with them but occupied with Him!

Where are we looking? Are we looking up or down?

Where is our attention? Is it on people and the evil they do or is our focus on Jesus? Is our focus on how bad people are or on how good Jesus is?

Acts 7:56 “AND HE SAID, “BEHOLD, I SEE THE HEAVENS OPENED UP AND THE SON OF MAN STANDING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD.”

In verse 54 it describes people being full of hatred and furious with Stephen. Then in this verse, we read what Stephen was speaking about. He was not speaking about evil people hating him, nor was he speaking about the people who lied about him in Acts 6:11-14.

Stephen was speaking about Jesus.

What do we speak about when we experience people hating us?

What do we speak about when we experience people lying about us?

The temptation is of course to speak about the people and how horrible they are. But with the Lord's help, we can talk about how magnificent Jesus is!

When our thoughts are on how bad people are, our thoughts are not on how good Jesus is!

Stephen was speaking about Jesus and there was excitement in his voice.

Stephen was excited about Jesus! What do we get excited about?

**Acts 7:56 “AND HE SAID, “BEHOLD, I SEE THE HEAVENS OPENED UP
AND THE SON OF MAN STANDING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD.”**

Now please consider this verse in terms of spiritual experiences.

In verse 55, the Lord enabled Stephen to see a vision of heaven and the ascended Christ. Now in this verse he speaks about his experience.

It is important to note that throughout chapter 7 Stephen speaks about the word of God. Then he also mentions a vision God gave him.

He did not just speak about the word of God.

He did not just speak about supernatural experiences of God.

He spoke of the word of God and supernatural experiences of God.

We are to follow this example that Stephen gives us.

We are to speak about the word of God and also speak about the supernatural experiences of God.

Acts 7:56 “AND HE SAID, “BEHOLD, I SEE THE HEAVENS OPENED UP AND THE SON OF MAN STANDING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD.”

Has the Lord ever given you a vision of heaven or some other spiritual experience? Have you told other people about the experience you had? In the case of Stephen, he was telling non-Christians his experience.

Have you ever told non-Christians spiritual experiences God has given you? If you have not, why not?

Are you afraid they might think you are some sort of religious fanatic?

Acts 7:58 “...THEY HAD DRIVEN HIM OUT OF THE CITY, THEY BEGAN STONING HIM, AND THE WITNESSES LAID ASIDE THEIR ROBES AT THE FEET OF A YOUNG MAN NAMED SAUL.”

From this verse we can picture a violent angry mob scene venting their intense hatred for what Stephen was saying about the Lord Jesus.

They hated not only what he was talking about, but also who he was talking about. Now we shall study the following two parts of this verse.

1. “...THEY HAD DRIVEN HIM OUT”

In the first two parts of this verse, two words are repeated. The words are “THEY” and “HIM.” As we continue on reading on to verse 60, we see “THEY” murdered “HIM.” Stephen was the first Christian martyr.

“THEY” refers to religious leaders.

“THEY” were murderers and “HIM” was a martyr.

There are murderers and there are martyrs.

Those of false religions murder.

Those of the true religion are martyrs.

Acts 7:58 “...THEY HAD DRIVEN HIM OUT OF THE CITY, THEY BEGAN STONING HIM, AND THE WITNESSES LAID ASIDE THEIR ROBES AT THE FEET OF A YOUNG MAN NAMED SAUL.”

This pattern of false and true religion can be traced back to the time of Cain and Abel. In Genesis 4:8 it says, **“CAIN ATTACKED HIS BROTHER AND KILLED HIM.”** Earlier in Genesis 4:3 Cain had brought some of the fruit of the soil as an offering to the Lord, while Abel brought portions from some of the first born of his flock.

Why was the offering of Cain not right before God and Abel’s was?

Abel’s sacrifice was from the first-born of his flock and required the shedding of blood. Where as Cain’s sacrifice was the result of his own work and his own ability. In Ephesians 2:8-9 it says, **“FOR BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED THROUGH FAITH; AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES, IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD; NOT AS A RESULT OF WORKS, THAT NO ONE SHOULD BOAST.”**

In the Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on The Old Testament it reads,

“The first sacrifices were offered after the fall, and therefore presupposed the spiritual separation of man from God, and were designed to satisfy the need of the heart for fellowship with God. ”

Acts 7:58 “...THEY HAD DRIVEN HIM OUT OF THE CITY, THEY BEGAN STONING HIM, AND THE WITNESSES LAID ASIDE THEIR ROBES AT THE FEET OF A YOUNG MAN NAMED SAUL.”

2. “A YOUNG MAN NAMED SAUL.”

As Stephen was being killed, Saul is first mentioned in Scripture. This event brings to mind the words of Jesus in John 12:24,

“TRULY, TRULY, I SAY TO YOU, UNLESS A GRAIN OF WHEAT FALLS INTO THE EARTH AND DIES, IT REMAINS BY ITSELF ALONE; BUT IF IT DIES, IT BEARS MUCH FRUIT.”

The life of Stephen is like the seed of grain falling to the earth and dying and after God would save Saul in Acts 9:4-6. After God saved Saul, the gospel spread and much fruit was the result, and we are part of that fruit.

Acts 7:59 “LORD JESUS, RECEIVE MY SPIRIT.”

To study of this part of verse 59 consider the following two parts.

1. “LORD JESUS,”

Here we learn the correct way to address Jesus. He is not referred to as “my personal Savior.” This type of phrase, although correct, tends to dilute the awe we are to have for the **“LORD JESUS.”**

The word **“LORD”** carries with it many meanings that include King, Ruler, and Master. At the end of Stephen’s life Jesus was his King, Ruler, and Master.

At the end of our lives may we have the same attitude of heart that Stephen had.

Acts 7:59 “LORD JESUS, RECEIVE MY SPIRIT.”

2. “RECEIVE MY SPIRIT.”

From this verse, we learn what happened to Stephen after he passed away. When he died, his spirit went to be with the Lord. We see in verse 56 it says, **“THE SON OF MAN STANDING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD.”**

The Lord was standing to welcome Stephen into His presence. It is important to know Stephen said, **“RECEIVE MY SPIRIT”** after first saying **“LORD JESUS.”** Stephen was able to say these words because he was saved. If a person is not saved, any form of religious practice or platitudes is a false hope.

We learn from the words Stephen spoke that as soon as he died he would immediately enter into the presence of the Lord. In John 11:25 Jesus said, **“I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE; HE WHO BELIEVES IN ME SHALL LIVE EVEN IF HE DIES.”**

When a Christian dies, he or she goes to be with the Lord as soon as their earthly body dies.

Acts 7:60 “THEN HE FELL ON HIS KNEES AND CRIED OUT, “LORD, DO NOT HOLD THIS SIN AGAINST THEM! AND HAVING SAID THIS, HE FELL ASLEEP.”

The words in this verse record what Stephen spoke just prior to his death. His words reflect those spoken by Jesus on the cross in Luke 23:34,

“FATHER, FORGIVE THEM; FOR THEY DO NOT KNOW WHAT THEY ARE DOING.”

Before Stephen died, he forgave just as our Lord did on the cross. On the cross, there was no hint of sounding cross.

Now shall we divide this verse into four parts.

1. “THEN HE FELL ON HIS KNEES AND CRIED OUT,”

Stephen fell on his knees, and then he forgave. Falling on his knees shows humbling himself and praying. Falling on his knees before forgiving applies to us. When life experiences hurt us, we are to fall on our knees in prayer, and forgive those that hurt us. We cannot forgive someone if we do not first humble ourselves.

Pride and humility are not compatible. Pride and not forgiving go together. Humility and forgiveness go together.

Acts 7:60 “THEN HE FELL ON HIS KNEES AND CRIED OUT, “LORD, DO NOT HOLD THIS SIN AGAINST THEM! AND HAVING SAID THIS, HE FELL ASLEEP.”

2. “LORD,”

We see the word “LORD,” comes before the words “DO NOT HOLD THIS SIN AGAINST THEM.” The word “LORD” came first. In Stephen’s life, the Lord came first and therefore he was able to forgive people. Stephen responded to the Lord rather than to people. When people hurt us, do we respond in a hurtful way? Hurt people hurt people! When people hurt us, may we respond with the grace of God to the “LORD” rather than to the hurt.

May our response be to the “LORD” and not to the hurt.

Acts 7:60 “THEN HE FELL ON HIS KNEES AND CRIED OUT, “LORD, DO NOT HOLD THIS SIN AGAINST THEM! AND HAVING SAID THIS, HE FELL ASLEEP.”

3. “DO NOT HOLD THIS SIN AGAINST THEM!”

From verse 54, we learn these people were filled with rage. In verse 59 we see them stoning Stephen with intense hatred. Try to imagine the horrible pain Stephen was suffering as the stones ripped into his skin. He must have been in terrible physical pain that few of us could imagine. In this barbaric act against a righteous man, we hear what Stephen cried out as he was being stoned. His words were like our Lord's on the cross in Luke 23:34,

“FATHER, FORGIVE THEM; FOR THEY DO NOT KNOW WHAT THEY ARE DOING.”

When we are in the midst of suffering, what are our words like?

In Matthew 12:34 it says,

“FOR THE MOUTH SPEAKS OUT OF THAT WHICH FILLS THE HEART.”

Are our words like our Lord's? Suffering brings out of the mouth what is in our hearts.

Acts 7:60 “THEN HE FELL ON HIS KNEES AND CRIED OUT, “LORD, DO NOT HOLD THIS SIN AGAINST THEM! AND HAVING SAID THIS, HE FELL ASLEEP.”

Stephen spoke words of forgiveness and forgave people who hated him.

Stephen was in terrible pain but that did not stop him from forgiving.

Stephen prayed for the people who hated him.

Do we forgive people who have hurt us?

Do we pray for people who have hurt us?

Do we pray for people who hate us?

Do we forgive people who hate us?

Or do we make excuses like, “I don’t feel like forgiving them,” or “I cannot forgive them.” Has someone hurt you? Have you forgiven them?

Do you pray for them? Forgive them and then pray for them.

Acts 7:60 “THEN HE FELL ON HIS KNEES AND CRIED OUT, “LORD, DO NOT HOLD THIS SIN AGAINST THEM! AND HAVING SAID THIS, HE FELL ASLEEP.”

4. “AND HAVING SAID THIS, HE FELL ASLEEP.”

It is vital to study what kind of words people in Scripture spoke prior to them dying.

In Genesis 48:15 Jacob referred to the Lord shortly before he died.

In Genesis 50:25 Joseph referred to the Lord shortly before he died.

In Joshua 24:23 Joshua referred to the Lord shortly before he died.

In Judges 16:28 Samson referred to the Lord shortly before he died.

In 1 Kings 2:2-4 David referred to the Lord shortly before he died.

Now we return to our study of this verse and examine its context.

In verses 59 and 60 are the final words Stephen spoke shortly before he died.

In his speech, the Lord is mentioned twice.

In verse 59, **“LORD JESUS”**

In verse 60, **“LORD”**

Acts 7:60 “THEN HE FELL ON HIS KNEES AND CRIED OUT, “LORD, DO NOT HOLD THIS SIN AGAINST THEM! AND HAVING SAID THIS, HE FELL ASLEEP.”

May we realize that God is spoken about by Stephen no less than 20 times throughout chapter 7. God was spoken about a lot by Stephen, and when he neared death God was still mentioned in his speech.

Do we presently speak about the Lord in our daily conversations?

Is the Lord mentioned a little or a lot?

Will the Lord be referred to in our speech shortly before we die?

Another thought from the context is to realize Stephen is praying in verse 59 and 60 shortly before he died.

Is our desire to be praying shortly before we die?

As we follow the description of Stephen from chapters 6 and 7 we see he lived right, then died right. To die right we must live right.

Acts 8:1 “...ON THAT DAY A GREAT PERSECUTION BROKE OUT AGAINST THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM, AND ALL EXCEPT THE APOSTLES WERE SCATTERED THROUGHOUT JUDEA AND SAMARIA.”

With the Holy Spirit to help us receive light and life from this verse may we study it in the following two segments.

1. “...ON THAT DAY A GREAT PERSECUTION BROKE OUT AGAINST THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM,”

In this verse is the first time “**THE CHURCH**” is mentioned in Scripture.

As we pray and ponder these words, we realize the early church was despised and hated. There was severe opposition to the church.

What was happening to the church fulfilled what Jesus said in Matthew 5:11, “**BLESSED ARE YOU WHEN PEOPLE INSULT YOU, PERSECUTE YOU AND FALSELY SAY ALL KINDS OF EVIL AGAINST YOU BECAUSE OF ME.**”

Our thoughts then go to John 9:22,

“THE JEWS HAD DECIDED THAT ANYONE WHO ACKNOWLEDGED THAT JESUS WAS THE CHRIST WOULD BE PUT OUT OF THE SYNAGOGUE.”

Those who chose to follow Jesus were rejected by the society they lived in.

Acts 8:1 “...ON THAT DAY A GREAT PERSECUTION BROKE OUT AGAINST THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM, AND ALL EXCEPT THE APOSTLES WERE SCATTERED THROUGHOUT JUDEA AND SAMARIA.”

The early church was rejected rather than respected.

The early church was viewed as despicable rather than respectable.

The early church experienced something that many modern churches have no conception of. If we or our church have never suffered any persecution we need to seriously wonder what sort of gospel we are preaching.

In the book *Preaching and Preachers*, Dr. Martyn-Lloyd Jones said,

“ We Nonconformists, and Free – Churchmen are now becoming respectable. We are becoming more educated and cultured and taking our place in society with the learned and the ruling classes. As the building becomes more ornate the spirituality invariably declines. ”

Do we want to be comfortable or do we want the Comforter?

When attack comes, keep doing the will of the Father!

Acts 8:1 “...ON THAT DAY A GREAT PERSECUTION BROKE OUT AGAINST THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM, AND ALL EXCEPT THE APOSTLES WERE SCATTERED THROUGHOUT JUDEA AND SAMARIA.”

2. “AND ALL EXCEPT THE APOSTLES WERE SCATTERED THROUGHOUT JUDEA AND SAMARIA.”

From this verse, please focus on the word **“SCATTERED.”** In the Webster Encyclopedic Dictionary the word means, “*To disunite, to frustrate, disappoint, and overthrow.*” It seems that Satan used a great persecution to try to destroy the early church. But God used the scattering of the church as a means of spreading the gospel. The picture that comes to mind is Matthew 13:3 to 9 and the sower sowing seeds. We learn from verse 4 that all those who had suffered being scattered and dispersed kept right on proclaiming the gospel. Imagine the terrible emotional trauma some of the early believers experienced. Some would have been separated from relatives and loved ones. In verse 3 Saul dragged off men and women and had them put in prison. Some would have suffered the loss of material possessions. Such severe persecution would have inflicted heavy damage on any type of temporal security these people might have had.

**Acts 8:3 “BUT SAUL BEGAN RAVAGING THE CHURCH,
ENTERING HOUSE AFTER HOUSE; AND DRAGGING OFF MEN
AND WOMEN, HE WOULD PUT THEM IN PRISON.”**

As we read this verse, we again notice the words “**THE CHURCH**” are repeated from verse 1. Now consider what the church is and what the church is not. The words “**DRAGGING OFF MEN AND WOMEN**” give us a clear understanding of what the church is. The church was and is made of people. The church is not a building. Sometimes we say phrases like “going to church” or “What church do you belong to?” These phrases are incorrect because we as born-again believers are the church. Saul did not drag off a building and put it in prison. He put believers in prison. A church building is made by men but “**THE CHURCH**” is made by God.

**Acts 8:4 “THEREFORE, THOSE WHO HAD BEEN SCATTERED
WENT ABOUT PREACHING THE WORD.”**

As we study this verse, it is important to consider the context in which it is found. In verse 1 we learn,

“AND ON THAT DAY A GREAT PERSECUTION AROSE AGAINST THE CHURCH.”

The early believers were under a lot of persecution. Some were being put to death, while others were imprisoned for their faith in Jesus Christ. They were suffering terribly yet here we read, **“WENT ABOUT PREACHING THE WORD.”**

The believers described here demonstrated actions like Jesus in Mark 16:15, **“AND HE SAID TO THEM, “GO INTO ALL THE WORLD AND PREACH THE GOSPEL TO ALL CREATION.”**

These were the first recorded words of Jesus in the book of Mark after the crucifixion. Although Jesus had suffered terrible torture, betrayal and abandoned by His disciples only three days before, His conversation was not about what people did but rather it was about advancing the gospel.

**Acts 8:4 “THEREFORE, THOSE WHO HAD BEEN SCATTERED
WENT ABOUT PREACHING THE WORD.”**

The believers described here were suffering for being followers of Jesus. Yet it is remarkable that under such circumstances they were telling people about the Lord Jesus instead of telling people about their suffering.

Their focus was on the Lord Jesus and advancing the gospel and not on their own hardship. They were not telling everyone what people had done to them but rather what Jesus had done for them!

In the midst of severe circumstances, they were talking about Jesus.

In the midst of difficult circumstances, what do we talk about?

Do we resemble the early believers? They are the right example to follow.

Acts 8:5 “AND PHILIP WENT DOWN TO THE CITY OF SAMARIA AND BEGAN PROCLAIMING CHRIST TO THEM.”

From this verse, may we divide it into five parts and learn how each of these points applies to us.

The five points are as follows.

1. “AND PHILIP”

In Acts 6:5 Philip is first mentioned. He was one of the seven chosen to wait on tables. For some of us we might think waiting on tables is beneath us. If we think serving tables is beneath us then we think we are above it. Perhaps it seemed like a low position but after Philip did it, the Lord raised him up and worked through him powerfully to bring the gospel to Samaria. When Philip was chosen to wait on tables in Acts 6:5 the Bible does not mention Philip knew the Lord was going to use him to bring the gospel to the Samaritan city.

**Acts 8:5 “AND PHILIP WENT DOWN TO THE CITY OF SAMARIA
AND BEGAN PROCLAIMING CHRIST TO THEM.”**

Philip did not know how long he would be waiting on tables.

Philip was not whining when he was waiting on tables.

Do we whine when we are waiting? After serving tables, the Lord raised him up to serve Samaria with the gospel. From serving tables to the incredible revival that took place through Philip is part of Scripture and reflects what Proverbs 18:12 says,

“HUMILITY GOES BEFORE HONOR.”

Acts 8:5 “AND PHILIP WENT DOWN TO THE CITY OF SAMARIA AND BEGAN PROCLAIMING CHRIST TO THEM.”

2. “WENT DOWN”

These words tell us what Philip was doing. The words tell us Philip was going in a particular direction. There are three things to see in this chapter.

1. Verse 5 “WENT DOWN”

2. Verse 26 “GO SOUTH”

3. Verse 40 “AZOTUS”

What do these three points have in common? Each conveys traveling south or going down. To proclaim the gospel, Philip, and us need to travel south. Or to put it another way, we need to humble ourselves. Philip used to do the humble task of waiting on tables in Acts 6:2 to 5. Philip had a humble position in the natural and his actions illustrated still walking in humility.

Acts 8:5 “AND PHILIP WENT DOWN TO THE CITY OF SAMARIA AND BEGAN PROCLAIMING CHRIST TO THEM.”

3. “TO THE CITY OF SAMARIA”

These words tell us the first place Philip went to preach the gospel.

As we follow Philip through chapter 8 we find him in three places:

1. Verse 5 he was in Samaria.
2. Verse 26 he was on a desert road.
3. Verse 40 he was at Azotus.

In each of these three locations, Philip did the same thing. He preached the gospel of Jesus Christ. Wherever he was, he was ready and willing to preach the gospel. Philip serves as a fine example for us in our lives. Wherever we are, we are to be ready and willing to preach the gospel. With Philip, his circumstances changed but his desire and willingness to preach the gospel did not change.

Philip's time in Samaria stopped.

Philip's time on the desert road stopped.

Philip's time in Azotus stopped.

Acts 8:5 “AND PHILIP WENT DOWN TO THE CITY OF SAMARIA AND BEGAN PROCLAIMING CHRIST TO THEM.”

But this did not stop Philip from proclaiming Christ. Wherever we are now or in the future, we are never to stop proclaiming Christ! From verse 5 we learn where Philip went and we learn why he went. There are two things that Philip did that serve as a model for us to apply in our lives.

1. He went to a city.
2. He shared the gospel in that city.

When we travel, do we share the gospel? We might hear thoughts in our minds that whisper something like this, “We are not evangelists, so we do not have to share the gospel? After all, that is what the pastor gets paid to do?” But that type of thought is just an excuse. In Acts 13:5, Barnabas and Saul (Paul) did two things.

1. They went to a city.
2. They shared the gospel in that city.

These men were evangelists, but they did the work of evangelists.

When we go on a trip, we can share the gospel wherever we are.

Acts 8:5 “AND PHILIP WENT DOWN TO THE CITY OF SAMARIA AND BEGAN PROCLAIMING CHRIST TO THEM.”

4. “AND BEGAN”

Philip began proclaiming Christ, and as we read through this chapter to verse 40, he was still proclaiming Christ. He began and he finished. Do we finish what we begin? As born-again Christians, God permitted us to repent of our sins and we began to follow Jesus. As the years have passed, are we still following Him? In 1 Kings 20:11 it says, **“LET NOT HIM WHO GIRDS ON HIS ARMOR BOAST LIKE HIM WHO TAKES IT OFF.”**

Now consider what happened after Philip began.

Verse 6. Philip experienced revival.

Verse 7. Philip experienced casting out demons.

Verse 13. Philip experienced incredible miracles.

Verse 26. Philip experienced an angel speaking to him.

Philip experienced all these things yet the messenger did not change and the message did not change. Philip did not get sidetracked but stayed on track. Have we become sidetracked or are we still on track?

**Acts 8:5 “AND PHILIP WENT DOWN TO THE CITY OF SAMARIA
AND BEGAN PROCLAIMING CHRIST TO THEM.”**

5. “PROCLAIMING CHRIST TO THEM.”

Philip did not keep the good news to himself. Are you tempted to not keep bad news to yourself, and the good news to yourself? When Philip preached he did not quote famous theologians or scholars. He preached about Jesus Christ. When you listen to a sermon, are famous authors or pastors quoted more than the Bible?

Is Jesus mentioned lots or little in the sermons you hear?

In the book God's Medicine Bottle, Derek Prince said,

“I begin to fear when I hear preachers quoting too many worldly experts, especially if they are trying to authenticate the Bible.”

Acts 8:6 “THE CROWDS HEARD PHILIP AND SAW THE MIRACULOUS SIGNS HE DID.”

In this verse, we see two key elements, the proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. Now let us look at these two parts.

1. “THE CROWDS HEARD PHILIP”

This is the proclamation of the gospel. The crowds heard Philip.

In Acts 21:8 Philip is described as an evangelist. The word evangelist is used once in the book of Acts. Philip demonstrates the Biblical model or example of what an evangelist is.

**Acts 8:6 “THE CROWDS HEARD PHILIP
AND SAW THE MIRACULOUS SIGNS HE DID.”**

2. “AND SAW THE MIRACULOUS SIGNS HE DID.”

This is the demonstration of the gospel. The pattern outlined in this verse is mirrored in the ministry of Jesus.

In Matthew 4:23 Jesus modeled the pattern that Philip followed.

In Matthew chapters 5 to 7 Jesus is preaching.

In Matthew 8:1 to 3 Jesus heals a man.

In Mark 6:12 and 13 the twelve disciples followed the pattern Jesus gave. Philip followed the example of Jesus and serves as a clear Biblical model to apply in evangelism.

There is to be both proclamation of the gospel and demonstration of the gospel. As we read of miracles happening here we also realize some churches believe and teach that miracles were only for that time in church history. Such teaching is not Scriptural.

**Acts 8:6 “THE CROWDS HEARD PHILIP
AND SAW THE MIRACULOUS SIGNS HE DID.”**

May I share a personal testimony, I am very thankful to our Lord for keeping me from being under such teaching, because in 1987 He healed me from arthritis. If I had been in a church that taught miracles were only for that time period then I likely would still be suffering from arthritis and rationalizing it as my “cross.”

Concerning the pattern Philip followed, we can learn from the wisdom God gave Derek Prince in his book *They Shall Expel Demons*,

“ Suppose, however, that Philip had followed a different pattern of evangelism - one that is common in our day. Suppose he had preached the Gospel to the people in Samaria and then, without dealing with demons, had invited people to come forward, say to pray, sign a decision card or receive instruction from a counselor. What would have been the result?

They would have been saved, or born-again, but they might still have needed deliverance from the demons that were in them before they were Christians. ”

Acts 8:7 “FOR IN THE CASE OF MANY WHO HAD UNCLEAN SPIRITS, THEY WERE COMING OUT OF THEM SHOUTING IN A LOUD VOICE; AND MANY WHO WERE PARALYZED AND LAME WERE HEALED.”

For this study may we prayerfully consider the following two parts.

1. “FOR IN THE CASE OF MANY WHO HAD UNCLEAN SPIRITS,”

As we consider these words may we ask ourselves, who were these people who had unclean spirits? Were they Christians or not Christians?

To answer this question may we look at the context.

In verse 5, Philip was proclaiming Christ to them.

In verse 6, multitudes were giving heed to Philip’s preaching.

Multitudes heard Philip preaching the good news and many no doubt responded to his preaching because in verse 12 they were being baptized. Many became Christians as a result of hearing and responding to the Gospel. Now we come to this verse 7 and see that many people, new believers were being delivered from unclean spirits. From this part of Scripture, we need to see that new believers needed deliverance from evil spirits. Let us continue and focus more closely on these words.

Acts 8:7 “FOR IN THE CASE OF MANY WHO HAD UNCLEAN SPIRITS, THEY WERE COMING OUT OF THEM SHOUTING IN A LOUD VOICE; AND MANY WHO WERE PARALYZED AND LAME WERE HEALED.”

First, we learn that Scripture uses the word “**MANY**” and not a “few” or “none” had unclean spirits. These new believers needed deliverance and we are naïve to think that Christians never need deliverance from unclean spirits. We also see from the words “**HAD UNCLEAN SPIRITS**” that it does not say they were “possessed with unclean spirits.”

A Christian cannot be possessed by evil spirits because the word “possessed” means owning. A real Christian is a person who is owned by the Lord Jesus.

In 1 Corinthians 6:20 it says, “**FOR YOU HAVE BEEN BOUGHT WITH A PRICE: THEREFORE GLORIFY GOD IN YOUR BODY.**”

Then in Romans 14:8 it says, “**IF WE LIVE, WE LIVE FOR THE LORD; AND IF WE DIE, WE DIE FOR THE LORD. SO, WHETHER WE LIVE OR DIE, WE BELONG TO THE LORD.**”

These new believers in Samaria belonged to the Lord, yet they still had areas needing deliverance.

Acts 8:7 “FOR IN THE CASE OF MANY WHO HAD UNCLEAN SPIRITS, THEY WERE COMING OUT OF THEM SHOUTING IN A LOUD VOICE; AND MANY WHO WERE PARALYZED AND LAME WERE HEALED.”

If you possess something, it means you own it. As believers who are born-again, we are owned by Jesus Christ.

In the book Deliverance, Graham Dow said, *“ From my own experience I am quite certain a Christian can have an evil spirit. Perhaps the wrong use of the word “ possessed ” has been the trouble here. We know that although a Christian is united with Christ at the center of his being sin still remains in us. ”*

What are unclean spirits? To put it simply, unclean spirits, or demons are persons without bodies. They are personalities. They express themselves through physical bodies.

In Mark 9:17 it describes a boy who was possessed by a spirit that caused him to be mute.

Then in Mark 9:25 it says,

“AND WHEN JESUS SAW THAT A CROWD WAS RAPIDLY GATHERING, HE REBUKED THE UNCLEAN SPIRIT, SAYING TO IT, “YOU DEAF AND DUMB SPIRIT, I COMMAND YOU, COME OUT OF HIM AND DO NOT ENTER HIM AGAIN”

Acts 8:7 “FOR IN THE CASE OF MANY WHO HAD UNCLEAN SPIRITS, THEY WERE COMING OUT OF THEM SHOUTING IN A LOUD VOICE; AND MANY WHO WERE PARALYZED AND LAME WERE HEALED.”

From this example, we learn what the unclean spirit was by what it did to its victim. Often we can discern the name of a spirit by what it does through a human being. In 1987, I suffered severe pain in my upper spine. I had been to the hospital for help but the problem remained.

Several years prior, I had had an accident in High School, which precipitated the injury. As the years passed, I could almost hear a thought in my mind saying, “You are getting old, and you are getting arthritis.” The Lord gave me the first and last part of Philippians 4:8,

“FINALLY, BRETHREN, WHATEVER IS TRUE...LET YOUR MIND DWELL ON THESE THINGS.”

From this verse, the Lord was helping me understand that the thought was not true. Yes I was getting old, that part was true, but the second part “you are getting arthritis” was only a thought in my mind.

**Acts 8:7 “FOR IN THE CASE OF MANY WHO HAD UNCLEAN SPIRITS,
THEY WERE COMING OUT OF THEM SHOUTING IN A LOUD VOICE;
AND MANY WHO WERE PARALYZED AND LAME WERE HEALED.”**

I slowly started to believe the Lord could heal me. When I was prayed for, the people praying said the Holy Spirit gave them discernment in the spirit to see what looked like a shadow in the form of a talon latched onto my upper back. When the “talon” or to use KJV terminology “a spirit of infirmity” was commanded to go in the name of Jesus, I was healed. The symptoms of the pain returned for about two weeks after, but each time they came the Lord gave me faith to rebuke them in the name of Jesus and they left. I have never suffered from “arthritis” since. In Luke 13:11 it says,

**“AND, BEHOLD, THERE WAS A WOMAN WHICH HAD A SPIRIT OF INFIRMITY
EIGHTEEN YEARS, AND WAS BOWED TOGETHER, AND COULD IN NO WISE LIFT
UP HERSELF.”**

Praise the Lord for He sets captives free!

Acts 8:7 “FOR IN THE CASE OF MANY WHO HAD UNCLEAN SPIRITS, THEY WERE COMING OUT OF THEM SHOUTING IN A LOUD VOICE; AND MANY WHO WERE PARALYZED AND LAME WERE HEALED.”

2. “THEY WERE COMING OUT OF THEM SHOUTING IN A LOUD VOICE;”

We learn from these words it was the demons who were shouting.

The NIV says, **“WITH SHRIEKS, EVIL SPIRITS CAME OUT.”** In verse 6 Philip was speaking, but he was not shouting. Now turn to the reference of demons in Mark 5:7, **“AND CRYING OUT WITH A LOUD VOICE.”**

Jesus was asking them their name and they were responding with a loud voice. Another example is in Acts 16:17 where the girl with a spirit of divination was shouting. Then in Acts 16:18 Paul was troubled and spoke, but he did not shout. In these cases, the demons were shouting, but Jesus, Philip and Paul were not shouting. When casting out demons, shouting is not required. Demons are not deaf! Authority over demons is not in us shouting at them. Authority over demons is in the name of Jesus.

In verse 6 multitudes came to hear the preaching of the gospel.

**Acts 8:7 “FOR IN THE CASE OF MANY WHO HAD UNCLEAN SPIRITS,
THEY WERE COMING OUT OF THEM SHOUTING IN A LOUD VOICE;
AND MANY WHO WERE PARALYZED AND LAME WERE HEALED.”**

Try to imagine this scene. The crowd was not sitting in padded pews listening to a flowery, ear tickling sermon. Demons were screaming and shouting as they were coming out of the people. There was major disruption happening. This was an evangelistic meeting. Does this New Testament service look like what you think is a normal church service?

If some of us saw this happening in a meeting, the ushers might come and escort the people with demons out of the church. But here the demons were removed rather than the people with the demons being removed.

Acts 8:8 “SO THERE WAS GREAT JOY IN THAT CITY.”

In the Samaritan city, something incredible was happening in verses 5 to verse 7. In the Samaritan city, great crowds heeded Philip and they saw attesting miracles. In the Samaritan city, many were coming to Jesus Christ in a dramatic revival. In the Samaritan city, demons were cast out and the paralyzed and lame healed. In the Samaritan city, there was great rejoicing because of what God was doing. If you hear of such occurrences happening today, what is your response? Do you rejoice or ridicule? Are you filled with joy or jealousy? We shall continue by focusing on the word **“JOY.”** In Galatians 5:22 **“JOY”** is recorded as one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. From the context of this verse, we see in verses 6 and 7 that the gifts of the Holy Spirit from 1 Corinthians 12:9 and 10 were evident. Where the gifts of the Holy Spirit are, the fruit of the Holy Spirit will be also. Both the gifts and the fruit of the Holy Spirit are for today.

Acts 8:9 “NOW THERE WAS A CERTAIN MAN NAMED SIMON,”

Beginning in verse 9 and going to verse 24 a man named Simon is introduced. This dubious fellow appears right in the midst of an incredible move of God.

In total 16 verses relate to this man Simon.

Then verses 25 to 40 refer to the Ethiopian eunuch.

In total 16 verses relate to this Ethiopian eunuch.

These two men, Simon and the Ethiopian eunuch, are both referred to equally in 16 verses of Scripture, but they are vastly different from each other. The following are eight characteristics about Simon and eight characteristics about the Ethiopian eunuch. In total 16 points:

Acts 8:9 “NOW THERE WAS A CERTAIN MAN NAMED SIMON,”

1. Simon claimed to be someone great. Verse 9,
“CLAIMING TO BE SOMEONE GREAT.”
2. The Ethiopian eunuch was someone great. Verse 27,
“A COURT OFFICIAL OF CANDACE.”
3. Simon wanted authority. Verse 19,
GIVE THIS AUTHORITY TO ME.”
4. The Ethiopian eunuch had authority. Verse 27,
“WAS IN CHARGE OF ALL HER TREASURE.”
5. Simon wanted power but not know the One with the power. Verse 19,
“GIVE THIS AUTHORITY TO ME.”
6. The Ethiopian eunuch wanted to know the One with the power. Verse 34,
“WHOM DOES THE PROPHET SAY THIS?”
7. Simon was rude. Verse 19,
“GIVE THIS AUTHORITY TO ME.”
8. The Ethiopian eunuch was polite. Verse 34,
“PLEASE TELL ME.”

Acts 8:9 “NOW THERE WAS A CERTAIN MAN NAMED SIMON,”

9. Simon did not respect spiritual authority. Verse 18,

“HE OFFERED THEM MONEY.”

10. The Ethiopian eunuch respected spiritual authority. Verse 31,

“INVITED PHILIP TO COME UP AND SIT WITH HIM.”

11. Simon was unfaithful with money. Verse 20,

“MAY YOUR SILVER PERISH WITH YOU.”

12. The Ethiopian eunuch was faithful with money. Verse 27,

“WAS IN CHARGE OF ALL HER TREASURE.”

13. Simon was not teachable. Verse 24,

“BUT SIMON ANSWERED AND SAID,”

14. The Ethiopian eunuch was teachable. Verse 31,

“HOW COULD I, UNLESS SOMEONE GUIDES ME.”

15. Simon did not repent. Verse 24,

“PRAY TO THE LORD FOR ME YOURSELVES.”

16. The Ethiopian eunuch repented. Verse 37,

“I BELIEVE THAT JESUS CHRIST IS THE SON OF GOD.”

Which of these two people, Simon, or the Ethiopian eunuch do we most resemble?

**Acts 8:9 “WHO FORMERLY WAS PRACTICING MAGIC IN THE CITY,
AND ASTONISHING THE PEOPLE OF SAMARIA?
CLAIMING TO BE SOMEONE GREAT;”**

From this part of verse 9 we can learn from the following two parts.

1. “WAS PRACTICING MAGIC IN THE CITY,”

From this verse, we learn the practice of magic was prevalent in Samaria. We also learn from verse 7 there was no shortage of evil spirits in that city. This observation teaches us that where magic is practiced, demons are present!

2. “CLAIMING TO BE SOMEONE GREAT;”

In this part of verse 9, the word **“CLAIMING”** is found. The word **“CLAIMING”** refers to what Simon was doing and it rhymes with **“PROCLAIMING”** in verse 5, which refers to what Philip was doing. Philip was preaching salvation through Jesus Christ.

**Acts 8:9 “WHO FORMERLY WAS PRACTICING MAGIC IN THE CITY,
AND ASTONISHING THE PEOPLE OF SAMARIA?
CLAIMING TO BE SOMEONE GREAT;”**

Now consider four differences between Philip and Simon.

1. Philip was **“PROCLAIMING”** someone great.

Simon was **“CLAIMING”** to be someone great.

2. Philip was Christ centered.

Simon was self-centered.

3. Philip was exalting the Lord.

Simon was exalting himself.

4. Philip was talking about the Lord.

Simon was talking about himself.

Now that we have looked at both Philip and Simon let us consider which of these men we most resemble.

Are we **“CLAIMING”** to be someone great or **“PROCLAIMING”** someone great?

Are we self-centered or Christ-centered?

Are we exalting ourselves or exalting the Lord?

Are we talking about ourselves or talking about the Lord?

**Acts 8:10 “AND THEY ALL, FROM SMALLEST TO GREATEST,
WERE GIVING ATTENTION TO HIM, SAYING,
“THIS MAN IS WHAT IS CALLED THE GREAT POWER OF GOD.”**

In Samaria, Simon was well known. From the smallest to the greatest he was known. All the people were giving him their attention and he was taking it. If ever there was a famous person it was Simon in Samaria. Simon boasted that he was great and people believed him. It is amazing how easily lies are believed and not the truth!

Then in verse 13, this famous person believed and was baptized.

Notice two ideas why some might like a “famous” person getting saved.

1. We might like a famous person getting saved to add credibility to Christianity.
2. We might like to boast about a famous person becoming a Christian so we do not feel so inferior about being a Christian.

**Acts 8:10 “AND THEY ALL, FROM SMALLEST TO GREATEST,
WERE GIVING ATTENTION TO HIM, SAYING,
“THIS MAN IS WHAT IS CALLED THE GREAT POWER OF GOD.”**

But as we read from here to verse 24, we see that although Simon had been famous in the eyes of man he was not suitable to be used by God.

In fact, there were serious issues in his heart needing to be repented of.

In 1 Corinthians 1:27,

**“BUT GOD HAS CHOSEN THE FOOLISH THINGS OF THE WORLD TO SHAME THE
WISE, AND GOD HAS CHOSEN THE WEAK THINGS OF THE WORLD TO SHAME
THE THINGS THAT ARE STRONG.”**

Simon was involved in magic. The practice of magic is rooted in rebellion.

Simon's title reflects what the serpent said in Genesis 3:5,

“YOU WILL BE LIKE GOD.”

In Possess the Land, Carroll Thompson said,

“That enticement led to the fall of man. Since that time, man has not ceased his quest for power to manipulate and control. Magic establishes the will of the person as supreme. ”

Acts 8:11 “AND THEY WERE GIVING HIM ATTENTION BECAUSE HE HAD FOR A LONG TIME ASTONISHED THEM WITH HIS MAGIC ARTS.”

Simon was only interested in the people because of what they gave him.

Simon wanted attention and that is what the people gave him.

Simon practiced magic not for the people but for himself.

Simon was famous because of his magic practices.

Simon used magic and he used people.

Do we use things or do we use people? In verse 9, Simon claimed to be someone great. Magic and self-exaltation go together. Pride is present wherever magic is present. Humility and magic cannot coexist! It is remarkable to learn Simon was involved in magic.

Acts 8:11 “AND THEY WERE GIVING HIM ATTENTION BECAUSE HE HAD FOR A LONG TIME ASTONISHED THEM WITH HIS MAGIC ARTS.”

From the Bible we learn that magic arts date back about 1,500 years before the New Testament era to the magicians of Egypt. In Exodus 7:11 and 22; and in Exodus 8:7 and 18 are the magicians in Egypt opposing Moses.

The Lord used signs and wonders in Egypt to deliver people from the bondage and slavery of Pharaoh. The Lord used signs and wonders accompanying the preaching of the gospel in the book of Acts to deliver people from Satan. Today the Lord still uses signs and wonders accompanying the preaching of the gospel to deliver people from the kingdom of darkness.

Acts 8:12 “...THEY WERE BEING BAPTIZED, MEN AND WOMEN ALIKE.”

From these words we learn who was being baptized. It was adults, men and women who were being baptized. It was not infants who were being baptized. Infant baptism is not supported in Scripture. The reason they were being baptized is because they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and Jesus Christ.

The Biblical pattern for baptism is as follows:

1. Believe the good news.
2. Respond to the good news.
3. Be water baptized.

**Acts 8:13 “HE CONTINUED ON WITH PHILIP; AND AS HE OBSERVED SIGNS
AN GREAT MIRACLES TAKING PLACE, HE WAS CONSTANTLY AMAZED.”**

From this verse we learn this man Simon was more interested in what the Lord was doing through Philip than he was interested in the Lord!

In this verse, there is no mention of Simon praying and asking the Lord if He wanted him to continue with Philip. There is no mention of Simon asking Philip for permission to accompany him. He went not because the Lord was leading him to do so, or because Philip had given him permission to come, but rather because of his fascination with experiences of seeing signs and miracles.

Simon was following the experiences rather than following Jesus. Signs and wonders were accompanying the preaching of the gospel.

The Lord did miracles then, and He still does. Some, to their own detriment find experiences more important than following Jesus.

**Acts 8:14 “WHEN THE APOSTLES IN JERUSALEM HEARD THAT SAMARIA
HAD ACCEPTED THE WORD OF GOD,
THEY SENT PETER AND JOHN TO THEM.”**

From this verse may we give our attention to the beginning and ending words.

1. The apostles heard. **“WHEN THE APOSTLES IN JERUSALEM HEARD”**

2. The apostles were sent. **“THEY SENT PETER AND JOHN TO THEM.”**

The apostles heard and then their actions followed. Actions follow what people listen to. What we listen to influences the actions we make. In the apostles' case, they listened to words that related to the gospel advancing. Then their actions related to the gospel advancing. We need to heed what we listen to and our actions need to relate to helping advance the gospel. Now we consider the words, **“ACCEPTED THE WORD OF GOD.”**

The new believers in Samaria accepted the word of God. New Christians need to readily accept the word of God. As we go on as Christians, do we continue to accept the word of God?

**Acts 8:14 “WHEN THE APOSTLES IN JERUSALEM HEARD THAT SAMARIA
HAD ACCEPTED THE WORD OF GOD,
THEY SENT PETER AND JOHN TO THEM.”**

As we look at these words let us ask ourselves five vital questions.

1. Does my denominational belief block my mind from accepting parts of the word of God?
2. Does hearing teaching taken out of context harden my heart to accepting the word of God?
3. Does wrong teaching remind me of the teacher rather than accepting the word of God?
4. Does unbalanced teaching of Scripture turn me off from accepting parts of the word of God?
5. Does my experience or lack of experience influence my thinking or does the word of God? We need ask the Lord to cleanse our minds from the defilement that causes us to become cynical and harden out hearts from accepting the word of God.

In 1 Corinthians 8:2 it says, **“IF ANYONE SUPPOSES THAT HE KNOWS
ANYTHING, HE HAS NOT YET KNOWN AS HE OUGHT TO KNOW.”**

**Acts 8:15 “WHO CAME DOWN AND PRAYED FOR THEM,
“THAT THEY MIGHT RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT.”**

This verse follows and is a continuation of what began in the previous verse. Let us now consider these words in three parts.

1. “WHO CAME DOWN”

These words speak of Peter and John coming from Jerusalem. When we look at a map, we find that Samaria is north from Jerusalem. It would almost seem more correct to say, “They went up and prayed for them.” Although they went up to Samaria, they **“CAME DOWN.”** In verse 17, the new believers were receiving the Holy Spirit. The new believers benefited because Peter and John **“CAME DOWN.”** Remember it was Peter and John who **“CAME DOWN.”**

**Acts 8:15 “WHO CAME DOWN AND PRAYED FOR THEM,
“THAT THEY MIGHT RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT.”**

For a moment, turn back to Luke 9:53 and 54.

In these verses, a Samaritan village did not receive Jesus and as a result, James and John wanted to retaliate in a vindictive manner and punish them. It would seem they had anger towards those who rejected Jesus.

Now fast forward to the verse and see it is John who **“CAME DOWN”** to pray for the new Samaritan believers. John once wanted to punish, now he wanted to pray. He **“CAME DOWN.”** The words can communicate humbling oneself. Do we sometimes feel anger towards people who reject Jesus? When we humble ourselves, other people benefit.

As Christians the choice we all need to make is to continually humble ourselves to obey the Lord.

**Acts 8:15 “WHO CAME DOWN AND PRAYED FOR THEM,
“THAT THEY MIGHT RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT.”**

2. “AND PRAYED FOR THEM,”

In this part of the verse the word “**THEM**” refers to the new converts in the city of Samaria. Peter and John prayed for new converts. These new converts, if they were like any other new converts they would still have a lot of areas of carnality and worldliness in them needing to be dealt with. Yet Peter and John still prayed for them. Do we pray for new converts?

Do we pray for carnal Christians or do we criticize them? Again, we consider that Peter and John were not praying for themselves but for other people. Do we only pray for ourselves or do we pray for other people? When we pray for other people it shows we first humble ourselves and think about others and not just ourselves.

**Acts 8:15 “WHO CAME DOWN AND PRAYED FOR THEM,
“THAT THEY MIGHT RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT.”**

3. “THAT THEY MIGHT RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT.”

To begin, let us ask, were these people new believers? The answer is yes they were and they had been baptized. Yet here the apostles had sent Peter and John to pray for them. Some might think, did they not receive the Holy Spirit when they believed the gospel? What these words show is very clear. Yes, these people were already believers. Yes, they were saved by grace through faith, and now they were going to be prayed for to receive the Holy Spirit by faith.

Verse 14, **“SAMARIA HAD RECEIVED THE WORD OF GOD.”**

Verse 15, **“THAT THEY MIGHT RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT.”**

In this verse, receiving the Holy Spirit is something different from conversion. Receiving the Holy Spirit came after conversion.

The words **“RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT”** refer to the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The people did not have to receive the Holy Spirit so they could be saved, but rather they could receive the Holy Spirit because they were saved.

**Acts 8:15 “WHO CAME DOWN AND PRAYED FOR THEM,
“THAT THEY MIGHT RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT.”**

May we continue to focus on the word “RECEIVE.” The word means to be given, accept, obtained. Here it means something is given without paying for it. When we “RECEIVE” something, it means someone else has paid for it for us. In John 14:17 Jesus spoke about the Holy Spirit, “THAT IS THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH, WHOM THE WORLD CANNOT RECEIVE, BECAUSE IT DOES NOT BEHOLD HIM OR KNOW HIM, BUT YOU KNOW HIM BECAUSE HE ABIDES WITH YOU, AND WILL BE IN YOU.”

In Acts 2:38 it says, “REPENT, AND LET EACH OF YOU BE BAPTIZED IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST FOR THE FORGIVENESS OF YOUR SINS; AND YOU SHALL RECEIVE THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.”

In this verse, the Holy Spirit is referred to as a gift. In Acts 8:20 the word “GIFT” of God is mentioned again. The gift of the Holy Spirit was and still is to be received. The Samaritans believers were not a super spiritual exclusive group. They were new believers whom the Lord was empowering to live and witness for Him.

**Acts 8:16 “FOR HE HAD NOT YET FALLEN ON ANY OF THEM;
THEY HAD SIMPLY BEEN BAPTIZED IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS.”**

This part of verse 16 repeats and reinforces the thought expressed in the previous verse. The word “HE” clearly refers to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is referred to as “HE” rather than a “force” or an “it.”

Now consider these tenses: “HAD NOT YET” refers to the future.

“THEY HAD” refers to the past.

The new converts were saved.

The new converts were baptized in water.

The new converts would get baptized with the Holy Spirit.

Next, consider the words “LORD JESUS.” The word “LORD” speaks of an owner, ruler, and master. Do we refer to Jesus as our “LORD?”

Do we think of Jesus as our owner, our ruler, our master? Or is Jesus spoken of as being our “personal Savior.” When we think of Jesus as only our “personal Savior” it can also mean we are still in charge to do as we please rather than living to please Him.

Is Jesus your Lord? How we answer that question influences every area of our lives and our eternal destiny.

**Acts 8:17 “THEN THEY BEGAN LAYING THEIR HANDS ON THEM,
AND THEY WERE RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT.”**

This verse is composed of two parts and we see the word “THEY” is in both.

1. “THEY BEGAN LAYING THEIR HANDS ON THEM,”

2. “THEY WERE RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT.”

In the first part, “THEY” refers to what Peter and John were doing.

In the second part, “THEY” refers to what the new converts were doing.

The receiving of the Holy Spirit took place after the people had been converted and baptized. Now in this verse Peter and John were praying for them. This shows that previously they did not have the Holy Spirit.

Now consider the context, which shows that receiving the Holy Spirit came after conversion.

**Acts 8:17 “THEN THEY BEGAN LAYING THEIR HANDS ON THEM,
AND THEY WERE RECEIVING THE HOLY SPIRIT.”**

1. Verse 14 is proof that time passed from when they were converted to when they received the Holy Spirit because the apostles in Jerusalem heard Samaria had received the word of God and then Peter and John were sent to Samaria.
2. Verse 15 describes Peter and John arriving from Jerusalem. They came to pray for the new believers. We do not know the period of time from when these people were converted, to when they were prayed for to receive the Holy Spirit.
3. Verse 16 makes it clear and simple that the Holy Spirit had not yet come. From this Scripture, receiving the Holy Spirit came after conversion and water baptism.

Acts 8:18 “NOW WHEN SIMON SAW THAT THE SPIRIT WAS BESTOWED THROUGH THE LAYING ON OF THE APOSTLES’ HANDS, HE OFFERED THEM MONEY.”

From this verse, we learn Simon saw something that was evidence that the Samaritan believers had received the Holy Spirit. He saw supernatural evidence. The evidence was the same evidence seen in Acts 2:4,

“AND THEY WERE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT AND BEGAN TO SPEAK WITH OTHER TONGUES, AS THE SPIRIT WAS GIVING THEM UTTERANCE.”

The external evidence of the baptism in the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues. In his Commentary on Acts, F. F. Bruce said,

“The context leaves us in no doubt that their reception of the Holy Spirit was attended by external manifestations such as had marked His descent on the earliest disciples at Pentecost. ”

Acts 8:19 “GIVE THIS AUTHORITY TO ME AS WELL,”

From verse 9, a person named Simon comes on the scene. According to verse 13, he believed and was baptized. We understand that he was a new believer and in this verse he wanted spiritual authority.

The way he spoke these words communicates a rather strong, pushy, demanding personality. Simon demonstrated very strong leadership qualities. According to verse 10, He had the ability to get people to follow him.

But in verse 20, we learn from Peter how to deal with such people.

Peter was not intimidated by him. Peter was not impressed with him.

Peter was not swayed by his pushy personality. In verse 21 Peter told Simon his heart was not right before God. Peter did not tell others that Simon was not right with God. Peter did not give spiritual authority to a new believer.

Acts 8:19 “GIVE THIS AUTHORITY TO ME AS WELL,”

A warning not to give spiritual authority to a new convert is in 1 Timothy 3:6, **“HE MUST NOT BE A NEW CONVERT, LEST HE BECOME CONCEITED AND FALL INTO THE CONDEMNATION INCURRED BY THE DEVIL.”**

The reason is a new believer has a lot of things in the heart still needing to be changed, as was the case with this man. The Lord was saving many people in Samaria as a result of Philip's preaching.

In such situations, there is a temptation to be hasty and put a man in a leadership position where there are people being saved.

The temptation can come as thoughts like “but look at all these new believers, they need teaching and there is not anyone to do it.”

The temptation is strong if a new believer has charisma and a strong personality.

A missionary named Daniel Del Vecchio said,

“I have regretted raising men up too fast, but I have never regretted waiting.”

Acts 8:20 “BUT PETER SAID TO HIM,”

These words introduce what Peter said to Simon from verse 20 to 23.

Notice this verse does not say “but Peter said to other people.”

Peter rebuked Simon for his sin. Peter spoke to him face to face rather than speaking behind his back.

If someone did something wrong do we speak to them about the wrong, or do we speak to people about what they did wrong? Do we speak to them face to face or are we afraid to face them?

Acts 8:21 “...YOUR HEART IS NOT RIGHT BEFORE GOD.”

These words express what Peter thought about Simon after he tried to bribe Peter and John in verse 18 to give him authority to pray for people to receive the Holy Spirit. Then Peter goes even further in the following verses to clearly tell us what he thought about Simon.

Verse 22, **“REPENT OF THIS WICKEDNESS”**

Verse 23, **“YOU ARE FULL OF BITTERNESS AND CAPTIVE TO SIN.”**

Now read what the Samaritans thought about Simon:

Verse 9, **“ASTONISHING THE PEOPLE OF SAMARIA.”**

Verse 10, **“WERE GIVING ATTENTION TO HIM.”**

Their opinion of Simon was completely opposite from Peter’s opinion. Peter was looking at Simon’s heart. The Samaritans were merely looking at the external.

Acts 8:21 “...YOUR HEART IS NOT RIGHT BEFORE GOD.”

In 1 Samuel 16:7 it says, “GOD SEES NOT AS MAN SEES, FOR MAN LOOKS AT THE OUTWARD APPEARANCE, BUT THE LORD LOOKS AT THE HEART.”

When we see people what do we look at? Do we go by the outward appearance or by what their heart is like? How did Peter know Simon was not right before God? Peter discerned this by the words that came out of Simon’s mouth. Peter said in this verse, “YOUR HEART.” Simon's words revealed his heart.

In Matthew 12:34 it says,

“FOR THE MOUTH SPEAKS OUT OF THAT WHICH FILLS THE HEART.”

Peter was right, he spoke to Simon instead of speaking to other people about Simon!

Acts 8:22 “...PRAY TO THE LORD...”

In verse 22, Peter told Simon what to do. But when we read on to verse 24, we learn Simon would not do what Peter told him to do. Simon would not obey a person in spiritual authority.

How do we respond when we are told to do something?

Do we obey someone in spiritual authority?

How do we respond to correction?

Do we like to correct or be corrected?

**Acts 8:23 “FOR I SEE THAT YOU ARE IN THE GALL OF BITTERNESS
AND IN THE BONDAGE OF INIQUITY.”**

From verse 20 up to this verse are the words spoken by Peter. We learn what a horrible person Simon was. Peter told Simon to his face what he thought of him. Peter did not talk behind his back but to his face!

Now we jump to verse 25 and read about Peter staying focused on proclaiming the word of the Lord.

Peter talked about the Lord and not about Simon. As we read through Acts we do not hear Peter talking about this horrible man Simon ever again. What the Lord is teaching us through this verse is to follow Peter's example. When we encounter horrible people, do not keep talking, and talking, and talking about them. But rather, keep talking, and talking, and talking about the Lord Jesus.

Acts 8:24 “...PRAY TO THE LORD FOR ME...”

As we approach our study of this verse, please consider its context in this verse. In verse 22, Peter told Simon to repent. Simon wanted prayer but he did not want to repent. This hardness of heart reminds us of Pharaoh in Exodus 8:28, **“NOW PRAY FOR ME.”** Pharaoh wanted prayer but he did not want to repent. In Simon’s case, it was the same. In the time of Pharaoh, there were magicians. The practice of magic dates back to Exodus 7:11. Simon practiced magic like those in Egypt and he even spoke like the arrogant Pharaoh.

In both the cases of Pharaoh and Simon, neither Moses nor Peter prayed for the person wanting it. These examples teach us that if a person wants us to pray for them, but is not willing to repent of sin in their lives, then we are to do as Moses and Peter did, and do not pray for them!

These words that Simon spoke reveal a rebellious attitude towards Peter, who was a person in spiritual authority. In verse 9, we learn Simon had been involved in magic. A characteristic of occult involvement is rebellion against authority.

Acts 8:25 “AND SO, WHEN THEY HAD SOLEMNLY TESTIFIED AND SPOKEN THE WORD OF THE LORD, THEY STARTED BACK TO JERUSALEM, AND WERE PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO MANY VILLAGES OF THE SAMARITANS.”

As we begin our study of this verse, the following words stand out in reference to what the apostles were speaking about.

- 1. “SOLEMNLY TESTIFIED”**
- 2. “SPOKEN THE WORD OF THE LORD,”**
- 3. “PREACHING THE GOSPEL”**

Now it is important to consider its context. In verse 24, Simon had answered the apostles in a defiant, not teachable tone of voice. But in this verse, we do not read of the apostles talking about Simon’s defiant behavior. They were talking about the Lord rather than talking about a person who was rebellious. The response by the apostles is quite the opposite to the example in 1 Kings 1:11, **“THEN NATHAN SPOKE TO BATHSHEBA THE MOTHER OF SOLOMON, SAYING, “HAVE YOU NOT HEARD THAT ADONIJAH THE SON OF HAGGITH HAS BECOME KING, AND DAVID OUR LORD DOES NOT KNOW IT?”**

Here Nathan and Bathsheba were talking about the rebellious behavior of Adonijah. When you encounter rebellious, defiant people, which response most closely resembles your response? Is your response like the apostles’, or is it like Nathan and Bathsheba’s?

**Acts 8:26 “BUT AN ANGEL OF THE LORD SPOKE TO PHILIP SAYING,
“ARISE AND GO SOUTH TO THE ROAD
THAT DESCENDS FROM JERUSALEM TO GAZA.” (THIS IS A DESERT ROAD)**

As we study this verse let us look at its context in the following three parts.

1. What happened before this verse?

Verse 5. Philip going to Samaria to preach Christ.

Verse 6. Signs and wonders accompanied Philip's preaching.

Verse 7. The Lord had Philip cast out demons and heal the sick.

Verse 8. There was much rejoicing in that city for what God was doing.

Verse 12. People were getting baptized.

Verse 13. There was great astonishment at the signs and miracles that were happening. Philip was in the middle of a revival. He was right in the middle of a “mighty move of God!” In this verse, we see great astonishment at the mighty miracles taking place.

Verse 14. News of what was happening reached Jerusalem.

Remember they did not have TV, Internet or social media to communicate what was occurring. But when God moves with power, the word spreads.

Verses 15 to 17. The new converts got baptized in the Holy Spirit.

**Acts 8:26 “BUT AN ANGEL OF THE LORD SPOKE TO PHILIP SAYING,
“ARISE AND GO SOUTH TO THE ROAD
THAT DESCENDS FROM JERUSALEM TO GAZA.” (THIS IS A DESERT ROAD)**

2. What is happening in this verse?

As we read verse 26, we find Philip at the “height of his career” as a “famous” evangelist. At the height of Philip’s “success,” the angel of the Lord speaks to him. The angel instructs him to leave the revival.

At the very pinnacle of “success,” Philip was told to leave and take a descending desert road.

This pattern reflects Jesus in Mark 1:38. Up until verse 38, Jesus was experiencing everything going wonderful for Him. When everything was going right, Jesus left. Usually we want to leave when everything is going wrong! In our lives, when we are experiencing “success” are we willing to hear God’s voice telling us to leave and take a descending desert road?

**Acts 8:26 “BUT AN ANGEL OF THE LORD SPOKE TO PHILIP SAYING,
“ARISE AND GO SOUTH TO THE ROAD
THAT DESCENDS FROM JERUSALEM TO GAZA.” (THIS IS A DESERT ROAD)**

The words “**THE ROAD THAT DESCENDS**” shows us a picture of going down. It communicates humbling oneself. For Philip to obey the Lord he had to go down. He had to humble himself. To obey the voice of the Lord requires continually being willing to descend. We are to decrease so Jesus can increase. Now consider the words “**A DESERT ROAD.**” When we think of a desert road, it would seem dry, dusty, and dirty. We do not picture it as a six-lane highway with bumper-to-bumper traffic! Rather it as a road with few people on it. A road we would likely not choose to take. To the natural mind, “**A DESERT ROAD**” would not be an attractive choice.

In Genesis 13:10 it says, “**AND LOT LIFTED UP HIS EYES AND SAW ALL THE VALLEY OF THE JORDAN, THAT IT WAS WELL WATERED EVERYWHERE.**”

What a contrast between Philip and Lot. Philip obeyed, taking a descending desert road, but Lot lifted up his eyes to a well-watered valley.

**Acts 8:26 “BUT AN ANGEL OF THE LORD SPOKE TO PHILIP SAYING,
“ARISE AND GO SOUTH TO THE ROAD
THAT DESCENDS FROM JERUSALEM TO GAZA.” (THIS IS A DESERT ROAD)**

3. What happened after this verse?

Prior to verse 26 the Lord was having Philip preach to multitudes, and now he would be preaching to only one person as is seen in verse 27.

Philip obeyed the Lord and left the multitude to preach to one person.

Philip's actions reflect what Jesus said in Luke 15:4,

**“SUPPOSE ONE OF YOU HAS A HUNDRED SHEEP AND LOSES ONE OF THEM.
DOES HE NOT LEAVE THE NINETY-NINE IN THE OPEN COUNTRY AND GO AFTER
THE LOST SHEEP UNTIL HE FINDS IT?”**

**Acts 8:27 “AND HE AROSE AND WENT; AND BEHOLD,
THERE WAS AN ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH.”**

In verse 26, Philip was sent. In verse 27, he went, and then he met.

Philip was sent, he went, and he met! The Lord instructed Philip to take a certain road and on that road was a person ready to be saved.

Whatever road the Holy Spirit leads us on, it is for the purpose to save people. When the Lord leads you into a new job or place to live, ask Him to show you who He wants you to speak to so they can get saved.

In verse 27, Philip acted upon what he was told to do.

Philip heard and responded. Faith requires accompanying action.

In James 2:18 it says,

“I WILL SHOW YOU MY FAITH BY WHAT I DO.”

**Acts 8:27 “AND HE AROSE AND WENT; AND BEHOLD,
THERE WAS AN ETHIOPIAN EUNUCH.”**

Philip arose and went after the angel of the Lord told him to.

Philip did not go until he first heard from the Lord.

Philip's actions were in agreement and obedient to the Lord's words.

Are our actions agree and obedient to what the Scriptures say?

In verse 27, Philip immediately responded to the Lord.

Philip did not question or argue even though the Lord had not told him why he was to leave the revival.

We recall a similar situation in Mark 1: 21 to 38. Jesus was performing miracles, and was well liked in Capernaum, yet He left when everything was going good.

The Lord gave Philip enough guidance for him to obey, and he would receive more once he obeyed. The Lord always leads step by step.

Acts 8:27 “HE HAD COME TO JERUSALEM TO WORSHIP.”

From this part of verse 27, we learn the purpose, the motive and the reason why the Ethiopian eunuch had gone to Jerusalem. He had gone to worship. This reminds us of the wise men in Matthew 2:2,

“FOR WE SAW HIS STAR IN THE EAST, AND HAVE COME TO WORSHIP HIM.”

Their purpose for going was not to stay in a luxury hotel & sleep on king size beds.

Their purpose was to worship the King of kings who once slept in a manger.

In both cases of the Ethiopian eunuch and the wise men traveled to a foreign country. When we travel, what is our purpose for going? What is our motive for going? Do we go with the intent of worshiping the Lord when we are at our destination? Or do we take a holiday from worshiping our Lord?

Do we worship the holiday or worship the Lord?

Do we go for the sights or for the Savior?

Do we go for the Son or the sun?

**Acts 8:28 “AND ON HIS WAY HOME WAS SITTING IN HIS CHARIOT
READING THE BOOK OF ISAIAH THE PROPHET.”**

Here we see the Ethiopian eunuch traveling home. He had completed what important tasks he was to do. From this sentence we see the eunuch was alone in his chariot. He had finished the tasks he had to do. This now was his free time.

In his free time he was sitting, reading the book of Isaiah. When we are alone, what do we do? In our free time what do we read? Do we read the newspaper, surf the Internet, or do we read the Bible? How we use our free time tells much about our spiritual condition.

Acts 8:29 “GO UP AND JOIN THIS CHARIOT.”

In verse 26, the angel of the Lord spoke to Philip. In verse 27, he obeyed. Now in this verse the Spirit is speaking, telling Philip the next step to take. Philip was in the right place to hear what the Spirit was saying because he was walking in obedience. Hearing follows obeying.

In verse 30, we see Philip's response to the Spirit's instruction.

He **“RAN UP TO THE CHARIOT.”**

The Holy Spirit speaks to those who are willing to obey.

Let us review this pattern:

In verse 26 an angel of the Lord spoke.

In verse 27, Philip responded.

In verse 29 the Holy Spirit spoke.

In verse 30, Philip responded. This pattern is repeated.

When a pattern or thought is repeated, we need to heed it. We are to pray, then obey!

**Acts 8:30 “AND WHEN PHILIP HAD RUN UP,
HE HEARD HIM READING ISAIAH THE PROPHET,
AND SAID, “DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU ARE READING?”**

As always, we need the Holy Spirit to help us receive any insight from this precious verse. Please consider the following five points.

1. “AND WHEN PHILIP HAD RUN UP,”

Here we learn how Philip responded to the Holy Spirit’s command in the previous verse, **“GO UP AND JOIN THIS CHARIOT.”** Philip ran to obey the Lord’s command.

Now look at seven things Philip did not do and see how we compare.

1. Philip did not doubt what the Lord said.

Do we doubt what the Lord says?

2. Philip did not forget what the Lord said.

Do we forget what the Lord says?

3. Philip did not question what the Lord said.

Do we question what the Lord says?

**Acts 8:30 “AND WHEN PHILIP HAD RUN UP,
HE HEARD HIM READING ISAIAH THE PROPHET,
AND SAID, “DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU ARE READING?”**

4. Philip did not rationalize what the Lord said.

Do we rationalize what the Lord says?

5. Philip did not argue with what the Lord said.

Do we argue about what the Lord says?

6. Philip did not delay to obey what the Lord said.

Do we delay to obey what the Lord says?

7. Philip did not complain with what the Lord said.

Do we complain about what the Lord says?

Philip showed immediate obedience to the Lord. Are we like Philip?

When the Holy Spirit wants us to do something, how do we respond?

Delayed obedience is polite disobedience.

Delayed obedience is polite rebellion.

**Acts 8:30 “AND WHEN PHILIP HAD RUN UP,
HE HEARD HIM READING ISAIAH THE PROPHET,
AND SAID, “DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU ARE READING?”**

2. “HE HEARD”

From this part of verse 30 please consider the first two words and the last two words. **“HE HEARD” “AND SAID,”**

In this verse, Philip ran up to the Ethiopian’s chariot.

Philip was quick to listen before he spoke.

Philip listened before he spoke.

Philip’s actions reflected the words of James 1:19,

“LET EVERYONE BE QUICK TO LISTEN AND SLOW TO SPEAK.”

Are we like Philip? Do our actions reflect what Scripture says? Are we quick to listen and slow to speak or quick to speak and slow to listen?

**Acts 8:30 “AND WHEN PHILIP HAD RUN UP,
HE HEARD HIM READING ISAIAH THE PROPHET,
AND SAID, “DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU ARE READING?”**

3. “HIM READING”

Remember the context of the verse. In verse 28, we learn the Ethiopian eunuch was in his chariot. Philip heard him reading Scripture in public. The eunuch was unique. The eunuch also was reading the Scripture out loud in public.

Have you ever read the Bible in public?

Have you ever read the Bible out loud in public?

Have you ever seen anyone reading the Bible in public?

If you have never read the Bible in public like a restaurant or a coffee shop you need to ask ourselves, why not? Perhaps you feel comfortable reading a magazine or newspaper in public but not reading the Bible. One reason we might feel uncomfortable reading the Bible in public is the fear of man.

**Acts 8:30 “AND WHEN PHILIP HAD RUN UP,
HE HEARD HIM READING ISAIAH THE PROPHET,
AND SAID, “DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU ARE READING?”**

4. “ISAIAH THE PROPHET,”

In this verse the word, “PROPHET” is used by Luke, the writer of Acts.

Then in verse 34 the word, “PROPHET” appears again and refers to Isaiah.

In both cases they refer to Isaiah a prophet.

In both of these verses Isaiah is referred to as a prophet by other people.

It is not Isaiah calling himself a prophet.

When a person is a genuine prophet, it will be recognized by other people.

A real prophet of the Lord does not refer to himself by that title, but other people will recognize God’s grace in the person’s life for that ministry.

**Acts 8:30 “AND WHEN PHILIP HAD RUN UP,
HE HEARD HIM READING ISAIAH THE PROPHET,
AND SAID, “DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU ARE READING?”**

5. “DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU ARE READING?”

Philip saw the Ethiopian eunuch reading the book of Isaiah.

Philip heard the Ethiopian eunuch reading the prophet Isaiah.

Philip did not presume the Ethiopian eunuch was a believer because he was reading Isaiah the prophet.

Now consider this in respect to a person having a Bible. Just because a person has a Bible does not necessarily mean they are a Christian.

Philip was led by the Holy Spirit to ask him the question **“DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU ARE READING?”** If we see a person reading something from the Bible, and we are not sure if they are a Christian, it is helpful to ask a question something like what Philip asked this man.

If a person does not understand the Bible, we need to respectfully ask them more about their conversion experience.

**Acts 8:30 “AND WHEN PHILIP HAD RUN UP,
HE HEARD HIM READING ISAIAH THE PROPHET,
AND SAID, “DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU ARE READING?”**

Next, consider another thought about Philip asking the Ethiopian eunuch this question, **“DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU ARE READING?”**

We can apply this question to our own lives.

As we read the Bible, do we understand what we are reading?

If there are Scriptures we do not understand, we can ask the Holy Spirit to teach us and give us understanding.

We can pray what Ephesians 1:17 says, **“THAT THE GOD OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, THE FATHER OF GLORY, MAY GIVE YOU A SPIRIT OF WISDOM AND OF REVELATION IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIM.”**

In the Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, C. H. Spurgeon said,
“Understandest thou what thou readest?” “That is the question.”

“I read a chapter every morning,” says one.

“Quite right; keep that up, but “Understandest thou what thou readest?”

“Well I learn the daily text”

“Yes, but “Understandest thou what thou readest?” “That is the main point.”

**Acts 8:31 “AND HE SAID, “WELL, HOW COULD I,
UNLESS SOMEONE GUIDES ME?”**

This verse shows the Ethiopian eunuch answered after Philip finished speaking. In verse 30 Philip said, **“DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU ARE READING?”** The Ethiopian eunuch did not interrupt or butt in on Philip.

He let Philip finish what he was saying. The fact he did not interrupt shows us a lot about the person's personality. A person who interrupts or butts in shows impatience. As well, the Ethiopian eunuch was not busy thinking about what to say that he did not listen while Philip was speaking.

The Ethiopian eunuch listened, then he responded to Philip's question. When someone is speaking to us, are we carefully listening to them or carelessly thinking about how we are going to reply?

If we carelessly listen, it shows we could not care less about the person.

If we interrupt, it reveals we think what we have to say is more important than the person speaking. Such an attitude reveals pride.

In James 1:19 it says, **“EVERYONE SHOULD BE QUICK TO LISTEN, SLOW TO SPEAK AND SLOW TO BECOME ANGRY.”**

**Acts 8:31 “AND HE SAID, “WELL, HOW COULD I,
UNLESS SOMEONE GUIDES ME?”**

If we are slow to listen, quick to speak, and quick to get angry it shows pride in our hearts. This point about listening is mirrored in Matthew 22:29,

**“JESUS REPLIED, YOU ARE IN ERROR BECAUSE YOU DO NOT KNOW THE
SCRIPTURES OR THE POWER OF GOD.”**

Jesus listened to the Sadducees in Matthew 22:24-28. In the NIV there are 90 words spoken by the Sadducees. After they finished speaking, Jesus then spoke.

Jesus did not interrupt or butt in, even though what the Sadducees were saying was wrong. Are we like Jesus? Do we interrupt or butt in when someone is talking? Do we interrupt and tell them they are wrong?

Acts 8:31 “WELL, HOW COULD I, UNLESS SOMEONE GUIDES ME?”

In verse 30 Philip asked, **“DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU ARE READING?”** Here the Ethiopian eunuch responded to Philip. How would we answer such a question? Would we say we did understand even if we did not because of pride or fear of being laughed at? Would we be offended or irritated for someone daring to ask us such a question that might indicate that we are not as smart as we think we are?

Perhaps in an irritated, self-defensive tone we would answer, “Of course I know what I am reading, what do think I am, stupid or something?”

Perhaps we might answer such a question in a more polite manner, “No thanks, I’m alright.” Even in such politeness is pride.

The eunuch’s answer was humble and honest. It is important to understand that the Ethiopian eunuch, according to verse 27 was,

“AN IMPORTANT OFFICAL IN CHARGE OF ALL THE TREASURY OF CANDICE, QUEEN OF THE ETHIOPIANS.”

Acts 8:31 “WELL, HOW COULD I, UNLESS SOMEONE GUIDES ME?”

The man was an important person yet here we see him asking Philip a question. We do not know much about what type of job Philip had except from Acts 6:5 he was chosen to wait on tables. So we learn in this verse an important official was asking an important question to a man who waited on tables. This indicates something about the eunuch's character. This indicates a certain amount of humility.

Also, the fact that he was admitting he needed someone to help him in what he was reading shows he was teachable. The eunuch was teachable and willing to learn. Are we teachable? Are we willing to learn from someone who waits on tables? We do not know if the eunuch was older or younger than Philip.

Do we find it easy or difficult to ask someone younger than we are to show us how to do something?

Do you think it is possible that other Christians know more than we do?

Acts 8:31 “AND HE INVITED PHILIP TO COME UP AND SIT WITH HIM.”

With the Lord's help, please look at the following four thoughts expressed in this part of the verse.

1. “AND HE INVITED PHILIP”

The eunuch invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Philip was not forcing his way or being pushy in telling the man about Jesus.

Are we like Philip when we witness?

2. “TO COME UP”

These words show us a picture of Philip being lower than the Ethiopian eunuch.

Philip was lower than the person he was going to witness to.

Philip was not looking down on the man, but was looking up at the man. Philip's position provides a good reminder for us when sharing the gospel. We are to humble ourselves lower than others rather than having an attitude of superiority. Now consider the eunuch was from Ethiopia.

That means his skin color might have been dark. Philip was willing to obey the Lord and witness to someone who likely had a different skin color.

Are we willing to do the same?

Acts 8:31 “AND HE INVITED PHILIP TO COME UP AND SIT WITH HIM.”

Remember the Ethiopian eunuch was a different nationality than Philip, yet he was willing to obey the Lord and witness to someone of a different nationality. Are we willing to do the same? The eunuch was in a higher position in the chariot than Philip standing on the ground. The eunuch also he had a high social standing because he was the Queen's official in charge of the treasury. Yet the eunuch was not talking down to Philip, who to the eunuch, was a complete stranger running down a desert road. When a person talks down to another person it shows they think they are higher than that person. People talk down to others through jokes. Belittling others shows we have little compassion for others. When we put others down it lifts us up!

Acts 8:31 “AND HE INVITED PHILIP TO COME UP AND SIT WITH HIM.”

3. “AND SIT”

In verse 28, we learn the eunuch was riding in his chariot.

In verse 30, we learn Philip was on foot.

These two facts provide a backdrop for our third point. If we were to ask who you think was better off, we likely would say the eunuch, because he rode down the road whereas Philip ran down the road! One rode down the road. One ran down the road.

The world's view would say the eunuch was better off because of his material possession. Very likely it was an expensive chariot. The eunuch appeared richer and better off, but actually Philip was spiritually rich and better off because he knew Jesus.

Philip was spiritually far richer and far better off than the eunuch.

Another example is Acts 26:27-29 with King Agrippa and a prisoner named Paul. Who would appear to be richer?

A man who lived in a palace or a prisoner?

Acts 8:31 “AND HE INVITED PHILIP TO COME UP AND SIT WITH HIM.”

4. “WITH HIM.”

The eunuch wanted Philip to come up and sit with him in his chariot.

The eunuch wanted to talk with Philip who was a devoted Christian.

The eunuch wanted to spend time with a person who loved the Lord.

The eunuch wanted to talk about what he was reading in Isaiah.

Not only did the eunuch want to spend time with a devoted Christian, he wanted to talk about the things he was reading in the Bible.

Acts 8:31 “AND HE INVITED PHILIP TO COME UP AND SIT WITH HIM.”

Let us compare ourselves with this eunuch by asking four questions.

1. What type of people do we feel comfortable with?
2. What things do we most enjoy talking about?
3. Do we like to spend time with devoted Christians?
4. Do we like to talk about what we are reading in the Bible?

In Jeremiah 15:17 it says,

“I NEVER SAT IN THE COMPANY OF REVELERS, NEVER MADE MERRY WITH THEM; I SAT ALONE BECAUSE YOUR HAND WAS ON ME.”

Then a similar thought is found in 1 Corinthians 15:33,

“DO NOT BE DECEIVED: BAD COMPANY CORRUPTS GOOD MORALS.”

The Ethiopian eunuch wanted to spend time with a godly person. Is that the same for us? What type of people do we choose to spend time with?

**Acts 8:34 “AND THE EUNUCH ANSWERED PHILIP
AND SAID, “PLEASE TELL ME,”**

The words are in context to the Ethiopian eunuch reading from the book of Isaiah. Verses 32 and 33 quote from Isaiah 53:7-8 about a prophecy. He was not sure who Isaiah was referring to but in verse 35, Philip explains it is referring to Jesus.

Now consider three short words that show seven things about the Ethiopian eunuch.

1. “PLEASE TELL ME” shows humility.
2. “PLEASE TELL ME” shows he was polite.
3. “PLEASE TELL ME” shows he was respectful.
4. “PLEASE TELL ME” shows he was teachable.
5. “PLEASE TELL ME” shows he was willing to listen.
6. “PLEASE TELL ME” shows he was wanting to learn.
7. “PLEASE TELL ME” shows Philip knew more than he did.

**Acts 8:34 “AND THE EUNUCH ANSWERED PHILIP
AND SAID, “PLEASE TELL ME,”**

Now here are seven questions to ask ourselves.

1. Are we humble?
2. Are we polite?
3. Are we respectful?
4. Are we teachable?
5. Are we willing to listen?
6. Are we wanting to learn?
7. Are we aware others know more than we do?

We compare these words with what Matthew 12:34 says,

“FOR THE MOUTH SPEAKS OUT OF THAT WHICH FILLS THE HEART.”

**Acts 8:34 “AND THE EUNUCH ANSWERED PHILIP
AND SAID, “PLEASE TELL ME,”**

Here are seven more things that the words show what was in his heart.

1. “PLEASE TELL ME” shows a heart with desire.
2. “PLEASE TELL ME” shows a heart that is hungry.
3. “PLEASE TELL ME” shows a heart that is respectful.
4. “PLEASE TELL ME” shows a heart admitting needing help.
5. “PLEASE TELL ME” shows a heart that is asking for help.
6. “PLEASE TELL ME” shows a heart that is searching for answers.
7. “PLEASE TELL ME” shows a heart wanting to hear more than be heard.

**Acts 8:34 “AND THE EUNUCH ANSWERED PHILIP
AND SAID, “PLEASE TELL ME,”**

Here are seven questions to ask ourselves.

1. Do we desire to truly know Him more?
2. Do we hunger to know Him more?
3. Do we respect God’s word?
4. Do we admit we need help?
5. Do we ask for help?
6. Do we search the Scriptures for answers?
7. Do we want to hear or just be heard?

**Acts 8:34 “AND THE EUNUCH ANSWERED PHILIP
AND SAID, “PLEASE TELL ME,”**

Here are seven cutting and convicting things to carefully consider.

1. If we think we are strong, we are wrong!
2. If we think we have arrived, we have not!
3. If we think we do not need help, we need help!
4. If we think we know it all we do not know it at all!
5. If we think we should be higher, we should be lower!
6. If we think we know everything, we do not know anything!
7. If we think we do not need to be taught, we need to be taught.

Acts 8:34 “OF WHOM DOES THE PROPHET SAY THIS? OF HIMSELF, OR SOMEONE ELSE?”

In this verse are the words spoken by the Ethiopian eunuch. Please notice there are two questions he asked Philip. The Ethiopian eunuch asked questions prior to his conversion. In the NT, we find seven examples of people asking questions before they were saved. These seven questions are as follows.

1. John 3:4, “HOW CAN A MAN BE BORN WHEN HE IS OLD? HE CANNOT ENTER A SECOND TIME INTO HIS MOTHER’S WOMB AND BE BORN, CAN HE?”
2. John 4:9, “HOW IS IT THAT YOU, BEING A JEW, ASK ME FOR A DRINK SINCE I AM A SAMARITAN WOMAN?”
3. John 4:11, “WHERE THEN DO YOU GET THAT LIVING WATER?”
4. John 4:12, “YOU ARE NOT GREATER THAN OUR FATHER JACOB, ARE YOU WHO GAVE US THE WELL, AND DRANK OF IT HIMSELF, AND HIS SONS, AND HIS CATTLE?”
5. Acts 8:31, “WELL, HOW COULD I, UNLESS SOMEONE GUIDES ME?”
6. Acts 8:34, “PLEASE TELL ME, OF WHOM DOES THE PROPHET SAY THIS? OF HIMSELF OR SOMEONE ELSE?”
7. Acts 16:30, “SIRS, WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?”

**Acts 8:34 “OF WHOM DOES THE PROPHET SAY THIS?
OF HIMSELF, OR SOMEONE ELSE?”**

When people are asking questions it indicates they are wanting answers.
When people ask questions, it shows they do not think they know everything.
When people are asking questions it is recognizing the person they ask may know more than them. People who think they know everything do not think they need to ask questions. No matter what the question is, the Bible has the answer.

**Acts 8:35 “AND PHILIP OPENED HIS MOUTH,
AND BEGINNING FROM THIS SCRIPTURE HE PREACHED JESUS TO HIM.”**

In this verse, we learn that when Philip spoke he talked about Jesus.

When we speak, do we talk about Jesus or everything but Jesus? As we consider this verse, we realize Philip did not hesitate to speak about Jesus to a non-Christian. Do we hesitate to speak about Jesus to non-Christians?

**Acts 8:36 “LOOK! WATER!
WHAT PREVENTS ME FROM BEING BAPTIZED?”**

Before we study this verse, please look at its context.

In the verse 35 it says,

**“AND PHILIP OPENED HIS MOUTH, AND BEGINNING FROM THIS SCRIPTURE HE
PREACHED JESUS TO HIM.”**

Philip preached Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch.

Then we look at verse 37 and find the eunuch saying,

“I BELIEVE THAT JESUS CHRIST IS THE SON OF GOD.”

Having looked at the verses before and after we see the Ethiopian eunuch had become a new believer in Jesus Christ.

Acts 8:36 “LOOK! WATER!”
WHAT PREVENTS ME FROM BEING BAPTIZED?”

Now we look at the words he spoke in this verse as a new Christian. As we read the words **“LOOK! WATER!”** we hear excitement in his voice to get water baptized. Perhaps you can recall having excitement when you were a new Christian. Do you still have that excitement for Jesus as you did when you were a new Christian? As the years have passed, has the excitement also passed? The Ethiopian eunuch was excited about getting baptized in water. He wanted to get baptized in water. A sign of a true heart conversion is the desire to be baptized in water. The Ethiopian eunuch was excited about God. Are we excited about God? What excites us? Whatever cools our love for Jesus is the world.

Acts 8:38 “THEN BOTH PHILIP AND THE EUNUCH WENT DOWN INTO THE WATER AND PHILIP BAPTIZED HIM.”

This is the second time water baptism is mentioned in chapter 8.

In these two cases the Bible teaches us two things.

1. Who was to be water baptized. In verse 12, **“THEY WERE BEING BAPTIZED, MEN AND WOMEN ALIKE.”** This verse clearly teaches that infant baptism is not Scriptural.
2. How they were to be water baptized. In verse 38, **“PHILIP AND THE EUNUCH WENT DOWN INTO THE WATER.”** Both Philip and the eunuch went into water. Philip did not just sprinkle some water on the eunuch’s head and call it baptism. What the Holy Spirit has enabled us to see here is doctrinal teaching on a Christian sacrament. Any form of teaching that says the book of Acts is not to be used for doctrine is false teaching. The evident fruit of such teaching is unbelief.

**Acts 8:40 “BUT PHILIP FOUND HIMSELF AT AZOTUS;
AND AS HE PASSED THROUGH HE KEPT PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO ALL THE
CITIES, UNTIL HE CAME TO CAESAREA.”**

With the Holy Spirit to help, let us divide this verse into five parts.

1. “BUT PHILIP FOUND HIMSELF AT AZOTUS;”

When we look on a map of the region Philip preached, we discover that the city of Azotus was the furthest south location that he preached. As we read through the description of Philip’s ministry in chapter 8 we discover his direction was southerly, or going down. The Holy Spirit led him down, or south. This is a picture of humility. For Philip or anyone else to properly serve the Lord we need to always humble ourselves.

**Acts 8:40 “BUT PHILIP FOUND HIMSELF AT AZOTUS;
AND AS HE PASSED THROUGH HE KEPT PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO ALL THE
CITIES, UNTIL HE CAME TO CAESAREA.”**

2. “AND AS HE PASSED THROUGH”

These words introduce the last verse in chapter 8. From when Philip was introduced in verse 5 until this last verse he was busy preaching the gospel. Philip began by proclaiming Christ and finished by proclaiming Christ.

This observation serves as an example for our Christian lives. From the beginning to the end we are to proclaim Christ. Philip was just passing through. In this life we too are just passing through. Philip was only temporarily in cities preaching the gospel. Wherever we live, whichever city we live in, it is only temporary compared to eternity.

**Acts 8:40 “BUT PHILIP FOUND HIMSELF AT AZOTUS;
AND AS HE PASSED THROUGH HE KEPT PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO ALL THE
CITIES, UNTIL HE CAME TO CAESAREA.”**

3. “HE KEPT PREACHING THE GOSPEL”

These words show us Philip’s uncompromising devotion to preach the gospel no matter what circumstances he went through. In chapter 8 Philip experienced a variety of situations yet he never diverted from the objective of proclaiming the gospel. Back in verse 5 Philip started proclaiming Christ. He started doing what the Lord had called him to do. And here at the end of this chapter Philip is still doing what the Lord wanted him to do.

Are we still doing what the Lord wants us to do? In this chapter situations changed, but that did not change Philip from actively preaching the gospel. In our lives we continually face new situations. Have any of those situations changed us from being active in advancing the gospel?

**Acts 8:40 “BUT PHILIP FOUND HIMSELF AT AZOTUS;
AND AS HE PASSED THROUGH HE KEPT PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO ALL THE
CITIES, UNTIL HE CAME TO CAESAREA.”**

4. “TO ALL THE CITIES,”

Philip preached in all the cities and not just some of the cities. Wherever he went he proclaimed the gospel. Wherever we go do we in some way proclaim the gospel?

5. “UNTIL HE CAME TO CAESAREA.”

These words show Philip had a destination. Our destination is heaven and until we get there we are to be busy helping in proclaiming the gospel.

Acts 9:1 “NOW SAUL, STILL BREATHING THREATS AND MURDER AGAINST THE DISCIPLES OF THE LORD, WENT TO THE HIGH PRIEST.”

In chapter 9 are two verses which mention Saul and what he was doing. In verse 1 it says, **“NOW SAUL, STILL BREATHING THREATS AND MURDER AGAINST THE DISCIPLES OF THE LORD.”**

In verse 1 Saul is described as a man violently opposed to the disciples of the Lord.

In verse 11 it says, **“A MAN FROM TARSUS NAMED SAUL, FOR BEHOLD, HE IS PRAYING.”** In verse 11 is a vastly different Saul from verse 1.

Why was there such a radical change in Saul? The reason for the radical change was he met Jesus in verses 3 to 6. Between verses 1 and 11, Saul had experienced being born-again, and the change in him was radically noticeable. Saul once was trying to murder people and next he was praying.

Saul changed from preying on God's people to praying to God.

Saul's a life changing conversion and it was very obvious.

When a person is truly born-again there will be evidence of a change.

Acts 9:3 “...SUDDENLY A LIGHT FROM HEAVEN FLASHED AROUND HIM;”

As we look at these words there is a temptation to slip over them to the next verses describing how Saul became a Christian. But these words have magnificent importance, for they speak of Jesus after His ascension.

Please examine this portion of verse 3 in the following two parts.

1. “...LIGHT FROM HEAVEN...”

From this verse we study the words, “**LIGHT FROM HEAVEN**” and then we read on and in verse 4 it says, “**HEARD A VOICE.**”

First, light appears from heaven.

Second, Jesus is heard speaking.

What this order shows us is, the light the Lord puts in our hearts needs to be seen before our words are heard. Light needs to be seen, then our voice heard.

The light came and it affected Paul, it knocked him off his high horse!

The light had a positive effect on a negative person.

The light that the Lord puts in our hearts has a positive effect on people!

Acts 9:3 “...SUDDENLY A LIGHT FROM HEAVEN FLASHED AROUND HIM;”

2. “LIGHT FROM HEAVEN FLASHED AROUND HIM;”

These words speak of Jesus the glorified Christ. The glorified Christ was even brighter than the sun as Paul describes in Acts 26:13. What sort of picture comes into your mind when you think of what Jesus looked like?

Perhaps you have thoughts of Him as depicted in a Hollywood movie.

Perhaps you think of a helpless little baby on a Christmas card.

Perhaps you have seen religious processions depicting Jesus dead.

Perhaps you have an picture in your mind of Jesus being rather weak.

Perhaps you have a picture in mind of Jesus looking almost feminine.

Perhaps you have seen sculptures of a rather sickly looking Jesus.

Perhaps you have visited art galleries and seen a rendition of Jesus.

Acts 9:3 “...SUDDENLY A LIGHT FROM HEAVEN FLASHED AROUND HIM;”

If you have any of these types of images lodged in your mind then realize they do not depict how the risen glorified Jesus looks like.

In this verse we see a Biblical description of what Jesus looks like after His ascension. In John 8:12 Jesus said, **“I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.”**

Imagine how light gives life to every human being on earth. It is only Jesus Christ who can give life to any person on earth! The glorified Christ who Paul saw, knew, and trusted, was and still is stronger than anything we can imagine with our finite minds. Which Jesus are you believing in? The one depicted by some artist, Hollywood movie, or the Jesus whom Paul knew!

**Acts 9:4 “AND HE FELL TO THE GROUND AND HEARD A VOICE SAY TO HIM,
“SAUL, SAUL, WHY ARE YOU PERSECUTING ME?”**

From this verse we shall study and learn from the following three parts:

1. “AND HE FELL TO THE GROUND”

Suddenly the powerful Saul was powerless! From verse 3 we learn that Saul fell to the ground because of the incredible presence of the Lord. When a someone falls to the ground it can convey a humbling situation.

Here it was not Saul humbling himself but rather the Lord humbling him.

Before conversion the Lord provides situations that humble us to lead us to salvation. Once we are Christians we are to humble ourselves.

2. “AND HEARD A VOICE SAY TO HIM,”

Saul was down and then he heard the Lord speak to him. For us to hear the Lord speak to us we need to be low. When he was low, then he could know the Lord was speaking.

**Acts 9:4 “AND HE FELL TO THE GROUND AND HEARD A VOICE SAY TO HIM,
“SAUL, SAUL, WHY ARE YOU PERSECUTING ME?”**

3. “SAUL, SAUL, WHY ARE YOU PERSECUTING ME?”

In verse 1 it says, **“NOW SAUL, STILL BREATHING THREATS AND MURDER
AGAINST THE DISCIPLES OF THE LORD”**

From verse 1 we learn that Saul had been persecuting the disciples of the Lord. But in this verse Jesus is asking Saul why he is persecuting Him. Saul's persecution against Christians was persecution against the Lord Jesus, which serves as a sobering truth for us in our attitudes towards Christians. We need to be careful in our attitudes towards fellow believers because they are part of the body of Christ.

**Acts 9:4 “AND HE FELL TO THE GROUND AND HEARD A VOICE SAY TO HIM,
“SAUL, SAUL, WHY ARE YOU PERSECUTING ME?”**

In 1 John 4:20 it says, “IF SOMEONE SAYS, “I LOVE GOD,” AND HATES HIS BROTHER, HE IS A LIAR, FOR THE ONE WHO DOES NOT LOVE HIS BROTHER WHOM HE HAS SEEN, CANNOT LOVE GOD WHOM HE HAS NOT SEEN.”

Commenting on this verse in Prayer: Key to Revival, Dr. Yonggi Cho said,
“ We are the body of Christ. Whatever we as His members feel, He as the head of the Body feels. Pain and suffering are never felt on the surface of our wound, but actual pain is felt in the brain, located in the head. ”

Jesus is the Head of the church. What we feel, He also feels. We learn from these words it is Christians who are persecuted and not Christians who persecute.

**Acts 9:10 “IN DAMASCUS THERE WAS A DISCIPLE NAMED ANANIAS.
THE LORD CALLED TO HIM IN A VISION, “ANANIAS!”
‘YES, LORD,’ HE ANSWERED.”**

From this verse is a wealth of truth to glean as the Holy Spirit enables us to receive light. We shall now begin with the following:

Place; we see where Ananias lived, **“IN DAMASCUS.”**

Position; we see what he was, **“A DISCIPLE.”**

Person; we see who was being addressed, **“ANANIAS.”**

Prophetic; we see how he was called, **“IN A VISION.”**

Promptness; we see how he replied, **“YES, LORD,” HE ANSWERED.”**

What we do not learn from this verse is why he was called. We learn that when we read verses 11 and 12. We do not know Ananias' physical age. He could have been 25 or 45 or 65. His physical age is not mentioned nor was it important to mention, but what is important is the Lord wanted to use him in an important task.

Ananias did not know how important the task was at that time.

Ananias did not know the Lord wanted him to pray for a man who later on would be used to write many of the books in the New Testament and have a profound effect on the course of history through the preaching of the gospel.

**Acts 9:10 “IN DAMASCUS THERE WAS A DISCIPLE NAMED ANANIAS.
THE LORD CALLED TO HIM IN A VISION, “ANANIAS!”
‘YES, LORD,’ HE ANSWERED.”**

This applies to us. No matter what our physical age is, the Lord has work for us to do. We may not think the task is as important as other people's work, but we do not know what the result will be further on in the future. Any work done for the Lord is vital, even if thoughts in our minds tell us otherwise.

Next we realize that Ananias was virtually unknown as far as “famous” people were concerned in the Bible. We have heard of Abraham, Noah, Moses, Joseph, David, Jonah, Daniel, and many more.

We know little about him, except that God chose him. God chose a virtually unknown person to help a person who later on would make known the gospel to a countless number of people. Jesus Christ chose a nobody to help expand the body of Christ!

Today you might feel that you are a nobody, but the Lord wants to use you to expand the body of Christ! Ananias was insignificant, but the Lord chose him to do a significant task. You may feel insignificant, but God can do something significant through you.

Acts 9:10 "...YES, LORD,"

We shall now look at this part of verse 10 in the following four points.

1. "YES, LORD,"

Ananias spoke these words before the Lord told him what to do.

In verses 11 to 13 the Lord told him. In verse 14 Ananias tried to get out of obeying what the Lord told him to do. How often are we like Ananias?

Do we show a willingness to obey until we find out what is involved?

2. "YES, LORD,"

In verse 10 the Lord called Ananias and he spoke very quickly in responding to the Lord. First Ananias was quick, and then he quaked! Is this what we are like? Do we quickly say we will do something then regret we said it?

Acts 9:10 "...YES, LORD,"

3. "YES, LORD,"

These words do not have any conditions attached. Ananias wanted to obey without conditions attached. Are we like him?

4. "YES, LORD,"

Ananias said yes to the Lord. When we say yes to what the Bible says, we are saying yes to the Lord. Jesus is the living Word. To the degree we do what the Bible says, is the degree that we say **"YES, LORD."**

In our lives where the Bible governs us, that is where Jesus is Lord!

Acts 9:11 “HE IS PRAYING.”

With the Lord to help, please study the following seven points.

1. “HE IS PRAYING”

We shall begin our study of these words in relationship to what occurred previously. In Acts 22:10 it says, **“WHAT SHALL I DO, LORD?”**

These words were spoken by Paul soon after his conversion. These words show a heart in submission to our Lord Jesus. Paul’s heart was in submission to God and he was praying. Paul used to pray as a religious Pharisee. The Pharisees prayed a lot but they were still Pharisees.

Now Paul was submitted to the will of God and was praying.

The Pharisees prayed but were not submitted to the will of God.

Acts 9:11 “HE IS PRAYING.”

2. “HE IS PRAYING”

The prayer that was pleasing to Jesus came from a person who was pleasing to God. These words also reflect humility before God.

Humility is required for genuine prayer. Paul was now right with God and his prayer was now right. For a person to pray requires being in a right relationship with God.

In the Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, C. H. Spurgeon said,

“ Real prayer cannot come from men whose characters are contrary to the mind of God. ”

Acts 9:11 “HE IS PRAYING.”

3. “HE IS PRAYING”

It is important that we read these words in context from verses 7 to 9.

Verse 7,

“THE MEN WHO TRAVELED WITH HIM STOOD SPEECHLESS.”

They were totally powerless in helping Paul.

Verse 8,

“HE COULD SEE NOTHING; AND LEADING HIM BY THE HAND.”

Paul was suddenly blinded. He had no idea how long he would be blind, neither did he know if he would ever see again. We learn from verse 9 that Paul was blind for three days but he did not know that.

Paul was totally and completely helpless.

Paul was not able to do anything to help himself in that situation.

Verse 9,

“AND HE WAS THREE DAYS WITHOUT SIGHT, AND NEITHER ATE NOR DRANK.”

Acts 9:11 “HE IS PRAYING.”

Here we get a feel for the desperate condition Paul was in. He needed help and knew it. As a Pharisee Paul would have likely fasted before.

But this was radically different. As a Pharisee it would be outward and showing off. But now, Paul fasted not to show off or pretend to be spiritual. Paul was fasting because he desperately needed help.

As a Pharisee his fasting would be outward, but this was inward.

In 1 Samuel 16:7 it says,

“FOR MAN LOOKS AT THE OUTWARD APPEARANCE, BUT THE LORD LOOKS AT THE HEART.”

The once powerful Paul was now powerless and his praying would reflect that.

In The Spiritual Man, Watchmen Nee said,

“True prayer uncovers the emptiness in the petitioner but the fullness in the Petitioned. ”

Acts 9:11 "HE IS PRAYING."

4. "HE IS PRAYING"

These are words Jesus spoke to Ananias. Jesus knew Saul was praying.

We also know from verse 11 that Ananias did not know Saul was praying until the Lord told him. Although people might not know we are praying but the Lord does. The secret of prayer is prayer in secret. Jesus told Ananias that Saul was praying and it was not Saul who was telling Ananias he was praying. Spiritual pride boasts in anything, even how much we pray.

Acts 9:11 "HE IS PRAYING."

5. "HE IS PRAYING"

From these words we learn what Paul did prior to any missionary travels in his life. Prayer came before everything else. When we think of Paul we think of the missionary travels, the churches planted, the books in the New Testament written to the early churches, but first **"HE WAS PRAYING."** Prepare in prayer. In *God Tells the Man Who Cares*, A.W. Tozer said,

"The man of God ought to be more at home in his prayer chamber than before the public. It is not too much to say that the preacher who loves to be before the public is hardly prepared spiritually to be before them."

Acts 9:11 “HE IS PRAYING.”

6. “HE IS PRAYING”

Please realize a dramatic change occurred in Paul's life. Now he was praying but before his conversion he was preying on the church as seen in Acts 8:1-3 and Acts 9:1. From preying to praying, it is clear something occurred in Paul's life. When a person is converted, it will be evident.

7. “HE IS PRAYING”

We notice the verse does not say “He is reading the Bible,” or “He is going to church,” or “He is singing in the choir.” An individual might do any of these things, yet not be converted.

**Acts 9:11,13,15 “AND THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”
“BUT ANANIAS ANSWERED,”
“BUT THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”**

Found in these three verses is a pattern how the Holy Spirit has been leading people throughout Scripture and is how He leads us as we follow Jesus Christ. This pattern we shall be studying is also reflected in Exodus 3:10-12, Judges 6:14-16, 1 Samuel 16:1-3, Jeremiah 1:5-7, and Matthew 14:16-18. Now let us continue and see in these three verses the three steps that apply to our lives. The three steps are as follows.

1. God calls us to do a task.
2. My weakness to do the task.
3. God's grace to do the task.

**Acts 9:11,13,15 “AND THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”
“BUT ANANIAS ANSWERED,”
“BUT THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”**

Let us now begin:

1. God calls us to do a task.

Verse 11, “AND THE LORD SAID TO HIM, “ARISE AND GO TO THE STREET CALLED STRAIGHT, AND INQUIRE AT THE HOUSE OF JUDAS FOR A MAN FROM TARSUS NAMED SAUL, FOR BEHOLD, HE IS PRAYING.”

In this verse the Lord called Ananias to do a very specific task. When the Lord says to do something it is always specific rather than vague or confusing. Now we might think, who was this Ananias? In Acts 9:10, the J.B. Philips translation describes him as “**A DISCIPLE.**” He is not someone listed in Hebrews 11 along with all those “mighty men of faith.” He was simply “**A DISCIPLE.**” We get the impression he was just an ordinary fellow. We are like this man Ananias, just ordinary people, called to do extraordinary tasks. The Lord called Ananias to go find a certain man named Saul, who according to Acts 8:3 was a terribly violent person bent on persecuting the church. What the Lord called Ananias to do would seem impossible for him to do.

**Acts 9:11,13,15 “AND THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”
“BUT ANANIAS ANSWERED,”
“BUT THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”**

As we read the reaction from Ananias in verse 13 we find he certainly did not think he had the ability to do what the Lord was calling him to do. Often the Lord calls us to do tasks that are beyond our ability. You might ask, why does He do that? The answer is just that, they are beyond our abilities, but not beyond His ability!

If the Lord only had us do things where we could rely on our own abilities then we would not realize our desperate need of His grace to help us.

God does not help those who help themselves but rather He helps those who cannot help themselves! We cannot live the Christian life apart from the grace of God. In John 15:5 it says,

“FOR APART FROM ME YOU CAN DO NOTHING.”

**Acts 9:11,13,15 “AND THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”
“BUT ANANIAS ANSWERED,”
“BUT THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”**

2. My weakness to do the task.

Verse 13, “BUT ANANIAS ANSWERED, “LORD, I HAVE HEARD FROM MANY ABOUT THIS MAN, HOW MUCH HARM HE DID TO THY SAINTS AT JERUSALEM.”

Like so many of us, this man Ananias was responding in fear rather than in faith. Ananias was fearful because he had listened to what people said about Saul. We have to be very careful who we listen to. In Mark 4:24 Jesus said, “TAKE CARE WHAT YOU LISTEN TO.”

There are considerable gems to unearth from the fertile soil of verse 13. Here are seven gems.

**Acts 9:11,13,15 “AND THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”
“BUT ANANIAS ANSWERED,”
“BUT THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”**

1. “BUT”

The word often introduces a rebuttal! As we read what Ananias said we can almost hear an excuse. Often excuses mask a heart not willing to obey. When we make excuses to cover up our disobedience, it is often because we think there is too great a cost in obeying. The fact is, we pay when we disobey! After Jonah disobeyed God it says in Jonah 1:3, **“PAID THE FARE.”** Jonah paid when he disobeyed, and we pay when we disobey!

2. “BUT”

It introduces words that show hesitation in Ananias to obey what the Lord said. Delayed obedience is polite disobedience! In Psalm 119:60 it says,

“I HASTENED AND DID NOT DELAY TO KEEP THY COMMANDMENTS.”

Self-centeredness and self-preservation are enemies of self-sacrifice!

**Acts 9:11,13,15 “AND THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”
“BUT ANANIAS ANSWERED,”
“BUT THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”**

3. “ANANIAS ANSWERED,”

These words introduce the second time Ananias spoke to the Lord.

The first time was in verse 10 where Ananias said, **“BEHOLD, HERE AM I, LORD.”** In verse 10 Ananias had an incredible experience of the Lord speaking to him through a vision. In the context of such an amazing experience, which many of us would dearly love to have, Ananias showed an eagerness to do what the Lord was asking. But soon as he found out what was involved, he was not as eager. If the Lord allows us to have supernatural experiences, are we still eager to obey Him once we find out what He clearly asks of us? In Deuteronomy 8:3 it says,

“MAN DOES NOT LIVE BY BREAD ONLY, BUT MAN LIVES BY EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF THE LORD.”

We cannot live on experiences alone.

**Acts 9:11,13,15 “AND THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”
“BUT ANANIAS ANSWERED,”
“BUT THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”**

4. “LORD,”

This word begins what Ananias spoke to the Lord. Ananias was speaking to the Lord in verse 13 and 14. Speaking to the Lord speaks of prayer. Speaking to the Lord came before doing the work of the Lord.

Ananias was praying and pouring out his concerns to the Lord.

Ananias prayed natural, nonreligious sounding words.

Ananias did what 1 Peter 5:7 says,

“CASTING ALL YOUR ANXIETY UPON HIM BECAUSE HE CARES FOR YOU.”

Ananias was feeling anxiety about Saul and he told the Lord about the anxiety he was feeling.

**Acts 9:11,13,15 “AND THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”
“BUT ANANIAS ANSWERED,”
“BUT THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”**

5. “LORD, I HAVE HEARD”

These are the first words Ananias spoke to the Lord. Notice the word “**LORD,**” is followed with a comma. There is a hesitation as he heard what the Lord had said. In total there are thirty-six words Ananias spoke that showed what people said was listened to more than what Jesus had said. What people said had a stronger influence on Ananias than what the “**LORD**” said. Are we influenced more by what people say or by what the Scriptures say?

**Acts 9:11,13,15 “AND THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”
“BUT ANANIAS ANSWERED,”
“BUT THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”**

6. “I HAVE HEARD FROM MANY ABOUT THIS MAN,”

Ananias heard certain things about Paul, based on what he was before the Lord saved him.

We need to be very careful not to listen to gossip.

We need to be very careful what we listen to.

Ananias had an opinion about Saul based on how he was in the past rather than how he was in the present. Ananias’ opinion about Saul was based on what he was like before Jesus changed his heart. We need to be careful not to harbor opinions about other Christians based on how they were at one point in the past. We need to remember the words of Philippians 2:13,

“FOR IT IS GOD WHO IS AT WORK IN YOU, BOTH TO WILL AND TO WORK FOR HIS GOOD PLEASURE.”

**Acts 9:11,13,15 “AND THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”
“BUT ANANIAS ANSWERED,”
“BUT THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”**

If we have an attitude that a fellow Christian will never change in a certain area then our attitude is not in agreement to what Scripture says. Any attitudes in our hearts that do not agree with Scripture need to be repented of. Just because a Christian is wrong in an area today, does not mean he will still be wrong in that same area a year from now. Jesus changes people's hearts. Have you heard things about certain Christian leaders? Have you heard positive or negative things?

What we hear is too often negative. In James 4:11 it says,

“DO NOT SPEAK AGAINST ONE ANOTHER BRETHREN.”

Then in James 5:9 it says,

"DO NOT COMPLAIN, BRETHREN, AGAINST ONE ANOTHER,"

**Acts 9:11,13,15 “AND THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”
“BUT ANANIAS ANSWERED,”
“BUT THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”**

7. “LORD, I HAVE HEARD FROM MANY ABOUT THIS MAN, HOW MUCH HARM HE DID TO THY SAINTS AT JERUSALEM. AND HERE HE HAS AUTHORITY FROM THE CHIEF PRIESTS TO BIND ALL WHO CALL UPON THY NAME.”

These are the words of Ananias in verses 13 and 14. Now let me ask you, how far are your eyes from the page? Perhaps your eyes are half a meter from the page. We are very close and can see weaknesses Ananias. When we are close to other Christians we see their weaknesses and they see ours. When we are close we see the cracks! We have seen some weaknesses in Ananias. How was our attitude towards him? Did we hear faint critical thoughts about him in our minds? If we heard accusations about him then we need to ask; if we were in his place, would we act any different? Perhaps we would act even worse! When we see weaknesses in each other, what is our response? Is there criticism or concern? In 2 Kings 6:17 Elisha prayed for his servant who showed weaknesses when facing the enemy. When we see weaknesses in each other, let us pray for each other.

**Acts 9:11,13,15 “AND THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”
“BUT ANANIAS ANSWERED,”
“BUT THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”**

3. God’s grace to do the task.

Verse 15, “BUT THE LORD SAID TO HIM, “GO, FOR HE IS A CHOSEN INSTRUMENT OF MINE, TO BEAR MY NAME BEFORE THE GENTILES AND KINGS AND THE SONS OF ISRAEL.”

From this verse consider the word “GO” in the following seven parts.

1. “GO”

The word confirms what the Lord spoke in verse 11, “ARISE AND GO.”

The Lord confirmed what He wanted Ananias to do. When the Lord leads, He will confirm what He has said. The Lord does not contradict Himself.

2. “GO”

The Lord spoke very clearly and simply.

The Lord used a simple one syllable word.

The Lord did not speak in complicated or confusing words.

The Lord is not the author of confusion, so when things are complicated or confusing, it is very unlikely the Lord is leading in that direction.

**Acts 9:11,13,15 “AND THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”
“BUT ANANIAS ANSWERED,”
“BUT THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”**

3. “GO”

The word begins the Lord’s response to what Ananias said in verses 13 and 14. What Ananias said about Saul was correct but it was also negative. Notice how the Lord responded to hearing something negative about another person. The Lord answered as if He never even heard the negative things about Saul. When we hear negative things about other people, particularly other Christians, what is our response?

Do we enjoy hearing negative things about other people?

4. “GO”

The word implies looking ahead rather than backward. For Ananias to obey this word would mean he would have to be looking ahead rather than looking over his shoulder. He would be making progress and going forward rather than standing still or going back.

**Acts 9:11,13,15 “AND THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”
“BUT ANANIAS ANSWERED,”
“BUT THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”**

5. “GO”

The word tells us the Lord was calling Ananias to do something he had never done before. Just because we have never done something is no excuse not to obey. Often the Lord calls us to do something we have never done before to teach us to depend on Him and deepen our faith.

6. “GO”

The word was not spoken to several people to go pray for Saul. The Lord was speaking to only one person named Ananias. He was alone. At times in our lives obedience to the Lord can seem very lonely.

**Acts 9:11,13,15 “AND THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”
“BUT ANANIAS ANSWERED,”
“BUT THE LORD SAID TO HIM,”**

7. “GO”

The word shows the Lord did not give in to disobedience or excuses.

We show wisdom to do likewise! The Lord did not let Ananias do what he wanted, but enabled Ananias to do what the Lord wanted. The Lord was not looking so much for ability in Ananias, but availability. Most of us do not have the ability to do what the Lord wants, but what we can give Him is our availability!

Before Ananias could help Saul he needed to realize he needed help. We need help before helping others! If you do not think you need help then it is obvious you really need help! The Lord called Ananias to do something outside of his comfort zone, but within the Comforter's zone! The Lord leads us in the same way. Ananias was weak and we are as well. But the Lord is very strong. The Lord wants to take those who are incapable and make them invincible.

**Acts 9:13 “BUT ANANIAS ANSWERED,
“LORD, I HAVE HEARD FROM MANY ABOUT THIS MAN,”**

Our study of this part of verse 13 can be divided into three points.

1. “BUT ANANIAS ANSWERED,”

In verse 10 Ananias had said, **“BEHOLD, HERE AM I, LORD.”**

Then in verse 11 and 12 the Lord gave Ananias instructions for him to do concerning Saul.

There is considerable contrast to the words Ananias spoke in verse 10 compared to verse 13.

Ananias was willing to do God’s will until he found out what it was.

Do we rashly say we want to do God’s will, then when we find out what it is we try to avoid it?

**Acts 9:13 “BUT ANANIAS ANSWERED,
“LORD, I HAVE HEARD FROM MANY ABOUT THIS MAN,”**

2. “LORD,”

It is the first word spoken by Ananias. The “LORD” came first with Ananias. Does the “LORD” come first in our lives? The “LORD” was mentioned in the words Ananias spoke. Is the “LORD” mentioned in our speech?

The word “LORD” introduces what Ananias was praying. The sentence he spoke was a prayer. Ananias was a man of prayer. Ananias was being very specific about what was concerning him. Ananias was afraid of Saul and he was pouring out his heart to the Lord.

Do we pour out our hearts to the Lord or to other people?

**Acts 9:13 “BUT ANANIAS ANSWERED,
“LORD, I HAVE HEARD FROM MANY ABOUT THIS MAN,”**

3. “I HAVE HEARD FROM MANY ABOUT THIS MAN,”

These words speak about the past tense. Ananias’ attitude towards Saul was based on past experience. Ananias knew about how Saul had been in the past but not how Saul was in the present. We might hold certain negative attitudes about another Christian based on what they did wrong in the past. But as was the case here, Saul was changed by the Lord and was not the same person as he was in the past. We need to be careful not to think someone will always remain the way they were in the past.

**Acts 9:13 “BUT ANANIAS ANSWERED,
“LORD, I HAVE HEARD FROM MANY ABOUT THIS MAN,”**

In Philippians 2:13,

**“FOR IT IS GOD WHO IS AT WORK IN YOU, BOTH TO WILL AND TO WORK FOR
HIS GOOD PLEASURE.”**

The Lord changes people when they are surrendered to His will. Ananias had based his opinion about Paul on what he heard from other people. Fear was governing him rather than what the Lord said. Please note the word **“MANY”** and understand we too hear many things that contradict what the Scripture says. We need to be very careful what and who we listen to.

In Mark 4:24 it says,

“TAKE CARE WHAT YOU LISTEN TO.”

Acts 9:15 “GO, FOR HE IS A CHOSEN INSTRUMENT OF MINE,”

With the Holy Spirit to illuminate these words and help us learn, let us study this verse in two parts.

1. “GO,”

This repeats the first word Jesus spoke to Ananais in verse 11, “GO.”

What Jesus said did not change.

What Jesus said did not have to change!

What had to change was Ananias.

The message did not have to change but the messenger did!

The Lord spoke this same word to another reluctant messenger named Jonah.

In Jonah 1:2, the sentence begins with the word “GO.”

In Jonah 3:2, the Lord’s words begin with the word “GO.”

The message to Jonah was written approximately 900 years before the book of Acts was written. The message did not change even though a considerable period of time period had passed. The Lord does not change. What the Lord says does not change. What does need to change is the messenger.

Acts 9:15 “GO, FOR HE IS A CHOSEN INSTRUMENT OF MINE,”

2. “FOR HE IS A CHOSEN INSTRUMENT OF MINE,”

In these words Jesus did not describe Saul in the way he had been but how he would be in the future. As we approach these words please consider the context they are found in. In verse 13, Ananias said,

“LORD, I HAVE HEARD FROM MANY ABOUT THIS MAN, HOW MUCH HARM HE DID TO THY SAINTS AT JERUSALEM.”

Ananias had heard what people said about Saul and it was discouraging him from obeying the Lord.

Ananias told the Lord about his fears concerning Saul. It is important that we learn from this and tell the Lord all those things that cause us to fear.

Ananias knew about Saul from what he was like in the past.

Ananias remembered Saul from what he used to be like and thought he was still the same.

Acts 9:15 “GO, FOR HE IS A CHOSEN INSTRUMENT OF MINE,”

In Ecclesiastes 7:8 it says,

“THE END OF A MATTER IS BETTER THAN ITS BEGINNING.”

The Lord looks at what a person can be with His grace and not what they were like before getting saved.

When we look at other Christians, do we see them as they were when they were spiritually younger, or do we consider that they have changed as the Holy Spirit has been working in their hearts?

Acts 9:15 "HE IS A CHOSEN INSTRUMENT OF MINE,"

These words remind me of a time when in England and visiting the home where Sir Winston Churchill used to live. In the kitchen of his home were several metal pots and pans. They did not look fancy. They did not look special. They were surprisingly common looking. They looked very ordinary and some were bent and scratched. But what made them special was who owned them. We are like those metal pots and pans.

We may look common and ordinary and have some scratches, but what makes us special is who owns us, the Lord Jesus Christ!

Acts 9:17 “THEN ANANIAS WENT TO THE HOUSE AND ENTERED IT. PLACING HIS HANDS ON SAUL, HE SAID, “BROTHER SAUL, THE LORD JESUS, WHO APPEARED TO YOU ON THE ROAD AS YOU WERE COMING HERE, HAS SENT ME SO THAT YOU MAY SEE AGAIN AND BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.”

For this present study of verse 17 and the being filled with the Holy Spirit, we shall highlight the following two parts.

1. “THEN ANANIAS”

In verse 17 Ananias laid hands on Saul and he was filled with the Holy Spirit. This is the first instance in the book of Acts where an ordinary believer imparted the Holy Spirit. Now a question arises, did Saul speak in tongues? The answer to that question is found in 1 Corinthians 14:18 where Paul said, **“I THANK GOD, I SPEAK IN TONGUES MORE THAN YOU ALL.”**

Now consider when Saul was filled with the Holy Spirit.

In Acts 9 verses 4 to 6 is the description of Saul’s conversion.

Then in verse 9 we learn that three days passed after Jesus had appeared to Saul. We learn from Saul’s example that being filled with the Holy Spirit was an experience that occurred after conversion.

Acts 9:17 “THEN ANANIAS WENT TO THE HOUSE AND ENTERED IT. PLACING HIS HANDS ON SAUL, HE SAID, “BROTHER SAUL, THE LORD JESUS, WHO APPEARED TO YOU ON THE ROAD AS YOU WERE COMING HERE, HAS SENT ME SO THAT YOU MAY SEE AGAIN AND BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.”

2. “BROTHER SAUL,”

In verse 13 Ananias referred to Saul as **“THIS MAN.”** In using these words Ananias saw Saul as just a non-believer. Now Ananias refers to Saul as **“BROTHER SAUL.”** Now Saul was a brother, which communicates, him as being in the Christian family whereas before he was just **“THIS MAN,”** a stranger. When the Lord saved Saul he became part of a family.

When the Lord saves someone they become part of His family.

Acts 9:26 “AND WHEN HE HAD COME TO JERUSALEM, HE WAS TRYING TO ASSOCIATE WITH THE DISCIPLES; AND THEY WERE AFRAID OF HIM, NOT BELIEVING HE WAS A DISCIPLE.”

For our study of this verse we shall highlight the following two parts.

1. “AND WHEN HE HAD COME TO JERUSALEM, HE WAS TRYING TO ASSOCIATE WITH THE DISCIPLES.”

In the course of our lives, if we ever move to a new church, we are to do like Paul did. When Paul came to Jerusalem and was trying to associate with the brethren, he was met with suspicion. In this verse we learn the disciples were not interested in the fact he was a Christian nor were they interested in what he had been doing as a Christian. Paul was viewed as cunning rather than credible! Perhaps some of us experience something similar when we go to a new church because in Proverbs 30:5 it says,

“EVERY WORD OF GOD IS TESTED.”

Acts 9:26 “AND WHEN HE HAD COME TO JERUSALEM, HE WAS TRYING TO ASSOCIATE WITH THE DISCIPLES; AND THEY WERE AFRAID OF HIM, NOT BELIEVING HE WAS A DISCIPLE.”

As we follow Jesus, the word of God becomes part of our experience.

In verse 27 it says

“BARNABAS TOOK HIM AND BROUGHT HIM TO THE APOSTLES.”

Paul was introduced to the church leaders. It is important to follow this pattern and meet the leaders in the new church you are moving to.

2. “AND THEY WERE AFRAID OF HIM, NOT BELIEVING HE WAS A DISCIPLE.”

We find the words “AFRAID” and “NOT BELIEVING” stand out. When we fear, it indicates we are not believing what the Bible says nor acting upon what the Bible says. Fear and doubt are close cousins! Behind fear is a lie.

Acts 9:31 “...GOING ON IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD AND IN THE COMFORT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT...”

This part of verse 31 reflects what Jesus taught in Luke 12:5-7. In those three verses Jesus taught on the fear of the Lord, then provided comfort to His hearers and here that same harmony of thought is expressed. With this brief observation please consider this verse as follows.

1. “GOING ON IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD”

These words refer to the church in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria going on in the fear of the Lord and the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

Are we doing the same?

Are we going on in the fear of the Lord?

Are we careful or careless when it comes to obeying the word of God?

How we answer that question will determine if we are **“GOING ON IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD.”**

**Acts 9:31 “...GOING ON IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD
AND IN THE COMFORT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT...”**

The words “GOING ON” show progress and increase. Are we experiencing this in our lives? If we do not have the fear of the Lord in our hearts then we will not progress. In Isaiah 66:2 it says,

**“THIS IS THE ONE I ESTEEM: HE WHO IS HUMBLE AND CONTRITE IN SPIRIT,
AND TREMBLES AT MY WORD.”**

Do we tremble at the word of God or has it become too familiar to us? In Jeremiah 15:6 it says,

**“YOU WHO HAVE FORSAKEN ME,” DECLARES THE LORD, YOU KEEP GOING
BACKWARD.”**

We are either going on or we are going back! When the word of God is rejected, backsliding is accepted! Progress in the Christian life is directly related to having the fear of the Lord. If there is no fear of God then progress, or spiritual growth will be seriously stunted.

**Acts 9:31 “...GOING ON IN THE FEAR OF THE LORD
AND IN THE COMFORT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT...”**

2. “AND IN THE COMFORT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT”

The order this verse is written is very important. For those who are going on in the fear of the Lord will recognize the need of comfort, and encouragement that comes from the Holy Spirit. As we obey God, and tremble at His word and seek to obey Him, we are very often going against the flow and so few are willing to do the same without compromising.

As we obey the Lord, and are constantly surrounded by a world that does not fear God we can become discouraged and tempted to just give up. That is why we need the comfort of the Holy Spirit. When we experience discomfort that is when we need comfort!

Acts 9:32 "HE CAME DOWN ALSO TO THE SAINTS WHO LIVED AT LYDDA."

From this verse please give attention to the words in three parts.

1. "HE CAME DOWN"

These words convey an attitude of humility. From this verse we as well learn the saints lived at Lydda. Peter came down demonstrates he was willing to come down to where people were living. The question we need to ask ourselves is, are we willing to come down, to humble ourselves?

2. "THE SAINTS"

Here we learn about saints. In the Bible, "**SAINTS**" are a set aside, redeemed people. The word refers to us who are genuine Christians. The word "SAINT" is wrongly used to describe only select persons.

In the Matthew Henry Commentary it says,

"The Christians are called saints, not only some particular eminent ones, as saint Peter and saint Paul, but every sincere professor of the faith of Christ."

In Psalms 16:3 it says, "**AS FOR THE SAINTS WHO ARE IN THE LAND, THEY ARE THE GLORIOUS ONES IN WHOM IS ALL MY DELIGHT.**"

**Acts 9:32 "HE CAME DOWN
ALSO TO THE SAINTS WHO LIVED AT LYDDA."**

3. "LIVED AT LYDDA."

When we read this, one reaction or question might come to mind.

We might say, where is Lydda? Let's face it, Lydda was not a famous city, in fact, it was just a village. But what occurred here is significant.

In verses 33 and 34 is mentioned a man named Aeneas, he was paralyzed eight years, and he was healed in the name of Jesus Christ.

Even in places we might be tempted to think are insignificant, the Lord can do extraordinary miracles.

**Acts 9:40 “BUT PETER SENT THEM ALL OUT AND KNELT DOWN AND PRAYED,
AND TURNING TO THE BODY, HE SAID, “TABITHA, ARISE.”**

From these words the Lord enables us to see four thoughts that will benefit our walk as Christians.

1.“BUT PETER SENT THEM ALL OUT”

In this verse Peter sent the people out before he knelt to pray for Tabitha. When we look at this situation we see that Peter followed a very similar pattern to what Jesus did in Matthew 9:25, **“BUT WHEN THE CROWD HAD BEEN PUT OUT.”** Peter followed the model Jesus gave.

2. “AND KNELT DOWN AND PRAYED,”

Next we see in this verse Peter knelt and prayed. When was the last time we knelt and prayed? If it has been a long time, then kneel and spend a long time praying right now.

**Acts 9:40 “BUT PETER SENT THEM ALL OUT AND KNELT DOWN AND PRAYED,
AND TURNING TO THE BODY, HE SAID, “TABITHA, ARISE.”**

3. “AND TURNING TO THE BODY,”

In verse 37 a disciple named Tabitha became sick and died. Now in this verse the Lord used Peter to raise her from the dead. This incredible miracle took place at the hands of Peter. Yet as we read through the book of Acts we do not read about Peter boasting about it.

In verse 42 it says,

“AND IT BECAME KNOWN ALL OVER JOPPA.”

Other people talked about the miracle,

but we do not see Peter broadcasting it.

**Acts 9:40 “BUT PETER SENT THEM ALL OUT AND KNELT DOWN AND PRAYED,
AND TURNING TO THE BODY, HE SAID, “TABITHA, ARISE.”**

4. “HE SAID, “TABITHA, ARISE.”

In this verse is the record of the Lord working through Peter to raise Tabitha from the dead. Now we look at chapter 10:28 where the Lord dealt with racial prejudice in Peter’s heart. The Lord used Peter to raise Tabitha from the dead yet there were still areas in his heart needing to be changed. What this teaches us is the Lord can use us even though there are still areas in our hearts needing to be changed. If we wait to be perfect before God can use us then we will have a very long wait! We also learn that someone can be used by God to do incredible things, but they still need God to work more in their lives just as all of us need.

**Acts 9:42 “AND IT BECAME KNOWN ALL OVER JOPPA,
AND MANY BELIEVED IN THE LORD.”**

When we read this verse we immediately think, what became known all over Joppa? In verse 37 we learn that a lady named Dorcas became sick and died. Then in verse 40 Peter prayed for her to come back to life and she was raised from the dead. What became known was Jesus used Peter to raise Dorcas from the dead. Now we return to our verse and see that as a result of this miracle news spread all over and many believed in Jesus Christ. A miracle from God was the spark that caused many people to believe in the Lord Jesus. This same pattern is seen in Matthew 9:25 with Jesus raising a girl from the dead. The result of what Jesus did was in Matthew 9:26,

“AND THIS NEWS WENT OUT INTO ALL THAT LAND.”

It is important to remember that in the time of this miracle there were no TV's, newspapers, internet, tracts or any modern forms of communication to spread the gospel. Yet the word spread as a direct result of a miracle. Today we have plenty of media, but little miracles. We need to follow Jesus as Peter did. Peter followed the pattern that Jesus did, and we are wise to not try to improve on what Jesus did. In Matthew 4:19 Jesus said, **“FOLLOW ME.”**

Acts 10:1 “NOW THERE WAS A CERTAIN MAN AT CAESAREA NAMED CORNELIUS,”

In chapter 10 Cornelius and Peter are central figures. In verse two we learn five important things about Cornelius which are very good examples for us to follow.

1. “A DEVOTED MAN,”
2. “AND ONE WHO FEARED GOD”
3. “WITH ALL HIS HOUSEHOLD,”
4. “AND GAVE MANY ALMS TO THE JEWISH PEOPLE,”
5. “AND PRAYED TO GOD CONTINUALLY.”

These words are describing Cornelius. It is interesting the person describing Cornelius is not himself. Luke, the writer of Acts is talking about Cornelius and not Cornelius talking about himself. Luke is praising Cornelius and not Cornelius praising himself.

Acts 10:1 “NOW THERE WAS A CERTAIN MAN AT CAESAREA NAMED CORNELIUS,”

In Proverbs 27:2 it says,

“LET ANOTHER PRAISE YOU, AND NOT YOUR OWN MOUTH.”

A respected disciple like Luke was describing this man Cornelius.

When a spiritual man like Luke is describing a person there is considerable credibility attached.

What opinion do spiritual people have about you? To further confirm what Luke said about this man we turn to verse 22,

**“AND THEY SAID, CORNELIUS, A CENTURION, A RIGHTEOUS AND GOD-
FEARING MAN WELL SPOKEN OF BY THE ENTIRE NATION OF THE JEWS.”**

This was the opinion of people who knew Cornelius. What opinion do people who know us have about us?

Acts 10:3 “HE CLEARLY SAW IN A VISION AN ANGEL OF GOD WHO HAD JUST COME INTO HIM, AND SAID TO HIM, “CORNELIUS!”

Here is an example of an angel appearing to a non Christian. This Scripture also introduces the first word the angel spoke to Cornelius. The thought to highlight here is, yes, an angel did speak to someone who was not yet saved, but what the angel said is vital. Reading through to the end of verse 6 the angel spoke in a manner that would direct Cornelius to where he could hear about Jesus Christ and get saved.

There are real angels from the Lord and there are counterfeits.

In Luke 2:10-11 it says, **“AND THE ANGEL SAID TO THEM, “DO NOT BE AFRAID; FOR BEHOLD, I BRING YOU GOOD NEWS OF A GREAT JOY WHICH SHALL BE FOR ALL THE PEOPLE; FOR TODAY IN THE CITY OF DAVID THERE HAS BEEN BORN FOR YOU A SAVIOR, WHO IS CHRIST THE LORD.”**

As we see from these verses the angel from the Lord directed people towards Jesus Christ. Any angel that does not do that is not from God.

Any angel that a non Christian claims to have seen must be treated with enormous caution.

Acts 10:3 “HE CLEARLY SAW IN A VISION AN ANGEL OF GOD WHO HAD JUST COME INTO HIM, AND SAID TO HIM, “CORNELIUS!”

Any angel that promotes teaching that detracts from Jesus Christ being the Son of God or in anyway detracts from Jesus being the sole means of salvation is not from God. There is no Scriptural basis to say that angels no longer appear to believers in Christ. In the book of Acts there are five examples,

Acts 8:26, Acts 10:3, Acts 12:7, Acts 12:23, and Acts 27:23

As we study these examples we find that in all, no one was seeking for angels. The angels appeared unexpectedly. This observation teaches us we are not to seek after angels, nor are we in any way to worship them as Colossians 2:18 and Revelation 19:10 cautions against.

Here it would seem timely to refer to Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem, “*Scripture gives us no warrant to seek for appearances of angels to us. They manifested themselves unsought. To seek such appearances would seem to indicate an unhealthy curiosity or a desire for some kind of spectacular event rather than a love for God and devotion to Him and His work.*”

Acts 10:3 “HE CLEARLY SAW IN A VISION AN ANGEL OF GOD WHO HAD JUST COME INTO HIM, AND SAID TO HIM, “CORNELIUS!”

The book of Acts in a sense does not end. What we see happening in it should be ongoing, and that includes angels from the Lord intervening in the affairs of people. With this view we need of course to exercise caution. Gal. 1:8 says, **“BUT EVEN THOUGH WE, OR AN ANGEL FROM HEAVEN, SHOULD PREACH TO YOU A GOSPEL CONTRARY TO THAT WHICH WE HAVE PREACHED TO YOU, LET HIM BE ACCURSED.”**

Any supposed angel that teaches anything contrary or additional to the Bible is demonic in origin.

Acts 10:14 “SURELY NOT, LORD!”

These words that quote Peter are from the NIV.

In NASB the words say, “BY NO MEANS, LORD.”

The words “SURELY NOT” and “BY NO MEANS,” contradict the word “LORD.” From verse 9 we learn that Peter had gone up on the roof to pray. Then as we read on to verse 13 a voice said, “GET UP, PETER, KILL AND EAT.” How Peter replied in verse 14 shows he understood the voice was the Lord’s voice. These words show us that although Peter was a man who prayed, he still disobeyed what the Lord told him to do. Peter prayed. Then disobeyed! After we pray, do we disobey?

Peter called Jesus “LORD” but was not willing to obey Him. Are we like Peter? Do we easily use the word “LORD” in reference to Jesus, but our actions are actually saying “SURELY NOT.” It is one thing to call Jesus our “LORD” but do we mean it? The words Peter said may have even sounded quite polite. Polite disobedience is still disobedience.

**Acts 10:15 “DO NOT CALL ANYTHING IMPURE
THAT GOD HAS MADE CLEAN.”**

In this verse we learn the Lord was correcting Peter. Imagine Peter, a man who saw Jesus transfigured, miracles, demons cast out, people healed, walked on water, and wrote two books that are part of the New Testament still needed correction. If Peter needed correction we are very foolish to dare to think we do not need correction.

Now in Acts 11:4 it says,

**“PETER BEGAN AND EXPLAINED EVERYTHING TO THEM PRECISELY AS IT HAD
HAPPENED.”**

God had corrected Peter's heart, then Peter was able to teach those in Jerusalem, and God corrected their hearts. Peter needed to be corrected and changed before he could preach to others the need to be corrected and changed.

**Acts 10:15 “DO NOT CALL ANYTHING IMPURE
THAT GOD HAS MADE CLEAN.”**

A preacher must preach to himself before he preaches to people.

We cannot lead where we have never been led!

We need help before we can help people! Peter had been following Jesus for some time. He had seen incredible miracles, yet he still needed areas of his heart changed. We may have been following Jesus for awhile, perhaps seen incredible miracles, but the fact remains we all need our hearts changed until we go to heaven. If you think you have arrived you have not! Another thought seen here is Peter is telling that the Lord corrected him. He is talking about himself who needed to be changed rather than other people needing to be changed. Do we talk about our own weaknesses or other people's weaknesses?

Acts 10:22 “CORNELIUS, A CENTURION, A RIGHTEOUS AND GOD-FEARING MAN WELL SPOKEN OF BY THE ENTIRE NATION OF THE JEWS, WAS DIVINELY DIRECTED BY A HOLY ANGEL TO SEND FOR YOU TO COME TO HIS HOUSE AND HEAR A MESSAGE FROM YOU.”

In verse 2 is a lot of detail expounded on about Cornelius. When we read these words we might be tempted at first glance to think Cornelius would be the ideal church member from what we learn in this verse.

Verse 2 **“A DEVOTED MAN,”**

Verse 2 **“AND ONE WHO FEARED GOD”**

Verse 2 **“AND GAVE MANY ALMS TO THE JEWISH PEOPLE,”**

Verse 2 **“AND PRAYED TO GOD CONTINUALLY.”**

Now in verse 22 we again see a glowing report of what type of person Cornelius was. The man sounds ideal, so why are all his outstanding qualities being repeated? If we only give superficial attention to reading about Cornelius we might think he is already saved. But the phrase, **“WELL SPOKEN OF BY THE ENTIRE NATION OF THE JEWS,”** contrasts to how Timothy was described in Acts 16:2, **“HE IS WELL SPOKEN OF BY THE BRETHREN.”**

Acts 10:22 “CORNELIUS, A CENTURION, A RIGHTEOUS AND GOD-FEARING MAN WELL SPOKEN OF BY THE ENTIRE NATION OF THE JEWS, WAS DIVINELY DIRECTED BY A HOLY ANGEL TO SEND FOR YOU TO COME TO HIS HOUSE AND HEAR A MESSAGE FROM YOU.”

In the case of Cornelius, Jews spoke well of him.

In the case of Timothy, Christians spoke well of him.

Then the last phrase of Acts 10:22 gives us even more clarity to Cornelius,

“TO COME TO HIS HOUSE AND HEAR A MESSAGE FROM YOU.”

Although Cornelius was a fine person, there was a message he needed to hear from Peter. From verse 36 to 43 Peter focused on Jesus, His death and resurrection, and everyone who believes in Jesus receives forgiveness of sins. Cornelius had undoubtedly done many fine things. He was a very devoted person, but he still need to be saved through Jesus Christ.

People might vote someone most devoted, but if that person has not had their sins forgiven they will not be promoted to heaven.

Acts 10:22 “CORNELIUS, A CENTURION, A RIGHTEOUS AND GOD-FEARING MAN WELL SPOKEN OF BY THE ENTIRE NATION OF THE JEWS, WAS DIVINELY DIRECTED BY A HOLY ANGEL TO SEND FOR YOU TO COME TO HIS HOUSE AND HEAR A MESSAGE FROM YOU.”

In Let The Nations Be Glad, John Piper said,

“ So Luke is not trying to tell us in this book that devote, God - fearing people, who practice what’s right as best they know how are already saved and without any need of the gospel. Devoutness and works of righteousness and religious sincerity do not solve the problems of sin. The only hope is to believe in Jesus.”

People might be very devoted as is seen in Acts 2:5 but still need to be saved as is seen in Acts 2:40.

**Acts 10:25 “CORNELIUS MET HIM,
AND FELL AT HIS FEET AND WORSHIPED HIM.”**

For our study of this part of verse 25 we shall examine it in three parts.

1. “CORNELIUS MET HIM,”

In Acts 10:23 it says,

“SOME OF THE BRETHREN FROM JOPPA ACCOMPANIED HIM.”

Then in Acts 11:12 it describes that there were six brethren who were Peter. But here it says Cornelius met Peter and not “Cornelius met Peter and the six brethren.” Peter is mentioned but not the other men. When they came in the house of Cornelius it was apparent that Peter was the center of attention and not the six brethren.

Do we secretly resent someone else being mentioned and not us?

Do we secretly resent someone else being the center of attention and not us?

If we resent someone being mentioned and we are not then we need to mention that to the Lord. If we resent someone being the center of attention and not us then we need to mention that to the Lord.

**Acts 10:25 “CORNELIUS MET HIM,
AND FELL AT HIS FEET AND WORSHIPED HIM.”**

2. “AND FELL AT HIS FEET”

Imagine Cornelius falling down at the feet of Peter to worship him.

Peter would have at that point then been higher and Cornelius would be lower. In the next verse we learn whether or not Peter liked being higher than another person. In Acts 10:26 he said, **“STAND UP, I TOO AM JUST A MAN.”** Evidently Peter did not want to be considered higher than another person. Wanting to be above other people, it shows we look down on people! Do we secretly want to be considered higher than other people? If we like being above other people we need to lower ourselves before the Lord.

**Acts 10:25 “CORNELIUS MET HIM,
AND FELL AT HIS FEET AND WORSHIPED HIM.”**

3. AND WORSHIPED HIM.”

It certainly appears Cornelius considered Peter more important than the six men with him. But Peter did not want to be considered more important than the other people. Do we secretly want to be considered more important than other people? If we want to be considered more important than other people it is important we talk to the Lord about it.

Acts 10:26 “STAND UP, I TOO AM JUST A MAN.”

In the preceding verse Cornelius fell down and worshiped Peter. Now in this verse is Peter's immediate response to this action. Before we go further please consider what type of person Cornelius was. In verse 22 it describes him as, **“A RIGHTEOUS AND GOD FEARING MAN WELL SPOKEN OF BY THE ENTIRE NATION OF THE JEWS.”**

He was such a person yet he fell down to worship Peter. Although he was a God-fearing man he still succumbed to exalting a mere man. In our hearts do we do the same as this man with servants of the Lord? Especially servants whom God has used mightily. There is a very real danger of exalting a preacher whom we especially respect, into some sort of superstar status. Just as the world has superstars in the sports and entertainment world, we Christians are at times tempted to do the same with pastors or Bible teachers we love and admire. In this verse Peter clarified how our attitudes are to be towards a man whom God is or has used to advance the Kingdom of God. The words **“I TOO AM JUST A MAN”** remind us that the person we hold in high esteem is nothing without the grace of God.

**Acts 10:28 "...BUT GOD HAS SHOWN ME THAT I SHOULD NOT CALL ANY
MAN IMPURE OR UNCLEAN."**

This verse is found sandwiched between the two accounts of the vision the Lord gave to Peter. In verse 9 to 16 and then in Acts 11:4 to 10 are the accounts of the vision. What is significant is that in this verse God had dealt with Peter's heart through the vision. The sins of exclusiveness and racial prejudice had been addressed in Peter's heart. Not only were these sins addressed but Peter admitted he was wrong. Peter boasted in his own weaknesses rather than weaknesses of others. His admitting his own weaknesses is mirrored in the book of Jonah. In that book we recall Jonah disobeyed the Lord and tried to escape from preaching to the people of Nineveh. Jonah rebelled against the Lord. Now let us ask ourselves, who wrote the book of Jonah? It is widely viewed that Jonah wrote the book of Jonah. Jonah boasted in his weaknesses rather than the weaknesses in others.

**Acts 10:28 “...BUT GOD HAS SHOWN ME THAT I SHOULD NOT CALL ANY
MAN IMPURE OR UNCLEAN.”**

Now consider three things about Peter.

1. Peter admitted he was wrong. Do we admit we are wrong?
2. Peter boasted in his own weaknesses. Do we boast in our weaknesses?
3. Peter did not boast in other people's weaknesses. Do we boast in other people's weaknesses?

Now let us carefully and honestly look at the following eight questions that examine our hearts.

1. Are we quick to say we are right?
2. Are we quick to say we are wrong?
3. Are we quick to say other people are right?
4. Are we quick to say other people are wrong?
5. Are we slow to say we are right?
6. Are we slow to say we are wrong?
7. Are we slow to say other people are right?
8. Are we slow to say other people are wrong?

Acts 10:30 “AND CORNELIUS SAID, “FOUR DAYS AGO TO THIS HOUR, I WAS PRAYING IN MY HOUSE DURING THE NINTH HOUR; AND BEHOLD, A MAN STOOD BEFORE ME IN SHINING GARMENTS.”

With the Lord to help us, please consider this verse in three parts.

1. “FOUR DAYS AGO TO THIS HOUR,”

In this verse Cornelius is describing an event that recently happened.

He had experienced something quite supernatural. What he was talking about was not some event from five, ten or more years in the past, but the experience was recent. As we look at this, let us ask ourselves, have we experienced anything supernatural lately? Perhaps we did years ago but are we experiencing a living faith now?

Acts 10:30 “AND CORNELIUS SAID, “FOUR DAYS AGO TO THIS HOUR, I WAS PRAYING IN MY HOUSE DURING THE NINTH HOUR; AND BEHOLD, A MAN STOOD BEFORE ME IN SHINING GARMENTS.”

2. “I WAS PRAYING IN MY HOUSE DURING THE NINTH HOUR;”

From these words we learn Cornelius had a disciplined prayer life. Do we have a disciplined prayer life? Now let us remind ourselves who Cornelius was. Was he a pastor who had plenty of time to spend each day in prayer? No, he was not. From verse 1 of this chapter it says,

“CORNELIUS, A CENTURION OF WHAT WAS CALLED THE ITALIAN COHORT.”

A Centurion was a military officer commanding between 50 to 100 men. He had a lot of responsibilities, but his responsibilities did not come before praying.

Cornelius would be busy commanding so many men but he was not too busy to pray. If we are too busy to pray then we are too busy!

Cornelius described that he was praying in his house. Do you pray in your house? Perhaps you did years ago, but now are you too busy to pray?

If we are too busy to pray, we will be prey! When we do not pray we do stray! Pray, or stray!

Acts 10:30 “AND CORNELIUS SAID, “FOUR DAYS AGO TO THIS HOUR, I WAS PRAYING IN MY HOUSE DURING THE NINTH HOUR; AND BEHOLD, A MAN STOOD BEFORE ME IN SHINING GARMENTS.”

3. “AND BEHOLD, A MAN STOOD BEFORE ME IN SHINING GARMENTS.”

Cornelius was talking about spiritual matters. His conversation was about the things of God rather than worldly and empty chatter. Is our conversation like his? Remember Cornelius was praying and then the Lord allowed him to experience an angelic appearance. What would have happened if he had not been praying? We do not know if he would have experienced what he did. Cornelius had a heart after God and he experienced an angel speaking to him. If we are devoted to the Lord and praying rather than wasting time watching TV or on the internet then the Lord can bless us in ways we would have missed out on.

Acts 10:34 “AND OPENING HIS MOUTH, PETER SAID: I MOST CERTAINLY UNDERSTAND NOW THAT GOD IS NOT ONE TO SHOW PARTIALITY.”

From this verse we shall highlight in two parts the words that Peter spoke.

1. “I MOST CERTAINLY UNDERSTAND NOW”

These words are spoken by Peter in the present tense. At that time in Peter's life God had dealt with a wrong attitude in his heart. In verse 28 Peter said, **“YOU ARE WELL AWARE THAT IT IS AGAINST OUR LAW FOR A JEW TO ASSOCIATE WITH A GENTILE OR VISIT HIM. BUT GOD HAS SHOWN ME THAT I SHOULD NOT CALL ANY MAN IMPURE OR UNCLEAN.”**

Peter had been following Jesus for the three years of our Lord's ministry. He had seen miracles of physical healings, demons expelled, supernatural provision in the feeding of more than five thousand, walking on water and other signs and wonders. But here we see the word **“NOW.”**

After all that Peter had seen and done as a follower of Jesus, there were still areas in his heart needing to be changed.

As we follow Jesus we may see miracles and mighty works of the Lord.

But no matter what our spiritual age is, there are still areas needing to be changed **“NOW.”** Any attitude in me that does not agree with Scripture is wrong and needs to be repented of.

Acts 10:34 “AND OPENING HIS MOUTH, PETER SAID: I MOST CERTAINLY UNDERSTAND NOW THAT GOD IS NOT ONE TO SHOW PARTIALITY.”

2. “GOD IS NOT ONE TO SHOW PARTIALITY.”

From Peter’s words we learn that God does not show partiality, or favoritism. We understand that He does not show favoritism, so we need to compare our attitudes with His.

Do we show partiality? Do we show favoritism?

Do we treat people equally, irregardless of what they have or do?

To answer if we show partiality of favoritism we need to understand what they mean. In James 2:3 it says,

“YOU PAY SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE ONE WHO IS WEARING THE FINE CLOTHES.”

The words **“SPECIAL ATTENTION”** reveal favoritism to someone at the exclusion of another person. We need to understand that favoritism is sin. This sin can manifest in the actions of parents towards their children where one child is liked more than another child. The sin manifests itself when one child is lifted up and another is put down.

Acts 10:35 “FEAR HIM AND DO WHAT IS RIGHT.”

The fear of God is a theme throughout the book of Acts. A chilling example of people who did not fear God is recorded in Acts 5:1 and 2.

Then in Acts 5:11 the fear of God is seen in the early church after God struck dead Ananias and his wife. An important question we need to ask ourselves is; do we fear God? Are we careful in our actions and words in the presence of God?

These words which we are studying come in two parts.

1. “FEAR HIM”

2. “DO WHAT IS RIGHT.”

When there is a fear of God the resulting actions will be doing what is right. When there is not a fear of God the resulting actions will be doing what is wrong. These words communicate a present active awareness of the Lord with us now and consciously walking in reverence before Him now.

Acts 10:38 “YOU KNOW OF JESUS OF NAZARETH, HOW GOD ANOINTED HIM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT AND WITH POWER, AND HOW HE WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD AND HEALING ALL WHO WERE OPPRESSED BY THE DEVIL; FOR GOD WAS WITH HIM.”

With the Lord’s help we can glean much from the following three parts.

1. “YOU KNOW OF JESUS OF NAZARETH, HOW GOD ANOINTED HIM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT AND WITH POWER.”

From this part of the verse we highlight the following words:

“JESUS” “GOD” “HOLY SPIRIT.”

These words clearly show the Trinity.

The doctrine of the Trinity is seen from this verse.

Now may we highlight the words **“YOU KNOW OF JESUS.”**

Friend, do **“YOU KNOW OF JESUS”** or do you know Jesus? Perhaps you have come to church or even involved in various religious activities, but do you know Jesus? Are you born-again?

Acts 10:38 “YOU KNOW OF JESUS OF NAZARETH, HOW GOD ANOINTED HIM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT AND WITH POWER, AND HOW HE WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD AND HEALING ALL WHO WERE OPPRESSED BY THE DEVIL; FOR GOD WAS WITH HIM.”

2. “AND HOW HE WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD”

Jesus faced incredibly diverse circumstances yet He consistently **“WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD.”** In this verse we learn how Jesus was able to continuously go about **“DOING GOOD.”** He was **“ANOINTED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT AND WITH POWER”** and the result was He **“WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD AND HEALING ALL WHO WERE OPPRESSED BY THE DEVIL.”**

In bad situations Jesus did good!

Do we follow our Lord's example? When we are in bad situations, do we do good? Do we go about doing good?

The words **“DOING GOOD”** is present continuous. Have bad things done to you stopped you from continuing on **“DOING GOOD?”**

The Holy Spirit empowered Jesus to do what is described in this verse and it is the same Holy Spirit who enables, and strengthens us to go about **“DOING GOOD.”**

Acts 10:38 “YOU KNOW OF JESUS OF NAZARETH, HOW GOD ANOINTED HIM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT AND WITH POWER, AND HOW HE WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD AND HEALING ALL WHO WERE OPPRESSED BY THE DEVIL; FOR GOD WAS WITH HIM.”

3. “HEALING ALL WHO WERE OPPRESSED BY THE DEVIL;”

These words follow **“DOING GOOD.”** It is Scriptural to be doing good and healing. The two go together. A presentation of the gospel that only emphasizes **“DOING GOOD”** in respect to social needs but is deficient in healing those under Satan’s oppression is an incomplete gospel.

We are to do 1 Timothy 6:18,

“INSTRUCT THEM TO DO GOOD, TO BE RICH IN GOOD WORKS, TO BE GENEROUS AND READY TO SHARE.”

We are to do Mark 16:17,

“AND THESE SIGNS WILL ACCOMPANY THOSE WHO HAVE BELIEVED, IN MY NAME THEY WILL CAST OUT DEMONS.”

Acts 10:38 “YOU KNOW OF JESUS OF NAZARETH, HOW GOD ANOINTED HIM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT AND WITH POWER, AND HOW HE WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD AND HEALING ALL WHO WERE OPPRESSED BY THE DEVIL; FOR GOD WAS WITH HIM.”

In Power Evangelism, John Wimber said,

“What Christians, including evangelicals are often left to follow is a good moral example, not a dynamic, Satan conquering Lord. This results in overly intellectual disciples, certainly not a people who cause demons to tremble.”

Please understand that healing is the result of removing the devil's oppression from people's lives. Demonic oppression is the cause of some, if not many physical sicknesses.

Acts 10:38 “YOU KNOW OF JESUS OF NAZARETH, HOW GOD ANOINTED HIM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT AND WITH POWER, AND HOW HE WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD AND HEALING ALL WHO WERE OPPRESSED BY THE DEVIL; FOR GOD WAS WITH HIM.”

An example of this is seen in Luke 13:11,

“AND A WOMAN WAS THERE WHO HAD BEEN CRIPPLED BY A SPIRIT FOR EIGHTEEN YEARS. SHE WAS BENT OVER AND COULD NOT STRAIGHTEN UP AT ALL.”

This woman was a daughter of Abraham, and she was in the synagogue. Satan caused her to be physically crippled, but Jesus healed her on the Sabbath. I used to suffer from what is referred to as arthritis. I had damage to my upper spine from a High School accident. Prior to the Lord healing me I would get thoughts in my mind telling me “you are getting older, you are getting arthritis.” I believed these thoughts because I had been injured and the pain was where the injury had been. Since I was from Canada, which has cold winters, I thought I had to live with arthritis.

Acts 10:38 “YOU KNOW OF JESUS OF NAZARETH, HOW GOD ANOINTED HIM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT AND WITH POWER, AND HOW HE WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD AND HEALING ALL WHO WERE OPPRESSED BY THE DEVIL; FOR GOD WAS WITH HIM.”

But in His mercy, the Holy Spirit highlighted Philippians 4:8,
“FINALLY, BRETHREN, WHATEVER IS TRUE, WHATEVER IS HONORABLE, WHATEVER IS RIGHT, WHATEVER IS PURE, WHATEVER IS LOVELY, WHATEVER IS OF GOOD REPUTE, IF THERE IS ANY EXCELLENCE AND IF ANYTHING WORTHY OF PRAISE, LET YOUR MIND DWELL ON THESE THINGS.”

The words “WHATEVER IS TRUE” and “LET YOUR MIND DWELL ON THESE THINGS” stood out in respect to this thought about getting arthritis. It was only a thought telling me I was getting arthritis, and I did not know if it was true or not. Shortly after the Holy Spirit had highlighted that verse, I was involved in a counseling session. At the end of the session the pastor’s wife and an elder asked if I wanted prayer for anything. I responded yes and they prayed.

Acts 10:38 “YOU KNOW OF JESUS OF NAZARETH, HOW GOD ANOINTED HIM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT AND WITH POWER, AND HOW HE WENT ABOUT DOING GOOD AND HEALING ALL WHO WERE OPPRESSED BY THE DEVIL; FOR GOD WAS WITH HIM.”

Through the gift of discerning of spirits they saw in the spirit something that resembled talons latched onto my neck in the very spot where my neck hurt. In the name of Jesus Christ they commanded a spirit of infirmity to go from my spine. At that particular time I was not in any pain so I was not sure if anything had happened. But about two weeks later the symptoms returned. The symptoms of the same pain returned a few times shortly after being prayed for but the Lord gave me the faith to command the symptoms to leave in Jesus' name! When I prayed the pain symptoms gradually loosened from my neck. The Lord healed me from a demonic oppression. This situation happened more than twenty five years ago, as of the time of writing this, and the symptoms of arthritis have never returned. Jesus still does go about **“DOING GOOD”** and healing those oppressed by the devil. Praise His holy name!

Acts 10:38 "...THE DEVIL;"

In the New American Standard translation of the book of Acts, the word "DEVIL" appears only twice, in this verse and in Acts 13:10. The reason for mentioning the devil is because it is a temptation to put too much emphasis on him instead of our Lord Jesus. It is important that when reading verse 38 the devil is mentioned in context to Jesus defeating him. The devil is only referred to as one who has been defeated by Jesus Christ. When someone puts too much emphasis on the devil's power they are not being true to Scripture. Jesus Christ defeated the devil on the cross, and our Lord's power over the evil one is without comparison. Then we note that Satan is only referred to twice, in Acts 5:3, and Acts 26:18.

In striking contrast to this we find Jesus is referred to more than seventy times in the book of Acts. The overwhelming emphasis is on Jesus Christ. Do we talk about what the devil is doing to us or do we talk about what Jesus is doing for us?

Acts 10:45 “THE CIRCUMCISED BELIEVERS WHO HAD COME WITH PETER WERE ASTONISHED THAT THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT HAD BEEN POURED OUT EVEN ON THE GENTILES.”

From this verse and the beginning of verse 46 we can ask and answer three important questions concerning the doctrine of Holy Spirit Baptism.

1. Who had received the Holy Spirit?

The answer to this question is,

“THE HOLY SPIRIT HAD BEEN POURED OUT EVEN ON THE GENTILES.”

2. Why were the circumcised believers astonished?

The answer to this question is in verse 46,

“FOR THEY HEARD THEM SPEAKING IN TONGUES.”

May we note that these believers were not embarrassed or ashamed to speak in tongues. Are we embarrassed or ashamed to speak in tongues?

Acts 10:45 “THE CIRCUMCISED BELIEVERS WHO HAD COME WITH PETER WERE ASTONISHED THAT THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT HAD BEEN POURED OUT EVEN ON THE GENTILES.”

3. What was the evidence that the believers were baptized with the Holy Spirit?

The answer to this question is seen in verse 46,

“FOR THEY HEARD THEM SPEAKING IN TONGUES.”

When believers in Jesus Christ receive the Holy Spirit, or are baptized in the Holy Spirit, the Scriptural way of knowing this has occurred is they will speak in tongues.

In *They Shall Expel Demons*, Derek Prince said,

“ In the book of Acts we see a divine precedent: the experience of the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius who received the Holy Spirit when Peter visited them. These were not Jews seeking to follow the Law of Moses. They were Gentiles, and this was probably the first time any of them had heard the Gospel. Yet the Holy Spirit fell on them and they began speaking with tongues. ”

Acts 10:46 “FOR THEY HEARD THEM SPEAKING IN TONGUES,”

To study this verse it is helpful to read verses 44 and 45 to see the context.

Verse 44 says,

“THE HOLY SPIRIT FELL UPON ALL THOSE WHO WERE LISTENING TO THE MESSAGE.”

Verse 45 says,

“THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT HAD BEEN POURED OUT UPON THE GENTILES ALSO.”

Verse 44 tells us something quite remarkable happened.

The Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles who were assembled hearing the gospel.

Verse 45 tells us the Holy Spirit was poured out on these people.

With verses 44 and 45 in mind we now return to verse 46.

It teaches how we know the Holy Spirit had been poured out.

It teaches there was evidence that the Holy Spirit was poured out.

Acts 10:46 “FOR THEY HEARD THEM SPEAKING IN TONGUES,”

It teaches

“FOR THEY WERE HEARING THEM SPEAKING WITH TONGUES AND EXALTING GOD.”

It teaches the evidence of Holy Spirit baptism is speaking in tongues.

It teaches as well they were exalting God. In the New International Commentary on the New Testament, F. F. Bruce said,

“The descent of the Holy Spirit on these Gentiles was outwardly manifested in much the same way as it had been when the original disciples received the Spirit at Pentecost: they spoke with tongues and proclaimed mighty works of God. ”

Acts 10:46 “FOR THEY WERE HEARING THEM SPEAKING WITH TONGUES AND EXALTING GOD.”

As we study this part of verse 46 let us divide it into the following two parts.

1. “FOR THEY WERE HEARING”

These were new believers. They had just heard about salvation through Jesus Christ. It would seem these new believers were not shy or embarrassed to speak in tongues where other people could hear them.

2. “SPEAKING WITH TONGUES AND EXALTING GOD.”

When a person is speaking in tongues they will find their focus, their minds, their attention turn from the circumstances of life and turn to the Lord Jesus. The result so often when praying, or speaking in tongues is the desire to magnify God. The words **“AND EXALTING GOD”** go together with speaking with tongues. The desire to magnify and worship God follows as we speak in tongues.

Speaking in tongues causes our hearts to be filled with praise to God.

Speaking in tongues lifts up Jesus instead of speaking to lift us up.

**Acts 10:47 “SURELY NO ONE CAN REFUSE THE WATER
FOR THESE TO BE BAPTIZED WHO HAVE RECEIVED THE HOLY SPIRIT
JUST AS WE DID, CAN HE?”**

In the preceding verses we learn that the Lord baptized Gentiles in the Holy Spirit. As we read through the book of Acts we see that believers were already baptized in water before the Holy Spirit baptism. But here we see the Lord baptizing in the Holy Spirit before water baptism. This shows us that water baptism, although very important in our Christian faith, is not required for salvation.

In the Annotated Bible, Arno Gaebele said ,

“ This shows the place water baptism holds on the ground of grace. ”

Acts 11:4 “PETER BEGAN AND EXPLAINED EVERYTHING TO THEM PRECISELY AS IT HAD HAPPENED.”

We begin with an overview of what took place prior to this verse.

In Acts 10:28 God dealt with racial prejudice in Peter's heart.

Then in Acts 10:25 to 33 Peter was treated with great respect.

In verse 44 while Peter was preaching there was an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Then chapter 10 concludes with Peter being shown so much love, acceptance and respect that the believers wanted him to stay longer.

Now in chapter 11 Peter arrived in Jerusalem. He was not greeted with respect or congratulated. He was rebuked rather than revered. He was greeted with considerable criticism by people full of the same racial prejudice that God had dealt with in his heart.

Acts 11:4 “PETER BEGAN AND EXPLAINED EVERYTHING TO THEM PRECISELY AS IT HAD HAPPENED.”

But here Peter patiently started to explain. His brethren had wronged him with their criticism but he did not retaliate or get offended. His actions reflected the words of 2 Timothy 2:24,

“AND THE LORD’S BOND-SERVANT MUST NOT BE QUARRELSOME, BUT BE KIND TO ALL, ABLE TO TEACH, PATIENT WHEN WRONGED.”

Peter had been convicted of racial prejudice, and now he was patient with those with racial prejudice. We are more merciful to others when their sins are the same as the ones the Holy Spirit has already convicted us of.

God was merciful to him and now he was merciful to others.

In Luke 6:36 it says,

“BE MERCIFUL, JUST AS YOUR FATHER IS MERCIFUL.”

**Acts 11:4 “EXPLAINED EVERYTHING TO THEM
PRECISELY AS IT HAD HAPPENED.”**

From verse 5 to 17 Peter described to the other believers all that had happened to him in chapter 10. For this study please give your attention to the word **“EVERYTHING.”**

Now look at the following seven reasons Peter explained **“EVERYTHING”** and consider some possible reasons we do not explain **“EVERYTHING.”**

Acts 11:4 “EXPLAINED EVERYTHING TO THEM PRECISELY AS IT HAD HAPPENED.”

1. Peter explained “EVERYTHING” since he had obeyed God.
Not explaining “EVERYTHING” implies we have not obeyed God.
2. Peter explained “EVERYTHING” since he respected others.
Not explaining “EVERYTHING” implies we do not respect others.
3. Peter explained “EVERYTHING” since he did nothing wrong.
Not explaining “EVERYTHING” implies we did something wrong.
4. Peter explained “EVERYTHING” since he had nothing to hide.
Not explaining “EVERYTHING” implies we have something to hide.
5. Peter explained “EVERYTHING” since he had a clear conscience.
Not explaining “EVERYTHING” implies we have a dirty conscience.
6. Peter explained “EVERYTHING” since he sought to be honest.
Not explaining “EVERYTHING” implies we want to be dishonest.
7. Peter explained “EVERYTHING” since he sought to be straight
Not explaining “EVERYTHING” implies we want to be crooked.

Acts 11:9 “BUT A VOICE FROM HEAVEN ANSWERED A SECOND TIME,”

In Acts 10:12 it describes various animals, crawling creatures and birds that the Lord wanted Peter to eat. Now Acts 11:9 repeats what happened in Acts 10:15. As we study this part of verse 9 may we consider the two previous verses.

Verse 7, **“AND I ALSO HEARD A VOICE SAYING TO ME,”**

Verse 8, **“BUT I SAID, “BY NO MEANS, LORD,”**

In verse 7 the Lord spoke to Peter and told him to kill and eat.

In verse 8 Peter refused to do what the Lord had told him to do.

In verse 9 the Lord again spoke to Peter and told him what to do.

The Lord spoke. Then Peter spoke. Then the Lord spoke.

The Lord had the final word, and the result was Peter's heart was changed. And the Lord used him to start preaching the gospel to the Gentiles in Acts 10:34 to 43 and they got saved.

Acts 11:9 “BUT A VOICE FROM HEAVEN ANSWERED A SECOND TIME,”

What do you think would have happened if Peter had the final word? The answer is his heart would not have been changed and the Gentiles would not have heard the gospel and gotten saved. In our life, do we want to have the final word or the Lord to have the final word?

If we have the final word our hearts do not get changed and the Lord cannot use us to advance the gospel for people to get saved.

If the Lord has the final word our hearts get changed and He can use us to advance the gospel for people to get saved.

If we have the final word our hearts do not get changed and the world does not get changed.

If the Lord has the final word our hearts get changed and He can use us to change the world.

**Acts 11:12 “AND THESE SIX BRETHREN ALSO WENT WITH ME,
AND WE ENTERED THE MAN’S HOUSE.”**

As we examine these words they shall examine our hearts. First, let us refer back to Acts 10:23 to 25 which mentions the brethren accompanying Peter to the house of Cornelius.

Now in this verse it clearly says,

**“AND THESE SIX BRETHREN ALSO WENT WITH ME, AND WE ENTERED THE
MAN’S HOUSE.”**

Peter mentioned brethren going with him but he did not mention what happened in the last part of Acts 10:25,

“CORNELIUS MET HIM, AND FELL AT HIS FEET AND WORSHIPED HIM.”

This is very significant because from Acts 11:4 up to this verse Peter described everything in detail that had occurred.

Then in Acts 11:13 Peter shared how Cornelius had seen an angel and the events that followed. The point the Holy Spirit is showing is Peter did not mention something that would make him look better than someone else.

Do we mention something that will make us look better than other people?

**Acts 11:13 “AND HE REPORTED TO US HOW HE HAD SEEN AN ANGEL
STANDING IN HIS HOUSE, AND SAYING, “SEND TO JOPPA, AND HAVE SIMON,
WHO IS ALSO CALLED PETER, BROUGHT HERE;”**

This verse describes an angel speaking to Cornelius. The angel started speaking in verse 13 and continued on in verse 14,

**“AND HE SHALL SPEAK WORDS TO YOU BY WHICH YOU WILL BE SAVED, YOU
AND YOUR HOUSEHOLD.”**

The angel pointed Cornelius in the direction to how he could get saved instead of pointing him in a direction where he could not get saved.

There are some who have a fascination with the supernatural and with angels. But if an angel does not point or in some way help direct an unsaved person towards hearing the gospel of the Lord Jesus then such an angel does not come from God. Any form of supernatural experience that suggests a way to God apart from the Lord Jesus is a deception.

Acts 11:14 “AND HE SHALL SPEAK WORDS TO YOU BY WHICH YOU WILL BE SAVED, YOU AND YOUR HOUSEHOLD.”

To understand this verse we need to refer back to chapter 10. Most of that chapter deals with a Gentile named Cornelius and the latter part of that chapter, from Acts 10:34 to 48 describes him along with his relatives and close friends hearing the gospel and getting saved, then baptized with the Holy Spirit, and water baptized. We recall from chapter 10 that Cornelius was a devote man, who feared God, had a good family, gave generously to those in need and prayed continuously.

Cornelius sounded like the ideal kind of person you would want in a church. Now we return to the following part of Acts 11:14,

“...YOU BY WHICH YOU WILL BE SAVED, YOU AND YOUR HOUSEHOLD.”

The word **“YOU”** and **“YOUR”** refers to Cornelius. The word **“YOU”** is mentioned three times. The word **“YOUR”** is mentioned once.

In chapter 10 it emphasized many things Cornelius had done. But the one thing, most essential thing needing to be done was to get saved.

Acts 11:14 “AND HE SHALL SPEAK WORDS TO YOU BY WHICH YOU WILL BE SAVED, YOU AND YOUR HOUSEHOLD.”

The words “YOU WILL BE SAVED,” speak in the future tense. They tell us that although Cornelius was a nice person and had done many nice things, he was not yet saved. He and his household needed to hear the gospel and get saved. Not just bad people need to hear the gospel and get saved. Even nice people who do many nice things need to hear the gospel and get saved.

**Acts 11:16 “AND I REMEMBERED THE WORD OF THE LORD,
HOW HE USED TO SAY, “JOHN BAPTIZED WITH WATER,
BUT YOU SHALL BE BAPTIZED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.”**

From this verse there are two important things Peter remembered and we are well advised to remember as well.

1. “AND I REMEMBERED THE WORD OF THE LORD, HOW HE USED TO SAY,”

Peter remembered the words Jesus said to him in the past.

**Acts 11:16 “AND I REMEMBERED THE WORD OF THE LORD,
HOW HE USED TO SAY, “JOHN BAPTIZED WITH WATER,
BUT YOU SHALL BE BAPTIZED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.”**

2. “YOU SHALL BE BAPTIZED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.”

Peter remembered the promise Jesus said.

What words do we remember most?

Do we remember good words from Jesus or bad words from people?

Do we remember healing words from Jesus or hurtful words from people?

Do we remember promises from Jesus or broken promises from people?

It requires effort to remember good words the Bible says.

It requires no effort to remember bad words people say.

It requires effort to hold onto the promises of God.

It requires no effort to hold on to the broken promises of people.

It requires effort to memorize Scripture.

It requires no effort not to memorize Scripture.

Acts 11:17 “IF GOD THEREFORE GAVE TO THEM THE SAME GIFT AS HE GAVE TO US ALSO AFTER BELIEVING IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST,”

For our present study please give attention to the following words highlighted in this verse.

1. “THE SAME GIFT AS HE GAVE TO US ALSO”

God gave the same gift rather than a different gift. This shows there is no favoritism or partiality with God.

2. “AFTER BELIEVING IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.”

In this verse Peter is stating that a gift had been given to the Gentiles.

This gift was given after they had believed in the Lord Jesus Christ.

What was this gift? In verse 16 we find the answer,

“AS I BEGAN TO SPEAK, THE HOLY SPIRIT CAME ON THEM AS HE HAD COME ON US AT THE BEGINNING. THEN I REMEMBERED WHAT THE LORD HAD SAID: “JOHN BAPTISED WITH WATER, BUT YOU WILL BE BAPTISED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.”

Acts 11:17 “IF GOD THEREFORE GAVE TO THEM THE SAME GIFT AS HE GAVE TO US ALSO AFTER BELIEVING IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST,”

They were baptized in the Holy Spirit just as it occurred at the beginning, which refers to Acts 2:4. Again we remind ourselves of this word “AFTER” and see that they had believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and “AFTER” their conversion they experienced the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

The baptism was not at the time as their conversion.

The baptism was after their conversion.

Acts 11:17 “IF GOD THEREFORE GAVE TO THEM THE SAME GIFT AS HE GAVE TO US ALSO AFTER BELIEVING IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST,”

Here are three other examples of this pattern in the book of Acts.

1. In Acts 8:14 to 17 many Samaritans believed, then received the Holy Spirit.

In verse 14, **“SAMARIA HAD ACCEPTED THE WORD OF GOD.”**

Then in verse 14, **“THEY SENT PETER AND JOHN TO THEM.”**

Then in verse 15, **“WHEN THEY ARRIVED.”**

Then in verse 17, **“THEN PETER AND JOHN PLACED THEIR HANDS ON THEM, AND THEY RECEIVED THE HOLY SPIRIT.”**

What we learn from these verses is the Samaritans received the word of God, which tells us they became new converts, and after they were prayed for to receive the Holy Spirit. We do not know the length of time between them believing, to when Peter and John arrived. But we learn it was two separate times from becoming converts to being baptized in the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit came after conversion.

Acts 11:17 “IF GOD THEREFORE GAVE TO THEM THE SAME GIFT AS HE GAVE TO US ALSO AFTER BELIEVING IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST,”

2. In Acts 9:5 and 6 we read about Saul’s dramatic conversion.

In verse 5, “AND HE SAID, “WHO ART THOU, LORD?” AND HE SAID, “I AM JESUS WHOM YOU ARE PERSECUTING.”

Then in verse 9 it says, “FOR THREE DAYS HE WAS BLIND.”

Then in verse 17 Ananias prayed for Paul, “BROTHER SAUL, THE LORD JESUS, WHO APPEARED TO YOU ON THE ROAD AS YOU WERE COMING HERE, HAS SENT ME SO THAT YOU MAY SEE AGAIN AND BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.”

From the time Jesus saved Saul, we know three days passed between the time of his conversion to when he was baptized in the Holy Spirit. The gift of the Holy Spirit came after conversion.

Acts 11:17 “IF GOD THEREFORE GAVE TO THEM THE SAME GIFT AS HE GAVE TO US ALSO AFTER BELIEVING IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST,”

3. In Acts 19:1 to 6 we read about the disciples in Ephesus.

In verse 1 it says, **“THERE HE FOUND SOME DISCIPLES.”**

From this verse we learn they were disciples. We do not know how long they had been disciples but they were disciples.

Then in verse 6 it says, **“AND WHEN PAUL HAD LAID HIS HANDS UPON THEM, THE HOLY SPIRIT CAME ON THEM, AND THEY BEGAN SPEAKING WITH TONGUES AND PROPHECYING.”**

The gift of the Holy Spirit came after conversion.

Acts 11:18 “...THE REPENTANCE THAT LEADS TO LIFE.”

We can learn much from the order this part of the verse is written.

Notice the word “**REPENTANCE**” comes before the word “**LIFE.**” We can say that without “**REPENTANCE**” there is no “**LIFE.**” If we or anyone do not repent then we are on a path that leads to death.

We can say that “**REPENTANCE**” comes before “**LIFE.**”

We can say that “**REPENTANCE**” leads to “**LIFE.**”

We can say that “**REPENTANCE**” is not penance.

We can say that without “**REPENTANCE**” there is death.

We can say that without “**REPENTANCE**” it leads to death.

Acts 11:19 “THOSE WHO WERE SCATTERED BECAUSE OF THE PERSECUTION THAT AROSE IN CONNECTION WITH STEPHEN MADE THEIR WAY TO PHOENICIA AND CYPRUS AND ANTIOCH, SPEAKING THE WORD...”

From this part of verse 19 we learn these disciples suffered being scattered and persecuted. Back in Acts 8:4 is the first mention of those who were scattered after the death of Stephen.

We do not know how long the time was from Acts 8:4 to Acts 11:19.

We do not know the depth of suffering they went through.

We do not know the pain they experienced.

We do not know their names.

Acts 11:19 “THOSE WHO WERE SCATTERED BECAUSE OF THE PERSECUTION THAT AROSE IN CONNECTION WITH STEPHEN MADE THEIR WAY TO PHOENICIA AND CYPRUS AND ANTIOCH, SPEAKING THE WORD...”

But what we do know is this, in Acts 8:4 they were, **“PREACHING THE WORD.”**
In Acts 11:19 they were, **“SPEAKING THE WORD.”**

People might not know how long of time you have been suffering.

People might not know the depth of suffering you have gone through.

People might not know the pain you have experienced.

People might not know your name. But the Lord knows. These Christians are convicting examples for us.

When we experience suffering what do we talk about? Do we talk about the pain and the people who caused it or continue **“PREACHING THE WORD”** and **“SPEAKING THE WORD?”**

**Acts 11:20 “...MEN OF CYPRUS AND CYRENE WHO CAME TO ANTIOCH AND
BEGAN SPEAKING TO THE GREEKS ALSO,
PREACHING THE LORD JESUS.”**

From this part of verse 21 we can highlight the following two points.

1. “MEN”

Here some men were mentioned but they are not the main message.

The verse tells what the men were talking about.

The verse tells where the men came from and why.

The verse tells who the men were spending time with.

2. “PREACHING THE LORD JESUS.”

When you hear preaching, how often is the “**LORD JESUS**” mentioned?

Are famous Bible teachers or theologians quoted more than the “**LORD JESUS?**” Notice the words “**LORD JESUS**” are used rather than just the word “**JESUS.**” It is difficult to call Jesus the “**LORD JESUS**” if He is not!

These men who were preaching spent time with people talking about the “**LORD JESUS.**” When we spend time with people what do we talk about?

Do we talk about the “**LORD JESUS**” or do we talk about everything but the “**LORD JESUS?**”

Acts 11:21 “...AND A LARGE NUMBER WHO BELIEVED TURNED TO THE LORD.”

From this part of verse 21 please give attention to these two parts.

1. “AND A LARGE NUMBER”

Here is seen a large number of people turning to the Lord for salvation.

We notice the words are careful not to say an exact amount. The use of this phrase avoids the temptation to exaggerate.

2. “WHO BELIEVED TURNED TO THE LORD.”

Here is evidence they believed. There was confirming action with believing. Believing the truth is a decision.

Believing the truth is not passive.

Believing the truth requires action.

Believing the truth means a change of direction.

Believing the truth is not just intellectual believing.

Acts 11:22 “...NEWS OF THIS REACHED THE EARS OF THE CHURCH AT JERUSALEM, AND THEY SENT BARNABAS OFF TO ANTIOCH.”

In this verse we learn a lesson that applies all through our Christian experience. The lesson is expressed in two points.

1. “...NEWS OF THIS REACHED THE EARS OF THE CHURCH AT JERUSALEM,”
2. “AND THEY SENT BARNABAS OFF TO ANTIOCH.”

In this verse the church in Jerusalem heard about what was happening in Antioch and the action to what they heard was they sent Barnabas to Antioch. They responded, or acted upon what they heard.

In the same way, we react, or act upon what we hear. What we listen to directly influences our attitudes and actions towards God, others and ourselves.

Acts 11:22 “...NEWS OF THIS REACHED THE EARS OF THE CHURCH AT JERUSALEM, AND THEY SENT BARNABAS OFF TO ANTIOCH.”

If we listen to lies about God, others or ourselves it causes negative reactions. If we are not careful we may hear accusations in the form of thoughts about God, others or ourselves. Accusations about someone produce a bad attitude towards that person. If we watch TV, spend hours on the internet, and listen to non-Christian music, our hearts become contaminated by the world and our attitudes and actions are negatively affected. But if we choose to listen carefully to what the Scriptures say our attitudes are to be towards people, then our actions will be positive.

In Acts 6:11 and 12 is a similar pattern,

“THEN THEY SECRETLY INDUCED MEN TO SAY, “WE HAVE HEARD HIM SPEAK BLASPHEMOUS WORDS AGAINST MOSES AND AGAINST GOD.” AND THEY STIRRED UP THE PEOPLE, THE ELDERS AND THE SCRIBES, AND THEY CAME UPON HIM AND DRAGGED HIM AWAY, AND BROUGHT HIM BEFORE THE COUNCIL.”

Acts 11:22 “...NEWS OF THIS REACHED THE EARS OF THE CHURCH AT JERUSALEM, AND THEY SENT BARNABAS OFF TO ANTIOCH.”

In these verses the people heard something negative about Stephen, and the result was a negative action. We can discern a lot about what we are listening to about a person or situation by the fruit it produces. If what we hear causes negativity, then we need to pray and ask the Lord to cleanse us from wrong attitudes. All attitudes in my heart that do not agree with Scripture are wrong and need to be repented of.

Acts 11:23 “...REMAIN TRUE TO THE LORD.”

To receive light from these words we need to consider the context in which these words are found.

Verse 21 says, **“TURNED TO THE LORD.”**

Verse 23 says, **“REMAIN TRUE TO THE LORD.”**

Then sandwiched between these verses is verse 22. It describes news reaching the church in Jerusalem about the Greeks receiving the preaching of the Lord Jesus and Barnabas being sent to Antioch. From Jerusalem to Antioch was over 200 miles in distance. We cannot be certain how long it took Barnabas to get to his destination. But we do know time would have gone by.

This observation brings us to the central thought to focus on at this time. Time had passed from when they **“TURNED TO THE LORD”** to when he encouraged them to **“REMAIN TRUE TO THE LORD.”**

Let us now consider back to when we **“TURNED TO THE LORD.”** As time has passed do we still **“REMAIN TRUE TO THE LORD.”**

Acts 11:23 “...REMAIN TRUE TO THE LORD.”

Verse 21 describes circumstances in Antioch.

Verse 22 describes circumstances in Jerusalem.

Verse 23 describes circumstances in Antioch.

Between verse 21 and 23 is verse 22 which describes a change in circumstances.

Have circumstances in life made a strain on us so that we no longer want to “REMAIN TRUE TO THE LORD.”

Have circumstances changed us from when we “TURNED TO THE LORD” to make us compromise to “REMAIN TRUE TO THE LORD?”

Acts 11:26 “AND IT CAME ABOUT THAT FOR AN ENTIRE YEAR THEY MET WITH THE CHURCH, AND TAUGHT CONSIDERABLE NUMBERS; AND THE DISCIPLES WERE FIRST CALLED CHRISTIANS IN ANTIOCH.”

For our study of this verse please highlight the following two words.

- 1. “CHURCH”**
- 2. “CHRISTIANS”**

We shall now begin our brief examination of these precious words.

1. “CHURCH”

In studying this verse we find that the church in Antioch is simply called **“THE CHURCH.”** The word **“CHURCH”** is a singular word, which means there was one church in this city rather than several.

“THE CHURCH” did not have a denominational name attached to it. It was simply **“THE CHURCH.”** In the book of Acts there we no such thing as denominations. They did not exist. Do you talk more about your denomination than you do about Jesus? If we identify more with a denomination than with Jesus Christ then our attitude constitutes a form of idolatry. In Exodus 20:3 it says, **“YOU SHALL HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME.”**

Acts 11:26 “AND IT CAME ABOUT THAT FOR AN ENTIRE YEAR THEY MET WITH THE CHURCH, AND TAUGHT CONSIDERABLE NUMBERS; AND THE DISCIPLES WERE FIRST CALLED CHRISTIANS IN ANTIOCH.”

Some years ago while attending Bible College the Holy Spirit whispered in my heart, “Do not defend a denomination, defend the Truth!”

In The Set Of The Sail, A.W. Tozer said,

“ I do not here offer a remedy for denominationalism. I merely report the facts, and they are not encouraging. To enter any place of worship where the saints of God meet conscious of denominational loyalties or hostilities is to loose completely the sense of communion with Christ and each other so vital to true worship. ”

In conclusion, we understand that a “**CHURCH**” is not merely a building or place to meet on a Sunday. As we read on further in this verse we come to the word “**DISCIPLES.**” They are who and what makes up a “**CHURCH.**” The building, no matter how old or majestic it might appear is but the shell that houses the “**CHURCH.**”

When a person travels through the United Kingdom there are many stone church buildings constructed hundreds of years ago, but now many are nothing more than empty shells for tourists to visit.

Acts 11:26 “AND IT CAME ABOUT THAT FOR AN ENTIRE YEAR THEY MET WITH THE CHURCH, AND TAUGHT CONSIDERABLE NUMBERS; AND THE DISCIPLES WERE FIRST CALLED CHRISTIANS IN ANTIOCH.”

2. “CHRISTIANS”

From this part of verse 26 we learn what a Christian was and still is.

The purpose for writing on this verse is because the word “Christian” has been used, abused, and misused to describe people who are not **“CHRISTIANS.”**

The word **“CHRISTIANS”** is misused calling a country a “Christian country.”

The word **“CHRISTIANS”** is misused by people and that causes confusion.

The word **“CHRISTIANS”** is misused by secular media.

The word **“CHRISTIANS”** is misused by many who are not even Christian or understand true Christianity.

Acts 11:26 “AND IT CAME ABOUT THAT FOR AN ENTIRE YEAR THEY MET WITH THE CHURCH, AND TAUGHT CONSIDERABLE NUMBERS; AND THE DISCIPLES WERE FIRST CALLED CHRISTIANS IN ANTIOCH.”

But it is not who people say “CHRISTIANS” are that matters. It is who the Scriptures say “CHRISTIANS” are is our final authority.

Verse 26 says, “DISCIPLES WERE FIRST CALLED CHRISTIANS.”

The word “DISCIPLES” and the word “CHRISTIANS” refer to the same people. If people are not disciples of Jesus Christ, they are not “CHRISTIANS.”

It is as simple as that. A disciple of Jesus is a person who has repented of their sins. A disciple of Jesus is a person who has chosen to follow Him. In Matthew 4:17 it says, “REPENT.” In Matthew 4:19 it says, “FOLLOW.”

To conclude, the Gospel can be simplified into two points.

1. “REPENT”
2. “FOLLOW”

Acts 11:27 “NOW AT THIS TIME SOME PROPHETS CAME DOWN FROM JERUSALEM TO ANTIOCH.”

For this study please focus on the following two parts.

1. “SOME PROPHETS”

We learn more than one prophet came to Antioch. There was not just one prophet showing up and prophesying. Notice it says they came from Jerusalem. In Acts 13:1, 1 Corinthians 14:29 and Ephesians 4:11 are descriptions of prophets rather than a prophet. In each of these cases prophets are in a church rather than not in a church. Why do you think prophets would come together rather than just coming alone?

The answer is 1 Corinthians 14:29,

**“TWO OR THREE PROPHETS SHOULD SPEAK, AND THE OTHERS SHOULD
WEIGH CAREFULLY WHAT IS SAID.”**

The answer certainly includes accountability as a safeguard against error.

**Acts 11:27 “NOW AT THIS TIME SOME PROPHETS
CAME DOWN FROM JERUSALEM TO ANTIOCH.”**

2. “CAME DOWN FROM JERUSALEM TO ANTIOCH.”

On a map, Jerusalem is south from Antioch therefore it would seem more correct to say “came up from Jerusalem to Antioch,” but it says “**CAME DOWN.**” Then in verse 28 Agabus gave a prophecy. Before speaking the Lord’s word they “**CAME DOWN.**”

The words provide a picture of humbling themselves. Then the Holy Spirit gave insight into what was to happen.

Acts 11:28 “AND ONE OF THEM NAMED AGABUS STOOD UP AND BEGAN TO INDICATE BY THE SPIRIT THAT THERE WOULD CERTAINLY BE A GREAT FAMINE ALL OVER THE WORLD. AND THIS TOOK PLACE IN THE REIGN OF CLAUDIUS.”

This verse is composed of two parts. The first part of the verse describes a prophet named Agabus prophesying about a severe famine. The second part of the verse describes the famine happening. The prophecy happened. The mark of a genuine prophecy from the Lord is, it comes to pass.

If a prophecy does not happen then it was not from the Lord. In Deuteronomy 18:22 it says,

“WHEN A PROPHET SPEAKS IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, IF THE THING DOES NOT COME ABOUT OR COME TRUE, THAT IS THE THING WHICH THE LORD HAS NOT SPOKEN.”

**Acts 11:30 “AND THIS THEY DID,
SENDING IT IN CHARGE OF BARNABAS AND SAUL TO THE ELDERS.”**

For our study of this last verse in chapter 11 please consider three parts.

1. “AND THIS THEY DID,”

In verse 28 it describes a great famine all over the world.

Then in verse 29 it describes Christians determining to help their fellow brethren.

Now in this verse they did what they said they were going to do.

They did not say one thing and do something else.

They did what they said they would do.

Do we do what we say we will do?

**Acts 11:30 “AND THIS THEY DID,
SENDING IT IN CHARGE OF BARNABAS AND SAUL TO THE ELDERS.”**

As we study this verse we are reminded of 1 John 3:17-18

“IF ANYONE HAS MATERIAL POSSESSIONS AND SEES HIS BROTHER IN NEED BUT HAS NO PITY ON HIM, HOW CAN THE LOVE OF GOD BE IN HIM? DEAR CHILDREN, LET US NOT LOVE WITH WORDS OR TONGUE BUT WITH ACTIONS AND TRUTH.”

There were very likely many people suffering because of this natural disaster yet the Christians helped other Christians in a great time of need. Sadly there is no shortage of sorry needs. So what we need to do is do what the Scriptures say.

**Acts 11:30 “AND THIS THEY DID,
SENDING IT IN CHARGE OF BARNABAS AND SAUL TO THE ELDERS.”**

2. “SENDING IT IN CHARGE OF BARNABAS AND SAUL”

In this verse it says Barnabas and Saul were in charge of making sure that what Christians were contributing got into the right hands rather than the wrong hands. The Christians sent their gift with two men who they knew were trustworthy. Today there is no shortage of secular charities and relief agencies constantly asking for help. We might not know which are legitimate and which are not. Some may even use the word “Christian” in their advertising. But in this verse the Christians sent their gift with men they knew rather than with people they did not know.

Remember in verse 26 it mentions Barnabas and Saul were with the church teaching them for a year. We need to be wise and discerning and follow their example. We need to be careful not to be supporting something that is not genuinely Christian.

**Acts 11:30 “AND THIS THEY DID,
SENDING IT IN CHARGE OF BARNABAS AND SAUL TO THE ELDERS.”**

3. “TO THE ELDERS.”

The gift to help other Christians was given to the elders.

The gift to aid people in need of help was given to leaders in a church.

The gift was not given to non-Christians to administer as they saw fit.

This model provides us with a pattern to follow in times when terrible natural disasters occur. The help Christians give is to be done wisely and in line with what Scripture teaches. Difficulties provide the opportunity for us to help others and the right way to help is seen in this verse.

Acts 12:5 “SO PETER WAS KEPT IN THE PRISON, BUT PRAYER FOR HIM WAS BEING MADE FERVENTLY BY THE CHURCH OF GOD.”

This verse can be divided into six parts. With help from the Holy Spirit let us begin our study.

1. “SO”

When we look at this small word “SO” we might think “SO” what is “SO” important about the word “SO.” The word “SO” continues or joins the preceding verses, “SO” it is very important. Peter was kept in prison because Herod was a men-pleaser. It is always “SO” important to read the context of Scripture. In verse 3 Herod had Peter arrested to please the Jews. A lesson we can learn from this is being a men-pleaser precedes imprisonment. A life of prison is the result of being men-pleasers.

Acts 12:5 “SO PETER WAS KEPT IN THE PRISON, BUT PRAYER FOR HIM WAS BEING MADE FERVENTLY BY THE CHURCH OF GOD.”

2. “PETER WAS KEPT IN THE PRISON,”

As we read these words they could leave us feeling depressed about Peter's fate, especially since James was put to death in verse 2.

Herod had Peter arrested and four squads of soldiers were guarding him. But thankfully there is a comma after the word “PRISON,” and not a period. A period would be an end to a sentence and an end to Peter's sentence would be death. The verse did not finish with Peter in prison. Can you imagine if there was a period instead of a comma after the word “PRISON.” That would be a discouraging finish. But the Lord never leaves us in discouraging places. He always provides a way out. He always provides hope. Any voice that produces hopelessness is not the Lord's voice.

Acts 12:5 “SO PETER WAS KEPT IN THE PRISON, BUT PRAYER FOR HIM WAS BEING MADE FERVENTLY BY THE CHURCH OF GOD.”

3. “BUT PRAYER”

The first part of the verse shows Peter in a helpless situation but the words “BUT PRAYER” introduces a hopeful situation. The Lord set Peter free after Christians were fervently praying for him. What would have happened had the church not prayed fervently for Peter? We cannot say for certain but we learn from verse 2 that James was put to death. There is not any mention of prayer for James prior to his being put to death. Then we see the result of fervent prayer in verse 7,

“AND BEHOLD, AN ANGEL OF THE LORD SUDDENLY APPEARED, AND A LIGHT SHONE IN THE CELL.”

A hopeless situation turned into a supernatural situation as Christians fervently prayed. Prayer turns a hopeless situation into liberation.

Acts 12:5 “SO PETER WAS KEPT IN THE PRISON, BUT PRAYER FOR HIM WAS BEING MADE FERVENTLY BY THE CHURCH OF GOD.”

4. “FOR HIM”

These words refer to Peter, who was a leader in the church. The people were not talking to each other about their church leader, but instead they were talking to the Lord about their church leader. Peter had plenty of faults but the church was praying for him. Here are some of his weaknesses.

In Mark 14:29 Peter was boastful.

In Mark 14:31 Peter was hasty.

In Mark 14:37 Peter was not prayerful.

In Mark 14:41 Peter was slothful.

In Mark 14:47 Peter was impulsive.

Acts 12:5 “SO PETER WAS KEPT IN THE PRISON, BUT PRAYER FOR HIM WAS BEING MADE FERVENTLY BY THE CHURCH OF GOD.”

We can condense Peter’s weaknesses into these five words:

1. boastfulness
2. hastiness
3. prayerlessness
4. slothfulness
5. impulsiveness

If these five weaknesses were not enough we realize that Peter even denied the Lord in Mark 14:68, 70 and 71. Yet the Christians were not talking about his weaknesses, but were praying for him. Are we like them?

This model is seen in 2 Kings 6:15-17 Elisha’s servant was very fearful but Elisha prayed for him rather than belittle him. Remember Peter was a church leader and people were praying for him.

**Acts 12:5 “SO PETER WAS KEPT IN THE PRISON, BUT PRAYER
FOR HIM WAS BEING MADE FERVENTLY BY THE CHURCH OF GOD.”**

When we see weaknesses in church leaders how do we respond?

Do we pray for them or betray them? When we see weaknesses in a leader or each other what is our response? Do we talk to people about the person or do we talk to the Lord about the person?

5. “WAS BEING MADE FERVENTLY”

From Scripture we do not know how long the church had been praying. Very likely they were praying for a long time. They prayed fervently because they were desperate for God to deliver Peter.

Desperation preceded deliverance.

Uncomfortable situations cause us to seek the Comforter.

Acts 12:5 “SO PETER WAS KEPT IN THE PRISON, BUT PRAYER FOR HIM WAS BEING MADE FERVENTLY BY THE CHURCH OF GOD.”

6. “BY THE CHURCH OF GOD.”

When we hear the words “**THE CHURCH**” some might think of a building where Christians go on Sundays. But the Scriptural meaning of “**THE CHURCH**” is not a building but an assembly of born-again believers.

“**THE CHURCH OF GOD**” is not a place but a people.

“**THE CHURCH OF GOD**” was made up of all ages of people.

The Christians that were praying for Peter were at different levels of spiritual maturity. Some were older and some were younger in the faith. These believers likely had not been saved for too long. Also the Christians would have been of different physical ages. Although they were very likely of various ages they were praying together. There was no such thing as a generational gap. “**THE CHURCH OF GOD**” was fervently praying for their church leader. We might think that younger Christians would be too consumed with their own problems to pray for someone else but here they were praying. Their example is a strong encouragement for us to follow.

Acts 12:6 “AND ON THE VERY NIGHT WHEN HEROD WAS ABOUT TO BRING HIM FORWARD, PETER WAS SLEEPING BETWEEN TWO SOLDIERS, BOUND WITH TWO CHAINS; AND GUARDS IN FRONT OF THE DOOR WERE WATCHING OVER THE PRISON.”

For this study please give particular attention to the following three words.

1. “NIGHT”

2. “CHAINS”

3. “PRISON”

Here we learn it was night time. It was dark and there were chains and a prison. Darkness and being held in prison are seen as well in Acts 16:24-25. Darkness, chains and prisons are described together. There are various forms of chains. Any area of darkness in our hearts where the truth of God's word is not in charge is a chain and keeps us in prison.

Chains can be any form of negative attitudes or feelings towards other people or situations.

Acts 12:7 “AND BEHOLD, AN ANGEL OF THE LORD SUDDENLY APPEARED, AND A LIGHT SHONE IN THE CELL; AND HE STRUCK PETER’S SIDE AND ROUSED HIM, SAYING, “GET UP QUICKLY.” AND HIS CHAINS FELL OFF HIS HANDS.”

This verse continues on from verse 6. The previous verse was very discouraging and depressing because Peter was in prison and in danger for his life. But the story did not end there. The words **“AND BEHOLD”** introduce hope in a seemingly hopeless situation. The Lord always provides hope in the worst of situations. Now please give attention to the following two phrases;

- 1. “HE STRUCK PETER’S SIDE”**
- 2. “GET UP QUICKLY.”**

The word **“HE”** of course refers to the angel. The word **“PETER’S”** refers to a Christian whose name was Peter. The angel spoke **“GET UP QUICKLY”** to a Christian leader. The angel did not speak to a non-Christian.

This observation instructs us to be on guard from non-Christians who write stories or books that describe seeing or hearing angels. This angel did not say anything contrary to the Bible.

Acts 12:7 “AND BEHOLD, AN ANGEL OF THE LORD SUDDENLY APPEARED, AND A LIGHT SHONE IN THE CELL; AND HE STRUCK PETER’S SIDE AND ROUSED HIM, SAYING, “GET UP QUICKLY.” AND HIS CHAINS FELL OFF HIS HANDS.”

Any angel that says something contrary to the Bible is contrary to the Bible!
Let us inspect the next two phrases.

1. **“LIGHT SHONE IN THE CELL;”**
2. **“AND HIS CHAINS FELL OFF HIS HANDS.”**

Light pierced the darkness of a cell. Light from the Lord came, and as a result a person in captivity was freed. This situation finely illustrates the gospel. In Luke 4:18 it says, **“THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES...”**

People without Christ in their lives are in various forms of prisons and need the light of the gospel to break the chains in their lives. In this verse we read the light shone in the cell and after the chains fell off. Chains in our lives come off as the light of God’s Word enters our lives. Truth sets captives free. In John 8:32 it says, **“THEN YOU WILL KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE.”**

Acts 12:8 “AND THE ANGEL SAID TO HIM, “GRID YOURSELF AND PUT ON YOUR SANDALS.” AND HE DID SO. AND HE SAID TO HIM, “WRAP YOUR CLOAK AROUND YOU AND FOLLOW ME.”

In verse seven we learn that the angel of the Lord woke Peter up. Then in this verse the angel told Peter to follow him. Peter was likely tired because he just got woken up but he did not hesitate to do what he was told.

The angel said, “FOLLOW ME” and then in the next verse it says Peter “CONTINUED TO FOLLOW.” Now consider seven things about Peter in prison and then set free, and compare if we respond the way he did.

1. Peter was very tired after what he had been in but he still followed.

When we are tired after what we have been in do we still follow?

2. Peter was in a dark time with no apparent way out but he still followed.

When we are in a dark time with no apparent way out do we still follow?

Acts 12:8 “AND THE ANGEL SAID TO HIM, “GRID YOURSELF AND PUT ON YOUR SANDALS.” AND HE DID SO. AND HE SAID TO HIM, “WRAP YOUR CLOAK AROUND YOU AND FOLLOW ME.”

3. Peter was wrongly treated by someone in authority but he still followed.
When we are wrongly treated by someone in authority do we still follow?
4. Peter was the only one in bondage who was set free, but he still followed.
If we are the only one set free from bondage, do we still follow?
5. Peter was facing a terrible situation in his life but he still followed.
When we are facing a terrible situation in our life do we still follow?
6. Peter was in a situation never experienced before but he still followed.
If we are in a situation never experienced before do we still follow?
7. Peter did not fully understand what was happening but he still followed.
When we do not fully understand what is happening do we still follow?

Acts 12:9 “...AND HE WENT OUT AND CONTINUED TO FOLLOW,”

Herod the king had Peter put in a prison and very likely Peter would have suffered the same fate of death that James suffered as recorded in verse 2. But the Lord sent an angel to rescue him in verses 7 and 8.

Now let us divide this part of the verse in two parts.

1. “AND HE WENT OUT”

The Lord had delivered Peter from prison and facing death. The Lord released Peter. We share something similar to Peter in that we who are born-again were once in a prison of sin and death, but the Lord released us.

2. “AND CONTINUED TO FOLLOW,”

Peter continued to follow after being delivered from prison and death.

This pattern applies to us as Christians. At some time in our past the Lord set us free from the prison of sin and death. Are we like Peter?

Can we honestly say “AND CONTINUED TO FOLLOW,” speaks about our faith and still following the Lord? In this situation it describes Peter following shortly after being released from prison.

May we seriously ask ourselves, are we still following, even if years have passed, as we did after the Lord saved us and set us free?

Acts 12:10 “...AND THEY WENT OUT AND WENT ALONG ONE STREET;”

For our study of this part of verse 10 please consider these two parts.

1. “...AND THEY WENT OUT”

In this verse we learn the Lord had brought Peter outside the prison.

Peter was not able to get out of prison by himself. If the Lord had not helped him he would have been killed. In our lives it is Jesus who has saved us from certain death. It is Jesus who has made the way of escape for Peter and it is Jesus who has made the way of escape for us.

2. “AND WENT ALONG ONE STREET;”

After the Lord had rescued Peter from prison and certain death Peter did not just stand outside the gate, nor did he try to get back in the prison. Peter kept going along a one way street. To follow Jesus it is a one way street. Jesus said, **“I AM THE WAY, AND THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE; NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER, BUT THROUGH ME.”**

Peter kept looking ahead rather than behind to see if anyone from the prison was chasing him. As we follow Jesus we are not to keep looking back at the prison from which He has delivered us.

Acts 12:11 “...NOW I KNOW FOR SURE THAT THE LORD HAS SENT FORTH HIS ANGEL AND RESCUED ME...”

With the Lord to help, please consider the following seven points.

1. “NOW”

This word is in the present tense. If we are not allowing the Lord to work in our present tense then we have good reason to be tense!

2. “I KNOW”

Here Peter is not guessing whether or not that it was the Lord who helped him. Here Peter is not saying “I think” or “maybe” or “probably.” Peter said

“I KNOW.” Peter is speaking with complete certainty concerning the Lord being able to help no matter how impossible the circumstances appear. Which of the following sentences best describes how you think as a Christian? Does God help us? God does help us!

Acts 12:11 “...NOW I KNOW FOR SURE THAT THE LORD HAS SENT FORTH HIS ANGEL AND RESCUED ME...”

3. “FOR SURE”

Peter experienced the Lord sending an angel to help him and then he was able to speak about it. He was able to speak about the Lord having power to deliver because he knew it in his own life. It was not just academics but by experience. It was not just facts, but acts!

4. “THAT THE LORD”

Earlier in verse 4, Herod had Peter imprisoned. Peter was a prisoner facing death. Peter was in a horrifying situation. Now the Lord set Peter free and we see he is not talking about how horrible Herod had been to him.

Peter was not talking about how he was badly treated.

Peter was not talking about the jail.

Peter was talking about the Lord.

When someone does wrong to us, do we talk about him or do we talk about the Lord? Do we talk about what a person did to us or what Jesus did for us?

Acts 12:11 “...NOW I KNOW FOR SURE THAT THE LORD HAS SENT FORTH HIS ANGEL AND RESCUED ME...”

5. HAS SENT FORTH”

Earlier in verse 5 the church was praying for Peter and here Peter gives God the glory for getting set free from prison. It is very likely that the people praying had a direct impact on an angel from God coming and setting Peter free. But the emphasis is not on people praying but rather the Lord answering the prayers. In Psalms 68:20 it says, **“GOD IS TO US A GOD OF DELIVERANCES; AND TO GOD BELONG ESCAPES FROM DEATH.”**

The angel was sent, and he did not act independently from God.

The angel went because he was sent. That is the pattern for us to apply.

6. “HIS ANGEL”

Here we see the correct Scriptural emphasis is described. The word **“HIS”** comes before the word **“ANGEL.”** **“HIS”** comes first. **“ANGEL”** comes second. The angel is not emphasized as the source of help, but rather the Lord is the source of help. Peter does not focus on the angel rescuing him but on the Lord sending an angel to rescue him. The focus, the emphasis, the glory must always exalt the Lord and not anything or anyone else!

**Acts 12:11 “...NOW I KNOW FOR SURE THAT THE LORD HAS SENT FORTH HIS
ANGEL AND RESCUED ME...”**

7. “AND RESCUED ME.”

Peter experienced an angel from the Lord delivering him from getting killed. Peter experienced what Psalm 34:7 says,

**“THE ANGEL OF THE LORD ENCAMPS AROUND THOSE WHO FEAR HIM, AND
RESCUES THEM.”**

Peter was in an extremely difficult situation, and it was in that difficult situation that the word of God became so real. The word of God was real and fresh in Peter's life. It is most often in the very difficult times of life that the word of God becomes so real in our lives. When life is too easy and too comfortable it seems the word of God is not so real to our lives as compared to difficult times.

Acts 12:12 “AND WHEN HE REALIZED THIS, HE WENT TO THE HOUSE OF MARY, THE MOTHER OF JOHN WHO WAS ALSO CALLED MARK, WHERE MANY WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AND WERE PRAYING.”

Prior to this verse an angel from the Lord had helped Peter to escape from prison. Now that Peter was free to go and be with who he wanted, he went to be with Christians who were praying.

Back in Acts 4:23 is a similar situation that Peter experienced.

In that verse Peter and John went to their companions. They went to people who loved Jesus.

Now Peter was alone and could go wherever he wanted. John was not there to make sure he went where he should and not go where he should not! Peter chose to be with people who loved Jesus and were praying.

This is quite the contrast to what is seen in Luke 22:55,

“...PETER WAS SITTING AMONG THEM.”

Acts 12:12 “AND WHEN HE REALIZED THIS, HE WENT TO THE HOUSE OF MARY, THE MOTHER OF JOHN WHO WAS ALSO CALLED MARK, WHERE MANY WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AND WERE PRAYING.”

There in that situation Peter was alone, he was with people who were not with Jesus. When we are alone, and without another Christian to check up on us, where do we go and who do we choose to be with?

When we are alone, and without another Christian to check up on us, where would we like to go and who would we choose to be with if we thought no one would find out?

**Acts 12:15 “AND THEY SAID TO HER, “YOU ARE OUT OF YOUR MIND!
BUT SHE KEPT INSISTING THAT IT WAS SO.”**

For our study of this verse please consider the following three parts.

1. “AND THEY SAID TO HER,”

The word “**THEY**” refers to Christians. The word “**HER**” refers to a servant-girl whose name was Rhoda. In verse 13 Peter was knocking at the door of the gate. Then in verse 14, Rhoda came to answer but when she heard Peter, she was so full of joy she ran to tell the other people that Peter was there.

**Acts 12:15 “AND THEY SAID TO HER, “YOU ARE OUT OF YOUR MIND!
BUT SHE KEPT INSISTING THAT IT WAS SO.”**

2. “YOU ARE OUT OF YOUR MIND!”

When the people inside heard what Rhoda said, they did not believe her. In fact they sounded quite rude to her. In verse 16 they finally opened the door to discover Peter. They discovered that what the servant-girl Rhoda had been saying was right. They discovered that what they had been saying was wrong. As well, there is no mention of them apologizing to the servant-girl for not believing what she said.

When we are wrong do we apologize?

In verse 12 we learn that many people were praying.

In verse 15 they were telling Rhoda she was out of her mind.

During a prayer meeting we may appear very holy but what is our behaviour towards people after the meeting?

**Acts 12:15 “AND THEY SAID TO HER, “YOU ARE OUT OF YOUR MIND!
BUT SHE KEPT INSISTING THAT IT WAS SO.”**

3. “BUT SHE KEPT INSISTING THAT IT WAS SO.”

In verse 14, Rhoda recognized Peter’s voice and knew he was outside. What she believed was true. With this in mind please consider seven things Rhoda did not do and see how we compare with her.

1. Rhoda did not give up when she was insulted.

Do we give up when we are insulted?

2. Rhoda did not keep the good news to herself.

Do we keep the good news to ourselves?

3. Rhoda did not give up when no one believed her.

Do we give up when no one believes us?

**Acts 12:15 “AND THEY SAID TO HER, “YOU ARE OUT OF YOUR MIND!
BUT SHE KEPT INSISTING THAT IT WAS SO.”**

4. Rhoda did not give up her joy when people opposed her.

Do we give up our joy when people oppose us?

5. Rhoda did not give up when everyone thought she was wrong.

Do we give up when everyone thinks we are wrong?

6. Rhoda did not give up when all were against what she said.

Do we give up when all are against what we say?

7. Rhoda did not give up when people said she was out of her mind.

Do we give up when people say we are out of our minds?

Acts 12:16 “BUT PETER CONTINUED KNOCKING; AND WHEN THEY HAD OPENED THE DOOR, THEY SAW HIM AND WERE AMAZED.”

In the previous verse the Rhoda the servant-girl told the people inside that Peter was knocking at the door. Their response to her was disbelief and talked to her in what appears to be a rather rude, and perhaps insulting manner. Now please give your attention to consider the following two parts of this verse.

1. “BUT PETER CONTINUED KNOCKING;”

In this verse we learn Peter continued knocking. We do not know how long he kept knocking, but we do know he did not stop what he started doing. Now consider five things about Peter.

1. Peter did not give up.
2. Peter started and did not stop.
3. Peter continued on in the dark of night.
4. Peter wanted to be with other Christians.
5. Peter kept persevering until he was finished.

Acts 12:16 “BUT PETER CONTINUED KNOCKING; AND WHEN THEY HAD OPENED THE DOOR, THEY SAW HIM AND WERE AMAZED.”

Now let us examine ourselves with these five things about Peter.

1. Do we give up?
2. Do we start and then stop?
3. Do we continue on even when it is dark?
4. Do we like to be with other Christians?
5. Do we keep persevering until we are finished?

2. “THEY SAW HIM AND WERE AMAZED.”

The people saw Peter and they also saw that Rhoda was right! When it became obvious she was right they did not apologize for speaking rudely to her. Do we ever speak rudely to people, even to someone who is in a lower position than us? Do we ever apologize when we do something wrong, even to someone younger than ourselves?

It takes humility to apologize to someone in a lower position, or even younger than ourselves. When did you last apologize to someone?

**Acts 12:21 “AND ON AN APPOINTED DAY HEROD,
HAVING PUT ON HIS ROYAL APPAREL, TOOK HIS SEAT ON THE ROSTRUM
AND BEGAN DELIVERING AN ADDRESS TO THEM.”**

Imagine Herod, this powerful ruler. Then as we read this verse and go on to verse 23 we see the sudden demise of a ruthless man. How old was Herod when he died? Was he old? Was he young? We do not know? Was he ready? No!

Imagine how great the pomp!

Imagine how great the prestige!

Imagine how important Herod looked!

Imagine how important Herod sounded!

Imagine how important Herod thought he was!

Imagine how important people thought he was!

Imagine how he did not know that day was his last!

Imagine how people were saying he was a god, and next facing God!

Imagine where he is now!

Acts 12:23 “AND IMMEDIATELY AN ANGEL OF THE LORD STRUCK HIM BECAUSE HE DID NOT GIVE GOD THE GLORY.”

Here we discover an angel from the Lord is described. It is the second time in this chapter an angel is mentioned. Let's examine this verse in two parts.

1. “AND IMMEDIATELY AN ANGEL OF THE LORD STRUCK HIM”

At the beginning of chapter 12 Herod was violently mistreating the church. Then in verse 2 he had James executed.

Then in verse 19 he ordered the execution of the guards who had been with Peter. Now in this verse an angel of the Lord struck down Herod.

The one who killed was killed!

The one who executed was executed!

The one who was violent at the start had a violent end!

The one who tried to destroy the gospel was destroyed!

The one who did not show mercy was not shown mercy!

In Galatians 6:7 it says, **“DO NOT BE DECEIVED, GOD IS NOT MOCKED;
FOR WHATEVER A MAN SOWS, THIS HE WILL ALSO REAP.”**

Herod had reaped what he had sown.

**Acts 12:23 “AND IMMEDIATELY AN ANGEL OF THE LORD STRUCK HIM
BECAUSE HE DID NOT GIVE GOD THE GLORY.”**

2. “BECAUSE HE DID NOT GIVE GOD THE GLORY.”

Glory is something that belongs only to God. When a person does not give glory to God it means the person has kept it for themselves. When we keep glory for ourselves it means we are stealing something that rightfully belongs to God. Do we give God the problems that people give us, but keep the praise that people give us?

**Acts 12:24 “BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD CONTINUED
TO GROW AND TO BE MULTIPLIED.”**

This magnificent verse begins with the word “BUT.” This is very good to see because verse 23 ends by saying,

“...AND HE WAS EATEN BY WORMS AND DIED.”

Can you imagine the chapter finishing like that. It would be very depressing. The Lord never leaves us depressed. If a situation is trying to leave you depressed, recognize the Lord is not doing it. Let us contrast the end of verse 23 with verse 24.

Verse 23 is gory. Verse 23 is death. Verse 23 is defeat.

Verse 24 is glory! Verse 24 is life! Verse 24 is victory!

Which of these two verses best describes your life?

Acts 12:24 “BUT THE WORD OF THE LORD CONTINUED TO GROW AND TO BE MULTIPLIED.”

To conclude our brief study of this verse, please consider the following four questions.

1. Perhaps you have gone through hard times in life, but has “**THE WORD OF THE LORD CONTINUED TO GROW AND TO BE MULTIPLIED**” in your life?
2. Perhaps you have had many disappointments in life, but has “**THE WORD OF THE LORD CONTINUED TO GROW AND TO BE MULTIPLIED**” in your life?
3. Perhaps you have gained much wealth in your life, but has “**THE WORD OF THE LORD CONTINUED TO GROW AND TO BE MULTIPLIED**” in your life?
4. Perhaps you have many friends and a good church, but has “**THE WORD OF THE LORD CONTINUED TO GROW AND TO BE MULTIPLIED**” in your life?

**Acts 13:1 “AND THERE WERE AT ANTIOCH,
IN THE CHURCH THAT WAS THERE, PROPHETS...”**

From this part of verse 1 please focus in on the following two parts.

1. “IN THE CHURCH”

Under the first point may we begin by looking at the small word “IN” rather than give in to thoughts that it is not important. We learn that prophets who were recognized as such were “IN” a church. They were not on the outside looking in. They were part of a local church in their city.

Next consider that if a person claims to be a prophet and is not “IN THE CHURCH,” or part of a church, but rather is separate, then warning bells should be going off. Any so-called prophet who is exclusive or independent from a local church is very highly suspect.

Acts 13:1 “AND THERE WERE AT ANTIOCH, IN THE CHURCH THAT WAS THERE, PROPHETS...”

2. “PROPHETS...”

The writer of Acts is describing these people as prophets. They were not referring to themselves as prophets. A genuine prophet does not refer to himself by that title. The Scriptural pattern concerning “**PROPHETS**” is seen in Matthew 1:22-23, where Matthew said the Lord had spoken through Isaiah the prophet and Matthew 2:17 calls Jeremiah a prophet. Other Scriptures that show this pattern are: Matthew 4:14, Matthew 8:17, Matthew 24:15, Mark 1:2, Mark 11:32, Luke 4:27, Luke 7:1, Acts 8:28, Acts 13:20, Acts 21:10.

In each of these examples it is the writers who are saying someone is a prophet rather than the person themselves.

The only reference to someone in the New Testament calling themselves a prophetess is found in Revelation 2:20, “**JEZEBEL, WHO CALLS HERSELF A PROPHETESS.**” The only person to refer to herself as a prophet, or prophetess was a false prophetess. This serves as a warning to us. If someone refers to himself or herself as a prophet or prophetess, we know they are false because of what the Holy Spirit teaches us in the New Testament.

**Acts 13:1 "...BARNABAS, AND SIMEON WHO WAS CALLED NIGER,
AND LUCIUS OF CYRENE, AND MANAEN WHO HAD BEEN BROUGHT UP WITH
HEROD THE TETRARCH, AND SAUL."**

In this part of the verse five people are mentioned, and the people's first names were used. We can deduce there was a closeness, a relationship between them. They were leaders in the church and they spent time together. How did they spend their time together?

There is no mention of them going to sports events together.

There is no mention of them in worldly amusements together.

What is mentioned concerning their relationship is as follows;

Verse 2, they ministered to the Lord together.

Verse 3, they fasted together.

Verse 3, they prayed together.

Acts 13:1 “...BARNABAS, AND SIMEON WHO WAS CALLED NIGER, AND LUCIUS OF CYRENE, AND MANAEN WHO HAD BEEN BROUGHT UP WITH HEROD THE TETRARCH, AND SAUL.”

Their relationship did not revolve around pleasure seeking.

Their relationship did not revolve around various forms of entertainment.

Their relationship to Jesus was primary in their relationship to each other.

The things that they had in common was devotion to our Lord Jesus.

The things they did together were spiritual.

Now let us compare our relationships with that of these men. What sort of people do we enjoy spending time with?

Do we enjoy being with those who are devoted to our Lord Jesus Christ? Are the things we do together spiritual?

Acts 13:1 “...AND SAUL.”

In this first verse Saul is mentioned last. Yet as we continue reading through the book of Acts we see a pattern of Paul emerging to spiritual prominence. Saul is mentioned after other men in the Antioch church. Here he is last but the Lord would raise him up as a leader. For us to last, we need to spend time being last! Now consider three things about Paul and let us compare his life with ours.

1. Other people were first.
2. Other people were put before him.
3. Other people were mentioned before him.

How do we react when other people come first?

How do we react when other people are put before us?

How do we react when other people are mentioned before us?

**Acts 13:2 “...THE HOLY SPIRIT SAID, “NOW SEPARATE TO ME BARNABAS
AND SAUL FOR THE WORK TO WHICH I HAVE CALLED THEM.”**

We shall prayerfully study this part of verse two in the following two parts.

1. “THE HOLY SPIRIT SAID,”

The Holy Spirit spoke and revealed His will. We do not know how the Holy Spirit spoke, but since prophets were in the Antioch church it was likely through a prophecy.

In The Annotated Bible, Arno C. Gaebele said,

“ The personality of the Holy Spirit is here fully demonstrated. They were thus sent forth not by the church, nor by a missionary society or committee, but by the Holy Spirit. ”

Acts 13:2 “...THE HOLY SPIRIT SAID, “NOW SEPARATE TO ME BARNABAS AND SAUL FOR THE WORK TO WHICH I HAVE CALLED THEM.”

2. “NOW SEPARATE TO ME BARNABAS AND SAUL FOR THE WORK TO WHICH I HAVE CALLED THEM.”

The Holy Spirit wanted Barnabas and Paul separated for His purposes.

The Holy Spirit wanted them separate and He wanted them in His service.

Separation preceded service.

The Holy Spirit is holy and He wants us to be separate from this world and to be a holy people. What does holiness mean? It means to be wholly His. Most people would say they desire happiness. But how many people want holiness? What the Lord earnestly desires from His people is to seek holiness not happiness. It is not surprising to know people want happiness. Even bars advertise a “happy hour” for people, but genuine happiness is experienced as the fruit, or result that people receive when they seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

**Acts 13:2 “...THE HOLY SPIRIT SAID, “NOW SEPARATE TO ME BARNABAS
AND SAUL FOR THE WORK TO WHICH I HAVE CALLED THEM.”**

In Absolute Surrender, Andrew Murray said,

*“A man who is separated unto the Holy Ghost is a man who is given up to say:
Father, let the Holy Ghost have full dominion over me, in my home, in my
temper, in every word of my tongue, in every thought of my heart, in every
feeling towards my fellowmen, let the Holy Spirit have entire possession. ”*

**Acts 13:3 “THEN, WHEN THEY HAD FASTED AND PRAYED
AND LAID THEIR HANDS ON THEM, THEY SENT THEM AWAY.”**

We find in verse 3 the word “**FASTED.**” The word also appears in verse 2. It is repeated so we are prudent to stop and give attention to it. Perhaps the word “**FASTED**” is the sort of word we are fast to overlook. But from verse 1 to 3 we learn that the Antioch church “**FASTED.**” As a result of this the church was able to clearly hear the Holy Spirit give instructions concerning Paul and Barnabas. In Matthew 6:16 it says, “**WHEN YOU FAST**” and not “if you fast.” The Antioch church obeyed what Jesus taught. Do we obey what Jesus taught?

**Acts 13:3 “THEN, WHEN THEY HAD FASTED AND PRAYED
AND LAID THEIR HANDS ON THEM, THEY SENT THEM AWAY.”**

Next please give attention to the words **“AND PRAYED.”**

There was emphasis placed on prayer before performance. Prayer came first and then there was opposition to the gospel and progression of the gospel. Without prayer there is digression of the gospel. Prayer came before everything else. Prepare in prayer! We have seen the church at Antioch fast and pray and now we look at the words **“THEY SENT THEM AWAY.”** These words refer to evangelism and missions. Prayer, fasting and evangelism was a normal part of church life. This church serves as a fine model in three areas:

Prophetic, verse 1.	Prayer, verse 3.	Power, verse 11.
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**Acts 13:5 “AND WHEN THEY REACHED SALAMIS,
THEY BEGAN TO PROCLAIM THE WORD OF GOD...”**

Here we see Paul and Barnabas arriving at their destination. In verse 3 prayer and fasting came before Paul and Barnabas left. Prayer and fasting came first. This example is vital for us to apply when we are traveling somewhere. Now we see what they did when they reached their destination. The verse says, **“THEY BEGAN TO PROCLAIM THE WORD OF GOD.”**

After arriving they did not lay around enjoying the sun and scenery. They were there for the Son and not for the sun!

What do we do when we travel somewhere?

Do we witness to some, where we are? Do we ever share our faith?

**Acts 13:8 “BUT ELYMAS THE SORCERER (FOR SO HIS NAME IS TRANSLATED)
WITHSTOOD THEM, SEEKING TO TURN THE PROCONSUL
AWAY FROM THE FAITH.”**

As always we need the Lord to help receive light and life from these words and not just dry words to fill up space.

Please consider the following two points.

**1. “BUT ELYMAS THE SORCERER (FOR SO HIS NAME IS TRANSLATED)
WITHSTOOD THEM,”**

As Barnabas and Saul sought to advance the gospel into new areas a sorcerer opposed them and the gospel. Those under Satanic control were present in three places where there was advancement of the gospel.

1. Acts 8:9
2. Acts 13:8
3. Acts 16:17

These three examples teach us three things concerning the gospel.

1. The examples teach in church history occult power opposed the gospel.
2. The examples teach us opposition manifests when we share the gospel.
3. The examples teach us demon powers oppose the progress of the gospel.

Acts 13:8 “BUT ELYMAS THE SORCERER (FOR SO HIS NAME IS TRANSLATED) WITHSTOOD THEM, SEEKING TO TURN THE PROCONSUL AWAY FROM THE FAITH.”

But in each case the Lord Jesus is mightier than any Satanic power. Satanic power is not to be cowered from but confronted and defeated in the name of Jesus! May I share with you a true story about demon powers opposing the gospel. A few years ago the Lord lead my wife and I to buy an apartment in Spain for it to be used for the gospel. On the day we went to the land registry office in Alicante, Spain to register the property with the government, I was struck with severe stomach pain. The pain was so severe I had to fast for several days.

Acts 13:8 “BUT ELYMAS THE SORCERER (FOR SO HIS NAME IS TRANSLATED) WITHSTOOD THEM, SEEKING TO TURN THE PROCONSUL AWAY FROM THE FAITH.”

Finally I was admitted to hospital. The preliminary tests made the doctor suspect a possible cancerous growth. As I was being x-rayed the Holy Spirit enabled me to discern the presence of a hideous looking evil spirit standing in front of me as the x-ray was about to be taken. Instantly the Holy Spirit quickened the words “spirit of murder” and I commanded it to go in the name of Jesus Christ. It instantly disappeared. If the Lord had not allowed me to discern that evil spirit’s presence its form would have shown up on the x-ray as a growth. Which in turn would mean an operation to remove what the x-ray would have seen as a cancerous growth. The powers of darkness do oppose the advancement of the gospel, but they are no power against the name of Jesus!

Acts 13:8 “BUT ELYMAS THE SORCERER (FOR SO HIS NAME IS TRANSLATED) WITHSTOOD THEM, SEEKING TO TURN THE PROCONSUL AWAY FROM THE FAITH.”

2. “SEEKING TO TURN THE PROCONSUL AWAY FROM THE FAITH.”

In verse 7 Sergius Paulus was very open to the gospel and this sorcerer tried to turn him away from the faith. We need to learn from this example that when a person is open and receptive to the gospel the possibility of someone being used by the devil to turn them away from the faith is extremely likely. We need to be aware of the spiritual warfare we are in.

Acts 13:15 “AND AFTER THE READING OF THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS THE SYNAGOGUE OFFICIALS SENT TO THEM, SAYING,”

For this part of verse 15 please consider it in the following two parts.

1. “AND AFTER THE READING OF THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS”

This verse is describing what we would call a church service. As we read this verse we notice there was not any mention of praise and worship in the church service. There was no joke at the beginning of the sermon. The church service was decidedly different from what we are used to. Yet as we read from verse 16 we do not see Paul critical of the style of this church service nor critical of the synagogue leaders. Paul did not say, “Well, that’s not the way we do it in our church.” When we go to a new church, perhaps visiting, do we find fault with the service or the Lord’s servants? Do we criticize anything that is different from what we are accustomed to?

Acts 13:15 “AND AFTER THE READING OF THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS THE SYNAGOGUE OFFICIALS SENT TO THEM, SAYING,”

2. “THE SYNAGOGUE OFFICIALS SENT TO THEM, SAYING,”

The people in charge of the meeting gave Paul and Barnabas permission to speak to the people. This was the first time Paul and Barnabas were in this synagogue and did not try speaking to the people behind the backs of the synagogue leaders. Paul and Barnabas did not try to undermine or bring division. When someone new comes to your church, do they respect the authority of that church? Or do they secretly or casually introduce books, tapes or other literature to people, particularly to younger Christians, without permission from the church leaders? When you see someone new come, perhaps to house meetings or prayer meetings, see if they are acting and speaking in a way that is OK with the church leadership.

**Acts 13:15 “BRETHREN, IF YOU HAVE ANY WORD OF EXHORTATION,
OR CONSOLATION OR ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE PEOPLE, SAY IT.”**

This part of verse 15 is from the Amplified Bible. Imagine the writer is speaking directly to us as we read this verse and we are being asked these three questions:

1. Do you have a word of exhortation?
2. Do you have a word of consolation?
3. Do you have a word of encouragement?

Then say it! Now consider the opposite of this verse. If we do not have a word of exhortation, consolation, and encouragement, then do not say it!

Is your conversation the opposite from what is said in this verse?

To do what this verse says requires being selfless. It requires denying self. When our conversation is not as it is said here, it shows selfishness.

If we constantly complain, gossip, and find fault it shows we are selfish and not thinking about the person we are talking to. It shows we are only concerned about ourselves and not other people.

Acts 13:16 "...YOU WHO FEAR GOD, LISTEN:"

Paul was directing these words to the men of Israel and they apply to us as well. These words are the introduction to what Paul was to preach. We notice his style of delivery. Paul's style was serious. Paul's style was sober. He did not begin with humor to lighten up the audience and make them feel comfortable. He did not begin by telling the audience to turn and shake someone's hand.

Now let us highlight two points from this verse.

1. "...YOU WHO FEAR GOD,"

Paul was speaking directly to the audience about them and not speaking to them about other people. The word **"YOU"** is speaking to **"YOU"** and not someone else. He spoke to individuals. These words appear here then again in verse 26. The fact this phrase is repeated should arrest our attention. Paul did not say, "You who are wealthy." "You who are well educated." "You who have a good career."

Acts 13:16 "...YOU WHO FEAR GOD, LISTEN:"

Paul was not concerned about what they owned, or what they did.

Paul was concerned that He who owned them hone them!

Paul was concerned that they had a fear of the Lord.

Do we fear God? To fear God gives wisdom we would not have in our own abilities. In Psalms 111:10 it says,

"THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS THE BEGINNING OF WISDOM."

To fear God affects how we live and the decisions we make.

In Proverbs 14:27 it says,

"THE FEAR OF THE LORD IS A FOUNTAIN OF LIFE, THAT ONE MAY AVOID THE SNARES OF DEATH."

To fear God protects and shields us from the deceptiveness of sin.

In Proverbs 16:6 it says,

"AND BY THE FEAR OF THE LORD ONE KEEPS AWAY FROM EVIL."

Acts 13:16 “...YOU WHO FEAR GOD, LISTEN:”

As we continue reading Acts 13 we find there is reference to two men, Saul and David. Both listened to the word of the Lord.

One did not fear God and the other did fear God.

In verse 21 Saul is mentioned and he did not fear God.

In verse 22 David is mentioned and he did fear God.

Now let us read 1 Samuel 15:1,

“SAMUEL SAID TO SAUL, “I AM THE ONE THE LORD SENT TO ANOINT YOU AS KING OVER HIS PEOPLE ISRAEL; SO LISTEN NOW TO THE MESSAGE FROM THE LORD.”

Then in 1 Samuel 15: 2 and 3 the Lord spoke through Samuel instructing Saul to utterly destroy the Amalekites. Saul listened to the word of the Lord but in verse 9 it says,

“BUT SAUL AND THE ARMY SPARED AGAG AND THE BEST OF THE SHEEP AND CATTLE.”

Acts 13:16 “...YOU WHO FEAR GOD, LISTEN:”

Now let us return to Acts 13: 22,

“AFTER REMOVING SAUL, HE MADE DAVID THEIR KING. HE TESTIFIED CONCERNING HIM: “I HAVE FOUND DAVID SON OF JESSE A MAN AFTER MY OWN HEART; HE WILL DO EVERYTHING I WANT HIM TO DO.”

Saul listened to the word of God, but did not do the word of God.

Saul had no fear of God.

David listened to the word of God, and did the word of God.

David had the fear of God.

Which of these men do we resemble most, Saul or David?

Acts 13:16 "...YOU WHO FEAR GOD, LISTEN:"

2. "LISTEN:"

The Bible tells us to do something, not because we already are doing it, but because we are not doing it! He did not ask them, he told them. Why did he tell them to "LISTEN." We do not know with certainty because the Scripture does not tell us, but perhaps the reason he told them to "LISTEN" was because they were not. Or they were distracted in their thoughts. Have you noticed how distracting thoughts enter your mind when studying the Bible or hearing a Bible teaching?

Often we do not "LISTEN" because our minds are distracted.

In Mark 4:24 it says,

"TAKE CARE WHAT YOU LISTEN TO."

Acts 13:16 “...YOU WHO FEAR GOD, LISTEN:”

To “LISTEN” means not talking.

To “LISTEN” requires self-denial.

To “LISTEN” requires being attentive rather than passive.

To “LISTEN” requires not interrupting when someone is talking.

To “LISTEN” requires not thinking what to say as a person is talking.

To “LISTEN” requires considering the person speaking as important.

Do you like talking more than listening?

Do we interrupt?

Do we like to be heard more than we like to hear?

Do you find it easy to be quick to speak and difficult to be slow to “LISTEN?”

In James 1:19 it says,

“BUT LET EVERYONE BE QUICK TO HEAR, SLOW TO SPEAK, AND SLOW TO ANGER.”

Acts 13:17 “THEY DWELT AS STRANGERS IN THE LAND OF EGYPT,”

May we prayerfully look into this part of the verse in the following two parts:

1. “THEY DWELT AS STRANGERS”

The word “**STRANGERS**” has various meanings, including, foreigners, outsiders, aliens, and visitors. This is what the Israelites were in Egypt and it is what we are in this world. Here are five characteristics of a foreigner.

1. A foreigner has a different language. Do we speak differently than non-Christians? Are we careful to avoid lying, gossiping, being critical and unthankful?
2. A foreigner looks different. Do we dress different from the world; God-conscious or fashion-conscious?
3. A foreigner is from another country. Do we believe our citizenship is in heaven more than a country in the world?
4. A foreigner thinks different. Do we think like what the Scriptures say or what the world says?
5. A foreigner acts different. Do we practice living to please God and serve rather than wanting to be served?

Do these five characteristics of a foreigner reflect us in this world?

Acts 13:17 “THEY DWELT AS STRANGERS IN THE LAND OF EGYPT,”

2. “IN THE LAND OF EGYPT,”

Egypt is a type or picture of the world in the Old Testament.

From Exodus 5:6 to 18 Pharaoh put increasing pressure on Israel.

In verse 9 it says, **LET THE LABOR BE HEAVIER ON THE MEN...**

The leader of Egypt put increased pressure on God’s people, particularly the men. As Christians the world exerts pressure on our minds to try to make us conform to it. Pressure often comes through peer pressure. Pressure also comes through the media, advertising and education.

Acts 13:17 “THEY DWELT AS STRANGERS IN THE LAND OF EGYPT,”

The expression “Keeping up with the Joneses” tries to pressure believers into the ways of the world. In Romans 12:2 it says,

“AND DO NOT BE CONFORMED TO THIS WORLD, BUT BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND.”

The Israelites were living in a foreign country and the Lord enabled His people to prosper even though they were strangers in that land. They were born, lived and worked in this foreign country but the Lord had another country for them. As Christians we are in a world that is alien to us.

You might live in a house but home is heaven. We are to be in the world but the world is not to be in us!

**Acts 13:21 “AND AFTERWARD THEY ASKED FOR A KING;
SO GOD GAVE THEM SAUL THE SON OF KISH,
A MAN OF THE TRIBE OF BENJAMIN, FOR FORTY YEARS.”**

Here Paul makes a passing reference to Saul. Then in verse 22 it says, **“AND WHEN HE HAD REMOVED HIM.”** This is all Paul said about Saul. In Saul’s early years he exhibited humility and self-control. Yet in the latter years of his life we find a man who had tragically rebelled and turned against God.

Consider eight disturbing things about Saul that Paul did not mention.

1 Samuel 13:12-13 Self-will.

1 Samuel 15:11-23 Disobedience.

1 Samuel 18:8 Jealousy.

1 Samuel 18:21 Craftiness.

1 Samuel 19:1 Hatred.

1 Samuel 22:18 Murderer.

1 Samuel 28:7 Superstitious.

1 Samuel 31:4 Suicide.

**Acts 13:21 “AND AFTERWARD THEY ASKED FOR A KING;
SO GOD GAVE THEM SAUL THE SON OF KISH,
A MAN OF THE TRIBE OF BENJAMIN, FOR FORTY YEARS.”**

Paul did not say anything negative about Saul even though his actions were far worse than many of us ever imagine doing. What Paul did reflected the words concerning love in 1 Corinthians 13:5, **“IT KEEPS NO RECORD OF WRONGS.”** Another translation says, **“DOESN’T KEEP SCORE OF THE SINS OF OTHERS.”** When people do things that are wrong, do we have this same heart attitude as Paul? Or do we continue to remember and talk about what someone did that was wrong? May we learn from the life of Jacob.

In Genesis 29:23 Jacob was deceived by Laban.

In Genesis 31:41 Laban was dishonest in his financial dealings with Jacob. In Genesis 32:4 it says, **“I HAVE SOJOURNED WITH LABAN AND STAYED THERE UNTIL NOW.”**

Jacob did not say what Laban had done to him.

Jacob did not talk about Laban even though he had hurt him.

With the grace of God may we follow such an example.

Acts 13:23 “FROM THE OFFSPRING OF THIS MAN, ACCORDING TO THE PROMISE, GOD HAS BROUGHT TO ISRAEL A SAVIOR, JESUS.”

For our study of this verse please focus on the words “THIS MAN.”

The person referred to is David. In the genealogy of Joseph, the husband of Mary we find David. He is mentioned although in 2 Samuel 11:4 we know he had committed adultery and further on in verse 15 David gave the order to have Uriah murdered.

The Bible does not attempt to hide the sordid actions of someone in the genealogy of Joseph. The Bible does not candy-coat sin. There are no skeletons in the closet, everything is open and transparent. We see the failings of men so we will not be tempted to exalt them over our Lord Jesus.

Acts 13:30 “BUT GOD RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD;”

This sentence is a simple, seven one syllable words. Yet it communicates the most profound event in all of human history. In verses 28 and 29 Paul expounded on the death of Jesus. Now in this verse Paul told those listening that God raised Jesus from the dead. When sharing the gospel there can be a temptation to focus primarily on the death but not on the resurrection. Paul told his audience that God rose Jesus from the dead. Have we ever told anyone that God raised Jesus from the dead?

Now let us highlight two words from this verse.

1. “BUT”

In verse 28 it ends with the words, “PUT TO DEATH.” In verse 29 it ends with the words, “LAID HIM IN A TOMB.” The two preceding verses talk about death but this verse talks about God giving life. If the chapter ended with verse 29 it would be a hopeless situation. But the Lord never leaves anyone in a hopeless situation. Any words from people that produce hopelessness is not the voice of the Lord.

Acts 13:30 “BUT GOD RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD;”

2. “HIM”

Now let us continue by seeing the word “HIM” is at the center of this sentence,
“BUT GOD RAISED” “HIM” “FROM THE DEAD.”

There are three words on either side and “HIM” takes center place.

And in the center of “HIM” is the letter “I.” As Christians we need to decide who is center in our lives, “HIM” or “I.” Does knowing Jesus, loving “HIM” and serving “HIM” take central place in our hearts and lives?

Now consider the word “I” is in “HIM.” Can you honestly say “I” am in “HIM.” As we consider “HIM” we understand it is referring to Jesus Christ.

Acts 13:30 “BUT GOD RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD;”

For “I” to be in “HIM” speaks of being in Christ. It also speaks of being in the body of Christ. The body of Christ is made up of many members.

To be a member of the body of Christ means passing from death to life.

When a person has repented of sin and received forgiveness from God, that person is born-again, and is then a member of the body of Christ. When we are born-again we can say “I” am in “HIM.”

In Acts 17:28 it says,

“FOR IN HIM WE LIVE AND MOVE AND HAVE OUR BEING.”

In Paul, Apostle of the Heart Set Free, F. F. Bruce said,

“The body of Christ (the believing body as a whole), together with its members one by one, is vitalized by the life of the risen Christ and energized by His Spirit.”

Acts 13:33 “THAT GOD HAS FULFILLED THIS PROMISE TO OUR CHILDREN IN THAT HE RAISED UP JESUS, AS IT IS ALSO WRITTEN IN THE SECOND PSALM, “THOU ART MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE.”

With the insight the Holy Spirit gives, let us look at this verse in two parts.

1. “THAT GOD HAS FULFILLED THIS PROMISE TO OUR CHILDREN IN THAT HE RAISED UP JESUS,”

These words describe God keeping His promise. The promise described is found in Psalms 2:7. The exact date when it was written is unsure, but it was at the very least several hundred years before the birth of Jesus Christ. God made a promise and although several hundred years passed He still kept His promise. God did what He had promised He would do.

He did not forget what He promised to do.

Acts 13:33 “THAT GOD HAS FULFILLED THIS PROMISE TO OUR CHILDREN IN THAT HE RAISED UP JESUS, AS IT IS ALSO WRITTEN IN THE SECOND PSALM, “THOU ART MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE.”

Here are seven questions, please do answer them.

1. Do we keep our promises?
2. Do we forget what we promised?
3. Do we forget to do what we promised?
4. Do we remember what someone promised and did not do?
5. Do we do what we promised even if a long time has gone by?
6. Do we keep our promises because we hurt people if we do not?
7. Do we keep our promise even if other people have not kept theirs?

In Psalms 15: 4 it says,

“KEEP YOUR WORD EVEN WHEN IT COSTS YOU.”

It is better not to promise than to promise and not do it.

Acts 13:33 “THAT GOD HAS FULFILLED THIS PROMISE TO OUR CHILDREN IN THAT HE RAISED UP JESUS, AS IT IS ALSO WRITTEN IN THE SECOND PSALM, “THOU ART MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE.”

2. “AS IT IS ALSO WRITTEN IN THE SECOND PSALM, “THOU ART MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE.”

From these words we learn that Paul spoke in agreement with Psalms 2:7. We are as well to speak in agreement to what Scripture says.

Paul taught about God fulfilling His promise by raising Jesus from the dead. Paul backed up what he was teaching with Scripture. Then we see Paul repeating this same pattern all through this chapter.

In verse 34 Paul teaches.

In verse 35 Paul backs up his teaching with Scripture.

In verses 36 to 40 Paul teaches.

In verse 41 Paul backs up his teaching with Scripture.

In verse 46 Paul teaches.

In verse 47 Paul backs up his teaching with Scripture.

Acts 13:33 “THAT GOD HAS FULFILLED THIS PROMISE TO OUR CHILDREN IN THAT HE RAISED UP JESUS, AS IT IS ALSO WRITTEN IN THE SECOND PSALM, “THOU ART MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE.”

Paul used this pattern throughout his teachings in the New Testament.

This observation teaches us to be discerning. When we read or hear teachings, we are to be very careful to see if what we are reading or hearing is firmly backed up, supported and grounded in Scripture.

If it does not agree with the Word it does agree with the Word!

If it does not go by the Bible it does not go!

In Acts 13:36 it says

“FOR DAVID, AFTER HE HAD SERVED HIS OWN GENERATION BY THE WILL OF GOD, FELL ASLEEP.”

Acts 13:33 “THAT GOD HAS FULFILLED THIS PROMISE TO OUR CHILDREN IN THAT HE RAISED UP JESUS, AS IT IS ALSO WRITTEN IN THE SECOND PSALM, “THOU ART MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE.”

As we read this verse we see it is like a testimony of the life of David.

The verse does not mention that David was rich.

The verse does not mention that David was successful.

The verse does not mention that David lived in a palace.

The verse does not mention that David was a famous king.

The verse does not mention that David was very handsome.

The verse does not mention that David was a gifted musician.

Acts 13:33 “THAT GOD HAS FULFILLED THIS PROMISE TO OUR CHILDREN IN THAT HE RAISED UP JESUS, AS IT IS ALSO WRITTEN IN THE SECOND PSALM, “THOU ART MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE.”

Now for our study of this verse look at it in the following five parts.

1. “FOR DAVID,”

David serves as a wonderful example of the grace of God in a person, enabling them to do what is pleasing to the Lord. Here we see the word “**DAVID**” is singular. One person is mentioned who successfully obeyed the will of God. Paul mentioned the one who had obeyed the Lord rather than mention those who did not obey the Lord. It is good to focus on the few who are obedient rather than the many who are not. We find a similar thought in 1 Peter 5:12, “**THROUGH SILVANAS, OUR FAITHFUL BROTHER.**”

Acts 13:33 “THAT GOD HAS FULFILLED THIS PROMISE TO OUR CHILDREN IN THAT HE RAISED UP JESUS, AS IT IS ALSO WRITTEN IN THE SECOND PSALM, “THOU ART MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE.”

Peter mentions a faithful brother instead of mentioning unfaithful brothers. When we speak about other Christians do we talk about the faithful ones or the unfaithful ones? Please consider this verse does not mention that David committed adultery as is recorded in 2 Samuel 11:4.

David received correction for his sin and repented in 2 Samuel 12:1 to 14 and Psalms 32:1 to 11. This verse which is in capsule form a testimony of David's life does not keep a record of his wrong. If a person sins, then repents, do we still keep a record of their wrong?

Acts 13:33 “THAT GOD HAS FULFILLED THIS PROMISE TO OUR CHILDREN IN THAT HE RAISED UP JESUS, AS IT IS ALSO WRITTEN IN THE SECOND PSALM, “THOU ART MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE.”

2. “AFTER”

Notice the verse does not say “before he had served his own generation.” There are those who profess to serve their generation by the will of God but how many actually do it? In Matthew 8:19 are the words of a scribe, **“TEACHER, I WILL FOLLOW YOU WHEREVER YOU GO.”**

This man sounded excited about following Jesus. If we had been there listening to him saying these words we might have mistaken his carnal zeal for being very spiritual. We might have had condemning thoughts come into our minds accusing us of not being as dedicated to the Lord as he was.

Acts 13:33 “THAT GOD HAS FULFILLED THIS PROMISE TO OUR CHILDREN IN THAT HE RAISED UP JESUS, AS IT IS ALSO WRITTEN IN THE SECOND PSALM, “THOU ART MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE.”

But if we listen more carefully, his words sound self-confident, loud, reckless, and careless. In Matthew 8: 18 it says,

“NOW WHEN JESUS SAW A CROWD AROUND HIM,”

The scribe made sure the crowd heard how much zeal he had.

Jesus was not and still is not impressed with show-offs. No one can follow Jesus unless Jesus gives him or her the strength to do so. Carnal zeal melts quickly in the fire of adversity. Chocolate soldiers melt in the heat.

It is better to have been in the battle and after take the armor off then to be putting the armor on to go to the battle.

Acts 13:33 “THAT GOD HAS FULFILLED THIS PROMISE TO OUR CHILDREN IN THAT HE RAISED UP JESUS, AS IT IS ALSO WRITTEN IN THE SECOND PSALM, “THOU ART MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE.”

3. “HE HAD SERVED HIS OWN GENERATION”

To begin with, look at three things “SERVED HIS OWN GENERATION” does not mean. Then we shall look at what these words do mean.

1. “SERVED HIS OWN GENERATION”

Does not mean David compromised or gave in to ungodly people.

2. “SERVED HIS OWN GENERATION”

Does not mean David went against God or conformed to the world.

3. “SERVED HIS OWN GENERATION”

Does not mean David avoided the world by living in a monastery.

Acts 13:33 “THAT GOD HAS FULFILLED THIS PROMISE TO OUR CHILDREN IN THAT HE RAISED UP JESUS, AS IT IS ALSO WRITTEN IN THE SECOND PSALM, “THOU ART MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE.”

Now look what “SERVED HIS OWN GENERATION” does means.

David did not own his own generation.

David was not owned by his own generation.

David was owned and did not think he was owed anything.

David served the One who owns all knowing he was owed nothing.

David served the One who owned him by serving his own generation.

David first faithfully cared for his father’s sheep in 1 Samuel 16:11.

Acts 13:33 “THAT GOD HAS FULFILLED THIS PROMISE TO OUR CHILDREN IN THAT HE RAISED UP JESUS, AS IT IS ALSO WRITTEN IN THE SECOND PSALM, “THOU ART MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE.”

David then looked after his heavenly Father's sheep in 2 Samuel 5:4.

David was looking after some sheep while his brothers were in battle.

David faithfully did something that may have seemed less important.

David faithfully did something that seemed a lot less glamorous.

David obeyed his father. An example of this is him taking food to his older brothers in 1 Samuel 17: 17 to 20. For us to serve our own generation involves obeying our heavenly Father.

Some might think that taking food to his brothers was not a very spiritual exercise for someone who was going to be a famous king.

Some might think that what he was doing was less important.

Acts 13:33 “THAT GOD HAS FULFILLED THIS PROMISE TO OUR CHILDREN IN THAT HE RAISED UP JESUS, AS IT IS ALSO WRITTEN IN THE SECOND PSALM, “THOU ART MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE.”

Here are four points that reflect David’s heart:

1. Readiness 1 Samuel 17:20 **“SO DAVID AROSE EARLY IN THE MORNING”**
2. Responsible 1 Samuel 17:20 **“LEFT THE FLOCK WITH A KEEPER”**
3. Reliable 1 Samuel 17:20 **“AND TOOK THE SUPPLIES AND WENT”**
4. Respect 1 Samuel 17:20 **“AS JESSE HAD COMMANDED HIM.”**

In 1 Samuel 17: 15 and 16 David had gone back and forth from Saul to looking after his father’s sheep. He did this faithfully for forty days.

He did not complain. He was responsible. Now we might be able to be responsible for a few days, perhaps even several days without complaining. But as day after day passes so does our limited human strength. In this part of Scripture it does not mention David’s father or his brothers thanking him for his responsible behavior.

Acts 13:33 “THAT GOD HAS FULFILLED THIS PROMISE TO OUR CHILDREN IN THAT HE RAISED UP JESUS, AS IT IS ALSO WRITTEN IN THE SECOND PSALM, “THOU ART MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE.”

Are we consistently responsible when no one commends us? God's grace enabled David to be responsible. It is by God's grace that we too can do as David did. David was reliable in what might seem a less important task. Are we reliable in seemingly small tasks? David was respectful to his father and obeyed his father's instruction. Do we obey commands? Remember David had been going back and forth some forty days, yet he remained obedient to what was commanded. Are we obedient as time passes or does our obedience pass with time? How are we to serve our own generation? We serve by obeying the will of God. The will of God is expressed through all of the Bible and the light the Holy Spirit gives from the Bible.

Acts 13:33 “THAT GOD HAS FULFILLED THIS PROMISE TO OUR CHILDREN IN THAT HE RAISED UP JESUS, AS IT IS ALSO WRITTEN IN THE SECOND PSALM, “THOU ART MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE.”

The promptings the Holy Spirit given by whatever means He chooses will always agree with the Bible. The words **“SERVED HIS OWN GENERATION”** are seen in 1 Kings 1:33, **“HAVE MY SON SOLOMON RIDE ON MY OWN MULE.”**

At that time David was an old man. He was king yet he still rode a mule. This is in stark contrast to Adonijah in 1 Kings 1:5,

“HE PREPARED FOR HIMSELF CHARIOTS AND HORSEMEN.”

David was a king and could have had any number of chariots and horsemen yet he still rode a mule.

This speaks of humility and self-denial. David **“SERVED HIS OWN GENERATION”** rather than just serving himself.

Acts 13:33 “THAT GOD HAS FULFILLED THIS PROMISE TO OUR CHILDREN IN THAT HE RAISED UP JESUS, AS IT IS ALSO WRITTEN IN THE SECOND PSALM, “THOU ART MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE.”

4. “BY THE WILL OF GOD,”

These words provide the answer to how we can serve our generation.

We can only truly serve our generation by obeying God’s will. As we obey what the Bible says we will serve our generation.

Acts 13:33 “THAT GOD HAS FULFILLED THIS PROMISE TO OUR CHILDREN IN THAT HE RAISED UP JESUS, AS IT IS ALSO WRITTEN IN THE SECOND PSALM, “THOU ART MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE.”

5. “HE FELL ASLEEP.”

These words tell us the end of David’s life had come. Right up until the very end David was faithful. By the grace of God he did the will of God until the end. These words remind us of Genesis 5:24,

“AND ENOCH WALKED WITH GOD; AND WAS NOT, FOR GOD TOOK HIM.”

In Psalms 150:6 it says, **“...PRAISE THE LORD!”** Imagine the book of Psalms as an overview of David’s life and the very last words in Psalms were words of victory. David obeyed the will of God and served his generation until **“HE FELL ASLEEP.”** David did not obey God and serve until circumstances of life caused him to become discouraged, embittered, disillusioned and give up.

In Matthew 4:19 Jesus said, **“FOLLOW ME.”** There is no expiry date on obedience.

In John 19:30 Jesus said, **“IT IS FINISHED.”** Jesus finished the will of His Father. We are to finish what the Lord has us do.

Acts 13:39 “THROUGH HIM EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES IS JUSTIFIED...”

For our study of this part of this glorious verse please look at these five points.

1. “THROUGH HIM”

In verse 38 the words “**THROUGH HIM**” are emphasized. Paul preached that there is forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ. Now these same words appear again. They speak of Jesus Christ. Notice it says, “**THROUGH.**”

It does not say “around Him” or “instead of Him” or “without Him.”

Paul is preaching that forgiveness of sins has been made possible “**THROUGH**” the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

2. “HIM”

The word is singular, not plural. There is one means of salvation, Jesus Christ. There are not many ways to heaven. In John 14:6 Jesus said, “**I AM THE WAY.**” Jesus did not say, “I am one of the ways.”

Acts 13:39 “THROUGH HIM EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES IS JUSTIFIED...”

3. “EVERYONE”

The verse does not say “some.” In the KJV it says, “**ALL.**” How many does this word refer to? The word means 100%. Notice the verse does not say “everyone is justified.” Not everyone is justified.

It does not matter if a person is wealthy or poor.

It does not matter if a person is educated or not.

It does not matter what nationality a person is.

4. “WHO BELIEVES”

It does not say everyone “who attends church.”

It does not say everyone “who tries to live a good life.”

It does not say everyone “who lives by the golden rule.”

It does not say everyone “who obeys the ten commandments.”

Acts 13:39 “THROUGH HIM EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES IS JUSTIFIED...”

5. “IS JUSTIFIED.”

We shall now proceed with these two words and begin studying the word “IS.”

The word “IS” is easily overlooked.

The word “IS” is easy to not even notice.

The word “IS” is considered not important.

The word “IS” is a word we would usually not bother with.

Have you ever felt like the word “IS?” If you have then be encouraged because the Lord has justified you.

The word “IS” is now! The word “IS” is certain! The word “IS” is present!

Acts 13:39 “THROUGH HIM EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES IS JUSTIFIED...”

Now let us continue on to the word “JUSTIFIED.”

The verse does not say, might be “JUSTIFIED.”

The verse does not say, try to be “JUSTIFIED.”

The verse does not say, want to be “JUSTIFIED.”

The verse does not say, probably will be “JUSTIFIED.”

The verse does not say, you hope you will be “JUSTIFIED.”

The verse says through Him everyone who believes is “JUSTIFIED.”

In Morning By Morning, Charles H. Spurgeon said,

“ The believer in Christ receives a present justification. ” Faith does not produce this fruit by - and - by, but now. ”

Acts 13:43 “...CONTINUE IN THE GRACE OF GOD.”

These words are spoken by Paul and Barnabas after Paul finished preaching. After the preaching their words were sober. When we hear a preaching, and after it finishes what are the sort of words we speak? Are our words sober or silly? After we hear a preaching do we talk about what we learned from the preaching or talk about anything but what we heard in the preaching? Now let us look closer at this verse in the following three parts.

Acts 13:43 “...CONTINUE IN THE GRACE OF GOD.”

1. “CONTINUE”

The word means to go on, carry on, persist, keep on, do not stop.

The word communicates advancement and progress. Are we progressing in the Christian faith? Are we persisting or resisting?

In The Man God Uses, Oswald J. Smith said,

“Am I making progress in Spiritual things? Am I a growing Christian? Am I better this year than last? Is Jesus more real to me? Can my friends see any differences in me? Are the old weaknesses and failings of the flesh disappearing, and is the fruit of the Spirit becoming increasingly mine?”

2. “IN”

As we look at this word we can consider the opposite to it, which is “out.” To continue and make progress in the Christian life we all need the grace of God. If we harden our hearts or rebel against God we are “out” of His grace. The way to remain “IN” the grace of God is to humble ourselves and obey Him.

Acts 13:43 “...CONTINUE IN THE GRACE OF GOD.”

3. “THE GRACE OF GOD.”

After preaching, Paul did not tell the listeners to start doing a bunch of legalistic things. Paul did not give them a list of do's and don'ts. The means of salvation is the grace of God.

In Ephesians 2:8 it says,

“FOR BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED THROUGH FAITH, AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES, IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD.”

Acts 13:43 “...CONTINUE IN THE GRACE OF GOD.”

May I share from my life to illustrate “**THE GRACE OF GOD.**”

In 1981 while serving the Lord as a missionary in Spain the pastor told me to work in a factory where prefabricated church buildings were being constructed for the Spanish people. The missionaries worked nearly ten hours a day without wages. The work environment was dirty, dangerous, and difficult. For awhile I was able to endure these hard circumstances in my own strength. But after a few months I finally broke. I finally realized I could not keep going in my own strength. I gave up, and cried to the Lord to help me. I could not keep working in that place without God's help. He wonderfully helped me and I experienced His grace to sustain me. After experiencing His abundant grace I loved working in that factory because God's grace was so real. If we do not think we need help, we really need help!

Acts 13:44 “AND THE NEXT SABBATH NEARLY THE WHOLE CITY ASSEMBLED TO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD.”

With the Lord to help us receive light and life from this verse, please look at the following three parts.

1. “AND THE NEXT SABBATH”

In context to these words we look at what verse 42 says,
“THE PEOPLE KEPT BEGGING THAT THESE THINGS MIGHT BE SPOKEN TO THEM THE NEXT SABBATH.”

The people were hungry for the word of God and that hunger remained.

A week passed but the hunger for the word of God did not pass.

As we read this verse we are left with the impression that the hunger for the word of God actually increased since so many people now wanted to listen.

The fact that time passed from verse 42 to 44 serves as a good model for us to learn from. Let us ask ourselves, as time has passed in our lives, has the hunger for the word of God passed? Has the hunger for the word of God increased in our lives with the passing of time?

Acts 13:44 “AND THE NEXT SABBATH NEARLY THE WHOLE CITY ASSEMBLED TO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD.”

2. “NEARLY THE WHOLE CITY ASSEMBLED”

In describing this event the writer was careful to say “**NEARLY**” in the sentence. The writer did not exaggerate and say “On the next Sabbath the whole city assembled to hear the word of God.” Exaggeration is sin.

3. “TO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD.”

This verse tells us why almost the entire city assembled. They did not assemble to see miracles. They did not assemble to hear a famous preacher. They did not assemble to meet someone of the opposite sex.

They did not assemble to meet people and make business contacts.

They did not assemble because of the great praise and worship.

The emphasis is on the message and not on the messenger.

When we assemble, what is our motive for doing so?

Acts 13:45 “WHEN THE JEWS SAW THE CROWDS, THEY WERE FILLED WITH JEALOUSY AND TALKED ABUSIVELY AGAINST WHAT PAUL WAS SAYING.”

As we approach this verse in prayer, two thoughts are revealed and with the Lord's help we can learn from them.

1. “THEY WERE FILLED WITH JEALOUSY”

The Jews were filled with jealousy when they saw the crowds of people wanting to hear Paul and Barnabas. In verse 44 it says,

“THE NEXT SABBATH ALMOST THE ENTIRE CITY GATHERED TOGETHER TO HEAR THE WORD OF GOD.”

In Word Pictures in the New Testament, Robertson said,

“Nothing is specifically stated here about the rabbis, but they were beyond doubt the instigators of, and the ringleaders in, the opposition as in Thessalonica (Acts 17:5). No such crowds came to the synagogue when they were the speakers.”

Acts 13:45 “WHEN THE JEWS SAW THE CROWDS, THEY WERE FILLED WITH JEALOUSY AND TALKED ABUSIVELY AGAINST WHAT PAUL WAS SAYING.”

By the grace of God, Paul and Barnabas were experiencing success with many coming to the Lord for salvation. The Jews did not like that they were so popular compared to them. When someone is successful there is often a temptation to be jealous towards that person. An example of this is seen in Judges 8:1 where the men of Ephraim were jealous because of Gideon's success in fighting the men of Midian. People are jealous of those who are successful, and not those who are failures.

2. “AND TALKED ABUSIVELY”

As we learn here about human nature, abusive speech is a characteristic of those who are jealous towards someone. We can look at our own hearts to see if we are abusive towards someone.

Perhaps a family member, or someone in a church. If we speak abusively we need to pray and ask the Lord if the sin of jealousy is in our hearts.

Acts 13:46 “...WE ARE TURNING TO THE GENTILES.”

Here Paul and Barnabas are telling the Jews what they were going to do. Please consider Paul said “WE” rather than “he” or “me.” Paul and Barnabas were in agreement to the decision they made. They made a decision and it was based on Scripture. In verse 47 it refers to Isaiah 42:6,

“I HAVE PLACED YOU AS A LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES.”

They were in agreement, and their decision was in agreement to Scripture. May we ask ourselves, are the decisions we make in agreement to Scripture?

**Acts 13:50 “BUT THE JEWS AROUSED THE DEVOTE WOMEN OF PROMINENCE
AND THE LEADING MEN OF THE CITY,
AND INSTIGATED A PERSECUTION AGAINST PAUL AND BARNABAS,
AND DROVE THEM OUT OF THEIR DISTRICT.”**

Throughout chapter 13 Paul and Barnabas obeyed the Lord from when they were fasting and praying and being sent out from the church in Antioch. Then on their missionary journey they saw God's power over satanic power. Then preaching to a receptive audience with very positive results.

They had obeyed God and now were suffering persecution.

They had obeyed God and now were suffering rejection.

They had done everything right and things went wrong!

Horrible things happened, not because they were disobeying the Lord but because they were obeying the Lord. We suffer persecution because we are obeying the Lord and not because we are disobeying the Lord. If a Christian is not suffering some type of persecution or rejection from the ungodly then their walk as a Christian is suspect.

Acts 13:51 “BUT THEY SHOOK OFF THE DUST OF THEIR FEET IN PROTEST AGAINST THEM AND WENT TO ICONIUM.”

In verse 50 Paul and Barnabas were persecuted by prominent, pompous people. Their situation was rejection and ejection from a region.

Now please look at these two parts.

1. “BUT THEY SHOOK OFF THE DUST.”

They quickly got rid of the dust. Dust is dirt! The dust on their feet did not stay and neither did the dirt stay in their hearts. They shook off the dust, the dirt and hurt.

2. “WENT TO ICONIUM.”

They did not stay where they had been hurt. As we follow Jesus we experience rejection and ejection but we are not to emotionally stay in that place. We can shake off the dust by asking the Lord to wash and cleanse our hearts. In 1 Peter 5:7 it says,

“CASTING ALL YOUR ANXIETY UPON HIM, BECAUSE HE CARES FOR YOU.”

**Acts 13:52 “AND THE DISCIPLES WERE CONTINUALLY
FILLED WITH JOY AND WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.”**

This is the last verse of the chapter and it ends in a very positive way.

In verse 50 there was considerable persecution and rejection against Paul and Barnabas. Then in verse 51 they shook the dust from their feet and left. Had this chapter stopped with that verse it would have been a rather sad ending. But the chapter did not end that way. The verse ends in victory. There was joy at the end. In our lives, when we have gone through many experiences both good and bad may we by the grace of God finish our course with joy.

Acts 14:1 “AND IT CAME ABOUT THAT IN ICONIUM THEY ENTERED THE SYNAGOGUE OF THE JEWS TOGETHER, AND SPOKE IN SUCH A MANNER THAT A GREAT MULTITUDE BELIEVED, BOTH OF JEWS AND OF GREEKS.”

We now come to this new chapter needing and desiring the Holy Spirit to teach us from this precious verse. Please look at the following three points.

1. “AND IT CAME ABOUT THAT”

To begin please consider what had taken place prior to it. In Acts 13:51 it says, **“BUT THEY SHOOK OFF THE DUST OF THEIR FEET IN PROTEST AGAINST THEM AND WENT TO ICONIUM.”**

Paul and Barnabas responded to a difficult situation where the Jews were persecuting them. They left the difficult situation and continued on. When we read chapter 13:49 and 50 we see great revival and then great riots. From one extreme to another yet Paul and Barnabas remained focused. Then we come to chapter 14 and there seems little if any pause. They kept right on doing what they were supposed to do.

Acts 14:1 “AND IT CAME ABOUT THAT IN ICONIUM THEY ENTERED THE SYNAGOGUE OF THE JEWS TOGETHER, AND SPOKE IN SUCH A MANNER THAT A GREAT MULTITUDE BELIEVED, BOTH OF JEWS AND OF GREEKS.”

2. “IN ICONIUM THEY ENTERED”

These words show us Paul and Barnabas had arrived in Iconium. They had gone on from Antioch and the rejection from the Jews. They continued on. When we suffer rejection or other hurtful experiences from people it is important to go on.

3. “AND SPOKE”

What did they speak about? Please recall in Acts 13:50 they had just been persecuted and rejected. Were they speaking about getting persecuted and rejected? If we had just been persecuted and rejected what would we be talking about? It is likely we would be talking about just getting persecuted and rejected. They did not speak about the Jews persecuting them. They did not blame God for allowing them to be rejected. What they spoke about was not what people had done but about what Jesus had done! When people hurt us what do we talk about? Do we talk about what Jesus did or what people did?

Acts 14:2 “BUT THE JEWS WHO REFUSED TO BELIEVE STIRRED UP THE GENTILES AND POISONED THEIR MINDS AGAINST THE BROTHERS.”

To study this verse we can divide it into the following three parts.

1. “BUT THE JEWS WHO REFUSED TO BELIEVE”

They chose not to believe. It does not say they were unable to believe.

It was not that they could not believe but rather would not believe. This observation applies today. If or when a person says “I cannot believe in Jesus” or something similar, it really means he or she is unwilling to believe.

2. “STIRRED UP THE GENTILES AND POISONED THEIR MINDS.”

From these words is seen the ones who refused to believe could not keep their evil unbelief to themselves. These particular Jews were rebelling against the Lord, and their sin negatively influenced other people.

Sin always affects others in a negative way.

Wrong belief produces wrong actions.

Acts 14:2 “BUT THE JEWS WHO REFUSED TO BELIEVE STIRRED UP THE GENTILES AND POISONED THEIR MINDS AGAINST THE BROTHERS.”

3. “AGAINST THE BROTHERS.”

The people who were against the truth of the gospel were against Christian brothers. When negative words are said about other believers it is evidence that the person speaking negatively is refusing to obey the Bible.

Acts 14:5 “AND WHEN AN ATTEMPT WAS MADE BY BOTH THE GENTILES AND THE JEWS WITH THEIR RULERS, TO MISTREAT AND STONE THEM.”

Here we see Gentiles and Jews who usually would not associate with each other finding common ground in their mutual hatred for Paul. They were choosing to be together against Paul. It was an unholy alliance.

Their shared interest was doing something against the will of God.

Their shared interest was their hatred for a servant of the Lord.

Their shared interest was their rejection of the gospel.

Do the people we choose to be with truly want to do the will of God?

Do the people we choose to be with respect servants of the Lord?

Do the people we choose to be with want to promote the gospel?

What kind of people do we associate with? What is the reason we want to spend time with certain people? What interests do we have in common with those we associate with?

Acts 14:7 “AND THERE THEY CONTINUED TO PREACH THE GOSPEL.”

Please read verses 1 to 10 and highlight the following three verses.

Verse 3,

“SO PAUL AND BARNABAS SPENT CONSIDERABLE TIME THERE, SPEAKING BOLDLY FOR THE LORD, WHO CONFIRMED THE MESSAGE OF HIS GRACE BY ENABLING THEM TO DO MIRACULOUS SIGNS AND WONDERS.”

Verse 5,

“THERE WAS A PLOT AFOOT AMONG THE GENTILES AND JEWS, TOGETHER WITH THEIR LEADERS, TO ILL-TREAT THEM AND STONE THEM.”

Verse 6,

“BUT THEY FOUND OUT ABOUT IT AND FLED TO THE LYCAONIAN CITIES OF LYSTRA AND DERBE AND TO THE SURROUNDING COUNTRY.”

Acts 14:7 “AND THERE THEY CONTINUED TO PREACH THE GOSPEL.”

Paul and Barnabus were nearly killed for preaching the gospel.

What would we have done if that had happened to us? Under the same circumstances would we have fled and kept on fleeing? Certainly that would be a strong temptation. Difficulties try to divert our eyes off proclaiming the gospel and onto the difficulties. When attack comes, keep doing the will of the Father.

**Acts 14:11 “AND WHEN THE MULTITUDES SAW WHAT PAUL HAD DONE,
THEY RAISED THEIR VOICE, SAYING IN THE LYCAONIAN LANGUAGE,
“THE GODS HAVE BECOME LIKE MEN AND HAVE COME DOWN TO US.”**

With the Holy Spirit to help us, prayerfully consider these five points.

1. “AND WHEN THE MULTITUDES SAW”

In verse 10 the Lord used Paul to heal a man who had been lame from birth. The multitudes in Lystra responded with these words in verse 11. What they believed and what they said was not true about Paul and Barnabas. They were believing a lie about Paul and Barnabas.

2. “WHAT PAUL HAD DONE,”

In verse 7 it says they, Paul and Barnabas, continued to preach the gospel. Then in verse 10 the people saw the miracle of a cripple getting healed. There was proclamation and demonstration of the gospel. Now we focus more closely on the words **“HAD DONE.”** What Paul had done was very recent. Scripture is not referring to something Paul did years before but what had happened very recently. In your life you might be able to recall what the Lord did years ago, but has anything happened recently?

**Acts 14:11 “AND WHEN THE MULTITUDES SAW WHAT PAUL HAD DONE,
THEY RAISED THEIR VOICE, SAYING IN THE LYCAONIAN LANGUAGE,
“THE GODS HAVE BECOME LIKE MEN AND HAVE COME DOWN TO US.”**

3. “THEY RAISED THEIR VOICE,”

These people had just seen a miracle take place in front of their eyes.

They raised their voice because they had seen a miracle of healing.

They did not doubt that miracles were real. Do we raise our voices or lower our voices when it comes to speaking about what God does?

When it comes to talking about what the Lord has done do we talk or balk?

Do we make things happen or just talk about things that happened?

**Acts 14:11 “AND WHEN THE MULTITUDES SAW WHAT PAUL HAD DONE,
THEY RAISED THEIR VOICE, SAYING IN THE LYCAONIAN LANGUAGE,
“THE GODS HAVE BECOME LIKE MEN AND HAVE COME DOWN TO US.”**

4. “SAYING IN THE LYCAONIUM LANGUAGE,”

These unsaved people spoke a language that is foreign to us. If we heard the Lycaonium language we would not have a clue what they were talking about. Conversely if those unsaved people were to hear us speaking English they would not understand us. What we can focus on is these people were unsaved and their way of speaking was foreign to us.

Now let us ask ourselves, is our way of speaking different from unsaved people? Is our conversation the same or different from unsaved people?

**Acts 14:11 “AND WHEN THE MULTITUDES SAW WHAT PAUL HAD DONE,
THEY RAISED THEIR VOICE, SAYING IN THE LYCAONIAN LANGUAGE,
“THE GODS HAVE BECOME LIKE MEN AND HAVE COME DOWN TO US.”**

5. “THE GODS HAVE BECOME LIKE MEN AND HAVE COME DOWN TO US.”

These words quote what the people said. Notice that what they said was a lie. What they were believing was a lie about two Christian leaders.

As we read verses 12 and 13 we realize these people readily believed this lie. There was no resistance to believing the lie. In verses 15,16, and 17 is seen Barnabas and Paul speaking the truth but people resisted believing what they said. The people did not doubt a lie but they doubted the truth. Are we the same? It seems so easy for people to believe a lie but difficult to believe the truth.

**Acts 14:11 “AND WHEN THE MULTITUDES SAW WHAT PAUL HAD DONE,
THEY RAISED THEIR VOICE, SAYING IN THE LYCAONIAN LANGUAGE,
“THE GODS HAVE BECOME LIKE MEN AND HAVE COME DOWN TO US.”**

They did not feel embarrassed to repeat a lie.

They did not mind not giving God the glory.

They did not feel ashamed to repeat a lie.

They did not mind giving men the glory.

They did not hesitate to believe a lie.

They did not question a lie.

**Acts 14:11 “AND WHEN THE MULTITUDES SAW WHAT PAUL HAD DONE,
THEY RAISED THEIR VOICE, SAYING IN THE LYCAONIAN LANGUAGE,
“THE GODS HAVE BECOME LIKE MEN AND HAVE COME DOWN TO US.”**

Do we question the truth?

Do we feel ashamed of the truth?

Do we hesitate to believe the truth?

Do we feel embarrassed about the truth?

Do we give men the glory or God the glory?

Do we exalt a servant of the Lord over the Lord?

Do we quote Bible teachers without mentioning they only have wisdom
because God gave it to them?

The correct way for us to think and speak is seen in 2 Peter 3:15,

**“...OUR BELOVED BROTHER PAUL, ACCORDING TO THE WISDOM GIVEN HIM,
WROTE TO YOU.”**

Acts 14:13 “THE CROWD WANTED TO OFFER SACRIFICES TO THEM.”

The people's attention was solely on Paul and Barnabas after the crippled man was healed in verse 10. The people credited mere men for the healing rather than the Lord. The people's focus was on men rather than the One and only true God. This observation shows us that human nature has not changed in all these years. Today, there is still the temptation to give credit to a person with a healing ministry rather than giving God the credit for healings done through them.

Some would rather give a man the glory rather than God.

**Acts 14:14 “BUT WHEN THE APOSTLES BARNABAS
AND PAUL HEARD THIS, THEY TORE THEIR CLOTHES
AND RAN IN AMONG THE MULTITUDE, CRYING OUT.”**

From this verse may we give attention to the words **“THEY TORE THEIR CLOTHES.”**

When we first read this we might find it difficult to understand why grown men, especially Christian men, and even more so, Christian leaders would tear their clothes in front of people. Obviously something had happened to cause this. In verse 13 the multitudes wanted to offer sacrifices to them, thinking they were gods.

Another example of a person tearing their robes is in 2 Kings 22:11 which says, **“AND IT CAME ABOUT WHEN THE KING HEARD THE WORDS OF THE BOOK OF THE LAW, THAT HE TORE HIS CLOTHES.”**

**Acts 14:14 “BUT WHEN THE APOSTLES BARNABAS
AND PAUL HEARD THIS, THEY TORE THEIR CLOTHES
AND RAN IN AMONG THE MULTITUDE, CRYING OUT.”**

The king's heart was humble and tender and he tore his robes because he realized God's word, the book of the law was not being obeyed.

Do we have such a tender, humble heart towards the word of God when we read or hear it taught?

In Revival Praying, Leonard Ravenhill said,

“This rending of the garments was again an outward sign of inward grief, a sign of a broken heart.”

Barnabas and Paul were deeply saddened by the people worshipping them rather than the true God. They were saddened because God was not given the rightful worship that belonged to Him. What makes us sad? Are we sad when God is not acknowledged the way we think He should be? Or are we sad when we are not acknowledged the way we think we should be?

Acts 14:15 “MEN, WHY ARE YOU DOING THESE THINGS?”

In verses 11 and 12 the multitudes were calling Barnabas and Paul gods. In verse 13 even the priest of Zeus joined in exalting them, wanting to offer sacrifice to them along with the crowd. Barnabas and Paul were immensely popular with the pagans. These pagans were praising them, exalting them, worshiping them. Then in verse 14 we learn that Barnabas and Paul were shocked that these people were exalting them. Now we come to verse 14 and here Barnabas and Paul rebuked the crowd. That rebuke not only cost them an offering, but nearly their lives. They distained the acclaim. Their exaltation of Barnabas and Paul quickly turned to attempted execution of Barnabas and Paul! Barnabas and Paul despised receiving the glory instead of God. If you and I were in Barnabas and Paul's place would our response be the same?

Acts 14:19 “...THEY STONED PAUL...”

These words and the context in which they are written teach us a lot concerning human nature. In verse 11 the multitudes were shouting out that Paul and Barnabas were gods. Then in verse 12 it says,

“AND THEY BEGAN CALLING BARNABAS, ZEUS, AND PAUL, HERMES.”

Then as we read from verse 12 to 19 we get the impression little time had lapsed between these verses. The people’s passion for Paul went from wanting to worship to wanting to wound! This pattern is a reflection of our Lord in Mark 11:9 where the people were praising Him. Then shortly after in Mark 14:43-44 Jesus was betrayed.

What we can apply from these insights is when people give you praise do not keep it. Those praising you today might be stoning you tomorrow!

Acts 14:20 “...HE GOT UP AND WENT BACK INTO THE CITY.”

In the preceding verse the Jews having won the people over to their side then dragged Paul out of the city and stoned him to the point they thought he was dead. Satan tried to shut Paul up but Paul did not love his life even onto death. Now if we had just had people turn on us, drag us out of a city, then stone us to where we were nearly dead, what would our response be? If this had happened to us, would we want to return to that city? Very likely it would be a strong temptation to run rather than return. Satan would very quickly remind us of what had happened to us.

Acts 14:20 “...HE GOT UP AND WENT BACK INTO THE CITY.”

- Remember it says, “HE GOT UP.” It does not say, he gave in!
- Remember it says, “HE GOT UP.” It does not say, he gave up!
- Remember it says, “HE GOT UP.” It does not say, he got down!
- Remember it says, “HE GOT UP.” It does not say, he got bitter!
- Remember it says, “HE GOT UP.” It does not say, he got upset!
- Remember it says, “HE GOT UP.” It does not say, he got angry!
- Remember it says, “HE GOT UP.” It does not say, he stayed down!

Acts 14:20 “THE NEXT DAY HE AND BARNABAS LEFT FOR DERBE.”

For our study of this part of verse 20 may we look at the context. From verse 8 is a record of Paul and Barnabas in Lystra. The Lord enabled Paul to heal a crippled man. Then as we read verses 8 to 18 we see the people were so amazed by the healing they tried to worship Paul and Barnabas. Then in verse 19 Jews came on the scene, stirred up the crowd and Paul was stoned, and was thought to be dead. Now we return to verse 20 where we learn that the very next day after such terrible physical pain, Paul and Barnabas left for Derbe to preach the gospel. Paul very likely was still in considerable physical pain after nearly being stoned to death the day before.

Acts 14:20 “THE NEXT DAY HE AND BARNABAS LEFT FOR DERBE.”

We learn from verse 21 that large numbers of people were converted. Imagine what would have happened if Paul had given up after suffering such severe physical punishment and had not gone to Derbe. What do you think would have happened if Paul had given up and not gone? What would have happened is people would not have been saved in Derbe. This observation serves as a sober lesson we need to pay careful attention to. When we go through various forms of suffering, the temptation is to give up. But if we give up, people who God wants to save through us will not have the chance to respond to the gospel. After severe sufferings come situations to share the gospel.

Acts 14:21 “THEY PREACHED THE GOOD NEWS IN THAT CITY AND WON A LARGE NUMBER OF DISCIPLES.”

For our present study please look at it in the following two points.

1. “THEY PREACHED THE GOOD NEWS IN THAT CITY”

So easily we can read these words and hurry on to the rest of the verse.

As a young Christian with lots of theory and little experience we may read these words but not understand them. But as we follow Jesus and go through some tribulations we can better appreciate God’s grace in Paul.

By God’s grace he preached the good news although he was nearly killed just a short time before. Imagine nearly being killed! That is bad news! But Paul kept preaching the good news! Usually after experiencing bad news we speak about the bad news and forget the good news. When we experience bad news, let us remain focused and preach the good news.

**Acts 14:21 “THEY PREACHED THE GOOD NEWS IN THAT CITY
AND WON A LARGE NUMBER OF DISCIPLES.”**

2. “AND WON A LARGE NUMBER OF DISCIPLES.”

We will compare these words with those in verse 19,

**“THEY STONED PAUL AND DRAGGED HIM OUTSIDE THE CITY, THINKING HE
WAS DEAD.”**

The people thought Paul was dead. Then after that there was a large number of conversions. This pattern brings to mind what Jesus taught in John 12:24,

**“I TELL YOU THE TRUTH, UNLESS A GRAIN OF WHEAT FALLS TO THE GROUND
AND DIES, IT REMAINS ONLY A SINGLE SEED. BUT IF IT DIES, IT PRODUCES
MANY SEEDS.”**

Acts 14:22 “STRENGTHENING THE SOULS OF THE DISCIPLES, ENCOURAGING THEM TO CONTINUE IN THE FAITH,”

This part of verse 22 is composed of two parts. With the Lord’s help we shall study each part.

1. “STRENGTHENING THE SOULS OF THE DISCIPLES.”

In verse 21 Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch. Now we learn in this verse why they returned to these cities. They returned to help the new disciples to grow in their faith. The disciples would have been quite new Christians. Paul and Barnabas were concerned for the growth of new Christians. Do we share the same type of concern for new Christians? When we travel to different cities, what is the purpose of our going? Is it to help other disciples in their faith? When we travel to another city or country, do we go with the motive of wanting to help strengthen and encourage Christians living there to continue in the faith?

**Acts 14:22 “STRENGTHENING THE SOULS OF THE DISCIPLES,
ENCOURAGING THEM TO CONTINUE IN THE FAITH,”**

2. “ENCOURAGING THEM TO CONTINUE IN THE FAITH.”

What would be the opposite of these words? Perhaps “discouraging them to not continue in the faith.” Encouragement comes from people and so does discouragement. The new disciples in this verse needed encouraging to remain true to the faith. Why do you think they needed encouraging to continue in the faith? Very likely there was plenty of opposition against them to stop them from continuing in the faith. Let us ask ourselves, do we encourage or discourage other Christians with the words we speak?

Acts 14:22 “WE MUST THROUGH MANY TRIBULATIONS ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD.”

With the Lord’s help we shall study this verse in the following seven points.

1. “WE”

It does not say “me.” When we are in tribulations we might be tempted to think we are the only ones going through difficult times. But that is not supported by Scripture. This verse applies to every believer who follows Jesus Christ.

2. “MUST”

It does not say “might.” This word tells us tribulations are certain. Scripture does not give false comfort, but does give comfort!

Acts 14:22 “WE MUST THROUGH MANY TRIBULATIONS ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD.”

3. “THROUGH”

It does not say “around.” In this verse is a confirmation to what was seen in Exodus 14:22, **“THROUGH THE MIDST OF THE SEA.”** In Exodus the Israelites went through a big tribulation called the Red Sea. They had to go through it on their journey to the promised land. Today this truth speaks to us. Each of us has our ‘Red Sea’ type tribulations. In Exodus 14:21-22 God took His people **“THROUGH”** a terrible situation. Today God still takes His people **“THROUGH”** tribulations. The Lord did not go around the Red Sea but **“THROUGH”** it! He does the same with us. We still go **“THROUGH”** many trials but we do not stay in them. Trials seem like they will never end. But they come to pass, not to stay.

**Acts 14:22 “WE MUST THROUGH MANY TRIBULATIONS
ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD.”**

4. “MANY”

It does not say “few.” It does not say “not any.” Paul certainly did not tickle the ears of these new believers. He did not dilute the message for fear of offending some. Scripture never gives false hope, but does give hope!

Acts 14:22 “WE MUST THROUGH MANY TRIBULATIONS ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD.”

5. “TRIBULATIONS”

It does not say “easy ride.” Earlier in chapter 14 Paul had suffered a lot.

We see in verse 19 the crowd stoned Paul and left him for dead.

After enduring so much pain and suffering he told the disciples these words. He experienced tribulations before teaching about tribulations.

We cannot lead where we have never been led. The audience Paul was addressing needed encouraging. They needed encouraging and so do we. The pressures of the world try to stop us from going forward.

Tribulations in our lives try to discourage us from continuing in the faith.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:11 it says,

“THEREFORE ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER, AND BUILD UP ONE ANOTHER, JUST AS YOU ALSO ARE DOING.”

We all need encouragement and courage for the challenges we face.

Acts 14:22 “WE MUST THROUGH MANY TRIBULATIONS ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD.”

6. “ENTER”

It does not say “no entry.” We have this certain hope for what is before us in the future. It is not presumption. The following three verses confirm the fact we “ENTER” heaven when we die.

1 John 5:10, “THE ONE WHO BELIEVES IN THE SON OF GOD HAS THE WITNESS IN HIMSELF;”

1 John 5:11, “AND THE WITNESS IS THIS, THAT GOD HAS GIVEN US ETERNAL LIFE, AND THIS LIFE IS IN HIS SON.”

1 John 5:12, “HE WHO HAS THE SON HAS THE LIFE; HE WHO DOES NOT HAVE THE SON OF GOD DOES NOT HAVE THE LIFE.”

When we leave this life we “ENTER” heaven. Do you have this assurance of going to heaven after you die?

**Acts 14:22 “WE MUST THROUGH MANY TRIBULATIONS
ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD.”**

7. “THE KINGDOM OF GOD.”

It speaks of God’s rule now, and what awaits us after we leave this world. God’s Kingdom is where He is ruling, where Jesus is King, Lord, and Master. We are to pray for His Kingdom to come. His authority is manifested, in people’s lives and over the powers of the devil. A clear manifestation of the Kingdom of God are demons being cast out of people.

**Acts 14:27 “AND WHEN THEY HAD ARRIVED
AND GATHERED THE CHURCH TOGETHER,
THEY BEGAN TO REPORT ALL THINGS THAT GOD HAD DONE WITH THEM
AND HOW HE HAD OPENED A DOOR OF FAITH TO THE GENTILES.”**

For our study of this verse please consider the following five points.

1. “AND WHEN THEY ARRIVED”

The verse begins with the word “AND.” From verses 23, 24, 25 and 26 the word “AND” introduces the acts taking place in each of these verses.

Paul and Barnabas were very busy traveling and proclaiming the gospel and now they arrived. They did not stop along the way as they preached the way of salvation. In your life, are you in some way helping preach the way of salvation or have you stopped along the way?

**Acts 14:27 “AND WHEN THEY HAD ARRIVED
AND GATHERED THE CHURCH TOGETHER,
THEY BEGAN TO REPORT ALL THINGS THAT GOD HAD DONE WITH THEM
AND HOW HE HAD OPENED A DOOR OF FAITH TO THE GENTILES.”**

2. “AND GATHERED THE CHURCH TOGETHER,”

Paul and Barnabas had been traveling and when they arrived they wanted to be with the people of God. When we travel, do we want to be with the people of God or people not with God? When Paul and Barnabas gathered the church together it was quite soon after what had happened in chapter 14. What they spoke about was recent. They were not reminiscing about “the good old days” and what God had done years before. What has God been doing recently in your life? Has God been doing anything recently through your life?

**Acts 14:27 “AND WHEN THEY HAD ARRIVED
AND GATHERED THE CHURCH TOGETHER,
THEY BEGAN TO REPORT ALL THINGS THAT GOD HAD DONE WITH THEM
AND HOW HE HAD OPENED A DOOR OF FAITH TO THE GENTILES.”**

3. “THEY BEGAN TO REPORT”

Under this point let us point out the word “**THEY.**” There were two people telling what had happened, rather than just one person telling what had happened. If there is only one person describing something, particularly to a church gathering, there is a temptation to exaggerate the facts concerning what happened elsewhere. But when there are two people doing the reporting that temptation is avoided.

**Acts 14:27 “AND WHEN THEY HAD ARRIVED
AND GATHERED THE CHURCH TOGETHER,
THEY BEGAN TO REPORT ALL THINGS THAT GOD HAD DONE WITH THEM
AND HOW HE HAD OPENED A DOOR OF FAITH TO THE GENTILES.”**

4. “ALL THINGS THAT GOD HAD DONE WITH THEM”

Paul and Barnabas reported all what God had done with them instead of reporting all that they had done for God. In verse 3 they had witnessed signs and wonders. In verse 10 a crippled man was healed. Paul and Barnabas's focus was on giving glory to God rather than themselves.

What they spoke about was what God had done through them rather than talking about what God had done with someone else. Their experience was firsthand rather than secondhand. They were not talking about something they read in a bibliography about some missionary. Again please consider these words “ALL THAT GOD HAD DONE WITH THEM” and highlight three verses related to this phrase. In verse 2 the Jews were opposed to them. In verse 5 people tried to mistreat and stone them.

**Acts 14:27 “AND WHEN THEY HAD ARRIVED
AND GATHERED THE CHURCH TOGETHER,
THEY BEGAN TO REPORT ALL THINGS THAT GOD HAD DONE WITH THEM
AND HOW HE HAD OPENED A DOOR OF FAITH TO THE GENTILES.”**

In verse 19 the Jews stoned Paul and left him for dead. Paul and Barnabas had endured horrific suffering from people. But here we read the words **“ALL THAT GOD HAD DONE WITH THEM”** rather than “all that people had done with them.”

They focused on the good God rather than the bad people!

They focused on what God did rather than what people did.

They focused on the great God rather than the grating of people.

**Acts 14:27 “AND WHEN THEY HAD ARRIVED
AND GATHERED THE CHURCH TOGETHER,
THEY BEGAN TO REPORT ALL THINGS THAT GOD HAD DONE WITH THEM
AND HOW HE HAD OPENED A DOOR OF FAITH TO THE GENTILES.”**

5. “AND HOW HE HAD OPENED A DOOR OF FAITH TO THE GENTILES.”

These words focus on God and what He did rather than on what they did.

The emphasis is on God and what He did for the Gentiles rather than on what Paul and Barnabas did for God. When we read of various ministries, where is the emphasis? Is it on what God does or what the ministry does?

**Acts 15:1 “AND SOME MEN CAME DOWN FROM JUDEA
AND BEGAN TEACHING THE BRETHREN,”**

The men described here were acting independently from the church leaders and teaching contrary to the doctrine that salvation is through the grace of the Lord Jesus as verse 11 says,

“BUT WE BELIEVE THAT WE ARE SAVED THROUGH THE GRACE OF THE LORD JESUS, IN THE SAME WAY AS THEY ALSO ARE.”

Please notice that the men who had come down from Judea **“BEGAN TEACHING THE BRETHREN.”** They spoke to the brethren in the church but they did not speak to the leaders in the church. We are well advised to heed this observation. If someone comes to your church and wants to start house meetings or prayer meetings, ask them if they have permission from the leaders in your church.

**Acts 15:1 “AND SOME MEN CAME DOWN FROM JUDEA
AND BEGAN TEACHING THE BRETHREN,”**

In verse 24 we see the result of such people's conduct, **“UNSETTLING YOUR MINDS AND THROWING YOU INTO CONFUSION.”** Their influence is divisive and brings confusion. Remember, a person under authority will have authority. The conduct of these men was in sharp contrast to Paul and Barnabas in verse 3, **“THEREFORE, BEING SENT ON THEIR WAY BY THE CHURCH.”**

Please give heed to the word **“SENT.”** The fact they were sent shows they were under authority. Another example like that of Paul and Barnabas is in verse 22, **“THEN IT SEEMED GOOD TO THE APOSTLES AND THE ELDERS, WITH THE WHOLE CHURCH, TO CHOOSE MEN FROM AMONG THEM TO SEND TO ANTIOCH WITH PAUL AND BARNABAS; JUDAS CALLED BARNABAS, AND SILAS, LEADING MEN AMONG THE BRETHREN.”**

This verse confirms that the men spoken of in this verse were as well under spiritual authority. Notice the words **“AMONG THE BRETHREN.”** They were among, not separate as was the case with the men described in verse 1.

Acts 15:3 “THIS NEWS MADE ALL THE BROTHERS VERY GLAD.”

For this study of the last part of verse 3 we shall examine it in two parts.

1. “THIS NEWS”

First we need to ask, what was this news that made all the brothers glad?

In the first part of this verse it tells of Paul and Barnabas traveling through Phoenicia and Samaria and telling the brothers about the Gentiles getting converted. Paul and Barnabas were not speaking about negative things like getting stoned and left for dead in the previous chapter.

They were speaking about positive things.

They were not speaking about the bad things that happened to them but rather the good things that happened to the Gentiles. What do we choose to speak about, bad news or the good news?

Acts 15:3 “THIS NEWS MADE ALL THE BROTHERS VERY GLAD.”

2. “MADE ALL THE BROTHERS VERY GLAD.”

What these brothers heard had an affect on them. In this case what they heard made them glad. What we hear, or what we listen to affects us in either a positive or negative way. Jesus gave us a very clear warning in Mark 4:24
“TAKE CARE WHAT YOU LISTEN TO.”

Now consider that hearing about people getting saved made these Christians glad. Let us ask ourselves a question.

What makes us glad? Does seeing people get saved make us glad?

Human nature is such that it naturally wants to pursue any activity that promises happiness. People will spend time and money to pursue activities that make them feel glad and happy. It seems only normal for us who are Christians to want to give our time and money towards seeing people get saved because it makes us glad.

**Acts 15:11 “BUT WE BELIEVE THAT WE ARE SAVED
THROUGH THE GRACE OF THE LORD JESUS,”**

Here Peter is expounding on the fact that salvation is through the grace of the Lord Jesus. Peter said these words because certain people were saying things in verse 5 that contradicted the gospel. Please give attention to the words **“WE ARE SAVED.”** These incredible words speak with certainty. These words speak of ‘knowing’ a person is saved.

Peter did not say “I think we are saved.”

Peter did not say, “I hope we are saved.”

When we are saved it is not because we are in some way superior to others but because of the mercy of God allowing us to hear the gospel and believe. If you are truly born-again you will know it. If there is uncertainty or you are not sure then pray, asking God to forgive you from your sins and receive salvation as a free gift from God.

**Acts 15:13 “AND AFTER THEY HAD STOPPED SPEAKING,
JAMES ANSWERED, SAYING, “BRETHREN, LISTEN TO ME.”**

For our study please give attention to the beginning words and the last words.
“AND AFTER THEY HAD STOPPED SPEAKING,” “LISTEN TO ME.”

In verse 12 Barnabas and Paul were speaking. James waited for them to finish speaking before he started speaking. James did not say, **“LISTEN TO ME”** right in the middle of when they were speaking. If we only want people to **“LISTEN TO ME”** it shows we are not willing to listen. How James acted reflected how Jesus acted in Matthew 22:29 when He waited for the Sadducees to finish speaking before He spoke. This is in stark contrast to what Judas did. In Matthew 26:47 it says about Jesus,
“AND WHILE HE WAS STILL SPEAKING.”

Then in verse 49 it says,

“AND IMMEDIATELY HE WENT TO JESUS AND SAID, “HAIL, RABBI!” AND KISSED HIM.”

**Acts 15:13 “AND AFTER THEY HAD STOPPED SPEAKING,
JAMES ANSWERED, SAYING, “BRETHREN, LISTEN TO ME.”**

Also in contrast to Jesus and James was Festus in Acts 26:24,
“AND WHILE PAUL WAS SAYING THIS IN HIS DEFENSE, FESTUS SAID IN A LOUD
VOICE.”

Interrupting someone when they are speaking shows pride and selfishness.
It communicates that the one interrupting thinks what he or she has to say is
more important than the person speaking. James followed the example of
Jesus. Judas did not. Whom do we wish to follow?

Acts 15:15 “THE WORDS OF THE PROPHETS ARE IN AGREEMENT WITH THIS, AS IT IS WRITTEN,”

We begin with verse 14 where James is speaking about God saving Gentiles. Then in verses 16, 17, and 18 he quotes from Amos 9:11 and 12. What the Scriptures said agreed with what was happening through Barnabas and Paul. What we can learn from this is, the things we see must be compared and evaluated with the teachings of Scripture. What James spoke agreed to what the Scriptures say. Is our speech in agreement to what the Scriptures say?

**Acts 15:31 “AND WHEN THEY HAD READ IT, THEY REJOICED
BECAUSE OF ITS ENCOURAGEMENT.”**

From verse 23 to 29 is a letter sent from the apostles and elders in Antioch. The people who read the letter were encouraged by what it said. When we write a letter, do we consciously write it to encourage the people who will receive it? Letters we write can reflect our spiritual condition as was evident here. The people doing the writing were devoted to the Lord and it came across through what they wrote.

If our lives are devoted to the Lord it will be seen in how we write to people. If our hearts are cold towards God that too will be reflected through the words we write.

Acts 15:40 “BUT PAUL CHOSE SILAS AND DEPARTED,”

This portion of verse 40 is linked to verses 39 and 41 and has two parts.

1. “BUT PAUL CHOSE SILAS”

Paul had a disagreement with Barnabas in verse 39. Then in this verse he was stilling willing to work with another Christian. A disagreement did not make him distance himself from other Christians.

2. “AND DEPARTED”

In verse 41 Paul went forward. Paul made a decision, a choice in his will.

Previously Paul had a disagreement, and now he was departing. When you have a disagreement, depart from it. Depart from disagreements! Do not keep going over the disagreement in your mind. Now that a choice was made Paul departed, and kept going forward.

If you ever have a disagreement with another Christian, make the decision, choose in your will to continue on.

Acts 15:40 “BUT PAUL CHOSE SILAS AND DEPARTED,”

If you have disagreements, depart from it in your thinking.

In Philippians 3:13 it says,

“FORGETTING WHAT IS BEHIND AND STRAINING TOWARDS WHAT IS AHEAD.”

Now see how David handled hurtful words from his brother Eliab in 1 Samuel 17:30,

“HE THEN TURNED AWAY TO SOMEONE ELSE.”

If David had got sidetracked fighting with his brother he would not have fought the real enemy who was Goliath.

If we get sidetracked fighting with a brother we will not be fighting the real enemy who is the devil.

If we do not turn away from wrongs done to us we risk turning away from the Lord.

Acts 15:40 “BUT PAUL CHOSE SILAS AND DEPARTED,”

Here is another example from David's life. After David helped the people of Keilah, they were going to betray him. Then the Lord warned him and this is how he responded in 1 Samuel 23:13,

“THEN DAVID AND HIS MEN, ABOUT SIX HUNDRED, AROSE AND DEPARTED FROM KEILAH.”

If we do not depart we will come apart!

If we do not depart we are not smart.

Acts 15:41 “AND HE WAS TRAVELING THROUGH SYRIA AND CILICIA, STRENGTHENING THE CHURCHES.”

To help gain insight from this verse it is most helpful to read the context.

In verse 39 it says, **“THEY HAD SUCH A SHARP DISAGREEMENT THAT THEY PARTED COMPANY.”** Paul and Barnabas had a big argument. Now let us move on and study this verse in the following two parts.

1. “AND HE WAS TRAVELING THROUGH SYRIA AND CILICIA,”

These words tell us Paul was moving on, going forward. He was not staying where he was. He did not stop. He did have a difficult argument with Barnabas, a person he was very close with. They had served the Lord together and gone through a lot together. But that did not stop him from continuing on serving the Lord. Have you had a big argument with someone you have known for awhile? In your mind is the event still fresh like the argument happened just yesterday? If it is, it is time to move on. If you keep looking back it hinders looking forward.

**Acts 15:41 “AND HE WAS TRAVELING THROUGH SYRIA AND CILICIA,
STRENGTHENING THE CHURCHES.”**

2. “STRENGTHENING THE CHURCHES.”

He was busy strengthening the churches. When we read this verse we realize it had taken place shortly after the disagreement Paul had with Barnabas. But Scripture makes no mention of Paul speaking to people in the churches about the argument he had with Barnabas. If we have an argument with someone, do we talk to people in the church about the person, or do we talk to the Lord about the person? Paul was busy **“STRENGTHENING THE CHURCHES”** rather than being a busybody!

If we talk about people we weaken the church rather than strengthen the church. Through the book of Acts Paul never spoke negatively about Barnabas. Paul showed true Christian love as expressed in 1 Corinthians 13: 5,
“IT KEEPS NO RECORD OF WRONGS.”

**Acts 15:41 “AND HE WAS TRAVELING THROUGH SYRIA AND CILICIA,
STRENGTHENING THE CHURCHES.”**

When we overlook an offense it shows we are looking at something beyond it.
In Hebrews 12:2 it says,

**“LET US FIX OUR EYES ON JESUS, THE AUTHOR AND PERFECTER OF OUR FAITH,
WHO FOR THE JOY SET BEFORE HIM ENDURED THE CROSS.”**

Have you suffered a painful disagreement with someone?

Do you keep thinking about it?

Do you keep talking about it?

Then talk to Jesus about it! In Proverbs 19:11 it says,

**“A MAN’S WISDOM GIVES HIM PATIENCE; IT IS TO HIS GLORY TO OVERLOOK
AN OFFENSE.”**

When we overlook something it shows we did not see it.

If we do not overlook an offense we look at an offense!

Let us look to Jesus rather than offenses.

Acts 16:2 “THE BROTHERS AT LYSTRA AND ICONIUM SPOKE WELL OF HIM.”

With the Holy Spirit to reveal light from this verse please give attention to these three points.

- 1. “THE BROTHERS”**
- 2. “AT LYSTRA AND ICONIUM”**
- 3. “SPOKE WELL OF HIM.”**

As you read these points, if you feel the Holy Spirit is putting His finger on something in your heart please stop and pray. Let us now continue with the following three points.

- 1. “THE BROTHERS”**

Under the first point are seven points relating to the word **“BROTHERS.”**

- 1. “BROTHERS”** The word is plural rather than singular. This shows Timothy was in a good relationship with more than just one person.

Do we have a good relationship with some Christians but conflicts with others? Let us stop now and ask the Lord if there is unforgiveness in our hearts towards anyone.

Acts 16:2 “THE BROTHERS AT LYSTRA AND ICONIUM SPOKE WELL OF HIM.”

2. “BROTHERS” The word has a warmth and closeness in the tone of voice. It is warmer than referring to a person as just a “co-worker.”

3. “BROTHERS” To have a brother means you or I would have the same parents. As Christians to be a brother indicates having the same Heavenly Father. The only way a person can have God as their Father is through the rebirth. A person might act religious, devoted and pious but if such a person has not received forgiveness of their sins through Jesus Christ and been born-again then they are not a true brother in the sense the writer describes in this verse.

4. “BROTHERS” The word refers to men who were likely different ages rather than all the same age. In the kingdom of God there is no generation gap.

Acts 16:2 “THE BROTHERS AT LYSTRA AND ICONIUM SPOKE WELL OF HIM.”

5. “BROTHERS” We do not know Timothy’s age, but we do know from 1 Timothy 4:12 that Paul referred to him as young. Some of the brothers who spoke well of him would have been older. How do we think and speak about a Christian who is younger and God has gifted in a certain area of ministry? Are there tinges of envy towards such a person because God is using someone younger than we are?

6. “BROTHERS” The word shows it was Christians who were speaking well about Timothy rather than non-Christians. When the world speaks well of a Christian it should be cause for concern!

7. “BROTHERS” Notice it does not say “sisters.” Who do you feel more comfortable with, brothers or sisters? Who do we prefer spending time with?

Acts 16:2 “THE BROTHERS AT LYSTRA AND ICONIUM SPOKE WELL OF HIM.”

2. “AT LYSTRA AND ICONIUM”

Scripture first mentions they were brothers and second where they came from. The brothers were from Lystra and Iconium, which were two cities in Asia Minor. We know from verse 1 that Timothy had a Jewish mother who was a believer and his father was a Greek. There is no mention of Timothy and these brothers being from the same nationality. The unity of the Spirit transcends nationalities. Wherever we travel on this planet there is a unity in the spirit no matter what language we speak or what culture we come from. We are brothers in Christ no matter what country we come from.

Acts 16:2 “THE BROTHERS AT LYSTRA AND ICONIUM SPOKE WELL OF HIM.”

3. “SPOKE WELL OF HIM.”

The person who was spoken well of, was Timothy. Who spoke favorably about Timothy? Other Christians “SPOKE WELL OF HIM” and not himself. In Proverbs 27:2 it says,

“LET ANOTHER PRAISE YOU, AND NOT YOUR OWN MOUTH; SOMEONE ELSE AND NOT YOUR OWN LIPS.”

Here are two vital verses for us to remember,

James 4:11, “DO NOT SPEAK AGAINST ONE ANOTHER, BRETHREN.”

James 5:9, “DO NOT COMPLAIN, BRETHREN, AGAINST ONE ANOTHER.”

When we speak about other Christians do we speak well of them or do we speak critically about them? If we cannot say anything good, it is good not to say anything.

Acts 16:2 “THE BROTHERS AT LYSTRA AND ICONIUM SPOKE WELL OF HIM.”

Timothy was well spoken of in two places rather than just one. Are we well spoken of in more than one place? When we leave one place do we leave in peace or in pieces? In verse 3 Paul wanted Timothy to come with him on his missionary journey. Paul found out what Timothy was like by speaking to people about what Timothy was like. People in different cities **“SPOKE WELL OF HIM.”** They were different cities but the opinion about Timothy was not different. This shows us that Timothy’s conduct was the same in both places. Timothy was consistent.

Remember this verse provides the first Scriptural record of Timothy.

We have no reason to think Timothy knew Paul wanted to take him on the missionary journey. Timothy was not acting to gain Paul’s approval but was living for God’s approval! Timothy was God-fearing and it was evident to other believers.

Acts 16:3 “PAUL WANTED TO TAKE HIM ALONG ON THE JOURNEY,”

From this verse we can uncover an aspect of Paul's life as an older Christian and his relationship with Timothy, a younger Christian.

First of all let us look at these words **“PAUL WANTED TO TAKE HIM...”**

He wanted to; he did not have to.

Paul was not taking Timothy along because he had to but because he wanted to. Paul gives us a wonderful example from his own conduct of how an older Christian is to relate to a younger Christian. By Paul taking Timothy along meant they would build a relationship together. They would be able to spend time together and Paul would be able to teach Timothy by example. We know Paul was older, and a more mature Christian than Timothy by how he speaks to him in the following verses:

1 Timothy 1:2, **“TO TIMOTHY, MY TRUE CHILD.”**

2 Timothy 1:2, **“TO TIMOTHY, MY BELOVED SON.”**

Acts 16:3 “PAUL WANTED TO TAKE HIM ALONG ON THE JOURNEY,”

Paul referred to Timothy first as a “TRUE CHILD” then later on as “MY BELOVED SON.” The word “CHILD” comes before the word “SON.”

This order shows that Timothy had grown in the faith.

We see Timothy was Paul’s disciple. May we allow the Lord to search our hearts and see if our conduct is like that of Paul. Do we want to involve a younger brother in our lives or do we sometimes have the “I can not be bothered” type of mentality? I have felt like this, not wanting to take the time and effort to spend with a younger brother. Yet I have seen by God’s grace, that type of attitude is wrong. May each of us pray, dear Lord, make me into a person like Paul, who wanted to take along a young brother and disciple him; make me to want to invite younger Christians to participate in my life. Thank you Father.

Acts 16:4 “...THEY WERE DELIVERING THE DECREES, WHICH HAD BEEN DECIDED UPON BY THE APOSTLES AND ELDERS WHO WERE IN JERUSALEM, FOR THEM TO OBSERVE.”

From this verse we see an important aspect in the life of Paul. He was under spiritual authority to the church and particularly the apostles and elders of the church. He was under submission to their decisions.

Being under submission to those in authority in a church is an important aspect of the Christian experience. Paul was not acting as a “Lone Ranger.” Notice the words **“THEY WERE DELIVERING THE DECREES.”** They were not acting independently from their church. Paul and Timothy were serving those they were sent to, serving them by way of delivering the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. In Romans 1:1 Paul describes himself as, **“A BOND-SERVANT OF CHRIST JESUS.”**

Acts 16:4 “...THEY WERE DELIVERING THE DECREES, WHICH HAD BEEN DECIDED UPON BY THE APOSTLES AND ELDERS WHO WERE IN JERUSALEM, FOR THEM TO OBSERVE.”

Here in this verse we see this servant serving. Notice in this verse it does not state how long ago these decrees were decided upon. Whether it was one day, one month, or one year, Paul was following the instructions given to him. Paul was obeying those who had authority over him.

Paul's actions were in line with Scripture. As we look further on in this chapter to verse 10 we see the Lord giving Paul guidance. There is an important truth and pattern between verses 4 and 10, Paul was walking in obedience to what Hebrews 13:17 says, **“OBEY YOUR LEADERS, AND SUBMIT TO THEM.”**

Then further on in verse 10 he was able to receive God's guidance. When we walk in obedience to God's word He can lead us on the course He has for us. In Psalms there are beautiful truths expressed about God's guidance.

Acts 16:4 “...THEY WERE DELIVERING THE DECREES, WHICH HAD BEEN DECIDED UPON BY THE APOSTLES AND ELDERS WHO WERE IN JERUSALEM, FOR THEM TO OBSERVE.”

Here are four examples.

1. In Psalm 5:8 it says,

“LEAD ME, O LORD, IN YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, BECAUSE OF MY ENEMIES, MAKE STRAIGHT YOUR WAY BEFORE ME.”

2. In Psalm 25:5 it says,

“GUIDE ME IN YOUR TRUTH AND TEACH ME.”

3. In Psalm 73:24 it says,

“YOU GUIDE ME WITH YOUR COUNSEL.”

4. In Psalm 119:105 it says,

“YOUR WORD IS A LAMP TO MY FEET AND A LIGHT TO MY PATH.”

Thank you Father, help us walk in Your truth and accomplish Your will.

Acts 16:5 “SO THE CHURCHES WERE BEING STRENGTHENED IN THE FAITH, AND WERE INCREASING IN NUMBER DAILY.”

This verse is composed of two parts. From these two parts we learn two important aspects of a healthy church. Let us look at these two parts.

1. “SO THE CHURCHES WERE BEING STRENGTHENED IN THE FAITH,”

In verse 4 we learn how the churches were being strengthened in respect to their faith. They were receiving the teaching decided on from the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. They were observing and obeying the apostles and elders in Jerusalem. They obeyed and as a result they were strengthened. Now please note the word **“BEING.”**

**Acts 16:5 “SO THE CHURCHES WERE BEING STRENGTHENED IN THE FAITH,
AND WERE INCREASING IN NUMBER DAILY.”**

This word is used in the NAS Bible and it refers to a continuing process in the present tense. This speaks to us who are by the grace of God hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

We experience “**BEING STRENGTHENED IN THE FAITH**” as we obey the word of God. When we disobey the word of God our faith is weakened. In daily life we are faced with situations that reveal our weaknesses, but God gives us His strength as we humble ourselves and yield to Him.

In Psalm 103:20 it says, “**...OBEYING THE VOICE OF HIS WORD!**” The churches described in this verse were doers of the word and not mere hearers of the word! As we read the Bible, do not just read words on a page but listen to the words that are on the page because the Holy Spirit is speaking to you.

**Acts 16:5 “SO THE CHURCHES WERE BEING STRENGTHENED IN THE FAITH,
AND WERE INCREASING IN NUMBER DAILY.”**

2. “AND WERE INCREASING IN NUMBER DAILY.”

Often this second point is emphasized and the first point is neglected.

It seems more exciting to emphasize numerical growth compared to spiritual growth. As we look at these words the Scripture does not give exact numbers to how many people were getting saved. We know the numbers were increasing but the writer is not exaggerating the number of conversions. There is a temptation to exaggerate and make the numbers seem better than they actually are. We see from these words that the numbers were increasing. Are the numbers where you are increasing?

The increasing numbers and numerical growth were the result of the type of teaching the churches were under. The type of teaching greatly influences if there will be growth or not.

Acts 16:6 “PAUL AND HIS COMPANIONS TRAVELED THROUGHOUT THE REGION...”

In this verse from the NIV we see the word “PAUL” comes before the word “COMPANIONS.” The fact that his name is ahead, or in front of his companions tells us something quite simple. “PAUL” was ahead of his “COMPANIONS.” That order shows us he was leading. Paul was a leader.

A characteristic of a leader is, he leads! A leader is a person who is capable of making decisions. In verse 3 Paul made the decision to take Timothy with him. In verse 3 Paul made the decision to have Timothy circumcised. In verse 10 Paul made the decision to go to Macedonia. Paul was decisive. The Lord had placed Paul in a place of leadership and Paul was not afraid to make decisions. Paul did not wait for someone else to lead.

Acts 16:6 “PAUL AND HIS COMPANIONS TRAVELED THROUGHOUT THE REGION...”

Throughout chapter 16 are seven examples of Paul taking the lead.

1. In verse 14 Paul led by witnessing.
2. In verse 18 Paul led by casting out a demon.
3. In verse 22 Paul led by getting brutally attacked.
4. In verse 25 Paul led by praying and praising God.
5. In verse 28 Paul led by showing compassion.
6. In verse 37 Paul led by showing courage.
7. In verse 40 Paul led by showing comfort.

**Acts 16:7 “WHEN THEY CAME TO THE BORDER OF MYSIA,
THEY TRIED TO ENTER BITHYNIA,”**

From this verse please give attention to the two words “**MYSIA**” and “**BITHYNIA**.” Geographically “**MYSIA**” was a province in Asia minor and “**BITHYNIA**” was also a province in Asia minor, northeast of “**MYSIA**.”

The course that the Holy Spirit directed them on, was of great importance that would be confirmed by history. As we read on to verse 10 we see the Lord directing them to Macedonia. The reason this is important historically is because it was the introduction of the gospel onto European soil.

Up until this point the gospel had not reached Europe.

**Acts 16:7 “WHEN THEY CAME TO THE BORDER OF MYSIA,
THEY TRIED TO ENTER BITHYNIA,”**

It is also important to mention that, had Paul not obeyed the Lord on this second missionary journey, the following five books in the New Testament would not have been written, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and 2 Thessalonians. These five were written to churches in Europe!

For us today in the twenty-first century we can look back at Church history and trace the advancement of the gospel into Europe, then North America. May we consider the importance of Paul obeying the Lord in going into Macedonia. His obedience was the seed for the advancement of the gospel into another continent. When Paul obeyed he did not know how many millions of people would be saved over the following twenty-one centuries. He just obeyed. If he had not obeyed the vision God gave him we would not be saved today. Obedience to God results in people getting saved.

Acts 16:7 “WHEN THEY CAME TO THE BORDER OF MYSIA, THEY TRIED TO ENTER BITHYNIA, BUT THE SPIRIT OF JESUS WOULD NOT ALLOW THEM TO.”

As we study this part of verse 7 please consider as well that in verse 6 Paul and his companions were kept from going into the province of Asia.

Then in verse 7 they tried to go into Bithynia and in both cases they were stopped. We do not know why the Holy Spirit stopped Paul and his companions. We do not even know if they knew why the Lord stopped them. What we do know is, these situations did not make them stop!

When stopped, they did not stop!

When stopped, do not stop!

What we also know is, Scripture does not record anyone complaining about things not working out the way they thought it would. There is no mention of people criticizing or complaining about not being able to go into Asia or Bithynia. The fear of making mistakes, fear of failure, or fear of the unknown did not stop them from going forward.

Acts 16:7 “WHEN THEY CAME TO THE BORDER OF MYSIA, THEY TRIED TO ENTER BITHYNIA, BUT THE SPIRIT OF JESUS WOULD NOT ALLOW THEM TO.”

When things do not work out the way we think they should, how do we react? Do we criticize? Do we complain? Do we fear the future? Do we fear making mistakes? Do we fear the unknown and stop going forward?

It is significant that these events are recorded in Scripture and not just the vision Paul had in verse 9. In verses 6 and 7 they show us that sometimes things did not work out for Paul. If only the vision in verse 9 had been mentioned and not these other situations we might think Paul never experienced things not working out. The Bible not only records when things go right but also when they do not. We are to mention when things did not go as we hoped and not just the success. A person who does not experience things not working out is a person who never does anything!

Acts 16:8 “AND PASSING BY MYRIA, THEY CAME DOWN TO TROAS.”

To study this verse please consider it in the following two parts and also the context in which it is found.

1. “AND PASSING BY MYRIA,”

In verse 5 we read, **“SO THE CHURCHES WERE BEING STRENGTHENED IN THE FAITH, AND WERE INCREASING IN NUMBER DAILY.”**

We see a picture of a revival atmosphere taking place with people getting saved daily. Then in verses 6 and 7 we read of Paul and his companions suddenly stopped from doing what they had set out to do. From success to what some might see as something quite the opposite was happening to them. But here in this verse we see them continuing on rather than after being stopped, stopping. Paul got stopped but he did not stop! When we get stopped, do not stop!

2. “THEY CAME DOWN TO TROAS.”

These words show us a picture going down, or we can say it shows humility. To continue on they came down. In our lives, for all of us to continue going on requires going down, humbling ourselves under the mighty hand of God.

**Acts 16:9 “DURING THE NIGHT PAUL HAD A VISION
OF A MAN OF MACEDONIA STANDING AND BEGGING HIM,
“COME OVER TO MACEDONIA AND HELP US.”**

With the Holy Spirit to bring illumination from this verse we shall the following seven parts.

1. “DURING THE NIGHT”

We begin with these words and recall that twice in this chapter “NIGHT” is referred to. In this verse 9 and also in verse 25, “ABOUT MIDNIGHT.”

Earlier in verse 5 was growth in the churches. Then in verses 6 and 7 Paul and those with him ran into roadblocks. They were trying to go in certain directions but things were not going as they thought. Now it was “NIGHT.” After things did not go as they planned it was “NIGHT.”

Perhaps you have tried certain things and things have not gone as you thought they would and now you are “DURING THE NIGHT.” In the “NIGHT” is a time when it is dark; when the Lord was there to help Paul obey him and the call on his life. It is “DURING THE NIGHT” times of our lives we need to trust the Lord to lead us as He did with Paul.

**Acts 16:9 “DURING THE NIGHT PAUL HAD A VISION
OF A MAN OF MACEDONIA STANDING AND BEGGING HIM,
“COME OVER TO MACEDONIA AND HELP US.”**

2.“PAUL HAD A VISION”

We see the Lord directed Paul through a vision. Through Scripture the Lord has used visions as a means of communicating and directing His people. A genuine vision from the Lord will always be in agreement to the Bible. In the book of Acts there are seven examples of the Lord speaking through visions.

1. Acts 9:10
2. Acts 10:3
3. Acts 10:11
4. Acts 16:9
5. Acts 18:9
6. Acts 22:18
7. Acts 23:11

**Acts 16:9 “DURING THE NIGHT PAUL HAD A VISION
OF A MAN OF MACEDONIA STANDING AND BEGGING HIM,
“COME OVER TO MACEDONIA AND HELP US.”**

In verse 6 the Holy Spirit stopped Paul and his companions from preaching in Asia.

Then in verse 7 they were stopped from entering Bithynia.

Then in verse 8 they even passed by Mysia.

But then the Lord did direct them after these other doors were closed. From this we can take encouragement. When some doors are closed, the Lord will open another. Paul had a vision in the night. The vision came when it was dark. When we go through dark times in our lives may we continue to have a heart attitude of obedience through dark times.

When we go through dark times in our lives we can be comforted knowing the Lord will speak and direct our lives. The Lord did not reveal everything that would take place in the Macedonia. The Lord provided Paul with direction to follow for the next step. Let us remember Psalm 119:105, **“THY WORD IS A LAMP TO MY FEET, AND A LIGHT TO MY PATH.”** The Lord provides light for the next step as He did with Paul.

**Acts 16:9 “DURING THE NIGHT PAUL HAD A VISION
OF A MAN OF MACEDONIA STANDING AND BEGGING HIM,
“COME OVER TO MACEDONIA AND HELP US.”**

3. “OF A MAN OF MACEDONIA”

As we read these words we realize we do not know anything about this person. All we know is he was just **“A MAN.”**

We do not know if the man was famous.

We do not know if the man was wealthy.

We do not know if the man was educated.

We do not know if the man was handsome.

All we do know was God used a vision of **“A MAN”** to direct Paul.

There was not a crowd of people calling Paul to come over to help them.

There were not famous influential people calling Paul to come over to help them. There was just **“A MAN.”** How humbling! This reminds us of what happened shortly after Paul was converted.

In Acts 22:12 it says, **“A CERTAIN ANANIAS, A MAN.”** Paul was totally helpless, dependent, and needing guidance, and the Lord had **“A MAN”** help him.

**Acts 16:9 “DURING THE NIGHT PAUL HAD A VISION
OF A MAN OF MACEDONIA STANDING AND BEGGING HIM,
“COME OVER TO MACEDONIA AND HELP US.”**

Now, after many years had passed, again we see Paul helpless, dependent, and needing guidance and the Lord had “A MAN” help him. Years had passed but Paul still needed God to guide him. Years had passed but the need for God to lead him did not pass. This is how God was able to use Paul. When the Lord saved us we were totally helpless, dependent, and needing guidance.

If we have been Christians for years, do we still know we are helpless, dependent, and needing guidance?

If we do not think we need God to help us, we really need God to help us! If we do not think we need help, we really need help!

**Acts 16:9 “DURING THE NIGHT PAUL HAD A VISION
OF A MAN OF MACEDONIA STANDING AND BEGGING HIM,
“COME OVER TO MACEDONIA AND HELP US.”**

4. “STANDING”

Standing shows he was in an upright position. He was upright in his actions and also was concerned for others. When we are upright, and right with God there will be concern for others.

5. “AND BEGGING HIM,”

These words show that words were spoken. They come after the words “**WAS STANDING**” which show action. The man spoke after his actions.

His actions came before his words. This pattern is seen in Acts 1:1, “**JESUS BEGAN TO DO AND TEACH.**” Our actions are to come before our words. When a person is upright in their actions, it will be reflected by having concern for others. He was concerned for others and not just himself.

In times of difficulties are we concerned only for ourselves, or for others as well? When we see others in trouble are we concerned or just curious? The help that Paul and those with him had was the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel is what people need for help, in every area of life.

**Acts 16:9 “DURING THE NIGHT PAUL HAD A VISION
OF A MAN OF MACEDONIA STANDING AND BEGGING HIM,
“COME OVER TO MACEDONIA AND HELP US.”**

6.“COME OVER TO MACEDONIA AND HELP”

To get to Macedonia would require time and effort for Paul and those with him. To help others requires time and effort. Are we willing to take time and make the effort to help others? As we meditate on the words **“AND HELP”** we see that they are a confession of a need for help.

Paul needed God to help him before he could help others.

We need God to help us before we can help others.

We need to recognize our need for help.

We need to then be honest and confess our need for help.

**Acts 16:9 “DURING THE NIGHT PAUL HAD A VISION
OF A MAN OF MACEDONIA STANDING AND BEGGING HIM,
“COME OVER TO MACEDONIA AND HELP US.”**

Once that is done, God is faithful to do so. The proud find it difficult to ask for help. There is a religious sounding cliché which is unscriptural and goes like this, “God helps those who help themselves.” This statement is wrong. What is true is, God helps those who ask Him for help. Asking for help is humbling; the helpless recognize they need help. Should we dare to think that we no longer need God’s help in our lives, that is when we most desperately do need His help. We need to receive help before we can give help! We need help, before we can help!

7. “US.”

This our concluding point in our study of verse 9. Remember earlier in this verse we saw the word **“A MAN”** and consider it is singular and the word **“US”** is plural. The man was asking for help not just for himself but for others as well. There was concern for others and not just himself. Is that true about us? Are we concerned for others or just ourselves? When we see needs in others, are we concerned or callous?

Are we concerned or just curious?

**Acts 16:10 “AND WHEN HE HAD SEEN THE VISION,
IMMEDIATELY WE SOUGHT TO GO INTO MACEDONIA, CONCLUDING THAT
GOD HAD CALLED US TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THEM.”**

This verse continues on from the preceding verse describing the Lord communicating to Paul thru a vision. Now we can study this verse in two parts.

1. Obedience to God.

2. Service to others.

Let us now begin looking at each of these points in some detail.

1. Obedience to God.

“IMMEDIATELY WE SOUGHT TO GO INTO MACEDONIA,”

From these words we learn to immediately respond to God.

Paul's reaction and those with him immediately obeying, brings to mind how Paul responded to Jesus in Acts 22:10, **“WHAT SHALL I DO LORD?”** From the first day of Paul's conversion to this point several years later, Paul still had that attitude of immediate heart obedience to the Lord.

Do we still have the same attitude of obedience to God that we perhaps had when we were first converted? As the years have passed has our dedication to the Lord passed as well?

**Acts 16:10 “AND WHEN HE HAD SEEN THE VISION,
IMMEDIATELY WE SOUGHT TO GO INTO MACEDONIA, CONCLUDING THAT
GOD HAD CALLED US TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THEM.”**

The word “IMMEDIATELY” tells us when Paul and those with him responded to the Lord’s direction. We also see they did not question the Lord. They put no conditions on obeying the Lord. Remember in this chapter Paul had no idea what would confront him in Macedonia, he did not know that he would be beaten and imprisoned in verses 22-23. He only knew God had spoken and he must obey. Our obedience to God must never be with conditions attached. By the grace of God we must be willing to obey unconditionally. True obedience is seen when God tells us to do something that we do not want to do. We have observed that Paul obeyed the Lord not knowing what would happen in the future. Let us stop and ask ourselves, are we willing to obey and follow Jesus even when the future seems uncertain? Or do we succumb, submit, or yield to fears of the unknown, fears of failure, fears and doubts that God did not really call you?

**Acts 16:10 “AND WHEN HE HAD SEEN THE VISION,
IMMEDIATELY WE SOUGHT TO GO INTO MACEDONIA, CONCLUDING THAT
GOD HAD CALLED US TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THEM.”**

Although Scripture does not say, it is a possibility that Paul was attacked in his mind with doubting thoughts like “Are you sure that vision was from God?” Guard your thoughts against fear of the unknown and fear of the future. We learn from this verse Paul and his companions were going to Macedonia, and verses 11 and 12 describe the course of their journey. So you say, so what? Let us stop and realize they were going to a place that was new to them. As far as we know from Scripture, they had never been there before. Going to Macedonia had never been tried before, yet Paul was willing to obey. Paul was willing to obey the Lord even though it was something he had never done before. In our lives we will come across those who are not willing to try something simply because it has never been done before. Yet we learn from Paul’s example as a servant of the Lord, he was willing to do what others had not done. Do not stop from obeying God in an area He is leading, simply because it is something you have never done before.

**Acts 16:10 “AND WHEN HE HAD SEEN THE VISION,
IMMEDIATELY WE SOUGHT TO GO INTO MACEDONIA, CONCLUDING THAT
GOD HAD CALLED US TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THEM.”**

2. Service to others.

“TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THEM.”

These words tell us why Paul and Timothy were going to Macedonia.

We look at the motivation with which they went. In verse 9 it says,

“COME OVER TO MACEDONIA AND HELP US.”

We see in verse 9 that the person in the vision was asking for help. Paul and Timothy went to Macedonia to help, to serve those in need of help. Paul and Timothy did not go to help with a social gospel, but the gospel of the N.T.

When our lives are right with God, walking in obedience to Him, the outworking of this relationship will be a heart attitude directed towards helping others. Wherever we go may we be equipped with the same attitude as Jesus. In Matthew 20:28 it says,

**“JUST AS THE SON OF MAN DID NOT COME TO BE SERVED, BUT TO SERVE, AND
TO GIVE HIS LIFE A RANSOM FOR MANY.”**

**Acts 16:10 “AND WHEN HE HAD SEEN THE VISION,
IMMEDIATELY WE SOUGHT TO GO INTO MACEDONIA, CONCLUDING THAT
GOD HAD CALLED US TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THEM.”**

Throughout the gospels and book of Acts we see a pattern that when the good news is preached, the power of the gospel is witnessed; in this case a girl was delivered from an evil spirit verse 18. There is both proclamation and demonstration. To advance the Kingdom of God we need both the proclaiming of the gospel accompanied by the power of the gospel. The Lord gave Paul a vision, and the primary purpose for the vision was to go to Macedonia to preach the gospel. A genuine vision from the Lord will always relate to the gospel being advanced. Again let us consider that they went to Macedonia only to preach the gospel. Their main concern was the gospel being proclaimed. May this be a burning vision in each of our lives to see the gospel proclaimed in and through us. There are many distractions to cloud this vision but may we continuously set the Lord and His will before us and be as John the Baptist in John 1:8,

“...HE CAME THAT HE MIGHT BEAR WITNESS OF THE LIGHT.”

**Acts 16:10 “AND WHEN HE HAD SEEN THE VISION,
IMMEDIATELY WE SOUGHT TO GO INTO MACEDONIA, CONCLUDING THAT
GOD HAD CALLED US TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THEM.”**

May the way we live bear witness of the light. In verse 9 the person in the vision was asking for help. Then Paul and Timothy went to proclaim the gospel. From these two facts we see that it is only the gospel that can help people, we must realize as well that only the good news of Jesus Christ can help. Paul and Timothy obeyed God, and the fruit of that obedience were people converted as seen in verses 14, and 34. From this Biblical example we learn when God directs us to a new job, new town, new country, or a position of authority, He has people there He wants to save. In Esther 4:14 it says,

“AND WHO KNOWS WHETHER YOU HAVE NOT ATTAINED ROYALTY FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS?”

God placed Esther in a position of authority as a queen, not so she could just enjoy wearing fine clothes and eating delicate food, but to save lives. Use us Lord to save souls in the place where You lead us. Amen!

**Acts 16:11 “THEREFORE PUTTING OUT TO SEA FROM TROAS,
WE RAN A STRAIGHT COURSE TO SAMOTHRACE,
AND ON THE DAY FOLLOWING TO NEAPOLIS.”**

Looking at this verse we see the Holy Spirit led them in three stages.

1. “THEREFORE PUTTING OUT TO SEA FROM TROAS,”
2. “WE RAN A STRAIGHT COURSE TO SAMOTHRACE,”
3. “AND ON THE DAY FOLLOWING TO NEAPOLIS.”

The Lord led them in stages, or step by step. The Lord does that with us. He leads step by step. Each step is a step of faith. As we obey, He leads us to the next step. The Lord had opened a door for Paul and those with him.

In verse 9 the Lord gave Paul direction and in this verse God confirmed His leading by allowing them to put out to sea. What we learn from this is that God will confirm His leading. We also learn from this verse God provided them with the transportation they needed to get to their destination. God’s way of confirming His will is very practical.

Acts 16:12 “FROM THERE WE TRAVELED TO PHILIPPI,”

Please look at this part of verse 12 in the following three parts.

1. “FROM THERE”

As we study this part of verse 12 let us recall that in verse 9 the Lord had spoken to Paul in a vision concerning the direction He wanted Paul and his companions to go in. In verse 11 we read of Paul and those with him traveling from Troas, Samothrace, and Neopolis. The words **“FROM THERE”** show a steady progression in the people’s obedience to the Lord’s call. Paul and those with him did not stop and stay at any other destination along the way. They started obeying God’s call and did not stop obeying God’s call until they had finished what God had wanted them to do.

Are we like Paul? Do we start to obey and continue to obey or do we stop in a Troas, Samothrace or Neopolis along the way? Is there steady, progressive obedience to God’s word in our lives? As we obey, we grow in our Christian faith.

Acts 16:12 “FROM THERE WE TRAVELED TO PHILIPPI,”

2. “WE”

This word speaks to us that there was a group of Christians, the fact that it is plural tells us simply Paul did not go alone. From the beginning of chapter 16 are more than just one person mentioned.

1. Verse 4, **“THEY TRAVELED”**
2. Verse 4, **“THEY DELIVERED”**
3. Verse 6, **“COMPANIONS”**
4. Verse 7, **“THEY CAME”**
5. Verse 7, **“THEM”**
6. Verse 8, **“THEY PASSED”**
7. Verse 10, **“WE GOT READY”**
8. Verse 10, **“CALLED US”**
9. Verse 11, **“WE PUT OUT”**
10. Verse 12, **“WE WERE STAYING”**

Acts 16:12 “FROM THERE WE TRAVELED TO PHILIPPI,”

Up to and including verse 12 there are ten references to a group of Christians. Now let us ponder the fact that there was a group. This group had traveled a long way together and in this time they would have time for fellowship, and friendships to develop and grow. The fact that there was a group, tells us the importance God places on relationships among Christians. During their time traveling they would learn to bear one another's burdens, how to esteem one another more important than themselves, they would learn to encourage one another, to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. They would learn not to slander or talk about one another. The word “WE” tell us they were Christians obeying God, there is no mention of what denomination they belonged to. Their relationship, their fellowship, their friendship was based on their obedience to God's word. There was a unity of the Spirit with those described by the word “WE.” As we study verse 12 we learn that these Christians were traveling on a course new to them all. They had never been where God was calling them to.

Acts 16:12 “FROM THERE WE TRAVELED TO PHILIPPI,”

As we go through life, each day is a new experience following the Lord.

As Christians we are on the same course, the same path, it is vital we support one another as those on the way to Philippi. With the word “WE” is seen they encountered various experiences together, in verse 5 they helped strengthen other churches. Their concern was advancing the kingdom of God rather than their own group. Then in verse 7 we see their plans being blocked by the Holy Spirit. Certainly some would be disappointed. They would have to support one another, whether exciting experiences as in verse 5 or disappointing experiences in verse 7, they were in it together.

Acts 16:12 “FROM THERE WE TRAVELED TO PHILIPPI,”

3. “TRAVELED TO PHILIPPI,”

Paul traveled to another country with people who were believers in Christ. Paul traveled with people who wanted to expand the gospel. Paul's actions mirror a principal of Matthew 2:2 where the wise men traveled together because they shared a single purpose and that was to be with Jesus. When we travel, who do we travel with? Is it with another Christian, or a group of Christians? The people we go on a trip with, will in some way have an effect on us. The effect will help us in our faith or hurt us in our faith.

Acts 16:12 “...WE WERE STAYING IN THIS CITY FOR SOME DAYS.”

In verse 11 it mentions “WE RAN A STRAIGHT COURSE.” Things seemed to be going along pretty smoothly. Now in this verse they were staying in Philippi and there is no mention of opposition. Things seemed fairly calm. There was no mention of satanic opposition. Then someone got converted in verses 14 and 15. Then opposition started in verse 16. If we are not doing anything to advance the kingdom of God then the enemy pretty much leaves us alone. But when we start getting serious about Jesus, then the adversary starts opposing us.

Acts 16:13 “AND ON THE SABBATH DAY WE WENT OUTSIDE THE GATE TO A RIVERSIDE, WHERE WE WERE SUPPOSING THAT THERE WOULD BE A PLACE OF PRAYER, AND WE SAT DOWN AND BEGAN SPEAKING TO THE WOMEN WHO WERE ASSEMBLED.”

With the Lord’s help we shall study this verse in the following seven parts. What we shall focus on is Paul speaking to women and learn a valuable lesson to protect a man from compromising situations with someone of the opposite sex.

1. “AND ON THE SABBATH DAY”

We notice it was day rather than night. It was daytime rather than nighttime when Paul and those with him spoke to the women. Daytime tells us it was light as opposed to night when it is dark. What Paul did was done in the light rather than in the dark.

Acts 16:13 “AND ON THE SABBATH DAY WE WENT OUTSIDE THE GATE TO A RIVERSIDE, WHERE WE WERE SUPPOSING THAT THERE WOULD BE A PLACE OF PRAYER, AND WE SAT DOWN AND BEGAN SPEAKING TO THE WOMEN WHO WERE ASSEMBLED.”

2. “WE”

We notice the word “**WE**” is plural. Further on in the verse we find the word “**WOMEN**” and see it too is plural. Both words are plural.

The verse does not say “**I**” and “woman.” Paul and those with him were speaking to women and from this verse it appears to be sometime during the day, instead of at night.

Paul did not speak to a woman separately by himself.

Paul did not and we are wise to follow his example.

We learn this word shows that Paul did not speak to the women alone.

Acts 16:13 “AND ON THE SABBATH DAY WE WENT OUTSIDE THE GATE TO A RIVERSIDE, WHERE WE WERE SUPPOSING THAT THERE WOULD BE A PLACE OF PRAYER, AND WE SAT DOWN AND BEGAN SPEAKING TO THE WOMEN WHO WERE ASSEMBLED.”

3. “WENT OUTSIDE THE GATE TO A RIVERSIDE,”

From this part of the verse, and in particular the word “**OUTSIDE**” tell us that Paul’s actions were out in the open. Paul was not closed away somewhere when he spoke to the women. We also see from these words that Paul is telling the readers what he and those with him were doing. Paul was not being secretive or trying to hide what he was doing.

If he had been trying to hide, it would show he had something to hide.

Are our actions out in the open?

If we hide, it communicates we have something to hide.

Acts 16:13 “AND ON THE SABBATH DAY WE WENT OUTSIDE THE GATE TO A RIVERSIDE, WHERE WE WERE SUPPOSING THAT THERE WOULD BE A PLACE OF PRAYER, AND WE SAT DOWN AND BEGAN SPEAKING TO THE WOMEN WHO WERE ASSEMBLED.”

4. “WHERE WE WERE SUPPOSING THAT THERE WOULD BE A PLACE OF PRAYER,”

In verse 10 Paul and his companions came to preach the gospel in a new country. Although they were in a new place they still sought a place of prayer. When go to a different country, perhaps on holidays, do we still pray? We are not to take a holiday from praying anymore than taking a holiday from breathing! In verse 12 we learn Paul and his companions had now been in Philippi for some days. Now we look and see that although they had been in Philippi for a few days they had not yet begun to preach. The simple fact is that praying came before preaching.

Acts 16:13 “AND ON THE SABBATH DAY WE WENT OUTSIDE THE GATE TO A RIVERSIDE, WHERE WE WERE SUPPOSING THAT THERE WOULD BE A PLACE OF PRAYER, AND WE SAT DOWN AND BEGAN SPEAKING TO THE WOMEN WHO WERE ASSEMBLED.”

Prayer was the priority in preparing to preach.

Prayer must come before proclaiming!

Prayer was their main concern, they went down to the riverside in verse 13 to pray, they did not go down looking for someone to share the gospel with. May we ask ourselves, is prayer a daily priority in our lives?

We live in a fast moving world. We might get tempted to think we do not have time to pray. Friend if you are too busy to pray, you are too busy. Prepare in prayer! When we do not pray we are prey!

5. “AND WE SAT DOWN”

Sitting down shows a relaxed position. Paul was doing everything out in the open and therefore he was relaxed. Paul was not looking around to see if anyone was watching. He was not nervous. When we try to hide or be secretive, there is a lack of feeling relaxed.

Acts 16:13 “AND ON THE SABBATH DAY WE WENT OUTSIDE THE GATE TO A RIVERSIDE, WHERE WE WERE SUPPOSING THAT THERE WOULD BE A PLACE OF PRAYER, AND WE SAT DOWN AND BEGAN SPEAKING TO THE WOMEN WHO WERE ASSEMBLED.”

6. “AND BEGAN SPEAKING”

Here we learn what they spoke about to the women. Paul’s conversation was about the gospel, rather than listening to problems and giving counsel. Paul was talking to these women about the Lord rather than talking about anything but the Lord!

7. “TO THE WOMEN WHO WERE ASSEMBLED.”

Paul did not make prearranged plans to meet any of these women.

For Paul and those with him meeting the women was not premeditated. He did not manipulate situations to meet. Paul did not invent some excuse to meet with a woman. Are we tempted to manipulate situations or invent excuses to meet a woman we should not be meeting?

**Acts 16:13 “...WE SAT DOWN AND BEGAN SPEAKING
TO THE WOMEN WHO WERE ASSEMBLED.”**

Let us look back to verses 10, 11 and 12 and visualize the men, Paul, Silas, and Timothy on an exciting missionary journey and when they arrived. Were they met with multitudes waiting to hear the gospel? No, only some women by a riverside. You mean this tremendous missionary enterprise was for only a few women sitting by a river? There must be some mistake! Too often we can get caught up thinking evangelistic campaigns must be before thousands of people, and if not, it is somewhat of a failure.

Imagine if we were in such a situation and there were thousands come to hear the gospel, certainly it would be a temptation to want to boast about how many came. But if only a few women showed up, would we be as eager to boast about that as if thousands had shown up? I think we both know the answer, yet God is not always interested in big numbers.

**Acts 16:13 “...WE SAT DOWN AND BEGAN SPEAKING
TO THE WOMEN WHO WERE ASSEMBLED.”**

He is concerned for individuals and proves it by having this situation recorded in the Bible. When we are doing outdoor preaching and only a few people may be listening, it may be a temptation to think, “Oh why bother for only a few?” Do we brag to other Christians if a lot of people listen to us preaching? But if only one or two stop to listen do we say anything? We must not rejoice in the numbers that listen but rejoice over the one whom God opens their heart to receive the gospel.

Paul made the most with the opportunity given to him.

Paul was faithful in the little things and certainly faithful in the big things. In this verse we see the writer being honest, recording that only some women were there when they were preaching. Being honest about only a small number hearing the gospel shows humility, and not being afraid of looking like a failure because there were not more people there to listen.

Acts 16:14 “AND A CERTAIN WOMAN NAMED LYDIA, FROM THE CITY OF THYATIRA, A SELLER OF PURPLE FABRICS, A WORSHIPER OF GOD, WAS LISTENING; AND THE LORD OPENED HER HEART TO RESPOND TO THE THINGS SPOKEN BY PAUL.”

In this verse we learn God opened her heart to respond to what Paul spoke. But before this happened important points took place that the Holy Spirit is teaching us, so we can be more effective in sharing the Good News.

Let us look at these points.

1. A CERTAIN WOMAN NAMED LYDIA,
2. FROM THE CITY OF THYATIRA,
3. A SELLER OF PURPLE FABRICS,

From this verse are three points the Holy Spirit teaches us about witnessing.

1. We learn what the lady's name was.
2. What city she came from.
3. What her occupation was.

Acts 16:14 “AND A CERTAIN WOMAN NAMED LYDIA, FROM THE CITY OF THYATIRA, A SELLER OF PURPLE FABRICS, A WORSHIPER OF GOD, WAS LISTENING; AND THE LORD OPENED HER HEART TO RESPOND TO THE THINGS SPOKEN BY PAUL.”

These three points are vital in speaking to people. It is important to spend time listening to and not just speaking to people.

In James 1:19 it says,

“...EVERYONE SHOULD BE QUICK TO LISTEN, SLOW TO SPEAK...”

Paul would have had to spend some time listening to Lydia to find out all these things about her. When we are trying to witness, are we thinking about what to say next as the person is talking? If we give in to this temptation we will not listen carefully. When sharing the gospel it is important we show an interest in the person we are speaking to, and important to be a good listener. We need to ask God to give us interest in people. Notice this verse says,

“THE LORD OPENED HER HEART TO RESPOND.”

God opened her heart to respond after Paul had taken time to get to know the person.

Acts 16:14 “AND A CERTAIN WOMAN NAMED LYDIA, FROM THE CITY OF THYATIRA, A SELLER OF PURPLE FABRICS, A WORSHIPER OF GOD, WAS LISTENING; AND THE LORD OPENED HER HEART TO RESPOND TO THE THINGS SPOKEN BY PAUL.”

We are more receptive to what a person says to us if we know they are interested in us, and care for us. If we are lacking any concern for a person we need to pray and ask the Lord to help us. This applies to sharing the gospel and with relationships in the church. People do not care how much we know until they know how much we care. Very often we find it difficult to “open up” to a person if we do not feel they are interested in us.

With the Lord to help him, Paul took the time to be interested in her as a person.

With the Lord to help us, may we learn from Paul’s example and follow it.

Acts 16:14 “AND THE LORD OPENED HER HEART TO RESPOND TO THE THINGS SPOKEN BY PAUL.”

From this part of the verse three words referring to people are mentioned. The order they are written shows where the emphasis is. The three persons are: **“LORD” “HER” “PAUL”**

We see the “LORD” is mentioned first. The emphasis for this woman getting saved is on the Lord. The emphasis is not on the woman accepting Jesus but rather Jesus accepting the woman.

We need to avoid saying religious clichés like, “when I accepted Jesus” or “before I got saved I was searching for the truth.”

Such religious sounding clichés place the emphasis on us rather than on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Neither is the emphasis on Paul’s preaching ability.

Acts 16:14 “AND THE LORD OPENED HER HEART TO RESPOND TO THE THINGS SPOKEN BY PAUL.”

In 2 Peter 3:15 it says,

“...OUR BELOVED BROTHER PAUL, ACCORDING TO THE WISDOM GIVEN HIM, WROTE TO YOU.”

In this verse the emphasis is not on how great a writer Paul was but on the wisdom from God. The Holy Spirit shows us this same pattern in Ex. 31:3,

“AND I HAVE FILLED HIM WITH THE SPIRIT OF GOD IN WISDOM, IN UNDERSTANDING, IN KNOWLEDGE, AND IN ALL KINDS OF CRAFTSMANSHIP.”

These words refer to a man called Bazelel and the gifting God gave him. The emphasis is on God rather than man.

How do we speak about “famous” Christian leaders?

Do we speak about what they did or what the Lord enabled them to do?

Acts 16:15 “...SHE INVITED US TO HER HOME. “IF YOU CONSIDER ME A BELIEVER IN THE LORD,” SHE SAID, “COME AND STAY AT MY HOUSE.”

From this part of verse 15 please look at the following three parts.

1. “...SHE INVITED US TO HER HOME.”

Here we see Lydia demonstrating hospitality to strangers. Her actions were in agreement to Scripture.

In Hebrews 13:2 it says,

“DO NOT NEGLECT TO SHOW HOSPITALITY TO STRANGERS, FOR BY THIS SOME HAVE ENTERTAINED ANGELS WITHOUT KNOWING IT.”

As Christians our conduct is to demonstrate God’s word in our lives and circumstances. Faith must be accompanied by works.

In James 2:26 it says, **“...FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD.”**

Here is another example of hospitality in Acts.

In Acts 16:34 it says, **“AND HE BROUGHT THEM INTO HIS HOUSE AND SAT FOOD BEFORE THEM.”**

Acts 16:15 “...SHE INVITED US TO HER HOME. “IF YOU CONSIDER ME A BELIEVER IN THE LORD,” SHE SAID, “COME AND STAY AT MY HOUSE.”

The Lord has given us two examples from chapter 16 concerning showing hospitality to strangers, we must be careful not to neglect this important aspect of church life. Too easily we can get into our own little cliques and not pay attention to newcomers, may the Lord help us to do Your word.

2. “A BELIEVER IN THE LORD,”

We give attention to this word “A.” Back in verse 13 it describes Paul and those with him witnessing to a certain number of women. And here, one woman became a Christian, “A BELIEVER IN THE LORD.”

Acts 16:16 “AND IT HAPPENED THAT AS WE WERE GOING TO THE PLACE OF PRAYER,”

With the Lord to help us, please consider the following two parts.

1. “AND IT HAPPENED”

As Paul and those with him were going to pray something happened to divert them from praying. Let us briefly consider this word “IT.”

Whatever “IT” is, the purpose of “IT” is to keep you and I from praying.

In this verse “IT” referred to a person. “IT” is often a person or people who distract us from praying. When we get serious about praying we often find various distractions come along to hinder us.

These words introduce the confrontation with an evil spirit in a girl.

These words introduce a situation that Paul was not looking for.

Paul had his focus on God rather than on demons!

**Acts 16:16 “AND IT HAPPENED THAT AS WE WERE
GOING TO THE PLACE OF PRAYER,”**

Paul was occupied with seeking after the Lord rather than preoccupied with looking for demons. In Luke 10:17 the seventy disciples returned to Jesus. They were excited because demons were subject to them in the name of Jesus. However, Jesus responded to them in Luke 10:20,

“NEVERTHELESS DO NOT REJOICE IN THIS, THAT THE SPIRITS ARE SUBJECT TO YOU, BUT REJOICE THAT YOUR NAMES ARE RECORDED IN HEAVEN.”

A Christian is not to be preoccupied with seeing demons everywhere but seeking after Jesus. That is not to suggest that demons are not real but we are not to be overly fascinated by them.

Acts 16:16 “AND IT HAPPENED THAT AS WE WERE GOING TO THE PLACE OF PRAYER,”

2. “PLACE OF PRAYER,”

These words arrest our attention because this is the second time the phrase is used in this chapter. In verse 13 the same words are used.

The words are repeated teach us the importance of prayer. Paul knew he needed to pray. Do we know we need to pray? If we do not know we need to pray we really need to pray! When we do not pray we are prey! From this part of verse 16 we can visualize Paul and Silas going to a place to pray. And then it happened!

Something always seems to happen when we commit to prayer.

Acts 16:16 “...A CERTAIN SLAVE-GIRL...”

Here were Paul and Silas in the midst of evangelizing and a demon possessed girl was there trying to undermine and discredit them. We learn from this example in Scripture that during evangelistic campaigns there will be a very high possibility of Satan sending someone to undermine and discredit the work of the Lord.

Acts 16:16 “...A CERTAIN SLAVE-GIRL...”

An example of this comes from a situation where I was involved in an outdoor evangelistic campaign in Spain. A rather strange looking fellow came along and tried to take part in the singing. The man certainly acted possessed and tried to infiltrate and pretend to be one of the Christians. He stood among the group and when asked to leave he became quite angry. When people passing by saw him with the group of Christians they would perhaps think he was a Christian as well. After the meeting ended, he went back to his booze and dope. People who saw him singing with the Christians would perhaps think all those Christians are just hypocrites, one minute singing and talking about Jesus and the next, drunk and stoned on drugs.

Paul and those with him encountered opposition as they proclaimed the gospel. We are very naive if we think we are exempt from opposition as we go forward proclaiming the gospel. There will be opposition against the advancement of the gospel. If you are not facing opposition you need to consider your position!

Acts 16:16 “...HAVING A SPIRIT OF DIVINATION MET US, WHO WAS BRINGING HER MASTERS MUCH PROFIT BY FORTUNE-TELLING.”

This part of verse 16 provides us a glimpse into the nature, activity and discernment of evil spirits. From this verse please give attention to the following two parts.

- 1. “A SPIRIT OF DIVINATION”**
- 2. “FORTUNE-TELLING.”**

From these two parts of verse 16 we learn what the spirit was, and what the spirit did. We also learn that the name of the spirit is recognized because of what it did through a human being.

The actions of an evil spirit discerns the name of the evil spirit. Another example of knowing what the name of an evil spirit is, by what it does, is found in Mark 9:17 and 25, **“...POSSESSED WITH A SPIRIT WHICH MAKES HIM MUTE.”** Then Jesus dealt with the spirit in verse 25, **“YOU DEAF AND DUMB SPIRIT, I COMMAND YOU, COME OUT OF HIM AND DO NOT ENTER HIM AGAIN.”**

Acts 16:16 “...HAVING A SPIRIT OF DIVINATION MET US, WHO WAS BRINGING HER MASTERS MUCH PROFIT BY FORTUNE-TELLING.”

In the New testament are seven examples of describing demons according to what they do. They are described in the NKJV, NASB, and NIV as follows.

1. Mark 9:17, mute, robbed of speech.
2. Mark 9:25, deaf and dumb, deaf and mute.
3. Luke 13:11, infirmity causing sickness and crippling.
4. Acts 16:16, divination, predicting the future.
5. 1 Timothy 4:1, deceiving, deceitful.
6. 2 Timothy 1:7, fear, timidity.
7. 1 John 4:6, error, and falsehood.

To illustrate these examples from the Bible, here is a testimony from when I served as a missionary in Spain. The Lord provided our church with a shipment of over 4,000 New Testaments.

Acts 16:16 “...HAVING A SPIRIT OF DIVINATION MET US, WHO WAS BRINGING HER MASTERS MUCH PROFIT BY FORTUNE-TELLING.”

When we received the boxes filled with the New Testaments we noticed they had been sent from America seven years before we actually got them. From the time they had been sent to when we got them, they had been stored in a factory in northern Spain all those years.

I remember praying and asking the Lord why they had not been distributed in all those years.

The Holy Spirit clearly answered and said,

“ Procrastination is not an attitude, it is a personality! ”

Procrastination is prevalent in Spanish society, where many tasks are left for tomorrow. Consequently, in this case, tomorrow was put off for seven years. A spirit by the Spanish name “mañana” which means “tomorrow” had influenced people’s minds to delay New Testaments from getting distributed. Anything that retards and stops the advancement of the gospel is demonic.

**Acts 16:17 “THE GIRL FOLLOWED AFTER PAUL AND THE REST OF US,
SHOUTING, “THESE MEN ARE SERVANTS OF THE MOST HIGH GOD,
WHO ARE TELLING YOU THE WAY TO BE SAVED.”**

For studying this verse we can divide it into the following six parts.

1. “THE GIRL FOLLOWED AFTER PAUL”

These words show us the girl was quite close to Paul when she was being used by the devil. Opposition often comes through a person or people, sometimes a person or people close to us.

Now let us focus more closely on the word **“FOLLOWED.”** In the NASB the word **“FOLLOWING”** is used. The word shows the voice coming from the girl was behind Paul rather than in front. The voice coming from the girl was coming from an evil spirit in the girl. Why do you think the enemy’s voice was behind Paul and Silas? There may be many reasons, but one is if we hear someone shouting behind us, the tendency is to look back and give our attention to the voice. The enemy's voice tries to get us to dwell on the past and past events rather than going forward.

In Isaiah 43:18 it says, **“DO NOT CALL TO MIND THE FORMER THINGS, OR
PONDER THINGS OF THE PAST.”**

As Christians our focus is to be forward and not looking back.

**Acts 16:17 “THE GIRL FOLLOWED AFTER PAUL AND THE REST OF US,
SHOUTING, “THESE MEN ARE SERVANTS OF THE MOST HIGH GOD,
WHO ARE TELLING YOU THE WAY TO BE SAVED.”**

2. “SHOUTING”

From this word the Holy Spirit helps us to understand spiritual warfare and a tactic the enemy uses against us. In the NASB the words **“KEPT CRYING OUT”** are used. This word usage communicates the slave-girl kept repeating what she was shouting. The enemy’s voice kept repeating the same thing. This is a tactic we need to be aware of. The enemy does this to us. He will keep shouting in our thoughts what someone did to us in the past. The purpose is to get us to look back in our thoughts so our thoughts are not on the Lord and following Him.

**Acts 16:17 “THE GIRL FOLLOWED AFTER PAUL AND THE REST OF US,
SHOUTING, “THESE MEN ARE SERVANTS OF THE MOST HIGH GOD,
WHO ARE TELLING YOU THE WAY TO BE SAVED.”**

3. “THESE MEN”

These words were spoken by a girl who was possessed by an evil spirit. The girl when referring to **“THESE MEN”** was speaking about Paul who was a spiritual leader and those with him. A lesson we learn from this situation is to consider the source when hearing what someone says about a leader. The words **“THESE MEN”** come before the word **“GOD.”** The slave-girl mentioned men before God. Men are mentioned before God.

The emphasis is on men rather than God. Imagine insignificant man being exalted above the magnificent God! The words almost sound like the religious expression “He is a mighty man of God.” This expression should actually say “The mighty God of a man.”

When attention is given to man it is taken away from God.

**Acts 16:17 “THE GIRL FOLLOWED AFTER PAUL AND THE REST OF US,
SHOUTING, “THESE MEN ARE SERVANTS OF THE MOST HIGH GOD,
WHO ARE TELLING YOU THE WAY TO BE SAVED.”**

4. “ARE SERVANTS OF THE MOST HIGH GOD,”

The slave-girl referred to Paul and those with him as servants of God rather than servants of Jesus. In contrast to this statement we see how Paul referred to himself in Romans 1:1, **“PAUL, A SERVANT OF CHRIST JESUS.”**

The evil spirit in the girl evidently did not have a problem saying Paul was a servant of God but certainly did not say he was a servant of Christ Jesus. We might be tempted to think, well that is sort of interesting but how does that apply to me? The New Age, humanistic and liberal thinking do not have a problem mentioning “god” but are allergic to the name of Jesus, unless of course in a sarcastic tone of voice.

**Acts 16:17 “THE GIRL FOLLOWED AFTER PAUL AND THE REST OF US,
SHOUTING, “THESE MEN ARE SERVANTS OF THE MOST HIGH GOD,
WHO ARE TELLING YOU THE WAY TO BE SAVED.”**

5. “WHO ARE TELLING”

The slave-girl is exalting Paul and those with him for the work they were doing for God rather than exalting God for the work He was doing through them! Perhaps you have heard testimonies of how some man has taken a small number of church members and built it into a church of thousands. The emphasis is on the man and his accomplishments with little or no mention of God enabling the small, feeble, frail, mortal to meet with some small amount of success.

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6. “YOU THE WAY TO BE SAVED.”

The slave-girl specifically uses the word **“YOU.”** She should have said, “telling us the way to be saved.” The girl who was speaking these words needed to be saved but she did not recognize it. The proud can see that others need to be saved but are blind to seeing the need in their own lives.

**Acts 16:17 “THE GIRL FOLLOWED AFTER PAUL AND THE REST OF US,
SHOUTING, “THESE MEN ARE SERVANTS OF THE MOST HIGH GOD,
WHO ARE TELLING YOU THE WAY TO BE SAVED.”**

The proud easily see problems in others but fail to see problems in their own lives. In contrast to these arrogant words let us look at 1 John 2:2,

“HE IS THE ATONING SACRIFICE FOR OUR SINS.”

John writes this and he includes himself by saying, **“A SACRIFICE FOR OUR SINS,”** and not “a sacrifice for your sins.” In writing this, John knew he was a sinner and acknowledged that fact. What a contrast to this poor girl in Acts 16:17. What Paul and the others were saying was true but the girl was not receiving it for herself. When we hear the word of God being preached we must be diligent and receive it and not self-righteously think it is for others and not for me. When listening to Bible teaching be careful not to listen to thoughts that tell us it applies to some other person and neglect to apply it personally.

Acts 16:18 “AND SHE CONTINUED DOING THIS FOR MANY DAYS. BUT PAUL WAS GREATLY ANNOYED, AND TURNED AND SAID TO THE SPIRIT, “I COMMAND YOU IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST TO COME OUT OF HER!” AND IT CAME OUT AT THAT VERY MOMENT.”

With the Lord's help may we study this verse in the following five parts.

1. “AND SHE CONTINUED DOING THIS FOR MANY DAYS.”

Now please focus even further on the word “**DAYS.**” As we read this verse we learn that it was during the day when Paul cast out the spirit.

In W. E. Vine’s expository dictionary the word ‘day’ refers to the period of natural light. As we see in this verse Paul dealt with this problem during the day, it was not something he got involved with late at night.

Let us read some examples of deliverances from evil spirits in the gospels.

Luke 9:37-42, Jesus delivered a boy from a demon in the daytime.

Luke 13:10-12, Jesus healed a sickness from a spirit on the Sabbath.

Mark 1:32-34, Jesus was casting out spirits after the sun had set.

Acts 16:18 “AND SHE CONTINUED DOING THIS FOR MANY DAYS. BUT PAUL WAS GREATLY ANNOYED, AND TURNED AND SAID TO THE SPIRIT, “I COMMAND YOU IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST TO COME OUT OF HER!” AND IT CAME OUT AT THAT VERY MOMENT.”

This verse tells us that our Lord did cast out spirits in what appears to be just after daylight This situation appears to be an exception rather than the rule.

It is important to stress that deliverances are mostly done during the day because if you get involved in praying for someone late at night it can be extremely draining. In Mark 1:35 Jesus arose early to pray,

“AND IN THE EARLY MORNING, WHILE IT WAS STILL DARK, HE AROSE AND WENT OUT AND DEPARTED TO A LONELY PLACE, AND WAS PRAYING THERE.”

For us to be able to follow our Lord’s example we have to avoid praying for people late at night.

Acts 16:18 “AND SHE CONTINUED DOING THIS FOR MANY DAYS. BUT PAUL WAS GREATLY ANNOYED, AND TURNED AND SAID TO THE SPIRIT, “I COMMAND YOU IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST TO COME OUT OF HER!” AND IT CAME OUT AT THAT VERY MOMENT.”

2. “BUT PAUL WAS GREATLY ANNOYED,”

In this chapter we learn that Paul was greatly annoyed. It might be somewhat difficult for us to imagine Paul getting annoyed but here we see he not only got annoyed but greatly annoyed. Now we learn why he got so greatly annoyed. In verse 16 and 17 a girl with a spirit of divination followed Paul and those with him. The girl's conduct tried to hinder them from proclaiming the gospel. Paul was greatly annoyed because the demon in the girl was trying to undermine them preaching the gospel.

Now that we know, what greatly annoyed Paul, let us ask ourselves, what greatly annoys us?

Acts 16:18 “AND SHE CONTINUED DOING THIS FOR MANY DAYS. BUT PAUL WAS GREATLY ANNOYED, AND TURNED AND SAID TO THE SPIRIT, “I COMMAND YOU IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST TO COME OUT OF HER!” AND IT CAME OUT AT THAT VERY MOMENT.”

Are we greatly annoyed, or at least annoyed that the devil tries to stop the gospel advancing? What makes us annoyed? If we are honest, we are seldom annoyed by the fact that the enemy tries to stop the gospel's advancement. Too often our annoyance is because our own circumstances rather than the gospel not advancing as it should. Do we get annoyed that the gospel is not advancing or that we are not advancing?

What greatly annoys us tells us much about our spiritual condition.

May we also consider that Paul was “**GREATLY ANNOYED**” because the demon possessed girl was praising and exalting them for the work they were doing. The girl's praising, and exalting them rather than God “**GREATLY ANNOYED**” Paul. Let us compare ourselves with Paul.

Acts 16:18 “AND SHE CONTINUED DOING THIS FOR MANY DAYS. BUT PAUL WAS GREATLY ANNOYED, AND TURNED AND SAID TO THE SPIRIT, “I COMMAND YOU IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST TO COME OUT OF HER!” AND IT CAME OUT AT THAT VERY MOMENT.”

When someone praises and exalts us rather than God, does it make us **“GREATLY ANNOYED”** or do we secretly savor the attention?

If we do, then we need to quickly repent. Remember this girl would be speaking in the hearing of people, perhaps crowds of people. The people would hear the praises directed towards Paul and Silas. Paul certainly was not impressed that people hear him, being praised. Do you like being praised? When people give you praise, give it to the Lord.

Acts 16:18 “AND SHE CONTINUED DOING THIS FOR MANY DAYS. BUT PAUL WAS GREATLY ANNOYED, AND TURNED AND SAID TO THE SPIRIT, “I COMMAND YOU IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST TO COME OUT OF HER!” AND IT CAME OUT AT THAT VERY MOMENT.”

3. “AND TURNED AND SAID TO THE SPIRIT,”

Notice here Paul is speaking to the spirit in the girl and not to the girl. Notice as well that Paul did not carry on a conversation with the spirit. There are times in a deliverance situation that the spirit will try talking to you, yet there is no Scriptural basis that a Christian should get into conversations with a demon. In Mark 5:9 Jesus asked the demon what its name was, but Jesus did not carry on a conversation with the demon.

In reading Mark 5:10 the demons tried to carry on a conversation with Jesus but He did not comply.

Acts 16:18 “AND SHE CONTINUED DOING THIS FOR MANY DAYS. BUT PAUL WAS GREATLY ANNOYED, AND TURNED AND SAID TO THE SPIRIT, “I COMMAND YOU IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST TO COME OUT OF HER!” AND IT CAME OUT AT THAT VERY MOMENT.”

4. “I COMMAND YOU IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST COME OUT OF HER!”

From this verse we learn Paul commanded the demon to come out in the name of Jesus Christ. He did not ask it to come out, he told it to come out. There is no indication that he shouted at the demon to come out.

In this verse it merely says Paul, **“SAID TO THE SPIRIT.”** Paul did not shout at the demon. We do not have to shout at demons, they are not deaf! Authority is not in our ability to shout at demons, but rather the authority is in the name of Jesus!

Acts 16:18 “AND SHE CONTINUED DOING THIS FOR MANY DAYS. BUT PAUL WAS GREATLY ANNOYED, AND TURNED AND SAID TO THE SPIRIT, “I COMMAND YOU IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST TO COME OUT OF HER!” AND IT CAME OUT AT THAT VERY MOMENT.”

5. “AND IT CAME OUT AT THAT VERY MOMENT.”

The slave-girl was no longer a slave of Satan. The girl was heavily into the occult being a fortuneteller. Paul and Silas were new in Philippi and they had to deal with demon powers before the gospel could properly advance. Paul also faced demonic opposition in a magician on his first missionary venture in Acts 13:8. As the light shines, darkness is discerned.

In Demolishing Strongholds, David Devenish said,

“As we advance the kingdom and preach the gospel, we will have to encounter demonic power in new areas and deal with them as Paul did in the book of Acts.”

Acts 16:19 “...THEY SEIZED PAUL AND SILAS AND DRAGGED THEM INTO THE MARKET PLACE TO FACE THE AUTHORITIES.”

This violent behavior against Paul and Silas happened right after the demon was expelled from the slave-girl in verse 18. There was a backlash after the deliverance. We need to be aware that after a deliverance takes place there is often a backlash of some form. From verses 19 to 23 Paul and Silas' situation went from bad to worse with seven traumatic things rapidly happening to them.

1. men seizing them.
2. dragged into the market.
3. being slandered.
4. rejected by people.
5. robes ripped off them.
6. beaten with rods.
7. and thrown in prison.

Acts 16:19 “...THEY SEIZED PAUL AND SILAS AND DRAGGED THEM INTO THE MARKET PLACE TO FACE THE AUTHORITIES.”

Now let us ask ourselves a question. Did all these terrible things happen because they had stepped out of God's will? The answer is, no.

As we read through chapter 16 we see Paul and Silas busy doing what God had called them to. Then, suddenly in this verse trouble breaks out.

These horrific problems came on them because they were in God's will. Being in God's will did not exempt them from problems, and neither will we be exempt.

Acts 16:19 “...THEY SEIZED PAUL AND SILAS AND DRAGGED THEM INTO THE MARKET PLACE TO FACE THE AUTHORITIES.”

Very often opposition is a characteristic of following the Lord.

In 2 Samuel 5:17 is an excellent example of this,

“WHEN THE PHILISTINES HEARD THAT THEY HAD ANOINTED DAVID KING OVER ISRAEL, ALL THE PHILISTINES WENT UP TO SEEK OUT DAVID, AND WHEN DAVID HEARD OF IT, HE WENT DOWN TO THE STRONGHOLD.”

David was very much in the will of God being anointed as king. Yet in the same sentence we read the Philistines coming out in full force to oppose him.

Following Jesus does not exempt anyone from opposition, in fact the opposition is often the confirmation of being in God's will.

Acts 16:20 “...THEY SAID, THESE MEN ARE THROWING OUR CITY INTO CONFUSION, BEING JEWS.”

In this verse and verse 21 we see Paul and Silas being falsely accused and slandered. Do you notice what they said in response to these accusations? Read verses 19 to 21 and see if you can see what their response was. Do you see it? They did not respond. Listen to the tone of voice verse 20 and 21 are spoken in, you can almost hear these people shouting. Their shouting and intimidation was a cover-up for their own sin. Their shouting was to divert blame away from themselves and onto Paul and Silas. This same type of conduct is seen today. Take for example, one politician shouts and accuses his opponent for failing to do a particular task. This type of action is to make us focus on the supposed failure of the one being accused. As Christians we are not to fall for this trap. Instead, we must look discerningly at the person making the accusations, because very often the person is attempting to cover up their own wrongdoing.

**Acts 16:20 “...THEY SAID, THESE MEN ARE THROWING OUR CITY INTO
CONFUSION, BEING JEWS.”**

This same manner of conduct is seen in children, one will blame another to cover up his or her sin.

In Acts 17:5 is an example of the sin of jealousy.

In Acts 17:6 is an example of shouting to cover up this sin.

Shouting, slander, and self-righteous behavior are three things to be aware of and are sadly part of an unrepentant sinner's behavior.

May we return to the observation that Paul and Silas did not respond to these accusations. This type of response is that of our Lord Jesus, as seen in Matthew 27:14 and Mark 15:3-5, and in 1 Peter 2:23 it says,

**“WHEN THEY HAD HURLED THEIR INSULTS AT HIM, HE DID NOT RETALIATE,
WHEN HE SUFFERED, HE MADE NO THREATS. INSTEAD, HE ENTRUSTED
HIMSELF TO HIM WHO JUDGES JUSTLY.”**

**Acts 16:20 “...THEY SAID, THESE MEN ARE THROWING OUR CITY INTO
CONFUSION, BEING JEWS.”**

The meekness of our Lord Jesus was seen through Paul and Silas' lives in a difficult trial. May we humbly ask God to help us to be as our Lord and as Paul and Silas, when we are insulted and reviled, not to retaliate but to entrust ourselves to the Lord.

Acts 16:22 “AND THE CROWD ROSE UP TOGETHER AGAINST THEM,”

In verses 20 and 21 the masters of the slave-girl were lying about Paul and Silas. Now we come to this verse and consider the word “CROWD.” We do not know the of jobs of people in the “CROWD.” We do not know the ages of the people in the “CROWD.” We do not know how many people were in the “CROWD.” We do not know where people were from, in the “CROWD.” We do not know if people knew each other in the “CROWD.” We do not know the various opinions of people in the “CROWD.” We do know they were all together in agreement against servants of the Lord and the gospel. In this verse we see no indication of even one person in the crowd questioning or doubting what they heard about Paul and Silas.

They believed lies without arguing. They believed lies without doubting. They believed lies with no resistance. They believed lies without hesitating. They believed lies without questioning.

How opposite this is to when the truth of the gospel is preached. Human nature is still the same today.

Acts 16:22 “AND THE CROWD ROSE UP TOGETHER AGAINST THEM,”

People argue against it.

People doubt it.

People resist it.

People hesitate to believe it.

People question it.

The crowd listened to lies and the resulting conduct was negative actions towards people. When Scriptural truth is listened to with obedience, the resulting conduct is positive and beneficial towards people.

**Acts 16:22 “...AND THE MAGISTRATES ORDERED THEM
TO BE STRIPPED AND BEATEN.”**

In this verse we learn the magistrates took actions against Paul and Silas. This verse along with the two preceding verses are vital in learning more about spiritual warfare. In verses 20 and 21 the owners of the slave-girl were speaking slander against Paul and Silas.

In verse 22 the magistrates, having listened to slander, acted on what they had heard. The magistrates made two errors by only acting on what they had heard from the owners of the slave-girl.

Acts 16:22 “...AND THE MAGISTRATES ORDERED THEM TO BE STRIPPED AND BEATEN.”

The magistrates' order was made based on the following two errors.

1. The first error; presumption.

The magistrates presumed that what they had heard was true. Their error of presumption is expressed in Proverbs 13:10, **“THROUGH PRESUMPTION COMES NOTHING BUT STRIFE.”** This verse was seen in what the magistrates did in Acts 16:22. The word **“PRESUMPTION”** is a symptom of pride and self-confidence. In Psalms 19:13 David prayed, **“ALSO KEEP BACK THY SERVANT FROM PRESUMPTUOUS SINS.”**

We can discern the presence of pride in our hearts when we are presumptuous about people. The word **“STRIFE”** means trouble, discord and contention. The way the magistrates reacted proved this Scripture is a true discerner of human nature.

Please consider that the magistrates lived several hundred years after Proverbs was written. Yet their actions confirmed Proverbs is true.

We can learn that even though hundreds even thousands of years have passed, the truth of the Bible never passes away.

**Acts 16:22 “...AND THE MAGISTRATES ORDERED THEM
TO BE STRIPPED AND BEATEN.”**

2. The second error; failure to get a second opinion.

The magistrates did not ask Paul and Silas about the accusations being made against them. In Proverbs 18:17 it says, **“THE FIRST TO PRESENT HIS CASE SEEMS RIGHT, TILL ANOTHER COMES FORWARD AND QUESTIONS HIM.”**

There are two sides to a story. In each of our lives, we act or react to what we hear or what we listen to. In this case it was ungodly people speaking about leaders in the church. We need to be extremely careful who we listen to. In this case the magistrates listened to negative things about Paul and Silas. When we hear negative things about other Christians we can discern their origin is from the accuser of the brethren. In this verse we see a negative action taken because negative words were listened to.

When we listen to negative words, it causes negative actions.

Listening to the word of God produces positive actions.

**Acts 16:22 “...AND THE MAGISTRATES ORDERED THEM
TO BE STRIPPED AND BEATEN.”**

Now consider that we listen to either people or thoughts.

Thoughts come in the form of words.

Here are three steps that occur with thoughts.

1. We hear thoughts enter our minds.
2. We accept or reject the thoughts.
3. We react to or reject the thoughts.

We need to be sober and vigilant to weigh thoughts to see if they are in accordance to Scripture. Thoughts that fail to agree with the full counsel of Scripture are not from God.

**Acts 16:23 “AND WHEN THEY HAD INFLICTED MANY BLOWS UPON THEM,
THEY THREW THEM INTO PRISON,”**

In this verse we see horrible actions were done to Paul and Silas.

In verse 22 it says,

“...PROCEEDED TO ORDER THEM TO BE BEATEN WITH RODS.”

Then in verse 23 here it says

“THEY HAD INFLICTED MANY BLOWS UPON THEM.”

Paul and Silas were beaten not with a few blows, but with rods and many blows. Imagine what they likely looked like. Paul and Silas were very likely in severe pain with the injuries they suffered. But notice how they responded to these horrible circumstances.

In verse 25 it says,

“...PAUL AND SILAS WERE PRAYING AND SINGING HYMNS OF PRAISE TO GOD”

**Acts 16:23 “AND WHEN THEY HAD INFLICTED MANY BLOWS UPON THEM,
THEY THREW THEM INTO PRISON,”**

Paul and Silas had wrong done to them but they did not respond in a wrong way. This example serves as the correct way for us to act when we suffer wrong done to us. When wrong is done to us our flesh wants to respond in a wrong way. Our flesh responds that it is right to respond wrong! Responding to wrong with wrong is a form of retaliation. To respond in a Christ-like manner requires God's grace as we humble ourselves and exercise self-control. To respond as Paul and Silas did requires self-denial. In Romans 12:17 it says, **“NEVER PAY BACK EVIL FOR EVIL TO ANYONE.”** Paul and Silas had obeyed God and landed in prison. When they set out to obey God they did not know they would be thrown in prison. If we knew we were going to be beaten and thrown in prison would we obey?

**Acts 16:23 “AND WHEN THEY HAD INFLICTED MANY BLOWS UPON THEM,
THEY THREW THEM INTO PRISON,”**

In conclusion, please consider the last word “**PRISON.**” Paul experienced the trauma of being imprisoned. Then later in his life (many consider Paul the writer of Hebrews) he would write in Hebrews 13:3,

**“REMEMBER THOSE IN PRISON AS IF YOU WERE THEIR FELLOW PRISONERS,
AND THOSE WHO ARE MISTREATED AS IF YOU YOURSELVES WERE SUFFERING.”**

Acts 16:24 “AND HE, HAVING RECEIVED SUCH A COMMAND, THREW THEM IN THE INNER PRISON, AND FASTENED THEIR FEET IN THE STOCKS.”

Let us look at this verse on two levels. First the guard, then Paul and Silas.

1. “AND HE, HAVING RECEIVED SUCH A COMMAND,”

The guard was prompt in obeying.

The guard did not procrastinate in obeying.

The guard did not question the chief magistrates.

The guard did not argue with the chief magistrates.

The guard did not complain about what he had to do.

The guard accepted the orders rather than reject orders!

This guard was a man who **“HAVING RECEIVED SUCH A COMMAND”** did it. His example proves a convicting challenge to each of us who profess Jesus as Lord. Do we show the same disposition to obey the word of God as this man was to obeying the words of men?

Acts 16:24 “AND HE, HAVING RECEIVED SUCH A COMMAND, THREW THEM IN THE INNER PRISON, AND FASTENED THEIR FEET IN THE STOCKS.”

2.“THREW THEM IN THE INNER PRISON, AND FASTENED THEIR FEET IN THE STOCKS.”

When we read this verse we get a clear picture of Paul and Silas in a terrible situation from which there was no escape. They were in prison and they did not know how long they would be there. Scripture makes no mention of them knowing when they would be freed from this prison. Paul and Silas did not fight with the plight they were in! Do we fight with the plight we are in? Paul and Silas could not escape. Are you in a situation you feel there is no escape from? The Lord released Paul and Silas after they prayed and praised. The Lord wants us to learn to do the same before being released from our prison. Too often we want circumstances to change and our hearts not change. The Lord wants to change us before He changes our circumstances. We see this pattern outlined in Jonah chapter 2. Jonah was in prison in the belly of a huge fish. In the first verse Jonah prayed, and in the last verse the Lord changed his circumstances! Jonah changed, then his circumstances changed.

Acts 16:25 “BUT ABOUT MIDNIGHT...”

Midnight is a time of day when it is dark. Midnight is a dark time. It most certainly was dark in the prison because in verse 29, when the jailor thought the prisoners had escaped he called for a light before going into where the prisoners were. In a dark time, we learn how Paul and Silas responded. In verse 25 it says,

“PAUL AND SILAS WERE PRAYING AND SINGING HYMNS TO GOD.”

In the dark times words of prayer and praise came from their hearts.

In the dark times of our lives, what words come from our hearts? When we think of the word **“MIDNIGHT”** we know it is a time in the night. In dark times, we might feel it will never end. When we are tempted to think the night will never end we can remember 2 Peter 3:8,

“BUT DO NOT LET THIS ONE FACT ESCAPE YOUR NOTICE, BELOVED, THAT WITH THE LORD ONE DAY IS AS A THOUSAND YEARS, AND A THOUSAND YEARS AS ONE DAY.”

**Acts 16:25 “...PAUL AND SILAS WERE PRAYING
AND SINGING HYMNS OF PRAISE TO GOD,”**

From verse 19 to verse 24 we learn Paul and Silas had suffered severely.

They suffered by being dragged into the marketplace.

They suffered by being slandered.

They suffered by being shown hostility by a crowd.

They suffered by being stripped.

They suffered by being beaten with rods.

They suffered by being thrown into jail.

Although horrible things happened to them, they were not talking about all the horrible things that had happened to them. In verse 22 they were beaten with rods. Then in verse 33 the newly converted jailor washed their wounds.

**Acts 16:25 “...PAUL AND SILAS WERE PRAYING
AND SINGING HYMNS OF PRAISE TO GOD,”**

Look at five things about Paul and Silas and compare our lives with theirs.

1. Paul and Silas had wounds, but they worshipped!

Do we worship after getting wounded?

2. Paul and Silas did not doubt God when they encountered hardships.

Do we doubt God when we encounter hardships?

3. Paul and Silas were not talking about people who had caused them pain.

Do we talk about people who have caused us pain?

4. Paul and Silas were not talking about bad people, but about good Jesus.

Do we talk about how bad people are or about how good Jesus is?

5. Paul and Silas's focus was on the Lord and not on people.

Do we have our focus on the Lord or on people?

**Acts 16:25 “...PAUL AND SILAS WERE PRAYING
AND SINGING HYMNS OF PRAISE TO GOD,”**

When we go through difficulties, how do we respond?

Do we have this same heart as these men? It was God's grace that enabled Paul and Silas to pray and sing hymns of praise in the midst of horrible suffering. It is God's grace that enables us to follow their example. It is easy to pray, sing hymns and look spiritual in a church meeting but are we so spiritual in a prison meeting?

In The Practice of the Presence of God Brother Lawrence said,

“Talk to Him often; Forget Him as seldom as possible. Praise Him, when the difficulties are at their worst. ”

ACTS 16:25 “GOD,”

To study this word please look at the two verses preceding, along with verse 25 and we shall highlight a word from each verse.

1. People Verse 23, “THEY”
2. Circumstances Verse 24, “PRISON”
3. God Verse 25, “GOD,”

The three words highlighted in these three verses apply to all of us.

1. People Verse 23, “THEY”

In verse 22 the multitudes had risen up against Paul and Silas and the magistrates had them beaten and thrown into prison. Although Paul and Silas were beaten, and very likely in severe pain, they did not show any indication of anger or retaliation towards the people.

The Expositors Bible Commentary says,

“One would expect that after such brutal treatment, Paul and Silas would be bemoaning their plight.”

When people hurt us, how do respond towards them?

Do we respond with anger towards the broken promises of people or do we respond with thankfulness towards the promises of God?

ACTS 16:25 “GOD,”

2. Circumstances Verse 24, “PRISON”

Paul and Silas now were experiencing terrible circumstances. Yet as we read through this chapter there is not a hint of complaining or bitterness against God for allowing them to be in such horrible circumstances.

There is not any hint of self-pity but in verse 28 there was pity for the jailor. When we are empty of self, we have pity.

When we are full of self, we are pitiful.

When we are in difficult circumstances, do we want to run from bad circumstances or do we want to run to our good God?

3. God Verse 25, “GOD,”

Paul and Silas were not filled with worry about their circumstances, instead they were filled with worship to their God. Their focus was not on the place, but placed their focus on the Lord. How we respond to people, circumstances, and God, will make us bitter or better.

Acts 16:25 “...AND THE PRISONERS WERE LISTENING TO THEM;”

Please carefully examine this part of verse 25 in the following two parts.

1. “...AND THE PRISONERS”

Notice Paul and Silas are not referred to as prisoners although the other people in the prison are. Paul and Silas’ physical bodies were in prison but their spirits were not imprisoned. Their spirits were free to worship God. Paul and Silas were clearly different from the other people in prison.

They were all in very difficult circumstances, yet the Bible only mentions Paul and Silas as the ones praying and singing hymns. What sort of words do you think would be coming from the mouths of the other people in prison? Do you think their mouths were filled with praise in prison?

Or do you think their mouths were filled with poison in prison?

What comes from our mouths in prison experiences, praise or poison?

Difficulties discern what is dormant in our hearts! When life is going along smoothly we might appear to be all right.

Acts 16:25 “...AND THE PRISONERS WERE LISTENING TO THEM;”

In Mark 4:36 to 41 Jesus and His disciples got into a boat to cross over to the other side. Things seemed to be going smoothly when a sudden storm struck. The furious storm tested the disciples' faith in Mark 4: 38.

In the storm, they doubted the Lord cared for them. Difficult circumstances test our faith. When we see things wrong in our hearts we are not to make excuses or blame others but to humble ourselves, confess and forsake the wrongs the Holy Spirit is showing us.

Acts 16:25 “...AND THE PRISONERS WERE LISTENING TO THEM;”

2. “WERE LISTENING TO THEM;”

The prisoners were listening to Paul and Silas praying and singing praises to God. We could say they had a captive audience! The actions and attitudes of Paul and Silas were noticed by other people. People notice what we do whether we know it or not. Then in 2 Samuel 11:10 it says,

“URIAH DID NOT GO DOWN TO HIS HOUSE.”

People saw that he had slept at the door of the king’s house with servants rather than go to his house, wash his feet, enjoy a present from the king, and sleep in more comfort. People see our behavior. In 1 Peter 2:12 it says,

“KEEP YOUR BEHAVIOR EXCELLENT AMONG THE GENTILES, SO THAT IN THE THING IN WHICH THEY SLANDER YOU AS EVILDOERS, THEY MAY ON ACCOUNT OF YOUR GOOD DEEDS, AS THEY OBSERVE THEM, GLORIFY GOD IN THE DAY OF VISITATION.”

Acts 16:25 “...AND THE PRISONERS WERE LISTENING TO THEM;”

The Bible does not say if Paul and Silas knew the prisoners were listening to them. They were not thinking about what people were thinking, they were thinking about the Lord!

What do we think about?

What people think, or think about the Lord?

They may or may not have been aware people in the prison were listening but they were aware God was listening. Do we want people to listen to us or do we want to listen to people?

Acts 16:26 “SUDDENLY THERE WAS SUCH A VIOLENT EARTHQUAKE THAT THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE PRISON WERE SHAKEN.”

In our study of this verse we shall at this time focus on two parts.

1. “VIOLENT EARTHQUAKE”

God does permit a sudden, “**VIOLENT EARTHQUAKE**” to shake the foundations of a person’s life to make them aware of needing help.

When a person is comfortable they have little or no awareness of needing the Comforter. Many of us can testify to a “**VIOLENT EARTHQUAKE**” experience in our lives prior to becoming Christians. In this portion of Scripture we see what the direct result of this earthquake was, the jailor crying out to be saved in verse 30. Before the violent earthquake the jailor showed no signs of wanting or recognizing his need to be saved. When we read this verse let us imagine what would have happened had there not been a violent earthquake. The violent earthquake not only shook the foundations of a jail, it also shook the foundations of a jailor’s life!

If there had been no earthquake the jailor likely would never have been saved as we see in verses 31 to 33.

Acts 16:26 “SUDDENLY THERE WAS SUCH A VIOLENT EARTHQUAKE THAT THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE PRISON WERE SHAKEN.”

From this verse and the verse proceeding we see an important pattern of God's delivering power. In verse 25 Paul and Silas were praying and praising God and then freedom came. Paul did what he wrote in Philippians 4:4, **“REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS.”** What Paul did and what he taught were in agreement. Remember, Acts 16:25 happened before Philippians 4:4. He did, then he taught. His actions preached before his mouth! Remember Paul and Silas were not praising God for the difficulties but rather praising God in the difficulties.

They were praising God because He is God! The action that took place in verse 25 and in this verse is seen in Psalm 91:15,

“HE WILL CALL UPON ME, AND I WILL ANSWER HIM, I WILL BE WITH HIM IN TROUBLE; I WILL RESCUE HIM, AND HONOR HIM.”

Earthquake experiences are not to cause people to perish but to bring people to repentance so they do not perish! The earthquake was not to hurt the jailor but rather to help the jail was out of control! Before the earthquake, the jailor was in charge. But he needed to change. When we are in charge, we need to change!

Acts 16:26 “SUDDENLY THERE WAS SUCH A VIOLENT EARTHQUAKE THAT THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE PRISON WERE SHAKEN.”

2. “THE FOUNDATIONS”

May we ask ourselves, what are the foundations of our lives built on?

Do you remember the story Jesus taught in Matthew 7:24-27?

In this story the person who hears and does the Lord's word is like a man who built his house upon a rock and when rain descended, floods came, and winds blew, but his house did not fall. However, a sudden violent earthquake will shake the man who does not act upon the words of the Lord.

God uses violent earthquake experiences in peoples' lives to bring them to repentance and salvation.

It is important to see that when this violent earthquake shook the foundations not only of the prison but as well the jailor's life. It is also important to note that there were Christians there to witness to him and lead him to Christ.

Very likely all of you who are reading this can think of many types of violent earthquakes that shake peoples' lives.

Let us be available to share our living hope in Christ with those whose foundations have been shaken.

Acts 16:27 “THE JAILOR WOKE UP, AND WHEN HE SAW THE PRISON DOORS OPEN, HE DREW HIS SWORD AND WAS ABOUT TO KILL HIMSELF BECAUSE HE THOUGHT THE PRISONERS HAD ESCAPED.”

For this study please consider the first part and last part of the verse.

1. “THE JAILOR WOKE UP,”

The jailor was in a prison and he was also in a prison of sin. God had provided an earthquake to free Paul and Silas from the prison.

Now the jailor needed God to free him from the prison of sin.

The earthquake roused him out of his sleep. When he was awakened he was then aware of his desperate condition. He was an awakened sinner! Here we learn the jailor had been sleeping. But in verse 25 Paul and Silas were singing. He was sleeping, they were singing! The jailor was sleeping and was about to perish. Paul and Silas were singing and were saved.

Are you sleeping or singing?

Acts 16:27 “THE JAILOR WOKE UP, AND WHEN HE SAW THE PRISON DOORS OPEN, HE DREW HIS SWORD AND WAS ABOUT TO KILL HIMSELF BECAUSE HE THOUGHT THE PRISONERS HAD ESCAPED.”

2. “HE THOUGHT THE PRISONERS HAD ESCAPED.”

Next consider that the jailor was going to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. His actions were in direct relationship to what he thought. Our actions are directly related to our thought life.

What we think affects what we do. What the jailor thought was not true. We need to be very careful to evaluate what we think is true or not.

In Philippians 4:8 it begins and ends with these words, **“FINALLY, BRETHREN, WHATEVER IS TRUE,” “LET YOUR MIND DWELL ON THESE THINGS.”**

From this verse the Holy Spirit teaches us that our minds are to think on things we know are true as opposed to our minds thinking on things that are presumptuous. This teaches us the importance of what we allow our minds to think on. What the mind dwells on is a vital part of spiritual warfare.

In 2 Corinthians 10:5 it says,

“...WE ARE TAKING EVERY THOUGHT CAPTIVE TO THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST.”

Acts 16:27 “THE JAILOR WOKE UP, AND WHEN HE SAW THE PRISON DOORS OPEN, HE DREW HIS SWORD AND WAS ABOUT TO KILL HIMSELF BECAUSE HE THOUGHT THE PRISONERS HAD ESCAPED.”

When our thoughts are negative towards someone then our actions will be negative towards the person. What we think also influences the type of people we associate with. In Psalm 1:2 it says,

“AND IN HIS LAW HE MEDITATES DAY AND NIGHT.”

The context of these words in verse 1 is we find that the person who meditates on God’s word avoids evil associations and their counsel.

It is vital to memorize Scripture so as to be able to meditate on it.

What the jailor thought was not what God thought. His thoughts were different from God’s. His thoughts were independent from God rather than dependent on God. Are we more concerned about what we think about someone or something or what God thinks about someone or something?

What is our thinking about God, others, and ourselves?

Do our thoughts agree or disagree with what the Bible says?

Acts 16:28 “DO NOT HARM YOURSELF!”

From these words we discern Paul’s concern and love for the jailor.

Paul was sensitive to what this man was going through.

Paul was sensitive to another person who was suffering because he had gone through suffering.

Paul knew the jailor was suffering because he knew suffering!

With Paul and Silas being in prison, we are reminded of Joseph in prison and asking the cupbearer and baker in Genesis 40:7,

“WHY DO YOU LOOK SO DEJECTED AND SAD TODAY?”

How do we respond when we see people dejected and sad? Do we talk to them about why they are dejected and sad or do we talk to other people about why they are dejected and sad? If we presume they look dejected and sad because they do not like us it shows we are self-centered. God uses suffering to mould and make us sensitive to the sufferings of others. Paul was willing to give comfort instead of receiving comfort.

Acts 16:28 “DO NOT HARM YOURSELF!”

Paul was an educated man but he did not tell the jailor about his education. People do not care how much we know but want to know how much we care! Do we desire to give comfort or receive comfort?

In 2 Corinthians 1:4 it says,

“WHO COMFORTS US IN ALL OUR TROUBLES, SO THAT WE CAN COMFORT THOSE IN ANY TROUBLE WITH THE COMFORT WE OURSELVES HAVE RECEIVED FROM GOD.”

Another thought from this verse is the fruit of the Holy Spirit is manifested in the words Paul spoke. In Galatians 5:22-23 are the fruit of the Holy Spirit. In this situation is evidence of the fruit of love, kindness and gentleness. This is a vital pattern in the New Testament where the gifts of the Holy Spirit are manifested, and the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Earlier on in Acts 16:18 we see Paul exercising discernment of spirits, one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit stated in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10. Throughout the Bible where the gifts of the Holy Spirit appear, so does the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 16:28 “DO NOT HARM YOURSELF!”

In Acts 16:25 we see the fruit of joy in Paul and Silas. We need a balanced understanding of the gifts and the fruit of the Spirit. There can be a tendency to emphasize one without the other.

Here are two other examples where the gifts and the fruit go together.

1. In Luke 17:15-17 is about Jesus healing by the power of the Holy Spirit and exercising goodness, in spite of the nine lepers ingratitude.
2. In John 4:7-16 we see love and kindness in Jesus expressed to the Samaritan woman, then in John 4:17-18 the word of knowledge exercised.

**Acts 16:30 “AND AFTER HE BROUGHT THEM OUT, HE SAID,
“SIRS, WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?”**

With the Holy Spirit to help, let us look into this part of verse 30 in four parts. A significant point in this verse is to point out the context where it is found. These words were spoken by the jailor who imprisoned Paul/Silas in verse 24.

1. “AND AFTER HE BROUGHT THEM OUT,”

Paul and Silas had been in a horrible place. Placed in a prison.

A place of pain “AND AFTER” pain “HE BROUGHT THEM OUT.”

A place of suffering “AND AFTER” suffering “HE BROUGHT THEM OUT.”

A place of rejection “AND AFTER” rejection “HE BROUGHT THEM OUT.”

A place of injustice “AND AFTER” injustice “HE BROUGHT THEM OUT.”

A place of darkness “AND AFTER” darkness “HE BROUGHT THEM OUT.”

A place of bondage “AND AFTER” bondage “HE BROUGHT THEM OUT.”

Paul and Silas did not know how long they would be confined, but they were released. The Lord brought them out. You may be in circumstances of pain, suffering, rejection, injustice, darkness and feel like you will never be released, but the Lord will bring you out!

**Acts 16:30 “AND AFTER HE BROUGHT THEM OUT, HE SAID,
“SIRS, WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?”**

2. “HE SAID, “SIRS,”

Let us consider who the word “SIRS” is referring to and who the word is not referring to. Let us consider as well why this word was spoken. The word “SIRS” refers to Paul and Silas. The jailor was not crying out to other people who might have been guarding the prisoners. Why did the jailor ask Paul and Silas how to be saved and not the other prisoners? The likely reason was that in verse 25 they were letting it be known they were Christians. Their actions demonstrated that they were Christians. Do non-Christians around us know we are Christians? Do our actions demonstrate that we are Christians?

The word “SIRS” communicates respect toward Paul and Silas as opposed to disrespect. Do we show respect or disrespect to others? We do not know if the jailor was younger or older than Paul and Silas but he was respectful. We are to be respectful to those younger and older than ourselves. Remember Paul and Silas were Christian leaders. The jailor showed respect to leaders. Do we show respect or disrespect? Do we respect Christian leaders who are younger than ourselves?

**Acts 16:30 “AND AFTER HE BROUGHT THEM OUT, HE SAID,
“SIRS, WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?”**

3. “WHAT MUST I DO”

If we take these words out from the context of the word “SIRS” we can see a very different meaning. If we read this verse without the word “SIRS” preceding we can almost hear the person trying to do something to save himself.

Without the word “SIRS” in front, read these words “WHAT MUST I DO” and hear a heart that is inclined to doing something to be saved apart from the grace of God. If we were to lift these words out of their context we could almost hear the person attempting to save himself by “good works” or more appropriately “dead works.” When we look at these words from this angle we see the emphasis is wrongly placed on self rather than the Savior!

**Acts 16:30 “AND AFTER HE BROUGHT THEM OUT, HE SAID,
“SIRS, WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?”**

In Ephesians 2:8 and 9 it says,

“FOR BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED THROUGH FAITH; AND THAT NOT OF YOURSELVES, IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD; NOT AS A RESULT OF WORKS, THAT NO ONE SHOULD BOAST.”

From the words **“WHAT MUST I DO”** we can hear the jailor was teachable. The jailor asked for advice.

Do we ask for advice?

The jailor admitted he did not know what to do.

Do we admit we do not know what to do?

The jailor asked what he was to do.

Do we ever ask what we are to do?

Do we like being told what to do resent being told what to do?

Do we like telling others what to do or others telling us what to do?

We can discern our spiritual condition and that of others by how we or others respond to being told to do something.

**Acts 16:30 “AND AFTER HE BROUGHT THEM OUT, HE SAID,
“SIRS, WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?”**

The jailor was asking with a disposition to obey without delay.

Are we teachable? Do we obey quickly?

In Psalm 119:60 it says,

“I HASTENED AND DID NOT DELAY TO KEEP THY COMMANDMENTS.”

The more there is a fear of God in our hearts the less time we take to obey.

More reverence equals less rebellion.

**Acts 16:30 “AND AFTER HE BROUGHT THEM OUT, HE SAID,
“SIRS, WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?”**

4. “TO BE SAVED?”

In this verse the jailor was asking how to be saved. Often in the N. T., it was people who asked questions that the Lord saved. Two other examples are in John 4:11 and Acts 8:34. Do you know anyone who is asking about the purpose of life? It is possible that such a person would be open to the gospel. In verse 27 it says,

“HE DREW HIS SWORD AND WAS ABOUT TO KILL HIMSELF.”

The jailor was going to commit suicide because he thought the prisoners had escaped.

When we consider the circumstances this man found himself in, we can understand he was in considerable emotional distress.

The jailor was experiencing a crisis in his life.

The jailor was in a desperate condition.

Desperate circumstances discern what is dormant in our hearts.

**Acts 16:30 “AND AFTER HE BROUGHT THEM OUT, HE SAID,
“SIRS, WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?”**

In Matthew 12:34 it says,

“FOR OUT OF THE ABUNDANCE OF THE HEART THE MOUTH SPEAKS.”

In the tone of the jailor’s words we can hear him crying out for help.

The very difficult circumstances the jailor found himself in brought him to a place in his life where he recognized, and confessed he needed to be saved. The jailor was honest enough to admit he needed to be saved.

The vast amount of mankind need to be saved but so few ever admit it.

It is important to remember that the difficult circumstance the jailor found himself in was not by accident. The jailor was in that situation because the Lord was in charge of the situation that brought him to realize his need for salvation. The Lord allowed difficult circumstances in his life to bring him to the end of himself.

**Acts 16:30 “AND AFTER HE BROUGHT THEM OUT, HE SAID,
“SIRS, WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?”**

We learn from this example of the jailor that it is those who experience a crisis, or difficult circumstance in life that are often the ones who admit their need of salvation. The Lord provides situations that teach us we desperately need Him. It is vital we be like Paul in verse 28 when he said,

“DO YOURSELF NO HARM, FOR WE ARE ALL HERE.”

Paul was concerned about a person who was not concerned about him. With the grace of God we can be concerned for those who are not concerned about us. Paul was concerned and not just curious about someone in a difficult situation. Which of the following best describes us?

Are we curious?

Are we callous?

Are we critical?

Are we concerned?

**Acts 16:30 “AND AFTER HE BROUGHT THEM OUT, HE SAID,
“SIRS, WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?”**

It is imperative we not only see when someone is in difficulties, but also be ready to share the gospel with them. Before we conclude our study of this verse please consider five things about the jailor.

1. Verse 27, the jailor went through a difficult situation in his life.
2. Verse 28, God's grace enabled Paul to be concerned for the jailor.
3. Verse 29, the jailor responded to kindness, knowing he needed help.
4. Verse 30, the jailor was teachable.
5. Verse 31, the jailor heard the gospel.

This outline is one the Holy Spirit provides us with so we can apply it in our circumstances because there are many “jailors” waiting to be freed by the gospel from their prison of sin.

Acts 16:31 “AND THEY SAID, “BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS, AND YOU WILL BE SAVED, YOU AND YOUR HOUSEHOLD.”

This verse is divided into four parts. With reliance upon the Lord we shall now proceed to study each of these four parts.

1. “AND THEY SAID,”

We learn from verse 29 that the word “**THEY**” is referring to Paul and Silas. Then as we continue to read this verse we learn they were saying the same thing, “**BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS.**” Paul and Silas were in agreement concerning the need for salvation and the means of salvation. What they taught was in agreement to Scripture. There was unity between them because of their belief in Jesus Christ. They were not part of some ecumenical unity that sought common ground at the exclusion of Jesus Christ as the only way to salvation.

**Acts 16:31 “AND THEY SAID, “BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS,
AND YOU WILL BE SAVED, YOU AND YOUR HOUSEHOLD.”**

2.“BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS,”

Now let us begin with the word “**BELIEVE**” and see it is written in the present tense. It applied to us when we repented of our sins and asked Jesus to be our Lord and Savior. It also applies to now, and will continue to apply to us in the future through all circumstances of life. The word “**BELIEVE**” is active as opposed to passive. It speaks of trust, dependency, and putting confidence in. The words “**BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS**” tells us Paul and Silas were saying to believe in Jesus Christ rather than anything other than Jesus Christ.

Multitudes of people believe in false religions, false hopes and carnal security. The fact Paul and Silas said, “**BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS**” tells us the jailor along with multitudes today believe everything else that does not save.

Next please consider the words “**THE LORD JESUS.**” To be genuinely saved requires everyone to make Jesus not just one’s “personal Savior” but to make Him “**THE LORD JESUS.**” The word “**LORD**” means master, boss, and ruler. The word “**LORD**” means He is in charge and not us.

**Acts 16:31 “AND THEY SAID, “BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS,
AND YOU WILL BE SAVED, YOU AND YOUR HOUSEHOLD.”**

3. “AND YOU WILL BE SAVED,”

As we approach these words we see they are a promise. They are a promise that is given when the condition is met. Receiving God’s blessings requires meeting God’s conditions. The condition is **“BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS”** and they will be saved. If people believe in anything apart from Jesus Christ as the only means of salvation they will not be saved.

People are not saved by doing religious duties.

People are not saved because they go to church.

People are not saved by trying to live a good moral life.

People are not saved because they were baptized as an infant.

People will be saved when they repent to God and put their complete trust and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Acts 16:31 “AND THEY SAID, “BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS,
AND YOU WILL BE SAVED, YOU AND YOUR HOUSEHOLD.”**

The fact Paul and Silas said, “YOU WILL BE SAVED” tells us the jailor was not yet saved.

The fact Paul and Silas said, “YOU WILL BE SAVED” tells us the jailor needed to be saved.

The fact Paul and Silas said, “YOU WILL BE SAVED” tells us the jailor would be saved!

The words “WILL BE” speak with absolute certainty. The verse did not say “and you might be saved” or “you probably will be saved” or “you will be saved if you live a good life.” As Christians we have experienced salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus has caused us to be born again. The Lord Jesus has saved us. Any doctrine that says it is presumption to believe people can be saved, is doctrinal error!

**Acts 16:31 “AND THEY SAID, “BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS,
AND YOU WILL BE SAVED, YOU AND YOUR HOUSEHOLD.”**

In 1 Peter 1:3 it says, “BLESSED BE THE GOD AND FATHER OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, WHO ACCORDING TO HIS GREAT MERCY HAS CAUSED US TO BE BORN AGAIN TO A LIVING HOPE THROUGH THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST FROM THE DEAD.”

When a person is born again they have eternal life.

That is not presumption, it is a fact.

4. “YOU AND YOUR HOUSEHOLD.”

As we look at this account of salvation coming to the jailors home, can we please ask ourselves the following question. Based on what Scripture reveals, were there any infants present in his household?

In verse 32 it says, “AND THEY SPOKE THE WORD OF THE LORD TO HIM TOGETHER WITH ALL WHO WERE IN HIS HOUSE.”

From what we read in the Bible there is no mention of infants being present when Paul and Silas spoke these words. The reason for mentioning this is because some incorrect teaching uses this Scripture as a proof text to attempt to validate infant baptism.

Acts 16:33 “AT THAT HOUR OF THE NIGHT THE JAILOR TOOK THEM AND WASHED THEIR WOUNDS;”

In verse 24 we saw the jailor throwing Paul and Silas in prison and fastening their feet in stocks.

In this verse we learn that the jailor had been converted.

In this verse the jailor is washing the wounds of Paul and Silas.

In this verse the jailor changed from being callous to concerned.

In this verse the jailor acted in a way that showed a change took place.

In this verse the words **“AT THAT HOUR OF THE NIGHT”** tells us the jailor was serving at a time when it was dark.

Acts 16:33 “AT THAT HOUR OF THE NIGHT THE JAILOR TOOK THEM AND WASHED THEIR WOUNDS;”

In dark times of our lives do we keep serving others?

In this verse is the third time in this chapter that night is mentioned.

Here are the three verses in Acts 16 that mention night.

In verse 9 the Lord led Paul.

In verse 25 the Lord was worshipped.

In verse 33 the Lord saved the jailor.

In these times when it was dark the Lord was the focus of attention.

In dark times in our lives is the Lord still the focus of our attention?

The evidence of a genuine conversion will be an attitude of serving rather than wanting to be served.

Acts 16:35 “NOW WHEN DAY CAME,”

Paul and Silas had experienced night in prison. In the night, when it was dark, they were in a prison. The Bible does not tell us if they knew how long they would be in that dark prison. But the night finished.

The dark time finished.

The day came!

Dark times seem very much like a prison.

Dark times in our lives can seem like prisons without knowing if or when we shall be released. But dark times do finish. Dark times come to pass, not to stay! The day, will come.

Acts 16:36 “...GO IN PEACE.”

These words were spoken to Paul and Silas and they apply to our lives. When we leave a place, do we **“GO IN PEACE.”**

In Colossians 3:15 it says,

“LET THE PEACE OF CHRIST RULE IN YOUR HEARTS.”

When we go into a new situation or make choices, does the Lord's peace direct us or does confusion and fear direct us? Let us ask, do we have peace about the decisions we face? If we do not have the Lord's peace in our hearts we need to stop and pray and ask Him if what we are doing is the right path. If we do not go in peace we run the risk of going to pieces!

Acts 16:40 “AND THEY WENT OUT OF THE PRISON...”

With the Holy Spirit to enable us receive light and life from this final verse of chapter 16, let us proceed to study the following two parts.

1. “AND”

In Acts 16 there are forty verses. In the NASB the word “AND” begins thirty of those verses. Let us examine this word, “AND” see how we are like it in the opinion of people, “AND” by contrast in God's opinion.

The word “AND” is a small word.

The word “AND” is a word we might overlook.

The word “AND” is a word we might not really notice.

The word “AND” is a word we might consider insignificant.

The word “AND” is a word we might not consider important.

The word “AND” is a word we might not pay much attention to.

The word “AND” is used in this chapter communicating God’s word.

The word “AND” is used all through this chapter right to the end.

Acts 16:40 “AND THEY WENT OUT OF THE PRISON...”

1. People might see you small. But God sees you very big.
2. People might easily overlook you. But God does not overlook you.
3. People might not really notice you. But God really does notice you.
4. People might see you insignificant. But God sees you very significant.
5. People might not consider you important. But God considers you very important.
6. People might not pay very much attention to you. But the Lord does pay very much attention to you.

“AND” the Lord wants to use you to communicate His word.

“AND” the Lord wants to use you through your life right to the end.

Acts 16:40 “AND THEY WENT OUT OF THE PRISON...”

2. “THEY WENT OUT OF THE PRISON”

In verse 23 Paul and Silas were thrown into prison after being physically dragged into a market place, slandered, rejected by both people, and people in authority, beaten and wrongly imprisoned. What took place earlier in this chapter was now part of what Paul and Silas experienced in the past. All these terrible things were past experiences for these men.

But here we read **“AND THEY WENT OUT OF THE PRISON.”** They did not stay in a physical prison nor did they stay in a prison of traumatic past experiences. In 1 Samuel 23:13 it says, **“THEN DAVID AND HIS MEN, ABOUT SIX HUNDRED, AROSE AND DEPARTED FROM KEILAH.”**

David and his men had helped the people of Keilah and the people were going to betray him. But they departed.

If our minds continually remember hurtful experiences from the past it is like being in a prison. In Isaiah 43:18 it says, **“FORGET THE FORMER THINGS; DO NOT DWELL ON THE PAST.”**

Acts 16:40 “AND THEY WENT OUT OF THE PRISON...”

Paul and Silas went on from there.

Paul and Silas did not stay in that prison.

Paul and Silas left that prison and Scripture does not mention them talking about it again.

Painful past experiences did not stop them from going on obeying God. Painful past experiences in life can be like a prison in our thinking.

Painful past experiences try to bind us to the past, but the Lord sets us free.

In The Three Battlegrounds, Francis Frangipane said,

“ We must ask ourselves, who is ruling our lives, God or our human experiences? To the degree that our experiences do not conform to the Word of God, they subconsciously teach us that God is not Who He says He is. ”

Acts 16:40 “..THEY ENCOURAGED THEM AND DEPARTED.”

These are the final words from chapter 16. The Lord had given Paul and Silas perseverance and encouragement and now they were encouraging the brethren even though they themselves had been through a lot of suffering.

When we are with Christians, do we encourage them before we depart?

It requires maturity and self-denial to give encouragement.

May our God encourage you so you can encourage others.

Amen.

Acts 17:3 “...CHRIST HAD TO SUFFER AND RISE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD,”

Please begin by praying. Now in this part of verse 3 we see two parts.

1. “CHRIST HAD TO SUFFER”
2. “AND RISE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD”

There is not just the suffering mentioned but what came after the suffering is also mentioned. When the gospel was preached in Acts not only was the crucifixion preached but the resurrection as well. Here are seven other references in Acts to the crucifixion and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

1. Acts 2:23-24
2. Acts 3:15
3. Acts 4:10
4. Acts 5:30
5. Acts 10:39-40
6. Acts 13:29-30
7. Acts 26:23

Acts 17:4 “AND SOME OF THEM WERE PERSUADED AND JOINED PAUL AND SILAS, ALONG WITH A GREAT MULTITUDE OF THE GOD-FEARING GREEKS AND A NUMBER OF THE LEADING WOMEN.”

It is interesting to see, the beginning of this verse mentions only “**SOME OF THEM WERE PERSUADED**” rather than conveniently neglecting to mention this and start the verse with “**A GREAT MULTITUDE.**” The word “**SOME**” tells us that just a few and not a lot were persuaded.

To mention just “**SOME**” shows great humility. The Bible is very honest. Are we very honest? Do we readily mention anything that might show our weakness or failings or do we only talk about our successes? Do we quickly talk about the failings of others but slowly mention our own? Are we slow to mention our failings but fast to mention our successes? Do we boast in our weaknesses or the weaknesses of others?

Acts 17:10 “AND THE BRETHREN IMMEDIATELY SENT PAUL AND SILAS AWAY BY NIGHT TO BEREA; AND WHEN THEY ARRIVED, THEY WENT INTO THE SYNAGOGUE OF THE JEWS.”

This verse is composed of the following two parts.

1. “AND THE BRETHREN IMMEDIATELY SENT PAUL AND SILAS AWAY BY NIGHT TO BEREA.”

We learn from these words it was at night when they left. Night does of course refer to a time when it is dark. They continued on going forward even though it was a dark time in their lives. When we are in a dark time in our lives we are to continue on going forward. This reference to night reminds us of Acts 16:25 when Paul and Silas were in prison.

That dark time was followed by them testifying about Jesus and people being saved in Acts 16:30-34.

This dark time in Acts 17:10 was followed by Paul and Silas going to the synagogue to preach that Jesus was the Christ and many coming to salvation as seen in verse 12.

After dark times they were still concerned about proclaiming the gospel.

After dark times we are still to be concerned with proclaiming the gospel.

Acts 17:10 “AND THE BRETHREN IMMEDIATELY SENT PAUL AND SILAS AWAY BY NIGHT TO BEREA; AND WHEN THEY ARRIVED, THEY WENT INTO THE SYNAGOGUE OF THE JEWS.”

2. “AND WHEN THEY ARRIVED, THEY WENT INTO THE SYNAGOGUE OF THE JEWS.”

The first part shows Paul and Silas fleeing by night.

The second part of the verse shows them in the synagogue reasoning with the Jews. Paul and Silas were fleeing from Thessalonica, but they were not fleeing from preaching Jesus was the Christ.

Notice the words, **“THEY WENT INTO THE SYNAGOGUE.”**

They **“WENT INTO”** and not went from the synagogue! They had trouble in one place but that did not stop them from proclaiming the truth in the next place. When they ran into trouble, they did not run from testifying about the Lord Jesus!

**Acts 17:11 “...THEY RECEIVED THE WORD WITH GREAT EAGERNESS,
EXAMINING THE SCRIPTURES DAILY,
TO SEE WHETHER THESE THINGS WERE SO.”**

The people described in this verse were from the city of Berea, and they serve as a fine example for each of us to follow.

We shall now look at this verse in the following six parts.

1. “THEY”

This word tells us “THEY” all had a hunger for the word of God. Very likely they were different ages yet they were all of the same mind. The Bereans did not complain at how long Paul and Silas preached. In fact the Bible does not even mention the length of their preaching. The Bereans were eager to receive the preaching of the word rather than being eager to reject the preaching of the word.

2. “RECEIVED THE WORD”

It is interesting this verse describes the Bereans receiving the word rather than receiving Paul and Silas. It seems the focus, and the attention, was on the message more than the messenger.

**Acts 17:11 “...THEY RECEIVED THE WORD WITH GREAT EAGERNESS,
EXAMINING THE SCRIPTURES DAILY,
TO SEE WHETHER THESE THINGS WERE SO.”**

3. “WITH GREAT”

It does not say “with great suspicion.” It does not even say they received the word “with eagerness.” Their attitude reflected a teachable spirit. Their attitude seemed exempt of pride or prejudice.

4. “EAGERNESS,”

The word “**EAGERNESS**” shows a hunger and a desire. After the word “**EAGERNESS**” is a comma. The Bereans showed prudence. If there had been a period that would mean the sentence was finished. It would have communicated they received all that was taught without questioning it.

Their cautious conduct is mirrored in 1 Thessalonians 5:20-21,

**“DO NOT DESPISE PROPHETIC UTTERANCES. BUT EXAMINE EVERYTHING
CAREFULLY; HOLD FAST TO THAT WHICH IS GOOD.”**

**Acts 17:11 “...THEY RECEIVED THE WORD WITH GREAT EAGERNESS,
EXAMINING THE SCRIPTURES DAILY,
TO SEE WHETHER THESE THINGS WERE SO.”**

5. “EXAMINING THE SCRIPTURES DAILY.”

This means they studied, and they considered the Scriptures daily.

This is what the Bereans did. The question is, do we do likewise?

Do you study the Scriptures daily? The reason the Bereans searched the Scriptures daily was to discern what they were hearing was correct.

This application is for us. Each of us is exposed to any number of things that often go contrary to Scripture. We need to study the Bible daily to keep our faith firm.

6. “TO SEE WHETHER THESE THINGS WERE SO.”

The Bereans were hungry for the word of God and evaluated what they heard through the Bible. The Scriptures were always the final authority. For the Bereans, and the Bible is always to be the final authority in our lives. If it does not go by the Bible, it does not go.

**Acts 17:16 “...HIS SPIRIT WAS BEING PROVOKED WITHIN HIM
AS HE WAS BEHOLDING THE CITY FULL OF IDOLS.”**

This verse from the NASB. Please pray for the Lord to speak clearly into your heart and consider the following two parts.

1. “BEING PROVOKED.”
2. “THE CITY FULL OF IDOLS.”

With the Lord to help us, please proceed with this sobering study.

**Acts 17:16 “...HIS SPIRIT WAS BEING PROVOKED WITHIN HIM
AS HE WAS BEHOLDING THE CITY FULL OF IDOLS.”**

1. “BEING PROVOKED.”

These words describe how Paul felt in his spirit when he saw the city full of idols. Let us now look at other translations to learn how they translate the words **“BEING PROVOKED.”**

The KJV says, **“WAS STIRRED.”**

The NKJV says, **“WAS PROVOKED.”**

The NIV says, **“GREATLY DISTRESSED.”**

The RSV says, **“WAS PROVOKED.”**

The American Standard says, **“WAS PROVOKED.”**

The J.B. Philips says, **“EXASPERATED BEYOND ENDURANCE.”**

The Wuest translation says, **“PROVOKED AND IRRITATED.”**

The Amplified says, **“GRIEVED AND AROUSED TO ANGER.”**

**Acts 17:16 “...HIS SPIRIT WAS BEING PROVOKED WITHIN HIM
AS HE WAS BEHOLDING THE CITY FULL OF IDOLS.”**

Now let us review what effect this city full of idols had on Paul.

Paul was “**AROUSED TO ANGER, GREATLY DISTRESSED, EXASPERATED BEYOND ENDURANCE, IRRITATED, GRIEVED AND PROVOKED.**”

From these multiple translations we get a clear picture of what Paul thought about idolatry.

Now let us consider six things that cause similar reactions in us.

1. Do we get distressed, provoked, exasperated, irritated, grieved and angry when Jesus is not exalted?
2. Do we get distressed, provoked, exasperated, irritated, grieved and angry when we are not exalted?
3. Do we get distressed, provoked, exasperated, irritated, grieved and angry when things do not go how we want?

**Acts 17:16 “...HIS SPIRIT WAS BEING PROVOKED WITHIN HIM
AS HE WAS BEHOLDING THE CITY FULL OF IDOLS.”**

4. Do we get distressed, provoked, exasperated, irritated, grieved and angry when our favorite TV program is not on?
 5. Do we get distressed, provoked, exasperated, irritated, grieved and angry when our favorite sports team does not win?
 6. Do we get distressed, provoked, exasperated, irritated, grieved and angry when we are not treated how we think we deserve? What causes these reactions within our hearts discerns much about where we are at as Christians. Now compare the life of Paul with that of Haman in Esther 3:5,
“WHEN HAMAN SAW THAT MORDECAI NEITHER BOWED DOWN NOR PAID HOMAGE TO HIM, HAMAN WAS FILLED WITH RAGE.”
- Haman was angered because he was not recognized.
Paul was angered because God was not recognized.
Which of these two men do we resemble?

Acts 17:16 “...HIS SPIRIT WAS BEING PROVOKED WITHIN HIM AS HE WAS BEHOLDING THE CITY FULL OF IDOLS.”

2. “THE CITY FULL OF IDOLS.”

The city of Athens did not just have one or two idols in it. The entire city was filled with them. Paul had come to shine the light of the gospel into this dark city. Where there is absence of light, there is the presence of darkness. Where the true God is not known, false gods are known. Now let us understand more clearly what exactly is an idol. Then we can see if our attitude is as Paul's.

The definition of the word idol is described in the following three books.

The Bullinger's Critical Lexicon says, *“Anything sacrificed to idols, offered in sacrifice unto, thing which is offered to.”*

The NASB Exhaustive Concordance says, *“An image for worship, an image worshiper.”*

The Webster Encyclopedic Dictionary says, *“Any person or thing on which we strongly set our affections; that to which we are excessively often improperly attached.”*

**Acts 17:16 “...HIS SPIRIT WAS BEING PROVOKED WITHIN HIM
AS HE WAS BEHOLDING THE CITY FULL OF IDOLS.”**

In Leviticus 26:1 it says, “DO NOT MAKE IDOLS OR SET UP AN IMAGE OR A SACRED STONE FOR YOURSELVES, AND DO NOT PLACE A CARVED STONE IN YOUR LAND TO BOW DOWN BEFORE IT.”

We might be tempted to think, well yes back then in the time of the Old Testament the people of God were tempted to make idols but surely we in a modern society are too sophisticated to make idols and worship them. Let us be very certain that such an arrogant attitude is fertile soil for idolatry to grow! In 1 Corinthians 5:10-11; 6:9; and 10:7 are clear warnings to believers against turning away from God to idolatry, whether openly, secretly, consciously or unconsciously. Paul clearly warned the Corinthian church of the dangers of idolatry.

This was not some church with liberal theology. It was a church of born again believers with the gifts of the Holy Spirit as part of their doctrine and practice.

**Acts 17:16 “...HIS SPIRIT WAS BEING PROVOKED WITHIN HIM
AS HE WAS BEHOLDING THE CITY FULL OF IDOLS.”**

This was a church founded by Paul. Let us ask ourselves, do we enjoy going to a sporting event more than going to a prayer meeting? If the answer is yes, idolatry is present. Idolatry is associated with and characterized by two things. A lack of acknowledgment of God.

A lack of thankfulness towards God.

Where there is an absence of gratitude to God is an essence of idolatry.

Where there is an absence of gratitude to God is a presence of idolatry.

An idol can be anyone.

An idol can be anything.

Idolatry is found in a heart that defends a denomination more than defending the truth of the Bible.

Please do not defend a denomination, defend the Truth.

**Acts 17:16 “...HIS SPIRIT WAS BEING PROVOKED WITHIN HIM
AS HE WAS BEHOLDING THE CITY FULL OF IDOLS.”**

Idolatry is the breaking of the first of the Ten Commandments.

In Exodus 20:3 it says, **“YOU SHALL HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME.”**

If we are serious about following Jesus then we are to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any idols in our hearts and repent. In 1 John 5:21 it says,

“DEAR CHILDREN, KEEP YOURSELVES FROM IDOLS.”

Paul was in Athens at that time, and Athens was the intellectual capital but Paul was not impressed by intellectualism or the great sports facilities in Athens. Are we impressed by such things? Here are three questions that can indicate idolatry in our hearts.

1. Do we get more excited about sports than we do about Jesus?
2. Do we recognize a movie star's voice more than the voice of God?
3. Do we spend more time in front of the TV than in front of the Bible?

**Acts 17:30 "THEREFORE HAVING OVERLOOKED THE TIMES OF IGNORANCE,
GOD IS NOW DECLARING TO MEN
THAT ALL PEOPLE EVERYWHERE SHOULD REPENT."**

We begin with the word **"THEREFORE"** and ask why it is there for?

To answer that question we need to read the context from verse 22 up to verse 30 and learn Paul was in Athens preaching to all who assembled to hear what he had to say. Now give attention to the words, **"GOD IS NOW DECLARING TO MEN THAT ALL PEOPLE EVERYWHERE SHOULD REPENT."**

Please consider the following five points.

1. "GOD IS NOW DECLARING"

First we understand that Paul is sharing with these people what "GOD" wants them to do, and he is not speaking on his own initiative.

2. "NOW"

We notice the phrase refers to now, in the present tense and not some obscure, vague time in the future.

**Acts 17:30 "THEREFORE HAVING OVERLOOKED THE TIMES OF IGNORANCE,
GOD IS NOW DECLARING TO MEN
THAT ALL PEOPLE EVERYWHERE SHOULD REPENT."**

3. "THAT ALL PEOPLE"

Notice it says "**ALL PEOPLE**" which means all people, and not just some people like criminals or bad people, but all people no matter who they are, rich or poor, young or old.

4. "EVERYWHERE"

This applies to every person no matter which country they come from.

This applies to every person no matter which culture they are part of.

This applies to every person no matter what language they speak.

5. SHOULD REPENT."

In verse 22 we learn the people were very religious.

In this verse we learn they needed to repent of their sins. This verse shows the error of Universalism. Humans through history are born in sin, and need to repent of their sins to God, and to be saved through Jesus Christ.

**Acts 18:5 “...PAUL BEGAN DEVOTING HIMSELF COMPLETELY TO THE WORD,
SOLEMNLY TESTIFYING TO THE JEWS THAT JESUS WAS THE CHRIST.”**

With the Holy Spirit to help us, please look at this verse in two parts.

1. “...PAUL BEGAN DEVOTING HIMSELF COMPLETELY TO THE WORD,”

In verse 3 Paul was busy working making tents.

In verse 4 Paul was busy working to persuade the Jews about the Lord.

In verse 5 Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia to help.

With their coming, Paul had more free time.

With more time available Paul used this time to devote himself to the word.

How do we compare with Paul?

With more free time available, how do we use it?

With more free time, what do we devote ourselves to?

With more free time, is more time spent studying the Bible?

How we use our free time tells much about our spiritual condition.

**Acts 18:5 “...PAUL BEGAN DEVOTING HIMSELF COMPLETELY TO THE WORD,
SOLEMNLY TESTIFYING TO THE JEWS THAT JESUS WAS THE CHRIST.”**

2.“SOLEMNLY TESTIFYING TO THE JEWS THAT JESUS WAS THE CHRIST.”

Paul spoke “SOLEMNLY” meaning he was serious rather than telling jokes to warm up the crowd. In the first part of the verse Paul devoted himself to studying the word. Paul not only studied the word, he kept consistent in witnessing about the Lord. Paul did both, study the word and witness of the living Word. Paul talked to people about Jesus.

How often do we talk to people about Jesus?

Acts 18: 6 “AND WHEN THEY RESISTED AND BLASPHEMED.”

With the Lord to help us, may we give heed to these words in two parts.

1. “AND WHEN”

These words continue on from what occurred in verse 5,

“SOLEMNLY TESTIFYING TO THE JEWS THAT JESUS WAS THE CHRIST.”

Paul was testifying about Jesus being the Christ and there was a reaction. The verse does not say, “and if” but **“AND WHEN.”** There was a strong reaction **“WHEN”** Paul testified that Jesus was the Christ. Very often there will be a negative reaction **“WHEN”** we testify that Jesus is the Christ.

Acts 18: 6 “AND WHEN THEY RESISTED AND BLASPHEMED.”

2. “THEY RESISTED AND BLASPHEMED.”

This is the response from the Jews towards Paul speaking about Jesus being the Christ. We realize that very often there will be resistance and with it comes the temptation to back off and not say anything, to keep the peace, to not rock the boat, not be accused of being a Bible thumper. We realize that blaspheming is a characteristic of resisting the truth. The desire to be popular and avoid persecution is a trap. Paul did not give in nor did he give up, and neither are we to give in or give up.

Acts 18:7 “HE DEPARTED FROM THERE AND WENT TO THE HOUSE OF A CERTAIN MAN NAMED TITIUS JUSTUS, A WORSHIPER OF GOD”

For this study may we study this verse in the following two parts.

1. “HE DEPARTED FROM THERE...”

In verse 6 it says the Jews **“RESISTED AND BLASPHEMED.”** It was a very negative environment, but Paul did not stay in this negative environment, **“HE DEPARTED FROM THERE.”**

When we are in negative environments, what do we do? Even if we leave them geographically, do we still remain in them in our thoughts?

This thought is reflected in what David did in 1 Samuel 23:13

“THEN DAVID AND HIS MEN, ABOUT SIX HUNDRED, AROSE AND DEPARTED FROM KEILAH.”

Acts 18:7 “HE DEPARTED FROM THERE AND WENT TO THE HOUSE OF A CERTAIN MAN NAMED TITIUS JUSTUS, A WORSHIPER OF GOD”

David obeyed the Lord and saved the city of Keilah from the Philistines, but they were going to hand him over to Saul even though he had saved them.

In Acts 16:40 it says,

“AND THEY WENT OUT OF THE PRISON AND ENTERED THE HOUSE OF LYDIA, AND WHEN THEY SAW THE BRETHREN, THEY ENCOURAGED THEM AND DEPARTED.”

The first and last part of this verse reflects the same pattern as David did.

1. **“AND THEY WENT OUT OF THE PRISON...”**
2. **“AND DEPARTED.”**

In Acts 16 Paul and Silas were persecuted and put in prison, but they departed. They did not stay living in the past.

Acts 18:7 “HE DEPARTED FROM THERE AND WENT TO THE HOUSE OF A CERTAIN MAN NAMED TITIUS JUSTUS, A WORSHIPER OF GOD”

2. A CERTAIN MAN NAMED TITIUS JUSTUS, A WORSHIPER OF GOD”

What do we know about Titius Justus? This verse merely describes him as

“A CERTAIN MAN.”

We do not know if he was wealthy.

We do not know if he had a big house.

This verse merely says Paul went to his **“HOUSE.”**

His house was not that important, but what was important was Titius Justus was **“A WORSHIPER OF GOD.”** The type of person who Paul wanted to be with was **“A WORSHIPER OF GOD.”**

What sort of person do we prefer to be with, **“A WORSHIPER OF GOD”** or person who blasphemes God?

Acts 18:9 “AND THE LORD SAID TO PAUL IN THE NIGHT BY A VISION, “DO NOT BE AFRAID ANY LONGER, BUT GO ON SPEAKING AND DO NOT BE SILENT.”

In Acts 18 are 28 verses. After verse 8 Jesus spoke. After He spoke are 18 verses. Now with the Lord's help please consider the following three parts.

1. “THE LORD SAID TO PAUL IN THE NIGHT BY A VISION,”

Notice it was just Paul, who had the vision.

In verse 7 Titius was mentioned.

In verse 8 Crispus, his household, and many Corinthians were around.

But here in the night, Paul is mentioned alone. In our lives there may be other people around but you may feel you are all alone in the night.

Be encouraged, you are not alone. This is the second recorded example of Paul receiving guidance through a vision and at night. The other time was in Acts 16:9. In the night the Lord gives light! From Acts 16:9 to Acts 18:9 Paul had gone through a lot but he was still obeying the Lord. As we go through a lot, are we still obeying the Lord?

Acts 18:9 “AND THE LORD SAID TO PAUL IN THE NIGHT BY A VISION, “DO NO BE AFRAID ANY LONGER, BUT GO ON SPEAKING AND DO NOT BE SILENT.”

2. “DO NO BE AFRAID ANY LONGER,”

Why did the Lord say these words? In the two verses before there is no indication of Paul being afraid. In fact, things seemed to be going along very well. But the reason the Lord told Paul not to be afraid was because Paul was afraid! These words indicate something happened in the past that had hurt him. There certainly were not a shortage of hurtful experiences.

Acts 18:9 “AND THE LORD SAID TO PAUL IN THE NIGHT BY A VISION, “DO NOT BE AFRAID ANY LONGER, BUT GO ON SPEAKING AND DO NOT BE SILENT.”

Here is an overview of some of those things.

Acts 13:45 Jews spoke abusively to Paul.

Acts 13:50 Jews persecuted and expelled Paul and Barnabas.

Acts 14:5 Jews and Gentiles plotted to stone Paul and Barnabas.

Acts 14:19 Paul was stoned and left for dead.

Acts 16:21 Paul and Silas were slandered.

Acts 16:22 Paul and Silas were stripped and beaten.

Acts 16:23 Paul and Silas were thrown into prison.

Acts 17:32 Paul was insulted.

Acts 17:32 Paul was mocked.

Acts 18:6 Paul was abused.

Acts 18:7 Paul departed abuse and was shown hospitality from Titius Justus.

Acts 18:8 describes people getting saved and baptized.

Acts 18:9 the Lord spoke to Paul through a vision.

Acts 18:9 “AND THE LORD SAID TO PAUL IN THE NIGHT BY A VISION, “DO NOT BE AFRAID ANY LONGER, BUT GO ON SPEAKING AND DO NOT BE SILENT.”

Difficult circumstances in our past can do damage but the Lord gives us His healing word for our souls. In Psalms 107:20 it says,

“HE SENT HIS WORD AND HEALED THEM.”

The Lord gave Paul light, not because he was walking in it but because he was not walking in it. The Lord gives us light not because we are walking in it but because we are not walking in it! When the Holy Spirit highlights verses from the Bible it is not because we are walking in them but so we will walk in them. For Paul to go from being afraid to not being afraid would mean he would change. As we read the Bible the Holy Spirit highlights verses to bring change within us. When the Holy Spirit highlights verses there will come situations to apply what He highlighted.

Acts 18:9 “AND THE LORD SAID TO PAUL IN THE NIGHT BY A VISION, “DO NOT BE AFRAID ANY LONGER, BUT GO ON SPEAKING AND DO NOT BE SILENT.”

3. “BUT GO ON SPEAKING AND DO NOT BE SILENT.”

The Lord had told Paul not to be afraid and to continue on speaking and not be silent. We can look at these words from two angles.

1. Paul was tempted to stop speaking and be quiet.
2. Paul was being commended for speaking and not being silent and to continue doing what he was doing.

In our lives, does “fear of the reactions of people” or the “fear of what people might think” cause us to stop speaking and to be silent?

Acts 18:10 “FOR I AM WITH YOU, AND NO ONE IS GOING TO ATTACK AND HARM YOU, BECAUSE I HAVE MANY PEOPLE IN THIS CITY.”

These words continue on from verse 9 and are the words Jesus spoke to Paul in a vision.

In Acts 9:3 to 6 Jesus appeared and Saul met the ascended Jesus.

In Acts 18: 9 and 10 Jesus revealed Himself to Paul.

Acts 9:3-6 Jesus was convicting and converting a rebellious man.

Acts 18:9-10 Jesus was comforting and consoling a submitted man.

Acts 9:3-6 Jesus was knocking him down.

Acts 18:9-10 Jesus was picking him up.

The Lord knew what Paul needed to hear at each particular time and circumstances in his life. The same is true for us.

Through our Christian life journey the Holy Spirit knows what situation we are in or what situation we will encounter and He can speak to us through a vision or which ever means He chooses.

Often the Holy Spirit will highlight verses from the Bible, which seem to jump off the page, and they exactly fit the situation we are facing.

Acts 18:10 “FOR I AM WITH YOU, AND NO ONE IS GOING TO ATTACK AND HARM YOU, BECAUSE I HAVE MANY PEOPLE IN THIS CITY.”

1. “FOR I AM WITH YOU,”

These words communicate comfort rather than criticism. If you have ever thought the Lord has abandoned you, remember these words of comfort. Also understand that any thoughts that come into our minds that suggest that the Lord has in some way abandoned us are a lie.

2. “AND NO ONE IS GOING TO ATTACK AND HARM YOU,”

These words of Jesus are both a promise and a comfort. As we continue reading in verse 11 we learn Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, and when he left in verse 21 there had not been anyone attacking him. The Jews in verse 12 tried to oppose Paul but it did not work. What Jesus promised came to pass. What the Lord promises us will happen.

Acts 18:11 “AND HE SETTLED THERE A YEAR AND SIX MONTHS, TEACHING THE WORD OF GOD AMONG THEM.”

For our study of this verse please look at the following two parts.

1. “TEACHING THE WORD OF GOD”

From verse 8 we learned that many Corinthians heard the gospel and were saved. They would have been very young Christians. Like newborn babies they needed feeding. Now in this verse we see how Paul spent his time with these new believers.

There is no mention of him going to parties with them.

There is no mention of him going to sports events with them.

There is no mention of him going to social activities with them.

What the verse does say is Paul was, **“TEACHING THE WORD OF GOD.”**

Was Paul against parties?

Was Paul against sports events?

Was Paul against social activities?

Was Paul against having fun?

We do not know, but such things certainly were not his priority.

We do know his priority was helping them grow as Christians.

We do know his priority was feeding them so they could grow.

**Acts 18:11 “AND HE SETTLED THERE A YEAR AND SIX MONTHS,
TEACHING THE WORD OF GOD AMONG THEM.”**

2. “AMONG THEM.”

Paul was “AMONG THEM” to help them grow spiritually. Paul wanted to be with new believers. Do we want to be with new believers?

To be “AMONG THEM” shows Paul was not aloof.

To be “AMONG THEM” shows Paul was on their level.

To be “AMONG THEM” shows Paul was close to them.

To be “AMONG THEM” shows Paul was not above them.

To be “AMONG THEM” shows Paul was not separating himself.

**Acts 18:18 “IN CENCHREA HE HAD HIS HAIR CUT,
FOR HE WAS KEEPING A VOW.”**

In this verse we learn Paul had his hair cut because of a promise he had made. We do not know when Paul made the vow but we do know why he made the vow. We also know he kept his vow. When we make a vow, or promise, we are to do it. There is not an expiry date on keeping our promises. Keeping promises is very important to God. In Psalms 15 it describes those who can dwell on His holy hill. One requirement is in Psalm 15: 4,
“...WHO SWEARS TO HIS OWN HURT AND DOES NOT CHANGE.”

Acts 18:23 “...STRENGTHENING ALL THE DISCIPLES.”

Here it says “**ALL**” the disciples and not just “some” of the disciples.

There was no partiality. All the disciples, and not just certain favorite ones were helped. Paul was willing to help all the disciples, not only certain ones he might feel more compatible with, but also those he did not know too well.

Concerning the disciples, some would be old, some would be young, some would be rich, some poor, some well educated, some others not educated and some would have better jobs than others.

Yet here it says Paul was, “**...STRENGTHENING ALL THE DISCIPLES.**”

There was not any favoritism in Paul.

There is not to be any favoritism in us.

Acts 18:24 “MEANWHILE A JEW NAMED APOLLOS, A NATIVE OF ALEXANDRIA, CAME TO EPHESUS. HE WAS A LEARNED MAN, WITH A THOROUGH KNOWLEDGE OF THE SCRIPTURES.”

What do we learn about Apollos from this verse? The verse is composed of two sentences. The first sentence is quite brief, telling us he was a Jew, and he was a native of Alexandria.

We are not told if he was rich.

We are not told what his career was.

We are not told if he drove an expensive chariot.

We are not told if he wore the latest fashions in clothes.

We are not told if he was from an upper class part of Alexandria.

We are not told if he had graduated from a famous University in Alexandria.

Acts 18:24 “MEANWHILE A JEW NAMED APOLLOS, A NATIVE OF ALEXANDRIA, CAME TO EPHESUS. HE WAS A LEARNED MAN, WITH A THOROUGH KNOWLEDGE OF THE SCRIPTURES.”

None of the things that people often put importance on is mentioned.

But it is the second sentence that is more emphasized.

The second sentence emphasizes,

“HE WAS A LEARNED MAN, WITH A THOROUGH KNOWLEDGE OF THE SCRIPTURES.”

Scripture emphasizes he knew the Scriptures. This is what Scripture emphasizes about this man. What do we have a thorough knowledge of?

In our lives may our testimony be the same as Apollos.

Acts 19:1 “...AND FINDING SOME DISCIPLES.”

Here Scripture plainly refers to these people as disciples. They were people who had heard and responded to the preaching of John the Baptist. Paul had come to Ephesus, and it is very possible he found some disciples because he was looking for disciples. Paul traveled to another city and looked for disciples. When we travel, do we look for other disciples?

**Acts 19:2 “AND HE SAID TO THEM,
“DID YOU RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT WHEN YOU BELIEVED?”**

For our look at this verse please consider the following two parts.

1. “AND HE SAID TO THEM, DID YOU RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT”

Paul is speaking with a certain urgency.

Paul is emphasizing that receiving the Holy Spirit is very important.

Paul did not try to avoid the subject of the Holy Spirit for fear of being accused of being too extreme or concerned these people would have a different denominational or doctrinal beliefs.

Dear ones, have you received the Holy Spirit since you believed?

If you are not sure you have, then verse 6 gives guidance as to how to receive the Holy Spirit and how to know you have received the Holy Spirit.

2. “WHEN YOU BELIEVED?”

Paul did not say, “if you believed.”

Paul did not dispute that these people believed.

Paul did not dispute that these people were saved.

Acts 19:3 “AND HE SAID TO THEM, “INTO WHAT THEN WERE YOU BAPTIZED?” SO THEY SAID, “INTO JOHN’S BAPTISM.”

From verse 7 we learn there were twelve men. Here Paul probes a little deeper asking about these twelve men’s conversion. Their response is immediate and clear, **“INTO JOHN’S BAPTISM.”** They did not know about the Holy Spirit but they knew how they had become disciples.

Notice the words **“THEY SAID,”** means all of them spoke and they all had the same answer.

They were not evasive, confused, or vague with their answer.

They knew they were disciples and how they became disciples.

When a person cannot give a clear answer as to how they became a disciple, or their answer is evasive, confused, or vague then their conversion is very suspect. In the New International Commentary on the New Testament, F.F. Bruce said,

“Paul then enquired about th eir baptism, and learned it was the pre - Pentecostal baptism as proclaimed and administered by John the Baptist.”

**Acts 19:5 “AND WHEN THEY HEARD THIS,
THEY WERE BAPTISED IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS.”**

For our study of this verse please read its context from verse 1.

This will help us see what is happening here.

In verse 1 Paul met some disciples.

In verse 2 Paul asked if they had received the Holy Spirit.

In verse 3 Paul heard them explain only experiencing John's baptism.

In verse 4 Paul said John preached repentance from sin and told people to believe in Jesus.

1. “AND WHEN THEY HEARD THIS,”

These disciples listened to Paul. There is no mention of them doubting what Paul said. When it comes to doubting, doubt the doubts about the truth! They were very receptive to the truth that they were hearing.

Are we as receptive to truth when we hear it?

**Acts 19:5 “AND WHEN THEY HEARD THIS,
THEY WERE BAPTISED IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS.”**

2.“THEY WERE BAPTISED IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS.”

The twelve men were baptized in water in the name of the Lord Jesus. These people had already repented from sins and now Jesus was their Lord. We do not know how much time had passed since they had become disciples. They had repented from their sins up and Jesus was now Lord. It is best that Jesus is Lord from the very beginning of when we repent from our sins, rather than time going by then realize He is not just our Savior but He is to be Lord also. As we consider these words we sense there was no hesitation to wanting to get baptized in water. In fact, there is a sense they wanted to do it. These people were born-again believers. They experienced what Mark 16:16 says, **“HE WHO HAS BELIEVED AND HAS BEEN BAPTISED SHALL BE SAVED.”**

Now they were baptized in water. Water baptism follows repentance and believing. A person gets baptized because they are saved, not to get saved.

**Acts 19:6 “AND WHEN PAUL HAD LAID HIS HANDS UPON THEM,
THE HOLY SPIRIT CAME UPON THEM,
AND THEY BEGAN SPEAKING WITH TONGUES AND PROPHESYING.”**

What we learn from verses 1 to 5 is Paul knew these men were real disciples, but he was not content to leave it at that. He did not say, “Oh good, you are disciples, you do not need to be baptized in the Holy Spirit.” Neither did Paul say, “Ok fine, you are believers, we will not talk about the baptism of the Holy Spirit because it is too controversial.”

The men were disciples, now the next step was the baptism in the Holy Spirit. What we see happening in verse 6 happened after the men had believed in Jesus and had been baptized in water. What Paul did here is the same as what Peter and John did in Acts 8:17.

In Acts 19: 6 is a separate act that followed verses 4 and 5. We do not know with certainty the amount of time that had gone by between these verses. It may have been a short time or long time.

**Acts 19:6 “AND WHEN PAUL HAD LAID HIS HANDS UPON THEM,
THE HOLY SPIRIT CAME UPON THEM,
AND THEY BEGAN SPEAKING WITH TONGUES AND PROPHESYING.”**

Let us understand that these twelve men were already disciples and now they were baptized in the Holy Spirit. In Acts 8:16-17 and Acts 9:17 new believers did not have to wait weeks or years before receiving the Holy Spirit. If you think you have to wait until you are more spiritually mature then know such thinking is not supported by Scripture.

Now let us focus on the words, “...AND THEY BEGAN SPEAKING IN TONGUES AND PROPHESYING.” These words teach us that there was evidence they were baptized in the Holy Spirit. In the book Water Baptism, David Pawson said, *“The truth is that in the New Testament Spirit-baptism was both audible and visible. Something happened, so that both participants and spectators knew whether it had happened and when it had happened.”*

In conclusion, “THEY BEGAN SPEAKING IN TONGUES AND PROPHESYING” tells us they and Christians today who are baptised in the Holy Spirit begin speaking in tongues and this gift is ongoing in a Christian's life.

Acts 19:9 “BUT WHEN SOME WERE BECOMING HARDENED AND DISOBEDIENT, SPEAKING EVIL OF THE WAY BEFORE THE MULTITUDE...”

From this verse we see a process taking place within people who rebel against the truth. This process is outlined in the following stages

1. “BECOMING”
2. “HARDENED”
3. “AND DISOBEDIENT,”
4. “SPEAKING EVIL OF THE WAY”
5. “BEFORE THE MULTITUDE.”

These five stages are found in the hearts of those who are rebellious towards God. With the Lord to help us, let us look at these five points.

Acts 19:9 “BUT WHEN SOME WERE BECOMING HARDENED AND DISOBEDIENT, SPEAKING EVIL OF THE WAY BEFORE THE MULTITUDE...”

1. “BECOMING”

The word “**BECOMING**” shows a process. In verse 8, we learn Paul was preaching for three months. So this word “**BECOMING**” was gradual, over a period of months rather than something that just suddenly happened.

We need to heed Proverbs 4:23,

“WATCH OVER YOUR HEART WITH ALL DILIGENCE, FOR FROM IT FLOW THE ISSUES OF LIFE.”

To protect our lives from “**BECOMING**” hard through hurtful circumstances of life we need to be continually watchful over our hearts and walk in continual trust and obedience to the word of God.

Acts 19:9 “BUT WHEN SOME WERE BECOMING HARDENED AND DISOBEDIENT, SPEAKING EVIL OF THE WAY BEFORE THE MULTITUDE...”

2. “HARDENED”

It is amazing to realize that these people who became “**HARDENED**” were religious people who had been exposed to some measure the preaching of Paul for three months. Can you imagine, Paul preaching about the kingdom of God for three months and some people actually hardening their hearts against the preaching of arguably the greatest preacher in church history. The “**HARDENED**” areas in our hearts are discerned when we see attitudes that do not agree with what the Scriptures say. Any attitude in our hearts that does not agree with the Bible needs repentance.

Acts 19:9 “BUT WHEN SOME WERE BECOMING HARDENED AND DISOBEDIENT, SPEAKING EVIL OF THE WAY BEFORE THE MULTITUDE...”

3. “AND DISOBEDIENT,”

A clear characteristic of a heart that is becoming hardened towards God is willful disobedience to God’s Word. This action demonstrates a willful choice to rebel against what is known to be the right thing to do and choosing not to obey. In our lives we may have read the Bible for years.

But as time goes by, if we are not very sober and vigilant, we can become too familiar with the Bible and get tempted to disobey in seemingly small choices. God’s will as revealed in the Bible and we need to tremble at His Word.

Acts 19:9 “BUT WHEN SOME WERE BECOMING HARDENED AND DISOBEDIENT, SPEAKING EVIL OF THE WAY BEFORE THE MULTITUDE...”

4. “SPEAKING EVIL OF THE WAY”

When an individual is disobedient it will be reflected in the type of speech the individual has. This shows there is no fear of God and “**SPEAKING EVIL OF THE WAY**” is not met with any conviction of sin. When a person has unbelief towards God’s Word, His promises, and His character, whatever speech is said invariably will be evil.

5. “BEFORE THE MULTITUDE.”

People who are willfully rebelling against God, will not keep their sin to themselves. They will want to infect as many other people as possible with their rebellious attitudes.

Acts 19:15 “AND THE EVIL SPIRIT ANSWERED AND SAID TO THEM, “I RECOGNIZE JESUS, AND I KNOW ABOUT PAUL, BUT WHO ARE YOU?”

In Acts 19 is an abundant wealth of insight concerning the supernatural. Paul had a head-on collision with demonic powers in Ephesus. Please focus on the words **“I RECOGNIZE JESUS”** in the following seven parts.

1. “I RECOGNIZE JESUS”

The evil spirit was speaking through the vocal cords of a man. Evil spirits still do the same today. In this verse the evil spirit spoke a language the listeners knew. On one occasion the Lord had me involved in casting out demons from a person from France. I spoke to the spirit in English and the spirit understood even though the person did not. I have seen on various occasions evil spirits speak through people.

According to the context, of verses 14 and 16 evil spirits are not intimidated by physical strength. They are stronger than strong men, but they cannot stand against the name of Jesus! The first encounter I had that brought this area of Scripture alive was in an Evangelical church in Torremolinos, Spain. An evil spirit in a small teenage girl, threw a tall, muscular man several feet across the front of the church during a deliverance session.

**Acts 19:15 “AND THE EVIL SPIRIT ANSWERED AND SAID TO THEM,
“I RECOGNIZE JESUS, AND I KNOW ABOUT PAUL, BUT WHO ARE YOU?”**

2. “I RECOGNIZE JESUS”

If we listen carefully to this voice we could almost hear the word “I” spoken much louder the two times it is spoken. We can hear it louder than the rest of the sentence. We can hear boasting in the tone of voice. Boasting is a characteristic of self-exaltation.

3. “I RECOGNIZE JESUS”

We notice the word “I” comes before the word “JESUS.” When “I” come before “JESUS” then pride is present. If “I” come before “JESUS” in my life then I need to repent of pride.

4. “I RECOGNIZE JESUS”

These words teach us that evil spirits can recognize the presence, authority, and power of Jesus Christ in a believer. An evil spirit can see Jesus in a person who is walking right before God. It does not matter if the Christian is wearing an expensive suit or dirty old blue jeans. Those things are outward but spirits see inward.

**Acts 19:15 “AND THE EVIL SPIRIT ANSWERED AND SAID TO THEM,
“I RECOGNIZE JESUS, AND I KNOW ABOUT PAUL, BUT WHO ARE YOU?”**

5. “I RECOGNIZE JESUS”

These words were spoken in the present tense. Evil spirits in the first century recognized Jesus and now in the twenty-first century they still recognize Jesus! There is no expiry date on these words. Evil spirits existed in Ephesus and they exist today, they did not become extinct! Paul had to deal with them and the occult in chapter 19 and we face these adversaries in advancing the gospel.

6. “I RECOGNIZE JESUS”

We learn evil spirits recognize only one person who has power over them. They did not say “I recognize Buddha,” or “I recognize Allah,” or “I recognize the virgin Mary,” nor did the evil spirit say “I recognize God.” The word “God” can mean different things than the God of the Holy Bible.

**Acts 19:15 “AND THE EVIL SPIRIT ANSWERED AND SAID TO THEM,
“I RECOGNIZE JESUS, AND I KNOW ABOUT PAUL, BUT WHO ARE YOU?”**

7. “I RECOGNIZE JESUS”

Let us ask ourselves is Jesus recognized in us? Do people see something different about us? Is His life being expressed through us?

Jesus said something quite amazing in Matthew 22:20,

“WHOSE LIKENESS AND INSCRIPTION IS THIS?”

Jesus was describing the coin for the poll tax when He said these words.
Whose likeness is inscribed on our hearts?

Is the likeness of Jesus in our hearts?

Acts 19:29 “AND THE CITY WAS FILLED WITH THE CONFUSION...”

As we read from verse 23 to this verse we learn that the people of Ephesus were steeped in idolatry. The people worshiped the goddess Artemis.

The people worshiped an idol and here we see confusion was prevalent. Where idolatry is prevalent, so is confusion. Still considering this word “CONFUSION” we see it is mentioned in Acts 16:20,

“THESE FELLOWS ARE JEWS AND THEY ARE THROWING OUR CITY INTO GREAT CONFUSION.”

In the context to this verse Paul cast out an evil spirit from a girl in verse 18. So we see in Acts where “CONFUSION” is mentioned, both idolatry and evil spirits are found in the context. In environments where “CONFUSION” is found, so is idolatry and evil spirits. In James 3:16 it says,

“FOR WHERE ENVYING AND STRIFE IS, THERE IS CONFUSION AND EVERY EVIL WORK.”

Acts 19:36 “...YOU OUGHT TO BE QUIET AND NOT DO ANYTHING RASH.”

As we study this verse we see it is composed of two opposite parts.

1. The first is telling us what we should be doing, “...YOU OUGHT TO BE QUIET.” These words are a command. Although it was addressed to the original audience we can apply it personally. The words “BE QUIET” are found in the context of verse 29 where there was considerable confusion and verse 34 the people were shouting for hours. For us to “BE QUIET” in the midst of such an unstable situation would be quite a testimony to God’s grace in our hearts.

Acts 19:36 “...YOU OUGHT TO BE QUIET AND NOT DO ANYTHING RASH.”

2. The second part is telling us what we should not be doing, **“AND NOT DO ANYTHING RASH.”** The J. B. Phillips New Testament translates this part of the verse in a marvelous way, **“DO NOTHING WHICH YOU MIGHT AFTERWARDS REGRET.”** The word **“RASH”** means to be hasty or impulsive. It is a behavior contrary to the leading of the Holy Spirit. If we are **“RASH”** in what we do we will afterwards regret what we did! We show wisdom by considering the consequences of our actions and words.

In Ecclesiastes 5:2 it says,

“BE NOT RASH WITH YOUR MOUTH, AND LET NOT YOUR HEART BE HASTY TO UTTER A WORD BEFORE GOD.”

Acts 20:18 “...I LIVED AMONG YOU ALL THE TIME.”

For our study of this part of verse 18 please consider three points.

1. “I LIVED”

Paul did not say, “I sometimes visited you.” Paul lived with these people. They would see him at various times of the day. They would see him not just on a Sunday morning all dressed up. They would see how he lived. His life would preach and not just his mouth.

2. “AMONG YOU”

This word shows Paul was not a person who separated himself from people. Those believers Paul was among, were much younger in their faith than Paul. More than likely, some of their conversation would not be as spiritually mature as his. Yet he was among them, helping them to grow in their faith. In verse 20 it says,

“...TEACHING YOU PUBLICLY AND FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE.”

Acts 20:18 “...I LIVED AMONG YOU ALL THE TIME.”

Paul not only saw the people at church but he was in all their homes.

Paul followed the example of Jesus as is seen in Luke 22:27,

“I AM AMONG YOU AS THE ONE WHO SERVES.”

In Acts 18:11 Paul lived **“AMONG THEM”** referring to being with the new believers in Corinth.

Now he was in Ephesus, a different city and later on in life. But he still continued the same pattern of life. His behavior remained the same.

In our lives, we may have moved to a different city, and time has passed, but are we continuing on the same pattern of life as when we were younger Christians? Are we remaining steadfast in our faith?

3. “ALL THE TIME.”

These words tell us Paul did not just see these Christians on Sunday morning. He invested a lot of time into their lives. Paul gave these people his precious possession of time.

Acts 20:19 “SERVING THE LORD WITH ALL HUMILITY AND WITH TEARS AND WITH TRIALS WHICH CAME UPON ME THROUGH THE PLOTS OF THE JEWS.”

With the Lord to help us, we shall examine this verse in these seven parts.

1. “SERVING”

It is written in the present continuous tense. The word applied to Paul in his present tense and it applies to us in ours. We might have served in the past, but are we serving today? In Colossians 3:24 it says,

“IT IS THE LORD CHRIST WHOM YOU SERVE.”

2. “THE LORD”

Since it is the Lord we are serving, the response people give us, whether compliments or criticism, that is not what we are to focus on. We serve **“THE LORD”** rather than people. We are to make it our goal to please Him and not people. In Galatians 1:10 it says,

“IF I WERE STILL TRYING TO PLEASE MEN, I WOULD NOT BE A BOND-SERVANT OF CHRIST.”

Acts 20:19 “SERVING THE LORD WITH ALL HUMILITY AND WITH TEARS AND WITH TRIALS WHICH CAME UPON ME THROUGH THE PLOTS OF THE JEWS.”

3. “SERVING THE LORD”

From these words we realize the verse does not say “Preaching the gospel with all humility.” Paul was preaching the gospel, but he says he was “**SERVING THE LORD.**” Whatever career, or occupation we have, we are to be “**SERVING THE LORD.**” In Colossians 3:23 it says, “**WHATEVER YOU DO, DO YOUR WORK HEARTILY, AS FOR THE LORD RATHER THAN FOR MEN.**” Paul described teaching the church and helping them as “**SERVING THE LORD.**” His focus was on the Lord rather than people.

When we have the attitude of “**SERVING THE LORD**” it will not matter if we are commended or criticized.

The approval is from the Lord rather than people. In Matthew 25: 21 and 23 Jesus said, “**WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SLAVE.**”

Let us remember the Christians who Paul was ministering to were much younger in the faith than he was, yet he was serving them.

How do we feel about serving someone younger than ourselves?

Acts 20:19 “SERVING THE LORD WITH ALL HUMILITY AND WITH TEARS AND WITH TRIALS WHICH CAME UPON ME THROUGH THE PLOTS OF THE JEWS.”

4. “WITH ALL HUMILITY”

Let us ponder these words. The words do not say, “with some humility” but **“WITH ALL HUMILITY.”** Someone once said, “If you think you are humble, you are not.” Humility is expressed through self denial.

5. “AND WITH TEARS”

From these words we learn the apostle Paul cried. God used Paul mightily, a man who was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write much of the New Testament, cried. Paul shed tears not for doing wrong but for doing right. Do we shed tears? Why do we shed tears? Is it for doing wrong or for doing right?

Acts 20:19 “SERVING THE LORD WITH ALL HUMILITY AND WITH TEARS AND WITH TRIALS WHICH CAME UPON ME THROUGH THE PLOTS OF THE JEWS.”

6. “AND WITH TRIALS”

Have you experienced tears and trials? When was the last time we experienced these things for the sake of the gospel? As we make determined efforts to follow the Lord, trials do come through people.

What exactly is a trial? A trial is something that tries our faith..

Trials are designed to do the following.

To glorify God, 1 Peter 4:12-16.

To test our faith, Genesis 22:1-18.

To help discipline us, Isaiah 48:10.

To increase our patience, James 1:3-4, 12.

To make our life abundant, Psalm 66:10-12.

To purify our faith, Malachi 3:3-4; 1 Peter 1:6-9.

Acts 20:19 “SERVING THE LORD WITH ALL HUMILITY AND WITH TEARS AND WITH TRIALS WHICH CAME UPON ME THROUGH THE PLOTS OF THE JEWS.”

7. “WHICH CAME UPON ME THROUGH THE PLOTS OF THE JEWS.”

Paul endured pain and suffering from people.

Yet we do not detect any hint of anger or bitterness towards those who caused him so much pain.

Is anger or bitterness detected in our words when we mention someone who has hurt us?

Acts 20:20 “YOU KNOW I HAVE NEVER SHRANK FROM TELLING YOU ANYTHING THAT WAS FOR YOUR GOOD.”

Sometimes it is a real temptation to shrink from telling others what is for their own good. Sometimes we are afraid of their response. But Paul was concerned for them rather than for himself. For Paul to do this required self-denial. For us to follow his example requires us to deny self. To speak words for the benefit of others requires humility. Pride only thinks of ones self. Pride is characterized by selfishness. This verse in the NIV is translated, **“I HAVE NOT HESITATED TO PREACH ANYTHING THAT WOULD BE HELPFUL TO YOU.”** Paul did not hesitate to speak in a way that would help others. Here are five reasons why we fail to speak for the good of others.

1. Lack of a fear of God.
2. Fear of man, or fear of what people might think.
3. Not thinking before speaking.
4. Unwillingness to practice self-denial.
5. Self-centeredness in the habit patterns of our speech.

In the Good News Bible, Ecclesiastes says, **“THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK.”**

Acts 20:21 “I HAVE DECLARED TO BOTH JEWS AND GREEKS THAT THEY MUST TURN TO GOD IN REPENTANCE & HAVE FAITH IN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.”

With the Lord's help we will look at this verse in the following two parts.

1. “I HAVE DECLARED TO BOTH JEWS AND GREEKS”

As we consider these words we see they refer to Paul speaking to Jews and Greeks right up to the present time. It was not just something he did when he was younger. He was still witnessing right up until the time these words were recorded. Are we witnessing for Jesus Christ right up until now?

Or is it something we did in the past and it did not last?

Paul declared to both groups of people, Jews and Greeks, neither group was better than the other. From these words we see Paul told both Jews and Greeks they needed to repent. He did not show favoritism.

In James 2:9 it warns,

“BUT IF YOU SHOW PARTIALITY, YOU ARE COMMITTING SIN.”

Paul had been hurt on various occasions by some of the Jews but he still witnessed about Jesus as the Christ to the Jews.

Acts 20:21 “I HAVE DECLARED TO BOTH JEWS AND GREEKS THAT THEY MUST TURN TO GOD IN REPENTANCE & HAVE FAITH IN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.”

2. “TURN TO GOD IN REPENTANCE.”

“HAVE FAITH IN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.”

We see in this verse the two requirements for salvation.

Repentance precedes faith in Jesus Christ. This verse provides the correct model to follow for salvation.

This pattern is also expressed in the following.

Matthew 4:17, **“REPENT.”**

Matthew 4:19, **“FOLLOW.”**

A person cannot follow Jesus until they have first repented of their sins.

Starting to attend church is not a substitute to repentance. We notice in verse 21 it says **“LORD JESUS CHRIST.”** It does not say, “personal savior Jesus Christ.”

For a genuine conversion a person has to surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

**Acts 20:22 "...I AM ON MY WAY TO JERUSALEM,
NOT KNOWING WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ME THERE."**

With the Lord to help us, please look at this verse in the following four points and see if any of them point to parts of your heart in need of change.

1. "I AM ON MY WAY"

Paul was on the way to Jerusalem. He was not in the way! Are we on the way or in the way? We either stay on the way or we stray! When we stray we betray the way! All of these five words have one syllable.

There is another saying with five words with all the words having one syllable. The saying is "I did it my way."

When we do it our own way we stray from the way.

2. "TO JERUSALEM,"

Here Paul is talking about where he is going in the future. Paul was restless to accomplish in the future rather than just rest on accomplishments in the past. His focus was forward. For us, where is our focus? He was not talking about the past but about the future. What do we talk about?

**Acts 20:22 “...I AM ON MY WAY TO JERUSALEM,
NOT KNOWING WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ME THERE.”**

3. “NOT KNOWING”

The elders of Ephesus loved and respected Paul, yet he was leaving. He was willing to leave a place where people loved him, to go to where some people hated him! Would we be willing to do as Paul did? The actions of Paul reflected what Jesus said in Mark 1:38, **“LET US GO SOMEWHERE ELSE TO THE TOWNS NEARBY, IN ORDER THAT I MAY PREACH THERE ALSO; FOR THAT IS WHAT I CAME OUT FOR.”**

4. “WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO ME THERE.”

These words are about the future. Paul was looking forward, not backward. His mind was on the future, not on the past. Do we spend more time thinking about the past than we do about the future? Fear of what would happen in the future did not stop Paul from going forward.

An unsaved person thinks about the past but tries not to think about the future. An unsaved person is like a person rowing a boat, going forward but constantly looking back.

Acts 20:23 “EXCEPT THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT SOLEMNLY TESTIFIES TO ME IN EVERY CITY, SAYING THAT BONDS AND AFFLICTIONS AWAIT ME.”

In this verse Paul is saying what awaits him in the future. Paul knew what would happen. These words were true for Paul and they are true for us. Here are three ways the Holy Spirit warns us.

1. He warns us through the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit knew what situations Paul would face before they happened. In our lives the Holy Spirit knows what situations we will face and He will often highlight a particular verse to warn us of what is coming.

In Psalms 119:105 it says, **“THY WORD IS A LAMP TO MY FEET, AND LIGHT TO MY PATH.”** Here is an example to illustrate this verse.

In John 5:41 it says, **“I DO NOT RECEIVE GLORY FROM MEN.”**

Then shortly after, these words are tested in John 6:15, **“JESUS, KNOWING THAT THEY INTENDED TO COME AND MAKE HIM KING BY FORCE, WITHDREW AGAIN INTO THE HILLS BY HIMSELF.”**

Acts 20:23 “EXCEPT THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT SOLEMNLY TESTIFIES TO ME IN EVERY CITY, SAYING THAT BONDS AND AFFLICTIONS AWAIT ME.”

The Holy Spirit will warn us through a verse like John 5:41 because a John 6:15 situation is just down the road.

When the Holy Spirit emphasizes a verse, it is to show what is ahead and how we are to respond to the situation.

This reminds us of the words of Jesus in Luke 18:32-33,

“FOR HE WILL BE DELIVERED TO THE GENTILES, AND WILL BE MOCKED AND MISTREATED AND SPIT UPON, AND AFTER THEY HAVE SCOURGED HIM, THEY WILL KILL HIM; AND THE THIRD DAY HE WILL RISE AGAIN.”

How many of us would like to read these words in the first person?

Our flesh tries to avoid what Paul is saying he would face. Are we willing to be a people who are sold out for the gospel no matter what the afflictions are that we will face?

Acts 20:23 “EXCEPT THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT SOLEMNLY TESTIFIES TO ME IN EVERY CITY, SAYING THAT BONDS AND AFFLICTIONS AWAIT ME.”

2. A second way the Lord warns us is through the witness of the Holy Spirit.

We find in Romans 8:16 it says,

“THE SPIRIT HIMSELF BEARS WITNESS WITH OUR SPIRIT THAT WE ARE CHILDREN OF GOD.”

Then in Hebrews 10:15 it says,

“AND THE HOLY SPIRIT ALSO BEARS WITNESS TO US.”

The Holy Spirit warns us through checks in our spirit. These checks are not in the mind, but rather deep inside. An uneasiness inside characterizes how the Holy Spirit warns us about a situation or a person. The question is, do we choose to submit to His promptings or not? When we feel in an uneasy way, the flesh wants to take the easy way!

Acts 20:23 “EXCEPT THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT SOLEMNLY TESTIFIES TO ME IN EVERY CITY, SAYING THAT BONDS AND AFFLICTIONS AWAIT ME.”

3. A third way the Holy Spirit warns us is by His peace, or lack of it.

In Colossians 1:15 it says,

“LET THE PEACE OF CHRIST RULE IN YOUR HEARTS.”

When there is not any peace to do something, we need to be mindful that very likely the Holy Spirit is trying to warn us not to do what we are intending to do.

Acts 20:24 “BUT NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME; NOR DO I COUNT MY LIFE DEAR TO MYSELF, SO THAT I MAY FINISH MY RACE WITH JOY, AND THE MINISTRY WHICH I RECEIVED FROM THE LORD JESUS, TO TESTIFY TO THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.”

This is a rather long verse packed with incredible light. With reliance upon the Holy Spirit to reveal light from it, we can divide it into seven points.

1. The Person. **“BUT NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME;”**
2. The Passion. **“NOR DO I COUNT MY LIFE DEAR TO MYSELF,”**
3. The Position. **“SO THAT I MAY FINISH”**
4. The Profession. **“MY RACE”**
5. The Power. **“WITH JOY,”**
6. The Performance. **“AND THE MINISTRY WHICH I RECEIVED FROM THE LORD JESUS,”**
7. The Purpose. **“TO TESTIFY TO THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.”**

Acts 20:24 “BUT NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME; NOR DO I COUNT MY LIFE DEAR TO MYSELF, SO THAT I MAY FINISH MY RACE WITH JOY, AND THE MINISTRY WHICH I RECEIVED FROM THE LORD JESUS, TO TESTIFY TO THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.”

We shall now begin our study in the following seven points. As we study, please pray to receive light from what the Holy Spirit is giving us.

1. The Person. “BUT NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME;”

When we read these words we might think, which things is Paul describing that do not move him? In verse 23 of the Amplified Bible,, NASB, NIV, KJV, and the NKJV Paul describes imprisonment, suffering, chains, tribulations, afflictions and hardships awaited him. If we were to think these same things awaited us in the future, would we be able to say, **“BUT NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME.”** Paul was suffering far beyond what most of us could imagine, and yet as we read his words in this verse there is not one word of complaining. There was no anger towards those who caused him so much suffering. There is no self-pity, only self-sacrifice and devotion to Jesus Christ!

Acts 20:24 “BUT NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME; NOR DO I COUNT MY LIFE DEAR TO MYSELF, SO THAT I MAY FINISH MY RACE WITH JOY, AND THE MINISTRY WHICH I RECEIVED FROM THE LORD JESUS, TO TESTIFY TO THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.”

Now we look ahead in Paul’s life to Philippians 1:21,

“FOR TO ME, TO LIVE IS CHRIST, AND TO DIE IS GAIN.”

Many years passed between Acts 20:24 and Philippians 1:21, but there was still the same self-sacrifice and consecration to the Lord Jesus Christ.

May we compare our lives to Paul. Do we harbor anger in our hearts towards people that have caused us suffering? Has our devotion to Jesus Christ remained as it was several years ago? Do we only do devotions or are we devoted? We might talk about being sold out for Jesus today, but will we be five, ten, or twenty years from now?

Paul remained steadfast in the Lord, will we?

Acts 20:24 “BUT NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME; NOR DO I COUNT MY LIFE DEAR TO MYSELF, SO THAT I MAY FINISH MY RACE WITH JOY, AND THE MINISTRY WHICH I RECEIVED FROM THE LORD JESUS, TO TESTIFY TO THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.”

Again consider the words “BUT NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME.”

Was Paul a young Christian when he said these words?

Was Paul plenty in theory but empty in experience?

Was Paul making a self-confident boast?

The answer to these three questions is no!

Paul was a mature Christian when he said these words.

Paul was plenty in experience and empty in theory.

Paul was not boasting but simply stating a fact.

Acts 20:24 “BUT NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME; NOR DO I COUNT MY LIFE DEAR TO MYSELF, SO THAT I MAY FINISH MY RACE WITH JOY, AND THE MINISTRY WHICH I RECEIVED FROM THE LORD JESUS, TO TESTIFY TO THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.”

2. The Passion. “NOR DO I COUNT MY LIFE DEAR TO MYSELF,”

From these words we can hear and feel Paul's passion.

Paul did not consider his life of any value. What had tremendous value was testifying of the gospel of God's grace. The gospel was so very important. Paul repeats his conviction in verse 25,

“I WENT ABOUT PREACHING THE KINGDOM.”

Paul had experienced God's grace, then he preached about God's grace. All that Paul went through, went through Paul. It is really something to consider our life worth nothing and doing God's will is worth everything.

Acts 20:24 “BUT NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME; NOR DO I COUNT MY LIFE DEAR TO MYSELF, SO THAT I MAY FINISH MY RACE WITH JOY, AND THE MINISTRY WHICH I RECEIVED FROM THE LORD JESUS, TO TESTIFY TO THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.”

We understand that Paul spoke these words,

“NOR DO I COUNT MY LIFE DEAR TO MYSELF.”

We understand these words because they are written in English.

It is one thing to read these words, even study them but it is entirely different to mean them.

Do we consider our life worth nothing?

Do we cling to life or cling to the Author of life?

Do we read these words as if they were our own words?

With God's strength, let us follow Paul as he followed Jesus!

Acts 20:24 “BUT NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME; NOR DO I COUNT MY LIFE DEAR TO MYSELF, SO THAT I MAY FINISH MY RACE WITH JOY, AND THE MINISTRY WHICH I RECEIVED FROM THE LORD JESUS, TO TESTIFY TO THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.”

3. The Position. “SO THAT I MAY FINISH”

Paul’s position was forward looking. Paul’s position, and his focus was towards the future and what had yet to be accomplished. This phrase sums up what Paul went through and all what went through Paul.

Paul was looking forward to what the Lord had for him in the future.

Paul was going forward instead of living in the past.

Paul was not preoccupied with what God did in the past but yearned for what God would do in the future.

Are we preoccupied with what God did in the past but are not seeing what God is doing now? Dwelling on what God did in the past brings stagnation and robs us of going forward.

Acts 20:24 “BUT NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME; NOR DO I COUNT MY LIFE DEAR TO MYSELF, SO THAT I MAY FINISH MY RACE WITH JOY, AND THE MINISTRY WHICH I RECEIVED FROM THE LORD JESUS, TO TESTIFY TO THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.”

From verses 18 to 31 Paul dealt with past, present, and future experiences.

1. Past tense.

Verse 18, “I WAS WITH YOU”

Verse 19, “TRIALS WHICH CAME UPON ME”

Verse 20, “I DID NOT SHRINK”

Verse 21, “I HAVE DECLARED”

2. Present tense.

Verse 22, “AND NOW.”

Verse 23, “THE HOLY SPIRIT WARNS ME”

Verse 24, “I CONSIDER MY LIFE WORTH NOTHING”

Verse 25, “AND NOW”

Verse 26, “I DECLARE TO YOU TODAY”

3. Future tense.

Verse 28, “KEEP WATCH”

Verse 29, “SAVAGE WOLVES WILL COME”

Verse 30, “MEN WILL ARISE”

Verse 31, “BE ON YOUR GUARD”

Acts 20:24 “BUT NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME; NOR DO I COUNT MY LIFE DEAR TO MYSELF, SO THAT I MAY FINISH MY RACE WITH JOY, AND THE MINISTRY WHICH I RECEIVED FROM THE LORD JESUS, TO TESTIFY TO THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.”

It was Paul's disposition and position was to complete what he started.

Do we have the same disposition? Do we share this same position?

Do we finish what we have started?

In John 19:30 Jesus said, **“IT IS FINISHED.”** Paul's goal, his vision, was summed up in these words **“SO THAT I MAY FINISH.”**

Then in 2 Timothy 4:7 it says, **“I HAVE FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT, I HAVE FINISHED THE RACE, I HAVE KEPT THE FAITH.”**

From desiring to **“FINISH”** to **“FINISHING”** was accomplished because Paul said **“I HAVE KEPT THE FAITH.”**

Another translation of the words **“SO THAT I MAY FINISH”** is from the NIV, **“IF ONLY I MAY FINISH THE RACE AND COMPLETE THE TASK THE LORD JESUS HAS GIVEN ME.”**

Please compare them along with the following words in verse 28, **“KEEP WATCH OVER YOURSELVES AND ALL THE FLOCK.”**

Acts 20:24 “BUT NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME; NOR DO I COUNT MY LIFE DEAR TO MYSELF, SO THAT I MAY FINISH MY RACE WITH JOY, AND THE MINISTRY WHICH I RECEIVED FROM THE LORD JESUS, TO TESTIFY TO THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.”

The words “IF ONLY I MAY FINISH THE RACE” and “KEEP WATCH OVER YOURSELVES” are internal. The words “COMPLETE THE TASK” along with the words “AND ALL THE FLOCK” are external.

What is important for us to see is verse 24 comes before verse 28.

What that means is Paul was already living in verse 24 what he was instructing others to live in verse 28. Paul was leading before telling others to lead. Paul could only give what that Lord had given him. Paul had to daily receive life from the Lord to be able to give life to others. Paul needed life from Jesus to be able to give life to others. We need to daily receive life from the Lord to be able to give life to others. 1 Tim. 4:16 says, “PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO YOURSELF AND TO YOUR TEACHING.”

It is easy to tell other people how they should be living, but are we living how we think others should be living?

We cannot lead where we have never been led!

We cannot give unless we have received.

Acts 20:24 “BUT NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME; NOR DO I COUNT MY LIFE DEAR TO MYSELF, SO THAT I MAY FINISH MY RACE WITH JOY, AND THE MINISTRY WHICH I RECEIVED FROM THE LORD JESUS, TO TESTIFY TO THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.”

4. The Profession. “MY RACE”

These words refer to Paul and summarize his profession and his life’s ambition. In total there are seven references to Paul in this verse,

“MOVE ME”

“I COUNT”

“MY LIFE”

“TO MYSELF”

“I MAY FINISH”

“MY RACE”

“I RECEIVED”

Acts 20:24 “BUT NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME; NOR DO I COUNT MY LIFE DEAR TO MYSELF, SO THAT I MAY FINISH MY RACE WITH JOY, AND THE MINISTRY WHICH I RECEIVED FROM THE LORD JESUS, TO TESTIFY TO THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.”

From these seven references to Paul we learn he was emphasizing his responsibility to obey Jesus in the ministry given him.

Paul’s profession was an obsession to please God.

Paul’s profession was his confession of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In 2 Corinthians 5:9 it says, **“THEREFORE ALSO WE HAVE AS OUR AMBITION, WHETHER AT HOME OR ABSENT, TO BE PLEASING TO HIM.”**

Acts 20:24 “BUT NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME; NOR DO I COUNT MY LIFE DEAR TO MYSELF, SO THAT I MAY FINISH MY RACE WITH JOY, AND THE MINISTRY WHICH I RECEIVED FROM THE LORD JESUS, TO TESTIFY TO THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.”

What we do not see in this verse is Paul mentioning other Christians and their responsibility to obey the Lord. Paul used the words “**MY RACE**” because he was focused on his race and not someone else’s race. Paul’s focus was on obeying the Lord and not on other people’s failure to obey the Lord. If our minds are focused on the failure of worldly, lukewarm Christians to obey Jesus, then we fail to focus on our responsibility to obey Jesus! If we focus on failure, we will fail! In 2 Corinthians 10:12 it says, “

WHEN THEY MEASURE THEMSELVES BY THEMSELVES AND COMPARE THEMSELVES WITH THEMSELVES, THEY ARE NOT WISE.”

We need to avoid comparing ourselves with others because it is a form of self-righteousness. In John 21:22 it says, “**JESUS SAID TO HIM, “IF I WANT HIM TO REMAIN UNTIL I COME, WHAT IS THAT TO YOU? YOU FOLLOW ME!”**

We are not to give in to the temptation of being preoccupied thinking about those who are not obeying Jesus. We are to be occupied with obeying Jesus! ”

Acts 20:24 “BUT NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME; NOR DO I COUNT MY LIFE DEAR TO MYSELF, SO THAT I MAY FINISH MY RACE WITH JOY, AND THE MINISTRY WHICH I RECEIVED FROM THE LORD JESUS, TO TESTIFY TO THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.”

5. The Power. “WITH JOY,”

Abiding in Christ provides the power to finish the race **“WITH JOY.”**

Some finish the race regretting what they have done.

Some finish regretting what they have not done.

Some finish the race with disillusionment.

Some finish the race with bitterness.

Some finish the race without joy.

Some don't finish the race!

Paul's goal was to finish **“WITH JOY.”**

Acts 20:24 “BUT NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME; NOR DO I COUNT MY LIFE DEAR TO MYSELF, SO THAT I MAY FINISH MY RACE WITH JOY, AND THE MINISTRY WHICH I RECEIVED FROM THE LORD JESUS, TO TESTIFY TO THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.”

As we read these words perhaps some Scriptures come to mind.

One is Psalm 150:6, **“PRAISE THE LORD!”**

These are the last words in the last verse in Psalms.

The book of Psalms finishes **“WITH JOY”** filled words! Imagine if the book of Psalms represented a believer’s life. The last words would be spoken with joy. In Psalms 16:11 it says,

“IN THY PRESENCE IS FULLNESS OF JOY.”

The words **“JOY”** has many meanings which include, satisfaction, enjoyment, and happiness. If we asked non-Christians if they wanted happiness, most would likely say yes. As Christians we understand that happiness is a product of holiness. The reason people do not have happiness is because they are not holy. Seek holiness, not happiness!

Acts 20:24 “BUT NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME; NOR DO I COUNT MY LIFE DEAR TO MYSELF, SO THAT I MAY FINISH MY RACE WITH JOY, AND THE MINISTRY WHICH I RECEIVED FROM THE LORD JESUS, TO TESTIFY TO THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.”

6. The Performance. “AND THE MINISTRY WHICH I RECEIVED FROM THE LORD JESUS.”

The first part of verse 24 dealt with Paul's position in Christ.

These words deal with Paul's performance in Christ. Position comes before performance! A person's value is not based on their performance.

In Mark 1:11 it says, **“THOU ART MY BELOVED SON, IN THEE I AM WELL PLEASED.”** These words were spoken by God the Father to Jesus His Son. They were spoken before the Bible records in Mark 1:15 the beginning of our Lord's public ministry. God loved His Son because He was His Son, and not because of His performance.

In the world, acceptance is based on performance.

In God's kingdom acceptance is because Jesus died and rose from the dead. We are accepted not because of our performance but because of His performance.

Acts 20:24 “BUT NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME; NOR DO I COUNT MY LIFE DEAR TO MYSELF, SO THAT I MAY FINISH MY RACE WITH JOY, AND THE MINISTRY WHICH I RECEIVED FROM THE LORD JESUS, TO TESTIFY TO THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.”

Here are five verses showing position coming before performance.

1. Ephesians 6:21, **“TYCHICUS, THE BELOVED BROTHER AND FAITHFUL MINISTER.”**

Tychicus' position is described first as a beloved brother, and second his performance as a faithful minister.

2. Philippians 2:25, **“BUT I THOUGHT IT NECESSARY TO SEND TO YOU EPAPHRODITUS, MY BROTHER AND FELLOW WORKER AND FELLOW SOLDIER.”**

Epaphroditus' position is described first as a brother, and second his performance is described as a fellow worker and fellow soldier.

3. Colossians 4:7, **“AS TO ALL MY AFFAIRS, TYCHICUS, OUR BELOVED BROTHER AND FAITHFUL SERVANT...”**

Tychicus' position is described first as a beloved brother, and second his performance is described as a faithful servant.

Acts 20:24 “BUT NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME; NOR DO I COUNT MY LIFE DEAR TO MYSELF, SO THAT I MAY FINISH MY RACE WITH JOY, AND THE MINISTRY WHICH I RECEIVED FROM THE LORD JESUS, TO TESTIFY TO THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.”

4. 1 Thessalonians 3:2, **“OUR BROTHER AND GOD'S FELLOW WORKER.”**

Tychicus’ position is described first as a beloved brother, and second his performance is described as a faithful servant.

5. Philemon 1, **“TO PHILEMON OUR BELOVED BROTHER AND FELLOW WORKER.”**

Philemon’s position is described first as a beloved brother, and second his performance is described as a fellow worker.

Acts 20:24 “BUT NONE OF THESE THINGS MOVE ME; NOR DO I COUNT MY LIFE DEAR TO MYSELF, SO THAT I MAY FINISH MY RACE WITH JOY, AND THE MINISTRY WHICH I RECEIVED FROM THE LORD JESUS, TO TESTIFY TO THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.”

7. The Purpose. “TO TESTIFY TO THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.”

Paul’s purpose, and his reason for being alive was to “TO TESTIFY TO THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.” May we consider what the words “TO TESTIFY” means. It means to show, prove, or bear witness.

These words tell us how Paul was able to endure what was described in verse 23, “BONDS AND AFFLICTIONS AWAIT ME.” It was “THE GRACE OF GOD” that enabled Paul to endure all the sufferings he faced, because he continually sought the face of God. The gospel expresses “THE GRACE OF GOD” in Paul’s actions and words. Do our actions and words “TESTIFY TO THE GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD.” We need to continually seek the face of God so we can face all that is to come in the future.

Acts 20:24 "...FINISH MY COURSE WITH JOY."

This part of verse 24 is from the Kings James Bible. It is very beneficial to read the Bible in various translations, for as we see here there is a glorious nugget of truth revealed.

Paul's desire was to finish his life with joy in his heart. Many are not like Paul, finishing their lives full of bitterness, regret, and cynical. Some finish the course of their lives having compromised their faith and are spiritually defeated. Is it your desire and prayer to finish your course with joy?

How does a person accomplish this? The answer is in Genesis 5:24, **"AND ENOCH WALKED WITH GOD, AND HE WAS NOT, FOR GOD TOOK HIM."** Enoch was able to finish his course with joy because he walked with God. In Psalm 16:11 it says, **"IN THY PRESENCE IS FULNESS OF JOY."**

A successful person is a person who finishes their course with joy.

As Christians we are to practice the presence of God in our daily lives.

In The Practice of the Presence of God, Brother Lawrence said,

"The presence of God is the concentration of the soul's attention on God, remembering that He is always present."

Acts 20:25 “...PREACHING THE KINGDOM,”

The words “...PREACHING THE KINGDOM” repeats what Paul mentioned earlier. In verse 21 Paul said, “SOLEMNLY TESTIFYING.” In verse 24 Paul said, “TESTIFY SOLEMNLY.” The fact that Paul repeats his thoughts using slightly differing phrases should catch our attention.

When the Holy Spirit has a thought repeated in Scripture it reveals He is teaching us an important truth. It is also helpful to examine the context of these verses that repeat a certain thought.

In verse 20 it says, “TEACHING YOU PUBLICLY AND FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE.” What we notice from the context is teaching came before testifying. Teaching and testifying are both part of the overall context.

Paul was involved in both teaching God’s word and testifying to the gospel. Paul did not do one and neglect the other.

Paul did not donate all his time to teaching and neglect evangelizing.

Acts 20:25 “...PREACHING THE KINGDOM,”

What would cause a person, or church to emphasize Bible teaching and neglect evangelization? There may be many reasons but verses 20 and 23 provide some answers.

1. Verse 20, “TEACHING YOU PUBLICLY AND FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE,”

Paul was teaching in the people’s homes. This tells us he was welcomed, respected, and loved. Teaching involves primarily being with Christians and mostly they welcome, respect and love the person teaching them.

2. Verse 23, “BONDS AND AFFLICTIONS AWAIT ME.”

Paul was testifying for the gospel. Paul was addressing non-Christians and often there was strong opposition. Often it is much easier to hide away in a room, studying the Bible, and teaching the Bible than it is to evangelize. Our flesh is highly unlikely to want to do something that risks responses of ridicule, and rejection.

Paul needed God’s grace to teach and testify, and so do we.

We need God’s grace to avoid doing only what is easiest and not avoiding what is difficult.

Acts 20:25 “...WILL SEE MY FACE NO MORE.”

From these words we learn Paul was preparing the elders in Ephesus for his departure. With the Holy Spirit to help us we can glean much from this statement about Paul's character. Please consider these three points.

1. Dependable. 2. Decisive. 3. Desire.

We shall now examine these three things in a character study of Paul.

1. Dependable.

In Acts 21:1 it says, **“NOW IT CAME TO PASS, THAT WHEN WE HAD DEPARTED FROM THEM.”**

From these words we see Paul did what he said he was going to do.

Paul said he was going to do something and he did it.

Do you think it was easy or difficult for him to leave people he had come to love?

Very likely it was not easy for Paul to leave people who loved and respected him. In verse 37 it says, **“AND THEY BEGAN TO WEEP ALOUD AND EMBRACED PAUL, AND REPEATEDLY KISSED PAUL.”**

Acts 20:25 "...WILL SEE MY FACE NO MORE."

In the Dake's Annotated Reference Bible it says,
"This demonstrates a normal relationship and mutual love between pastor and people."

Paul kept his word even when it hurt.

Paul's words and actions were in harmony.

Paul did what James 2:12 says, **"SO SPEAK AND SO ACT."**

Paul's character reflects our Lord Jesus in Hebrews 10:23,

"...HE WHO PROMISED IS FAITHFUL."

May we compare ourselves with Paul and ask ourselves three questions.

1. Are the words we speak and the actions we do in harmony?
2. Does our mouth say one thing and our life something else?
3. Do we keep our promises even when it hurts?

Before rushing on to the next point in our character study of Paul, it would be most helpful to stop and pray and ask the Lord to examine our hearts and reveal areas in us that are not in line with Paul's example.

If the Lord reveals or reminds you of something wrong, then repent.

Acts 20:25 “...WILL SEE MY FACE NO MORE.”

2. Decisive.

We see that this statement that Paul made was decisive. Paul did not tell the elders in Ephesus he was leaving then change his mind when they started weeping and kissing him. We also note that when Paul said “...WILL SEE MY FACE NO MORE” he left soon after. Paul did not linger, nor waver. Paul knew difficulties awaited him but that did not cause him to wait. Paul made a decisive decision even though difficulties awaited.

Acts 20:25 “...WILL SEE MY FACE NO MORE.”

3. Desire.

Here are twelve points that show what Paul's desires were.

1. Paul's desire was the gospel be promoted; and not him promoted.
2. Paul's desire was the gospel be advanced; and not him advanced.
3. Paul's desire was the gospel be accepted; even if he was rejected.
4. Paul's desire was the gospel not be rejected if he was accepted.
5. Paul's desire was the gospel be exalted; and not him exalted.
6. Paul's desire was not preoccupied with tearing others down.
7. Paul's desire was the gospel increase and him decrease.
8. Paul's desire was occupied with building others up.
9. Paul's desire was not to build his own kingdom.
10. Paul's desire was not to shred and tear others.
11. Paul's desire was to build God's kingdom.
12. Paul's desire was to shed tears for others.

**Acts 20:26 “THEREFORE I TESTIFY TO YOU THIS DAY,
THAT I AM INNOCENT OF THE BLOOD OF ALL MEN.”**

When the time came for Paul to leave Ephesus he did so with a clear conscience because he had obeyed all of God's will. Now we might think, what was God's will for Paul? The context of verse 26 provides the answer.

Verse 25, **“PREACHING THE KINGDOM.”**

Verse 27, **“DECLARE TO YOU THE WHOLE PURPOSE OF GOD.”**

Paul proved faithful in doing God's will with a clear conscience to the end. What a tremendous testimony, to be able to complete a task with a clear conscience. Further on in Paul's life he said in Acts 23:1, **“I HAVE LIVED MY LIFE WITH A PERFECTLY GOOD CONSCIENCE BEFORE GOD UP TO THIS DAY.”**

Then in Acts 24:16 he said, **“I MYSELF ALWAYS STRIVE TO HAVE A CLEAR CONSCIENCE WITHOUT OFFENSE TOWARD GOD AND MEN.”**

Paul left Ephesus with a clear conscience. When we leave a place, do we leave with a clear conscience? Having a clear conscience is the fruit of obeying God. Do you have a clear conscience?

Acts 20:27 “FOR I DID NOT SHRINK FROM DECLARING TO YOU THE WHOLE PURPOSE OF GOD.”

Please look at this verse from the NASB in the following three parts.

1. “FOR I DID NOT SHRINK”

The word “**SHRINK**” means to hesitate, avoid, draw back from danger, turn away from, decline action due to fear, or withdraw because of hurt.

In Acts 20: 23 it says, “**BONDS AND AFFLICTIONS AWAIT ME.**”

Paul knew bonds and afflictions awaited him. But how did he respond to what the Holy Spirit was warning him?

Paul did not “**SHRINK**” back before afflictions.

Paul did not “**SHRINK**” back after afflictions.

How does our life compare with Paul’s?

Do we “**SHRINK**” back before afflictions?

Do we “**SHRINK**” back after afflictions?

**Acts 20:27 “FOR I DID NOT SHRINK FROM DECLARING TO YOU
THE WHOLE PURPOSE OF GOD.”**

2. “FROM DECLARING TO YOU”

Paul spoke what applied to his audience.

Paul did not speak about things that did not apply to them.

Paul spoke to them rather than speaking to other people about them.

Do we speak to people or about people?

**Acts 20:27 “FOR I DID NOT SHRINK FROM DECLARING TO YOU
THE WHOLE PURPOSE OF GOD.”**

3. “THE WHOLE PURPOSE OF GOD.”

In the NKJV it says, “THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD.”

In the NIV it says, “THE WHOLE WILL OF GOD.”

Paul did speak words to help rather than hurt.

Paul did have the fear God rather than the fear of man.

Paul did teach all of the Scriptures and not just parts of them.

Paul did not avoid controversial parts to avoid parting with people.

Paul did not withhold anything that was profitable for people.

Paul did withhold everything that was unprofitable for people.

Paul did esteem others as more important than himself.

Paul did write Philippians 2:3,

“IN LOWLINESS OF MIND LET EACH ESTEEM OTHERS BETTER THAN HIMSELF.”

**Acts 20:27 “FOR I DID NOT SHRINK FROM DECLARING TO YOU
THE WHOLE PURPOSE OF GOD.”**

Do we speak words to help rather than hurt?

Do we have the fear of God rather than the fear of man?

Do we teach all of the Scriptures and not just parts of them?

Do we avoid controversial parts to avoid parting with people?

Do we withhold anything that is profitable for people?

Do we withhold everything that is unprofitable for people?

Do we esteem others as more important than ourselves?

**Acts 20:27 “FOR I DID NOT SHRINK FROM DECLARING TO YOU
THE WHOLE PURPOSE OF GOD.”**

These words “THE WHOLE PURPOSE OF GOD” are the last five words in this verse.

Now compare these words with five words in verse 20,

“...YOU ANYTHING THAT WAS PROFITABLE.”

From these two verses please focus on the words “PURPOSE OF GOD” and the word “PROFITABLE.”

From this observation we learn that the whole purpose of God is profitable. There is great comfort for us in knowing that God’s purposes are profitable for us. Please dear Lord, help us to speak words that will be profitable to others and help us withhold words that are unprofitable to others.

**Acts 20:28 “BE ON GUARD FOR YOURSELVES AND FOR ALL THE FLOCK,
AMONG WHOM THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS MADE YOU OVERSEERS, TO SHEPHERD
THE CHURCH OF GOD WHICH HE PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.”**

With the Lord to help us, we can learn from verse 28 in seven parts.

1. “BE ON GUARD”
2. “FOR YOURSELVES”
3. “AND FOR ALL THE FLOCK,”
4. “AMONG WHOM THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS MADE YOU OVERSEERS,”
5. “TO SHEPHERD”
6. “THE CHURCH OF GOD”
7. “WHICH HE PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.”

**Acts 20:28 “BE ON GUARD FOR YOURSELVES AND FOR ALL THE FLOCK,
AMONG WHOM THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS MADE YOU OVERSEERS, TO SHEPHERD
THE CHURCH OF GOD WHICH HE PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.”**

We will now begin our study of this verse by dividing it into seven parts.

1. “BE ON GUARD”

With the Holy Spirit to help us , we shall study five words as follows.

1. Who.

Paul was speaking to the elders in Ephesus, and these words also have application to all of us who read the Bible. We begin our study of this verse by observing that the words **“BE ON GUARD”** are written in the form of a command. The words are written with concern rather than criticism. Paul is concerned for them to **“BE ON GUARD”** rather than criticizing them for not being on guard. The Lord is concerned for us to **“BE ON GUARD”** as much as He was for these men. The fact Paul says these words, shows us there is a temptation to not **“BE ON GUARD.”**

**Acts 20:28 “BE ON GUARD FOR YOURSELVES AND FOR ALL THE FLOCK,
AMONG WHOM THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS MADE YOU OVERSEERS, TO SHEPHERD
THE CHURCH OF GOD WHICH HE PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.”**

2. What.

The words “**BE ON GUARD**” communicate what the elders in Ephesus were to be doing. They were to be alert rather than sleeping.

3. When.

The words “**BE ON GUARD**” are always in the present. There is no expiry date on these words! When are you most likely to find a guard on duty? The time to be most on guard is at night when it is dark. In dark times we especially need to “**BE ON GUARD.**”

Acts 20:28 “BE ON GUARD FOR YOURSELVES AND FOR ALL THE FLOCK, AMONG WHOM THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS MADE YOU OVERSEERS, TO SHEPHERD THE CHURCH OF GOD WHICH HE PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.”

4. Where.

The elders in Ephesus were to “**BE ON GUARD**” where they were. The place they were living and serving the Lord is where they were “**TO BE ON GUARD.**” Where we live and serve the Lord is where to “**BE ON GUARD.**”

5. Why.

The words “**BE ON GUARD**” teach us there was some thing or some people Paul was speaking about to watch out for. These words convey that there is a very real enemy. How does a person obey these words “**BE ON GUARD?**” Imagine our lives being similar to a garden. The person in charge of the garden goes out each morning looking for weeds. When he sees a weed just popping out of the ground he immediately pulls it out.

Acts 20:28 “BE ON GUARD FOR YOURSELVES AND FOR ALL THE FLOCK, AMONG WHOM THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS MADE YOU OVERSEERS, TO SHEPHERD THE CHURCH OF GOD WHICH HE PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.”

Thus the garden is maintained and able to produce an abundance of vegetables and fruit. If the garden is not maintained the weeds soon grow up and choke out the produce and make it unproductive.

Our hearts are like this garden.

Small sins need to immediately be uprooted by repentance.

In Proverbs 4:23 it says,

“ABOVE ALL ELSE, GUARD YOUR HEART, FOR IT IS THE WELLSPRING OF LIFE.”

We can soberly study Judas and realize the process that took place in that man and his betrayal of Jesus.

In John 12:6 it says about Judas,

“HE HAD THE MONEY BOX, HE USED TO PILFER WHAT WAS PUT INTO IT.”

Judas started with small sins which eventually led to betraying Jesus.

If small sins are not repented of, they lead to betraying Jesus.

Acts 20:28 “BE ON GUARD FOR YOURSELVES AND FOR ALL THE FLOCK, AMONG WHOM THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS MADE YOU OVERSEERS, TO SHEPHERD THE CHURCH OF GOD WHICH HE PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.”

2. “FOR YOURSELVES”

From verse 18 to 27 we learn that Paul already did what he was telling the elders to do in this verse. Paul did it, then tells them to do it! His life was much like the illustration of an incoming airplane. When an airplane is landing it is seen, then after we can hear it landing.

His life preached before his mouth.

In 1 Timothy 4:16 Paul said,

“PAY CLOSE ATTENTION TO YOURSELF AND TO YOUR TEACHING.”

**Acts 20:28 “BE ON GUARD FOR YOURSELVES AND FOR ALL THE FLOCK,
AMONG WHOM THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS MADE YOU OVERSEERS, TO SHEPHERD
THE CHURCH OF GOD WHICH HE PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.”**

Time had passed from Acts 20:27 and 1 Timothy 4:16 but the message stayed the same. The order these words are written in teach that the person in spiritual leadership is first and foremost responsible to watch over their own spiritual condition before watching over the spiritual condition of those they are responsible for. The person who teaches the Bible needs to be ever so careful to avoid the temptation of only reading the Bible to prepare sermons without reading it for his own spiritual nourishment. A leader needs to live right, to lead right. A preacher needs to preach to himself before preaching to others.

Acts 20:28 “BE ON GUARD FOR YOURSELVES AND FOR ALL THE FLOCK, AMONG WHOM THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS MADE YOU OVERSEERS, TO SHEPHERD THE CHURCH OF GOD WHICH HE PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.”

3. “AND FOR ALL THE FLOCK”

From these words may we focus on the word **“ALL.”** It does not say, “some of the flock.”

Neither does it say, “only those you get along with.”

Neither does it say “only those who tithe the most.”

Paul was saying to care for all, whether they are weak or wealthy.

To obey this command requires all partiality being crucified.

Favoritism is sin and needs repentance.

In this verse Paul is addressing shepherds first and the flock second.

Recently a Bible teacher was teaching at a church on the subject of repentance. The shocking reality was the pastor of the church fell into immorality soon after those meetings. The audience had heard the message, but what about the pastor?

Acts 20:28 “BE ON GUARD FOR YOURSELVES AND FOR ALL THE FLOCK, AMONG WHOM THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS MADE YOU OVERSEERS, TO SHEPHERD THE CHURCH OF GOD WHICH HE PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.”

4. “AMONG WHOM THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS MADE YOU OVERSEERS,”

In this part of verse 28 the focus is on the Holy Spirit making overseers.

Now look in more detail at the word **“MADE”** in three points.

1. The word **“MADE”** is the past participle of the word “make” which means to construct or produce something. It describes being molded, fashioned, or designed. He is the Potter and we are the clay!

2. For something to be **“MADE”** that is of high quality, it requires considerable time. To be **“MADE”** into high quality leaders the Holy Spirit takes time. The Holy Spirit does not rush. Today we live in a world of instant coffee, instant potatoes, instant communications, etc. But instant overseers can instantly fall.

3. The overseers were **“MADE”** instead of making themselves overseers. When a person makes himself a leader rather than being **“MADE”** a leader they are usurping authority. A person making themselves a leader rather than being **“MADE”** a leader is in 1 Kings 1:5,

“NOW ADONIJAH THE SON OF HAGGITH EXALTED HIMSELF, SAYING, “I WILL BE KING.”

**Acts 20:28 “BE ON GUARD FOR YOURSELVES AND FOR ALL THE FLOCK,
AMONG WHOM THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS MADE YOU OVERSEERS, TO SHEPHERD
THE CHURCH OF GOD WHICH HE PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.”**

5. “TO SHEPHERD”

From this part of the verse we notice the word **“SHEPHERD”** comes before the words **“THE CHURCH.”** This verse shows a shepherd goes before, or leads the church. A good shepherd leads the flock. To lead requires knowing where you are going. A person cannot lead where they have never been led. Earlier in this verse it says, **“...THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS MADE YOU OVERSEERS.”** An overseer can only effectively lead where the Holy Spirit has already led him. He has to practice what he preaches before telling the church to practice what he preaches.

In John 10:3 it says, **“LEADS THEM OUT.”**

In John 10:4 it says, **“...HE GOES ON AHEAD OF THEM...”**

Acts 20:28 “BE ON GUARD FOR YOURSELVES AND FOR ALL THE FLOCK, AMONG WHOM THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS MADE YOU OVERSEERS, TO SHEPHERD THE CHURCH OF GOD WHICH HE PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.”

6. “THE CHURCH OF GOD”

These words convey the meaning that the church is God's.

The church is God's possession. The church belongs to God.

The shepherd is to not only lookout for what is bad for the flock but also to lookout for what is good for the flock. If a shepherd only feeds the flock so as to be popular or well respected, the shepherd is selfish.

A shepherd discerns wrong motives in his heart when discouragement and self-pity arise from his heart after teaching the Bible and no one commends or praises him. Self-pity is a symptom of selfishness.

The correct motive for feeding **“THE CHURCH OF GOD”** is love for Jesus.

**Acts 20:28 “BE ON GUARD FOR YOURSELVES AND FOR ALL THE FLOCK,
AMONG WHOM THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS MADE YOU OVERSEERS, TO SHEPHERD
THE CHURCH OF GOD WHICH HE PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.”**

This motive is seen three times in John 21.

1. In John 21:15 Jesus said,

**“SIMON, SON OF JOHN, DO YOU LOVE ME MORE THAN THESE?” “TEND MY
LAMBS.”**

2. In John 21:16 Jesus said,

“SIMON, SON OF JOHN, DO YOU LOVE ME?” “SHEPHERD MY SHEEP.”

3. In John 21:17 Jesus said,

“SIMON, SON OF JOHN, DO YOU LOVE ME?” “TEND MY SHEEP.”

Acts 20:28 “BE ON GUARD FOR YOURSELVES AND FOR ALL THE FLOCK, AMONG WHOM THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS MADE YOU OVERSEERS, TO SHEPHERD THE CHURCH OF GOD WHICH HE PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.”

Even as I write these words my heart has not escaped the searchlight of the Holy Spirit. He showed me I was secretly desiring you think I am very spiritual for getting this insight from this verse. My selfish motives have been laid bare. Repentance and receiving mercy from God is the only solution.

In the Westminster Pulpit, G. Campbell Morgan wrote concerning the word “CHURCH” as,

“The word “ecclesia” literally means called out, and is used of some company of people separated from others.”

The church is a group of believers, rather than saying a building is a church. We cannot correctly say we “go to church” because we are the church.

**Acts 20:28 “BE ON GUARD FOR YOURSELVES AND FOR ALL THE FLOCK,
AMONG WHOM THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS MADE YOU OVERSEERS, TO SHEPHERD
THE CHURCH OF GOD WHICH HE PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.”**

7. “WHICH HE PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.”

In this final part of Acts 20: 28 Paul refers to Jesus by using the following words, “**HE PURCHASED**” and “**HIS OWN BLOOD.**” The fact that Jesus is being emphasized arrests our attention.

As we read through Acts 20: 18 to 35, Jesus is spoken about four times.

1. Verse 19, “**SERVING THE LORD...**”
2. Verse 21, “**...FAITH IN OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.**”
3. Verse 24, “**...I RECEIVED FROM THE LORD JESUS...**”
4. Verse 35, “**...REMEMBER THE WORDS OF THE LORD JESUS...**”

Acts 20:28 “BE ON GUARD FOR YOURSELVES AND FOR ALL THE FLOCK, AMONG WHOM THE HOLY SPIRIT HAS MADE YOU OVERSEERS, TO SHEPHERD THE CHURCH OF GOD WHICH HE PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.”

What we see Paul doing is emphasizing Jesus as Lord. Do you hear Jesus referred to as Lord? It seems Jesus is often referred to as Savior but not as Lord. Many want Jesus as their Savior but not as their Lord.

Preaching that only refers to Jesus as Savior but not as Lord is a watered down gospel. In Paul's life the word Lord came from his mouth because Jesus was Lord of his heart. In Matthew 12:34 it says,

“FOR OUT OF THE ABUNDANCE OF THE HEART THE MOUTH SPEAKETH.”

If Jesus is not the Lord of our heart, the word “Lord” will not be on our lips! The Lord Jesus gave His life to save our lives. Jesus died so we can live. Jesus, the good Shepherd gave shepherds the correct model to follow.

A true shepherd is to lay down his life for the flock. Jesus gave 100 percent and He requires that much in return.

From Acts 20: 18 to 27 Paul followed the example of Jesus and then instructs the elders and us, to do the same.

Acts 20:28 “HE PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.”

These six words contain five foundational doctrines of the Christian faith.

1. Sanctification. “HE”
2. Redemption. “PURCHASED”
3. Regeneration. “WITH”
4. Reconciliation. “HIS OWN”
5. Justification. “BLOOD”

These words are of great importance considering the context. They come before strong warnings in Acts 20: 29 and 30 against false teachers and heresies. In these six words Paul, with the wisdom God gave him is providing the Ephesian elders with doctrinal truth as armor against the error that would attack them as described in verses 29 and 30.

Acts 20:28 “HE PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.”

With the Holy Spirit to help, we will examine these six words.

1. Sanctification. “HE”

The word Sanctification means being set free from the power of sin.

Jesus is the Truth and it is the Truth that sanctifies us as seen in John 14:6, Hebrews 9:14, 1 John 1:9, and Jude 24.

In Lectures in Systematic Theology, Henry C. Thiessen said,

“Sanctification as a separation to God, an imputation of Christ as our holiness, purification to God, an imputation of Christ as our holiness, purification from moral evil, and the conformation to the image of Christ as our righteousness.”

The fact that born again Christians are purified from moral sin and evil is in fact a real form of separation. The Holy Spirit changes us so we find no interest in doing what we used to do. With this separation from the corruption of the world is also conformation to the image of Christ.

The Lord changes us when we are born-again and continues to do so throughout our lives. The Holy Spirit gives us new interests and desires.

Acts 20:28 “HE PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.”

2. Redemption. “PURCHASED”

The word redemption means to pay a ransom, purchase, to release on receipt of a ransom.

In Colossians 1:14 it says,

“IN WHOM WE HAVE REDEMPTION, THE FORGIVENESS OF SIN.”

In Hebrews 9:12 it says,

“NEITHER BY THE BLOOD OF GOATS AND CALVES, BUT BY HIS OWN BLOOD HE ENTERED IN ONCE, INTO THE HOLY PLACE, HAVING OBTAINED ETERNAL REDEMPTION FOR US.”

Acts 20:28 “HE PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.”

When we stop and seriously consider these verses we realize to some degree how much God really does love us. Imagine, God gave His own Son for us. When we realize the huge cost that Jesus paid to save us it should cause us to love, revere, worship and serve Him with all that is within us. The price of following Jesus cannot be compared to the price that has been paid!

Here are the three ways redemption is accomplished.

The power of God. Deuteronomy 7:8.

The grace of God. Romans 3:24-25.

The blood of Jesus. Ephesians 1:7.

Acts 20:28 “HE PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.”

3. Regeneration. “WITH”

The word regeneration means the imparting of a brand-new nature within us. Regeneration is a miracle. In regeneration, God our Father has done the following seven things.

1. He has blessed us with divine life in our soul.
2. He has blessed us with a brand-new nature.
3. He has blessed us with being born-again.
4. He has blessed us with a victorious life.
5. He has blessed us with a changed life.
6. He has blessed us with a holy life.
7. He has blessed us with eternal life.

Acts 20:28 “HE PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.”

Regeneration is only possible by the Holy Spirit. Science, technology, nor education can give man a new nature. In Titus 3:5 it says,

“HE SAVED US, NOT ON THE BASIS OF DEEDS WHICH WE HAVE DONE IN RIGHTEOUSNESS, BUT ACCORDING TO HIS MERCY, BY THE WASHING OF REGENERATION AND RENEWING BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.”

The old nature is replaced supernaturally with a new nature.

The old nature, referred to as the flesh, needs regeneration and not reformation. Before regeneration a person is dead in sin. A person is much like a freshly cut rose. The rose looks very beautiful and healthy, but it is cut off from the source of its life. An unregenerate person may look healthy and vibrant, like the freshly cut rose, especially when they are young.

Acts 20:28 “HE PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.”

4. Reconciliation. “HIS OWN”

The word reconciliation is used both as a verb and a noun. God takes a rebellious human who is his own and on his own, to become **“HIS OWN.”**

Now let us look at the word reconciliation as a verb and noun.

As a verb, it means to change from enmity to friendship. Enmity means, hostility, hate, and antagonism. This is wonderfully expressed in the Amplified Bible of Romans 5:10,

“FOR IF WHILE WE WERE ENEMIES WE WERE RECONCILED TO GOD THROUGH THE DEATH OF HIS SON, IT IS MUCH MORE CERTAIN, NOW THAT WE ARE RECONCILED, THAT WE SHALL BE SAVED (DAILY DELIVERED FROM SIN’S DOMINION) THROUGH HIS RESURRECTION LIFE.”

Acts 20:28 “HE PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.”

In these verses the word “**ENEMIES**” not only expresses the hostile attitude within human nature but also signifies that until this change of attitude takes place the human race is under condemnation and exposed to the wrath of God. Through the death of our Lord Jesus, that wrath has been removed for us when we repent of our sins.

As a noun, reconciliation means, the change on the part of one party, encouraged by the actions of another person.

In NASB and NIV, Leviticus 8:15 and Ezekiel 45:20 translates reconciliation as atonement. On the cross, Jesus gave “**HIS OWN**” life so we could be reconciled to God.

Acts 20:28 “HE PURCHASED WITH HIS OWN BLOOD.”

5. Justification. “BLOOD”

The word justification means to be set free from the penalty of sin, which is death according to Genesis 2:17 and Romans 5:12-14 and 6:23.

For any person to be saved requires the penalty of sin to be removed.

That is what Jesus did when He shed **“HIS OWN BLOOD.”**

In Romans 5:9 it says,

“MUCH MORE THEN, HAVING NOW BEEN JUSTIFIED BY HIS BLOOD, WE SHALL BE SAVED FROM THE WRATH TO COME.”

When Jesus died on the cross, it provided the way for us to be made right with God.

The Lord Jesus gave His life so people could receive the following.

1. Forgiveness of sins, Acts 13:38-39.
2. Peace with God, Romans 5:1.
3. Eternal life, Titus 3:7.

**Acts 20:29 “I KNOW THAT AFTER I LEAVE, SAVAGE WOLVES WILL COME IN
AMONG YOU AND WILL NOT SPARE THE FLOCK.”**

This is the tenth New Testament prophecy in the book of Acts and it serves as an introduction to the warnings concerning apostasy in Ephesus.

In this verse Paul stresses with absolute certainty that external attack would come on the church. In the NIV there are three phrases used that communicate certainty.

We learn from the words “**I KNOW**” Paul is warning the elders that this church would be vulnerable to attack after Paul left.

Paul is speaking of a certainty and not a vague possibility.

This is a good lesson to learn that when the pastor leaves for a holiday or for some other purpose, that is the time for increased soberness and watchfulness from wrong teaching coming in. From these words the Holy Spirit is teaching us that to be forewarned is to be forearmed.

Acts 20:29 “I KNOW THAT AFTER I LEAVE, SAVAGE WOLVES WILL COME IN AMONG YOU AND WILL NOT SPARE THE FLOCK.”

2. “SAVAGE WOLVES WILL COME”

Now please give attention to the words **“SAVAGE WOLVES.”** Paul is using very sobering language. From the context of this verse Paul is telling the elders that these **“SAVAGE WOLVES”** are coming in for only one purpose. That purpose is to destroy the flock.

Wolves come in and associate with spiritually young Christians and avoid the Pastor or leaders. In Matthew 7:16 it says,
“YOU WILL KNOW THEM BY THEIR FRUITS.”

In this verse Jesus shows us how to discern a ravenous wolf Here are three identifiable marks of a wolf.

Wolves promote divisiveness and bitterness, 1 Timothy 6:4-5.

Wolves tear down people's faith, 2 Timothy 2:18.

Wolves promote ungodliness, 2 Timothy 2:16.

**Acts 20:29 “I KNOW THAT AFTER I LEAVE, SAVAGE WOLVES WILL COME IN
AMONG YOU AND WILL NOT SPARE THE FLOCK.”**

3. “WILL NOT SPARE.”

Wolves come to bring division and spits. This unfortunately is seen where other religions and cults attend evangelical churches with the purpose to cause discord and division between Christians.

Acts 20:30 “AND FROM AMONG YOUR OWN SELVES MEN WILL ARISE, SPEAKING PERVERSE THINGS, TO DRAW AWAY THE DISCIPLES AFTER THEM.”

In verse 29, Paul warned of external attack. Now in this verse he is warning of an internal attack. The attack is characterized by these three phrases.

1. “MEN WILL ARISE,”
2. “SPEAKING PERVERSE THINGS,”
3. “TO DRAW AWAY THE DISCIPLES AFTER THEM.”

With help from the Holy Spirit we now look at these areas of internal attack.

Acts 20:30 “AND FROM AMONG YOUR OWN SELVES MEN WILL ARISE, SPEAKING PERVERSE THINGS, TO DRAW AWAY THE DISCIPLES AFTER THEM.”

1. “MEN WILL ARISE,”

These words tell us self-exaltation as the first form of internal attack.

Self-exaltation is seen when men usurp authority not given to them.

Self-exaltation is seen in men wanting to lead but not follow.

Self-exaltation is a characteristic of internal corruption.

Self-exaltation is a characteristic of pride.

Self-exaltation is seen when people start meetings without permission from leaders.

People who exalt themselves are opposing God.

**Acts 20:30 “AND FROM AMONG YOUR OWN SELVES MEN WILL ARISE,
SPEAKING PERVERSE THINGS, TO DRAW AWAY THE DISCIPLES AFTER THEM.”**

In James 4:6 it says,

“GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.”

An example of self-exaltation is seen in 1 Kings 1:5,

**“NOW ADONIJAH THE SON OF HAGGITH EXALTED HIMSELF, SAYING,
“I WILL BE KING.”**

In God’s economy humility comes before honor.

In Proverbs 18:12 it says,

“BEFORE HONOR IS HUMILITY.”

The way up is the way down!

Acts 20:30 “AND FROM AMONG YOUR OWN SELVES MEN WILL ARISE, SPEAKING PERVERSE THINGS, TO DRAW AWAY THE DISCIPLES AFTER THEM.”

2. “SPEAKING PERVERSE THINGS,”

In the NIV it says, **“DISTORT THE TRUTH.”** Perverse speaking and distorting the truth go together. They are a manifestation of self-exaltation. The distortion of truth produces error. The distortion of truth is seen in false doctrines and heresies. False doctrine is referred to in Isaiah 32:6,

“FOR THE FOOLISH PERSON WILL SPEAK FOOLISHNESS, AND HIS HEART WILL WORK INIQUITY: TO PRACTICE UNGODLINESS, TO UTTER ERROR AGAINST THE LORD, TO KEEP THE HUNGRY UNSATISFIED, AND HE WILL CAUSE THE DRINK OF THE THIRSTY TO FAIL.”

Heresy is another form of **“SPEAKING PERVERSE THINGS.”**

Heresy is often introduced secretly.

Heresy is intent on causing people to fall away from the faith.

Heresy comes from those not submitted to spiritual authority.

Heresy is the product of deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.

Acts 20:30 “AND FROM AMONG YOUR OWN SELVES MEN WILL ARISE, SPEAKING PERVERSE THINGS, TO DRAW AWAY THE DISCIPLES AFTER THEM.”

3. “TO DRAW AWAY THE DISCIPLES AFTER THEM.”

We now come to the motive as to why men arise and speak perverse things. The motive is selfishness. It causes splits and schisms in a church. We see the fulfillment of this in Revelation 2:15-16. In Revelation 2:20 it says, “...**YOU TOLERATE THAT WOMAN JEZEBEL, WHO CALLS HERSELF A PROPHETESS**”

In the New Testament this is the only reference to someone calling themselves a prophetess (or prophet). When someone refers to themselves as a prophet, you will know they are false. People who exalt themselves instead of Jesus Christ seek disciples to follow them rather than the Lord. People seeking to draw disciples away often falsely accuse church leaders.

In 1 Timothy 5:19 it says, “**DO NOT RECEIVE AN ACCUSATION AGAINST AN ELDER EXCEPT ON THE BASIS OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES.**”

Then in Hebrews 13:17 it says, “**OBEY YOUR LEADERS, AND SUBMIT TO THEM, FOR THEY KEEP WATCH OVER YOUR SOULS, AS THOSE WHO WILL GIVE AN ACCOUNT.**”

**Acts 20:31 “THEREFORE BE ON THE ALERT, REMEMBERING THAT NIGHT
AND DAY FOR A PERIOD OF THREE YEARS
I DID NOT CEASE TO ADMONISH EACH ONE WITH TEARS.”**

With the Lord to give illumination, let us study this verse in seven parts.

1. “THEREFORE”

This translation begins with this word **“THEREFORE”** so let us ask ourselves what it is there for. Paul is using this word to stress the importance of what he has been saying since Acts 20: 28. Paul stressed his point but he was not stressed! Paul warned those he loved of danger they would face in the future. Do we warn people we love of danger in the future?

**Acts 20:31 “THEREFORE BE ON THE ALERT, REMEMBERING THAT NIGHT
AND DAY FOR A PERIOD OF THREE YEARS
I DID NOT CEASE TO ADMONISH EACH ONE WITH TEARS.”**

2. “BE ON THE ALERT,”

In this verse Paul is finishing off the same way he began by giving a sober warning to the elders of the Ephesus church.

In Acts 20: 28 Paul said, **“BE ON GUARD.”** Here Paul is repeating the same warning with the words, **“BE ON THE ALERT.”** The fact Paul repeats his warning teaches us the vital importance to take heed to warnings.

Please remember the words, **“BE ON GUARD”** and **“BE ON THE ALERT”** are both in the present tense.

Their application was for then, and also for us today.

**Acts 20:31 “THEREFORE BE ON THE ALERT, REMEMBERING THAT NIGHT
AND DAY FOR A PERIOD OF THREE YEARS
I DID NOT CEASE TO ADMONISH EACH ONE WITH TEARS.”**

3. “REMEMBERING”

Paul wanted these elders to remember what he was stressing to them.

The Ephesian elders needed to heed repeated warnings and how much more do we! This word “**REMEMBERING**” was used to stir up their memory, for they, like us tend to easily forget.

Paul did what is seen in 2 Peter 3:1,

“I AM STIRRING UP YOUR SINCERE MIND BY WAY OF REMINDER.”

**Acts 20:31 “THEREFORE BE ON THE ALERT, REMEMBERING THAT NIGHT
AND DAY FOR A PERIOD OF THREE YEARS
I DID NOT CEASE TO ADMONISH EACH ONE WITH TEARS.”**

4. “THAT NIGHT AND DAY”

These words teach us what Paul did during the “NIGHT” as well as what he did during the “DAY.” When we think of nighttime we think of darkness. Under the cover of darkness Paul had nothing to uncover! His conduct was the same whether it was “NIGHT” or “DAY.” Do we conduct ourselves the same way in the nighttime as we do in the daytime?

These words teach us Paul was busy doing what God wanted him to do.

Are we busy doing what God wants us to do?

These words teach us Paul did not waste time during his free time.

**Acts 20:31 “THEREFORE BE ON THE ALERT, REMEMBERING THAT NIGHT
AND DAY FOR A PERIOD OF THREE YEARS
I DID NOT CEASE TO ADMONISH EACH ONE WITH TEARS.”**

Do we waste time during our free time? We see from these words Paul was a good steward of the time God gave him. Are we good stewards of the time God has given us?

These words teach us that Paul was consistent. It did not matter if it was “NIGHT” or “DAY” to Paul. “NIGHT” is a dark time but even in dark times Paul was obeying God. “DAY” is a light time but even in light times Paul was obeying God. When we experience dark times are we consistent in obeying God? When life becomes light and comfortable, do we stay consistent in obeying God?

**Acts 20:31 “THEREFORE BE ON THE ALERT, REMEMBERING THAT NIGHT
AND DAY FOR A PERIOD OF THREE YEARS
I DID NOT CEASE TO ADMONISH EACH ONE WITH TEARS.”**

5. “FOR A PERIOD OF THREE YEARS ”

Imagine having the apostle Paul as your mentor and pastor for three years. We would tend to think this Ephesian church would be a strong church that would impact the world. If we were to think this church would only prosper and multiply, then we would be grievously mistaken.

Looking at the Ephesian church in Revelation 2:1-4 we find they still heeded the warnings by Paul about false teachers, but they had left their first love. From this we learn that a church may be spiritually healthy today, but will it remain healthy ten, twenty or thirty years from now?

**Acts 20:31 “THEREFORE BE ON THE ALERT, REMEMBERING THAT NIGHT
AND DAY FOR A PERIOD OF THREE YEARS
I DID NOT CEASE TO ADMONISH EACH ONE WITH TEARS.”**

6. “I DID NOT CEASE TO ADMONISH EACH ONE”

Paul repeatedly warned these elders of a very real danger.

The word “**ADMONISH**” carries many meanings including, reprove, reprimand, rebuke, caution, and warn about.

Paul admonished with tears.

How do we admonish?

Do we do so with tears or in a tirade?

Admonishing in a tirade shows pride.

Admonishing with tears shows humility.

**Acts 20:31 “THEREFORE BE ON THE ALERT, REMEMBERING THAT NIGHT
AND DAY FOR A PERIOD OF THREE YEARS
I DID NOT CEASE TO ADMONISH EACH ONE WITH TEARS.”**

7. “WITH TEARS.”

We now conclude our study of this verse with these words.

Back in verse 19 Paul used the phrase **“HUMILITY AND WITH TEARS.”**

Tears follow humility. In John 11:35 it says, **“JESUS WEPT.”**

Jesus wept for others but not for Himself.

Paul shed tears for others but not for himself.

Have we wept lately?

Once the Lord spoke to my heart and said, “Do not shed tears for yourself, but for those who are perishing.”

Acts 20:32 “AND NOW I COMMEND YOU TO GOD AND TO THE WORD OF HIS GRACE, WHICH IS ABLE TO BUILD YOU UP AND TO GIVE YOU THE INHERITANCE AMONG ALL THOSE WHO ARE SANCTIFIED.”

With the Holy Spirit to help us, please study at this verse in four parts.

1. “AND NOW I COMMEND YOU TO GOD”

Paul was going to leave them but God was not going to leave them.

This was a great comfort for them and it serves as a great comfort for us knowing, God will never leave us. Throughout life people we love may have to leave as Paul did here, but the Lord is always near.

In Hebrews 13:5 it says,

“I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU.”

Paul was not possessive because he knew the elders were God's possession. Paul knew the people belonged to God and not him. In this verse we learn the elders could no longer cling to Paul but they could cling to the Lord. As we go through life we may find we have to leave secure situations. Our hearts may desire to hold onto a place but the only thing to hold onto is a Person, Jesus Christ. True security for those elders and for us as well, was not in a person named Paul who would die, but in a Person named Jesus who died and rose again.

Acts 20:32 “AND NOW I COMMEND YOU TO GOD AND TO THE WORD OF HIS GRACE, WHICH IS ABLE TO BUILD YOU UP AND TO GIVE YOU THE INHERITANCE AMONG ALL THOSE WHO ARE SANCTIFIED.”

2. “THE WORD OF HIS GRACE,”

This rich term is one we could spend a lot of time in. What does this phrase mean? The Amplified Bible says,

“THE COMMANDS AND COUNSELS AND PROMISES OF HIS UNMERITED FAVOR.”

God gives us His word and He gives us the grace to obey it. In The Acts of the Apostles, G. Campbell Morgan wrote,

“The grace of God is not the love of God only, it is not the favor of God alone; it is the love of God operating through passion, in order to the perfecting of those whom that love is set.”

3. “WHICH IS ABLE TO BUILD YOU UP”

These words communicate growth and a progressive, positive change happening in a believer’s heart. Paul was concerned about building others up rather than tearing others down.

Acts 20:32 “AND NOW I COMMEND YOU TO GOD AND TO THE WORD OF HIS GRACE, WHICH IS ABLE TO BUILD YOU UP AND TO GIVE YOU THE INHERITANCE AMONG ALL THOSE WHO ARE SANCTIFIED.”

4. “AND GIVE YOU THE INHERITANCE AMONG ALL THOSE WHO ARE SANCTIFIED.”

For this present study please consider these brief two points.

1. “AND”

The word “AND” joins the previous words “WHICH IS ABLE TO BUILD YOU UP” which are in the present tense. The Lord always wants to give us more than we could ever imagine.

2. “GIVE YOU THE INHERITANCE”

The words “GIVE YOU THE INHERITANCE” speak about our glorious future. The words also speak about hope for the future rather than hopelessness. The words also speak about hope for the present rather than hopelessness. One phrase is for the present and the next is for the future. Paul was giving them hope for their present and also for their future. The Lord always gives us hope for the present and for the future.

Acts 20:34 “YOU YOURSELVES KNOW THAT THESE HANDS MINISTERED TO MY OWN NEEDS AND TO THE MEN WHO WERE WITH ME.”

We begin with the words **“YOU YOURSELVES KNOW THAT.”** These words refer to the Ephesian elders. They are mentioned before Paul refers to himself in this verse. Paul mentioned others before he mentioned himself. He put others first. In Philippians 2:3 it says,

“IN LOWLINESS OF MIND LET EACH ESTEEM OTHERS BETTER THAN THEMSELVES.”

Next we consider the words **“THESE HANDS.”** From these words we learn Paul worked with his hands rather than look for handouts.

Next are the words **“...MINISTERED TO MY OWN NEEDS AND TO THE MEN WHO WERE WITH ME.”**

Paul was not just concerned about meeting his own needs but as well for others. Paul was concerned for others and not just himself. If we work only to meet our own needs, our attitude is contrary to that of Paul's. Our attitude is in fact, selfish because it is contrary to what Scripture says. Selfishness is clocked in clichés like “I have all that I need.” Paul's words followed Paul's actions. May our life speak, before our mouth!

Acts 20:35 “IN EVERYTHING I DID, I SHOWED YOU THAT BY THIS KIND OF HARD WORK WE MUST HELP THE WEAK, REMEMBERING THE WORDS THE LORD JESUS HIMSELF SAID: “IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE.”

We begin with the words “IN EVERYTHING I DID, I SHOWED YOU.”

Here Paul is reminding the elders of the type of example he proved to be. The elders saw what Paul did.

These words speak of action.

These words teach us Paul led by example.

Paul modeled what he wanted them to do. You cannot lead where you have never been led!

Acts 20:35 “IN EVERYTHING I DID, I SHOWED YOU THAT BY THIS KIND OF HARD WORK WE MUST HELP THE WEAK, REMEMBERING THE WORDS THE LORD JESUS HIMSELF SAID: “IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE.”

Then Paul said, “**THAT BY THIS KIND OF HARD WORK WE MUST HELP THE WEAK.**” These words show what kind of a proper role model he was for his converts. Paul used the word “**WE**” which means he included himself rather than just telling them what to do.

Next we notice the word “**I**” comes before the word “**WE.**”

Paul states his responsibilities first and their responsibilities second.

Paul did not tell other people what to do before doing it himself.

Paul did and taught based on what Jesus said, “**IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN TO RECEIVE.**”

Paul never outgrew doing what Jesus said. We never outgrow growing.

Acts 20:37-38 “AND THEY BEGAN TO WEEP ALOUD AND EMBRACED PAUL, AND REPEATEDLY KISSED HIM, GRIEVING ESPECIALLY OVER THE WORD WHICH HE HAD SPOKEN, THAT THEY SHOULD SEE HIS FACE NO MORE.”

Please look at these words as Paul is saying farewell to the brethren.

1. “AND THEY BEGAN TO WEEP ALOUD”
2. “AND EMBRACED PAUL,”
3. “REPEATEDLY KISSED HIM,”
4. “GRIEVING”

In these words are considerable heartfelt emotions being released.

In these words is emotional suffering in the hearts of these Christians.

The reason for all of this emotion is found in the words “**SEE HIS FACE NO MORE.**” They were expressing this emotion because they were losing someone they loved. What is vital for us to learn is they were not suppressing or denying their feelings.

In our lives we already have or will experience the loss of someone we love.

The loss can come through a death or in this case a person we have known and grown to love, departs, never to be seen again.

Acts 20:37-38 “AND THEY BEGAN TO WEEP ALOUD AND EMBRACED PAUL, AND REPEATEDLY KISSED HIM, GRIEVING ESPECIALLY OVER THE WORD WHICH HE HAD SPOKEN, THAT THEY SHOULD SEE HIS FACE NO MORE.”

A second thought about these verses is, it serves as an ideal model for us to how we should leave a church or group of brethren. The elders of the Ephesian church were sad that they should see Paul's face no more.

When we leave a church, are the elders sad or glad to see our face no more? Paul's example is the right way to leave a church. The wrong way to leave is having problems with church leadership or other people in the church. Even if other people are wrong, it is wrong to leave with a critical attitude or unforgiveness in the heart.

**Acts 21:5 “...AND AFTER KNEELING DOWN ON THE BEACH AND PRAYING,
WE SAID FAREWELL TO ONE ANOTHER.”**

Here Paul had completed his time and before leaving he prayed with them.
This is a good pattern to apply when leaving and saying goodbye.

This pattern is seen with Paul saying goodbye to the elders in the Ephesian church in Acts 20:36, **“...HE KNELT DOWN AND PRAYED WITH THEM ALL.”**

Paul did it before talking about it in Ephesians 4:14, **“I BOW MY KNEES BEFORE THE FATHER.”**

Paul taught by example. Paul had been a Christian for a long time and we see him kneeling to pray.

Jesus knelt to pray.

Luke 22:41, **“...HE KNELT DOWN AND BEGAN TO PRAY.”**

Daniel knelt to pray.

Daniel 6:10, **“...ON HIS KNEES THREE TIMES A DAY, PRAYING...”**

Do we kneel to pray or think we do not need to pray?

**Acts 21:6 “THEN WE WENT ON BOARD THE SHIP,
AND THEY RETURNED HOME AGAIN.”**

This verse continues on where verse 5 ends. In the preceding verse Paul and those present knelt to pray before saying goodbye.

Paul was now boarding a ship.

Paul and those with him knelt and prayed in a public place.

In verse 5 it mentions “**WIVES AND CHILDREN**” were present when Paul was kneeling and praying.

Paul was not embarrassed or self-conscious to kneel and pray in public or in front of women and children and whoever else might have been watching.

Are we embarrassed or self-conscious to pray in public or in front of people even if they include women and children?

Acts 21:11 “...THIS IS WHAT THE HOLY SPIRIT SAYS: ‘IN THIS WAY THE JEWS AT JERUSALEM WILL BIND THE MAN WHO OWNS THIS BELT AND DELIVER HIM INTO THE HANDS OF THE GENTILES.’ ”

In this eleventh verse is the eleventh prophecy in Acts, and it provides a very good teaching on the subject of prophecy.

To begin, let us understand this prophecy confirmed what the Holy Spirit had already said to Paul in Acts 20:23, **“THE HOLY SPIRIT WARNS ME THAT PRISON AND HARDSHIPS ARE FACING ME.”**

A genuine prophecy from the Lord will confirm what He has already spoken to an individual. In Acts 21: 27 to 33 is the fulfillment of the prophecy.

A genuine prophecy will do two things.

1. Confirm what the Lord has already spoken.
2. It will come to pass.

In Deuteronomy 18:22 it says, **“WHEN A PROPHET SPEAKS IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, IF THE THING DOES NOT COME ABOUT OR COME TRUE, THAT IS THE THING WHICH THE LORD HAS NOT SPOKEN.”**

Acts 21:12 “...BEGGING HIM NOT TO GO...”

Following the course of Paul’s life we learn the Lord led him to Rome, as seen in Acts 23:11 and Acts 28:14. What would have happened had Paul given in to these people who were **“BEGGING HIM NOT TO GO?”**

These people loved Paul and he loved them, yet his love for Jesus was greater. What would have happened had he not obeyed the leading of the Holy Spirit? Paul did go to Rome and during his time there the Holy Spirit inspired him to write parts of what we know as the New Testament.

The books of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 2 Timothy, and Philemon were most likely written in Rome. If Paul had given in to those who were **“BEGGING HIM NOT TO GO”** those books of the Bible may never have been written. Do you think it was difficult for Paul to obey rather than listen to those who were **“BEGGING HIM NOT TO GO.”** In verse 13 Paul said, **“WHAT ARE YOU DOING, WEeping AND BREAKING MY HEART.”**

Acts 21:12 “...BEGGING HIM NOT TO GO...”

Of course it was not easy for Paul. Sometimes we face difficult choices as did Paul, but by the grace of God may we be willing to not only suffer but to die for the sake of our Lord Jesus. Throughout the centuries the Christian church owes much to Paul's obedience to God. We do not know how God will use us in the future but it is imperative we obey Him today.

Obeying God today is the preparation for Him using us in the future.

Acts 21:13 “...I AM READY NOT ONLY TO BE BOUND, BUT EVEN TO DIE AT JERUSALEM FOR THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS.”

The heart attitude of Paul that is seen here, reflected how Jesus was in Luke 9:51, “...HE RESOLUTELY SET HIS FACE TO GO TO JERUSALEM.”

In verse 12, it describes the people begging Paul not to go.

Their conduct was much how Peter acted in Matthew 16:22,

“GOD FORBID IT, LORD! THIS SHALL NEVER HAPPEN TO YOU.”

The people trying to stop Paul acted very similar to Peter with Jesus. Yet in both cases their human sympathy and concern was totally contrary to the will of God.

Do we share the same heart attitude as our Lord Jesus? Paul was ready to die for his Lord Jesus Christ. Are we?

Acts 21:17 "...THE BRETHREN RECEIVED US GLADLY."

In this verse the Christian brethren gladly received Paul the apostle.

In verses 27 to 36, Paul the apostle was received madly by non-Christians.

Those who were following Jesus were glad to see Paul.

Those who were against Jesus were mad when they saw Paul.

When we see a Christian leader what is our response? Is it glad or mad?

Acts 21:19 “...THE THINGS WHICH GOD HAD DONE AMONG THE GENTILES THROUGH HIS MINISTRY.”

In this part of verse 19 are two parts. Let us now part this part of the verse.

1. “...THE THINGS WHICH GOD HAD DONE”

In verse 17 we learn the brethren in Jerusalem gladly welcomed Paul and those with him. Paul had returned from a missionary trip and there was a level of excitement among the people with his return. To some, Paul may have seemed like a hero. Traveling to other lands preaching the gospel can seem exciting when compared to the daily grind of making a living.

Paul was with people who loved and respected him. In this situation of adulation, he could have expounded on all that he had done.

But instead he expounded on, **“THE THINGS WHICH GOD HAD DONE.”**

If we expound on what we have done, we shall soon be done.

Acts 21:19 “...THE THINGS WHICH GOD HAD DONE AMONG THE GENTILES THROUGH HIS MINISTRY.”

2. “THROUGH HIS MINISTRY.”

The mention of Paul's ministry follows giving God the credit for what Paul accomplished. In verse 18 Paul was well received by James and the elders. Even though Paul was in the company of church leaders, he exalted God and not the ministry. This same pattern of exalting God in the company of a leader is also expressed in Daniel 2:27, **“DANIEL ANSWERED BEFORE THE KING AND SAID,”** and Daniel 2:28, **“THERE IS A GOD IN HEAVEN WHO REVEALS MYSTERIES,”** Just as Paul gave God the glory in the presence of leaders, Daniel gave God the glory in the presence of a leader. The emphasis was on God and not on a ministry. The emphasis was on the God of a man instead of a man of God! When God enables us to succeed in any area of life we are wise to always be careful to give Him the glory. This helps us avoid people feeling jealous towards us.

Acts 21:19 “...THE THINGS WHICH GOD HAD DONE AMONG THE GENTILES THROUGH HIS MINISTRY.”

The pattern of giving God the glory for what we have is seen by what Jacob spoke in Genesis 33:11, “...GOD HAS DEALT GRACIOUSLY WITH ME, AND BECAUSE I HAVE PLENTY.” When God enables us to succeed in any area of life, we are wise to always be careful to give Him the glory. This helps us avoid people feeling jealous towards us. The pattern of giving God the glory for what we have is seen in how Jacob spoke in Genesis 33:11, “...GOD HAS DEALT GRACIOUSLY WITH ME, AND BECAUSE I HAVE PLENTY.”

Paul acknowledged that God had enabled him to have success.

Jacob acknowledged that God had enabled him to have success.

Do we acknowledge that it is God who enables us to have success?

Acts 21:20 “AND WHEN THEY HEARD IT THEY BEGAN GLORIFYING GOD.”

In Acts 21:19 Paul told the people what God had enabled him to accomplish. Success was because of God, and Paul emphasized that fact. The result is found here, **“THEY BEGAN GLORIFYING GOD.”** How do you think some of the people would have responded had Paul claimed the success by his own doing rather than God’s doing? Very likely instead of glorifying the Lord, there would have been some who would be jealous of his success.

It truly is gory when God does not get the glory!

Acts 21:37 “MAY I SAY SOMETHING TO YOU?”

From Acts 21: 30 and up to this verse is a picture of total chaos erupting when Paul was seen in the temple.

Verse 30, “..DRAGGED HIM OUT OF THE TEMPLE.”

Verse 31, “...SEEKING TO KILL HIM.”

Verse 32, “...THEY STOPPED BEATING PAUL.”

Verse 33, “...ORDERED HIM TO BE BOUND WITH TWO CHAINS...”

Verse 34, “...SOME WERE SHOUTING ONE THING...”

Verse 35, “...THE VIOLENCE OF THE MOB.”

Verse 36, “...CRYING OUT, “AWAY WITH HIM!”

In the midst of all this chaos, Paul calmly and politely said, “MAY I SAY SOMETHING TO YOU?”

Acts 21:37 “MAY I SAY SOMETHING TO YOU?”

Please consider four things about Paul in the midst of this situation and compare our reactions with his.

1. Paul was calm in the midst of chaos.
2. Paul was polite to people when they were rude.
3. Paul was well mannered when people were bad mannered.
4. Paul was respectful when people were disrespectful.

Are we calm in the midst of chaos?

Are we polite to people when they were rude?

Are we well mannered when people are bad mannered?

Are we respectful when people are disrespectful?

**Acts 22:7 “AND I FELL TO THE GROUND AND HEARD A VOICE SAYING TO ME,
‘SAUL, SAUL, WHY ARE YOU PERSECUTING ME?’ ”**

These words describe Paul describing how Jesus had saved him.

These words describe Paul describing his conversion experience.

Paul had been a Christian for a long time and he was sharing his testimony when this situation took place.

Many years had gone by since the Lord saved Paul.

But even though time had passed by, Paul did not pass by an opportunity to share his testimony. It had been a long time since Jesus saved him.

But it was not a long time since Paul told people how Jesus saved him.

It may have been a long time since Jesus saved you.

But has it been a long time since you told people, Jesus saved you?

Do you still share your testimony even if you have been a Christian for a long time? If not, why not?

When was the last time you told someone how Jesus saved you?

**Acts 22:7 “AND I FELL TO THE GROUND AND HEARD A VOICE SAYING TO ME,
‘SAUL, SAUL, WHY ARE YOU PERSECUTING ME?’ ”**

Perhaps you used to tell people how Jesus saved you.

But over the years you stopped because of the rejection you have had or the excuses you have heard. It is vital we share our testimonies even if we have been saved for a long time. Sharing our testimony is a vital aspect in spiritual warfare as Ephesians 6: 15 says, **“AND HAVING SHOD YOUR FEET WITH THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE.”**

In Revelation 12:11 it says, **“THEY OVERCAME HIM BY THE BLOOD OF THE LAMB AND BY THE WORD OF THEIR TESTIMONY...”**

Acts 22:7 “AND I FELL TO THE GROUND AND HEARD A VOICE SAYING TO ME, ‘SAUL, SAUL, WHY ARE YOU PERSECUTING ME?’ ”

We have briefly looked at this verse, now study the following three parts.

1. “AND I FELL TO THE GROUND AND HEARD A VOICE”

Paul had to first come down low before he heard the Lord speak to him. This is true for us. We need to come down, to hear the Lord speak to us.

2. “THE GROUND”

The ground is hard. Saul had to hit the ground before he got saved.

Saul hit something that was hard before he got saved. For many of us we had to hit hard circumstances before the Lord saved us. The Lord knocked Saul down before saving him. The Lord allows hard circumstances in people's lives to knock them down! Saul had to go down before the Lord raised him up. In the Christian life the way up, is the way down.

3. “SAUL, SAUL, WHY ARE YOU PERSECUTING ME?”

These are the words of Jesus speaking to Paul. In verses 4 and 5 we learn that Saul was persecuting Christians. Yet in this verse Jesus told Saul that he was persecuting Him. What Saul was doing to Christians was actually what he was doing to Jesus. When we persecute a fellow Christian we are persecuting Jesus.

Acts 22:10 “...WHAT SHALL I DO, LORD?”

There is a vast amount of treasure packed into these five words.

From these words please prayerfully examine seven points.

1. “WHAT SHALL I DO, LORD?”

The words are spoken to the Lord. In other words, Paul as a new convert was praying. An indication of a genuine heart conversion will be the desire to pray.

2. “WHAT SHALL I DO, LORD?”

The words reflect a true heart conversion because Paul is no longer doing what he wants but wants to do what Jesus wants. Before a person is born-again everything is done for self-centered motives. When a genuine conversion happens, the person starts to put the Lord's interests ahead of his own. To the degree that the Bible governs our lives is the degree that Jesus is Lord of our lives.

Acts 22:10 “...WHAT SHALL I DO, LORD?”

3. “WHAT SHALL I DO, LORD?”

The words show that Paul wanted to know what to do. We notice from verse 9 there were companions with Paul, but only Paul asked this question. Are we willing to be like Paul and say, “WHAT SHALL I DO, LORD?” even if other people do not?

Paul was the only one who said the words, “WHAT SHALL I DO, LORD?”

Paul was alone.

Often obedience to the Lord means being alone. It is often a minority rather than the majority that choose to obey the Lord.

Acts 22:10 “...WHAT SHALL I DO, LORD?”

4.“WHAT SHALL I DO, LORD?”

This shows Paul had an obedient, surrendered heart attitude.

This shows Paul was willing to do anything the Lord required of him.

This shows Paul was willing to do God’s will without conditions attached.

In Acts 22: 9 it says, “MY COMPANIONS SAW THE LIGHT, BUT THEY DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE VOICE OF HIM WHO WAS SPEAKING TO ME.”

Paul was willing to obey the Lord Jesus even though other people did not understand.

Are we willing to obey the Lord even if other people don’t understand? Paul was willing to follow and the word “LORD” shows who to follow.

We cannot call Jesus our Lord if we are not willing to say, “WHAT SHALL I DO, LORD?” Notice the contrast between these words and those of Peter in Acts 10:14, “SURELY NOT, LORD!”

Peter was saying, “no” to the Lord. Paul was saying, “yes” to the Lord.

Which of these men does our life resemble?

Acts 22:10 “...WHAT SHALL I DO, LORD?”

5. “WHAT SHALL I DO, LORD?”

The words reflect humility and honesty. When a person says, “WHAT SHALL I DO, LORD?” it shows the person does not know what to do but is honest enough to admit it. Saul was once a proud leader, but became a humble follower of Jesus.

Are we willing to be like Paul and admit when we do not know what to do?

6. “WHAT SHALL I DO LORD?”

This sentence has the word “LORD” at the end and not the word “Savior.” Paul began his Christian life knowing Jesus was his Lord and not just his Savior. Sometimes Jesus is only referred to as our “personal Savior” but little emphasis is on Jesus being our “LORD.” The word “LORD” means Master. If Jesus is not our Master then someone or something else is.

Acts 22:10 "...WHAT SHALL I DO, LORD?"

7. "WHAT SHALL I DO, LORD?"

The words communicate a willingness to do whatever the Lord asked without conditions attached. If we read these words without the word "LORD" at the end it changes the meaning very significantly. If we say, "WHAT SHALL I DO" without the word "LORD" it shows we are in charge. We should say "WHAT SHALL I DO, LORD?" This shows the Lord is in charge. The "LORD" is the final word. The "LORD" has the final word in our life.

Acts 22:10 “WHAT SHALL I DO, LORD? I ASKED.”

To study this verse we shall briefly look at the following two points.

1. “WHAT SHALL I DO, LORD?”

The word “I” is mentioned twice in this verse and communicates personal responsibility. Saul did not say, “What shall the people with me do?” Can we read these words **“WHAT SHALL I DO, LORD?”** as if we were saying them instead of just reading them? These words **“WHAT SHALL I DO, LORD?”** teach us Saul did not know what to do and he was admitting it to the Lord. Do we admit we do not know to the Lord? Saul admitted he needed help. Do we admit we need help?

2. “I ASKED.”

Saul was the only one who asked the Lord what to do.

Even if I am the only one, I am to ask the Lord what He wants me to do.

These words **“I ASKED”** are in the past tense. Did we say these words in the past and do we say “I ask” in the present? The way Saul spoke shows submission. Later in his life the Lord would send him on missions. Submission comes before missions.

Acts 22:10 “ARISE AND GO INTO DAMASCUS...”

From verses 7 to 10 we read a conversation is taking place between the Lord Jesus and Paul.

In verse 7 the Lord spoke.

In verses 8 and 9 Paul spoke.

Then in verse 10 it begins with Paul speaking and then finishes with the Lord speaking. These Scriptures show the Lord spoke at the beginning and at the end. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.

The Lord Jesus had the final say in the conversation with Paul.

Does the Lord Jesus have the final say in our lives?

Acts 22:10 “ARISE AND GO INTO DAMASCUS; AND THERE YOU WILL BE TOLD OF ALL THAT HAS BEEN APPOINTED FOR YOU TO DO.”

This verse provides a Scriptural example of how God led His servant then and how He leads us today.

This pattern is seen in 1 Samuel 16:1; Jeremiah 18:2-3 and Matthew 28:10. There are two bases, yet profound unchanging ways God uses to guide. The verse divides into the following two parts.

1. God requires obedience. “ARISE AND GO INTO DAMASCUS;”

We might think, why did the Lord not just tell him then and there what he was supposed to do. Paul had to rely on other people to get him to Damascus. Surely it would have been easier to just tell him then and there what he was supposed to do, but the Lord Jesus had Paul go to Damascus to teach him to rely on His guidance and to teach him he needed the help of other people. The once self reliant Saul would now be the Lord reliant Paul.

Paul had to obey the first part of the verse before the Lord would give him further instructions. The Lord always leads through obedience and trust.

Acts 22:10 “ARISE AND GO INTO DAMASCUS; AND THERE YOU WILL BE TOLD OF ALL THAT HAS BEEN APPOINTED FOR YOU TO DO.”

2. God requires faith. “AND THERE YOU WILL BE TOLD OF ALL THAT HAS BEEN APPOINTED FOR YOU TO DO.”

We are to trust in the Lord with simple, childlike faith. This part of the verse is a promise. For us to receive the promise of God, we are to obey God. The way God leads His people in the twenty-first century has not changed from the time of 1 Samuel 16:1, Jeremiah 8:2-3 and Acts 22:10.

In Malachi 3:6 it says, **“FOR I THE LORD, DO NOT CHANGE.”**

Acts 22:11 “MY COMPANIONS LED ME BY THE HAND INTO DAMASCUS...”

Here we learn that Paul needed help from his companions. In verse 10 the Lord told him, **“GO INTO DAMASCUS. THERE YOU WILL BE TOLD ALL THAT YOU HAVE BEEN ASSIGNED TO DO.”** Paul needed help to be able to do what the Lord had called him to do. We also need the help of others to obey what the Lord has called us to do. It is important we realize the circumstances that took place just prior to these words. From verses 6 to 10 Paul described his conversion experience. He was a brand-new Christian. As a new Christian he needed help to do God’s will. New Christians need help to obey the Lord.

Acts 22:15 “...WHAT YOU HAVE SEEN AND HEARD.”

From this part of verse 15 we see the word “SEEN” precedes the word “HEARD.” Often we tend to remember what we have seen more than what we have heard. In the life of Jesus, He would often teach by example before teaching vocally. The words “SEEN” and “HEARD” challenge us to daily be doers of the word and not mere hearers. Our actions are to be seen and not just our mouths heard. This example of “SEEN” and “HEARD” is finely modeled in Acts 9:3 and 4 where Paul suddenly saw a light come from heaven and then he heard the Lord speaking to him.

Acts 22:19 “AND I SAID, “LORD, THEY THEMSELVES UNDERSTAND THAT IN ONE SYNAGOGUE AFTER ANOTHER I USED TO IMPRISON AND BEAT THOSE WHO HAD BELIEVED IN THEE.”

As we approach this verse consider the context in which it is found.

In verse 18 Jesus spoke to Paul.

In verse 19 and 20 Paul spoke to the Lord.

In verse 21 Jesus spoke to Paul.

This same pattern is seen in Acts 9:11 to 16.

In Acts 9:11 and 12 Jesus spoke to Ananias.

In Acts 9:13 and 14 Ananias spoke to the Lord.

In Acts 9:15 and 16 Jesus spoke to Ananias.

Now we return to Acts 22:18 and see the Lord spoke to Paul and told him to quickly get out of Jerusalem.

Paul said in Acts 22:19,, **“AND I SAID, “LORD,”**

Ananias said in Acts 9:13, **“BUT ANANIAS ANSWERED, “LORD,”**

Acts 22:19 “AND I SAID, “LORD, THEY THEMSELVES UNDERSTAND THAT IN ONE SYNAGOGUE AFTER ANOTHER I USED TO IMPRISON AND BEAT THOSE WHO HAD BELIEVED IN THEE.”

In both cases Paul and Ananias called Jesus “LORD,” but there is a comma after the word. The comma shows a pause. The Lord was telling each man to do something and each man was politely questioning the Lord.

As a new believer Paul called Jesus “LORD,” but did not believe what Jesus told him about people.

Do we call Jesus “LORD,” but not believe what He says?

Do we call Jesus “LORD,” but question what He says?

Do we call Jesus “LORD,” but doubt what He says?

Do not believe unbelief about the word of God.

Do question questions about the word of God.

Do doubt doubts about the word of God.

Acts 22:22 “AND THEY LISTENED TO HIM UP TO THIS STATEMENT, AND THEN THEY RAISED THEIR VOICES AND SAID, “AWAY WITH SUCH A FELLOW FROM THE EARTH, FOR HE SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO LIVE!”

In Acts 22: 18, it records the words Jesus warned Paul about the Jews.

Now in this verse we see the Jews rejecting what Paul said.

In verse 18 Jesus told Paul what they were like.

In verse 19 Paul naively did not believe what Jesus said they were like.

In verse 22 Paul found out what they were like.

Jesus knows what people are like. We are naïve to think people are different from how the Bible describes what man is like.

If we believe man is “basically quite good,” or that man is “inherently good,” then we are very naïve and are not believing what Scripture says about human nature. In Jeremiah 17:9 it says, **“THE HEART IS MORE DECEITFUL THAN ALL ELSE AND IS DESPERATELY SICK; WHO CAN UNDERSTAND IT?”**

**Acts 23:5 “AND PAUL SAID, “I WAS NOT AWARE, BRETHREN,
THAT HE WAS HIGH PRIEST; FOR IT IS WRITTEN,
“YOU SHALL NOT SPEAK EVIL OF A RULER OF YOUR PEOPLE.”**

In verse 2 the high priest had Paul struck on the mouth.

In verse 3 Paul responded to the way he was wrongfully treated.

Paul responded in a manner not in line with Scripture and here he quickly receives correction. Those around Paul were wrong in their conduct towards him but they did not admit being wrong.

When my words or conduct do not agree with Scripture, do I quickly receive correction as Paul did even if others are unwilling to admit their wrong?

Paul did not make excuses, even though he was wrongly treated.

Paul responded to what the Scriptures say rather than what people did to him. This is the correct example we are to heed. When we are wrongly treated, we are to avoid the temptation to retaliate but rather respond to what God's word says.

**Acts 23:11 “...THE LORD STOOD AT HIS SIDE AND SAID,
“TAKE COURAGE;”**

For our brief study of verse 11 may we consider the following two parts.

1. “...THE LORD STOOD AT HIS SIDE AND SAID,”

When we read these words we might think it would be incredible to have such an experience as Paul had here. Imagine having Jesus appear and stand right beside you. The Lord gave Paul this incredible experience before Paul experienced incredible opposition. Do you want incredible experiences? Remember that with the incredible experiences comes incredible opposition.

**Acts 23:11 “...THE LORD STOOD AT HIS SIDE AND SAID,
“TAKE COURAGE;”**

2.“TAKE COURAGE;”

The words Jesus spoke were comforting rather than condemning.

The words Jesus spoke were encouraging rather than discouraging.

The words Jesus spoke were helpful rather than hurtful.

We can distinguish the voice of the Lord from other voices because His voice comforts, encourages, and helps.

Voices that condemn, discourage, or hurt are not from the Lord.

When we speak, are our words comforting or condemning?

When we speak, are our words encouraging or discouraging?

When we speak are our words helpful or hurtful?

Acts 23:11 "...FOR AS YOU HAVE SOLEMNLY WITNESSED TO MY CAUSE AT JERUSALEM, SO YOU MUST WITNESS AT ROME ALSO."

Here the writer of Acts quoted what Jesus spoke to Paul. This simple observation teaches us we are to quote, or speak what Jesus says.

In 2 Chronicles 18:13 it says,

"...WHAT MY GOD SAYS, THAT I WILL SPEAK."

Do we quote what the word of God says or do we speak what fears and doubts say?

What Jesus said was spoken rather than what fears and doubts said.

These words of Jesus are recorded in the Bible.

Jesus spoke them and they are repeated as recorded.

These words of Jesus were heard, and they were repeated. We are to hear the word of God and repeat it rather than listen to fears and doubts and repeat them. In this verse Jesus was telling Paul to witness in Rome.

Acts 23:11 “...FOR AS YOU HAVE SOLEMNLY WITNESSED TO MY CAUSE AT JERUSALEM, SO YOU MUST WITNESS AT ROME ALSO.”

Then we look forward to Acts 28:14,

“THERE WE FOUND SOME BRETHREN, AND WERE INVITED TO STAY WITH THEM FOR SEVEN DAYS; AND THUS WE CAME TO ROME.”

These words tell us Paul arrived in Rome.

Between Acts 23:11 and Acts 28:14 Paul went through severe trials. Paul suffered some of his worst attacks from religious people.

When the Lord calls us to do a task, expect opposition from religious people. Paul had to go through a storm and suffered hardship on a ship. The same pattern that Paul went through is mirrored in Mark 4:35,

“AND ON THAT DAY, WHEN EVENING HAD COME, HE SAID TO THEM, “LET US GO OVER TO THE OTHER SIDE.”

And in Mark 5:1 it says,

“AND THEY CAME TO THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SEA, INTO THE COUNTRY OF THE GERASENES.”

Acts 23:12 “THE NEXT MORNING THE JEWS FORMED A CONSPIRACY AND BOUND THEMSELVES WITH AN OATH NOT TO EAT OR DRINK UNTIL THEY HAD KILLED PAUL.”

For this present study of this verse we shall look at the following two parts.

1. “THE NEXT MORNING THE JEWS FORMED A CONSPIRACY”

In the preceding verse the Lord called Paul to witness about Jesus in Rome. What we learn from this verse is that religious Jews tried to stop Paul from fulfilling the Lord’s will for him. Religious people are often the source of opposition against servants of the Lord.

Opposition did not come as a result of Paul doing something wrong.

Opposition came as a result of Paul doing what was right.

Opposition came because Paul was testifying about Jesus.

Opposition came from these religious people and proved what Jesus said in Matthew 5:11,

“BLESSED ARE YOU WHEN MEN CAST INSULTS AT YOU AND PERSECUTE YOU, AND SAY ALL KINDS OF EVIL AGAINST YOU FALSELY, ON ACCOUNT OF ME.”

**Acts 23:12 “THE NEXT MORNING THE JEWS FORMED
A CONSPIRACY AND BOUND THEMSELVES WITH AN OATH
NOT TO EAT OR DRINK UNTIL THEY HAD KILLED PAUL.”**

2. “BOUND THEMSELVES WITH AN OATH”

Here is an example of an unholy alliance. The people who were in agreement were in disagreement to a servant of the Lord witnessing about Jesus. What type of people do we find ourselves in alliance with?

Are they for or against the Lord?

**Acts 24:5 “WE HAVE FOUND THIS MAN TO BE A TROUBLEMAKER ,
STIRRING UP RIOTS AMONG THE JEWS ALL OVER THE WORLD.
HE IS A RINGLEADER OF THE NAZARENE SECT
AND EVEN TRIED TO DESECRATE THE TEMPLE; SO WE SEIZED HIM.”**

This verse focuses on slander being directed towards Paul.

In the New Testament slander is often towards Jesus and His disciples.

In the New Testament there are no references of slander being directed towards the Pharisees or false teachers.

Satan uses slander against servants of the Lord, not his own servants!

Satan does not slander those who belong to him, but those who are opposing him! When we hear slander against a fellow Christian, we can be quite certain the Christian is serving the Lord.

Acts 24:25 “...FELIX WAS AFRAID AND SAID, “THAT’S ENOUGH FOR NOW! YOU MAY LEAVE. WHEN I FIND IT CONVENIENT, I WILL SEND FOR YOU.”

With the Lord to help give life from this text, please study these five parts.

1. “...FELIX WAS AFRAID AND SAID,”

Felix had heard from Paul about faith in Jesus Christ.

Felix had heard about righteousness, self-control, and judgment.

But instead of responding in faith Felix responded in fear. Fear controlled his decision rather than faith. The result of Felix responding to fear rather than faith was he rejected Jesus Christ. Fear stops us from following Jesus Christ. Felix feared what would happen to him rather than fear the One who could protect him from what would happen to him. Felix feared what would happen in the future. Felix had a fear of the future. Fear of what might happen in the future is paralyzing and keeps many from obedience to Jesus Christ. Fear is an enemy of faith.

The only thing a Christian is to fear is the Lord.

Acts 24:25 “...FELIX WAS AFRAID AND SAID, “THAT’S ENOUGH FOR NOW! YOU MAY LEAVE. WHEN I FIND IT CONVENIENT, I WILL SEND FOR YOU.”

2. “THAT’S ENOUGH FOR NOW!”

These words communicate a decision Felix was making. Felix was afraid and his fear initiated the words he spoke and the decision he made.

Fear directed his decision. His conduct was contrary to what Scripture teaches in Colossians 3:15,

“LET THE PEACE OF CHRIST RULE IN YOUR HEARTS.”

People can talk for hours about worldly subjects like sports and food, but when it comes to talking about faith in Christ Jesus the conversation quickly comes to an end.

3. “WHEN I FIND IT CONVENIENT,”

Felix put off hearing more about the gospel because he was convicted of his sin. His words may have even sounded polite. Felix was politely refusing the truth of the gospel. He was a polite rebel. Polite rebels are still rebels!

Acts 24:25 “...FELIX WAS AFRAID AND SAID, “THAT’S ENOUGH FOR NOW! YOU MAY LEAVE. WHEN I FIND IT CONVENIENT, I WILL SEND FOR YOU.”

4. “ I ”

This one letter word is mentioned twice in this one sentence. Felix did not hesitate to talk about himself but hesitated in hearing Paul talk about Jesus. Do we like to talk about ourselves more than we like to talk about Jesus?

5. “I WILL SEND FOR YOU.”

Here we see procrastination in Felix. Delayed obedience is polite disobedience. Felix’s avoidance of the truth sounds much like the sinner who says, “I will become a Christian when I am older but first I want to enjoy life.”

In Acts 24: 27 it says, **“FELIX WAS SUCCEDED BY PORCIUS FESTUS.”**

After this Felix is not mentioned. It is unknown what happened to Felix but there is no further mention of him having an opportunity to hear the gospel. Delaying to respond to the gospel is extremely dangerous.

Acts 24:27 “BUT AFTER TWO YEARS HAD PASSED,”

In Acts 24 we read of four references to time periods passing.

In verse 1 it says, **“AND AFTER FIVE DAYS”**

In verse 17 it says, **“NOW AFTER SEVERAL YEARS”**

In verse 24 it says, **“BUT SOME DAYS LATER”**

In verse 27 it says, **“BUT AFTER TWO YEARS HAD PASSED”**

In verse 1 is reference to days.

In verse 17 is reference to years.

In verse 24 is reference to days.

In verse 27 is reference to years.

We can read these words so quickly, in fact we read verses 1 and 17 as quickly as we read verses 24 and 27. We read about days as quickly as we read about years. Time goes quickly. Mere days become years.

Paul was not one to waste time and neither are we to waste it.

Acts 24:27 “BUT AFTER TWO YEARS HAD PASSED,”

Now we focus on verse 27 and two years are recorded as having passed instead of just a few days. Let us consider these two years.

These two years must have been a severe time of testing for Paul.

In verse 26 the corrupt Felix tempted Paul to bribe his way out of prison. Yet by the grace of God, Paul remained faithful even though it meant having to endure continuing hardship for two more years in prison.

We remember Joseph suffered in a similar way. In Genesis 41:1 it says,

“NOW IT HAPPENED AT THE END OF TWO FULL YEARS.”

Joseph and Paul were righteous men, but they were wrongly put in prison.

Acts 24:27 “BUT AFTER TWO YEARS HAD PASSED,”

We learn from the following Scriptures how these men were able to endure such evil from men.

In Genesis 39:21 it says,

“BUT THE LORD WAS WITH JOSEPH.”

In Acts 23:11 it says,

“THE LORD STOOD AT HIS SIDE.”

Although many centuries had passed, the Lord was with both men.

Today the Lord is still the same. He is with us in the midst of our trials and He will help us as He did with Joseph and Paul.

In Acts 24:15 it says,

“HAVING A HOPE IN GOD.”

Our unwavering trust in God will sustain us.

**Acts 24:27 “BUT AFTER TWO YEARS HAD PASSED,
FELIX WAS SUCCEEDED BY PORCIUS FESTUS;
AND WISHING TO DO THE JEWS A FAVOR, FELIX LEFT PAUL IMPRISONED.”**

These are the final words in Acts 24. Paul had been left in prison for two years and now he was still left in prison. Then further on to Acts 26 and Paul preached with passion and compassion.

More than two years of being wrongly kept in prison had not caused him to become bitter towards God but provided him time with God.

In John Darby's Synopsis of the New Testament, John Darby said,

“Two years in prison had brought him no depression of heart or faith, but had only set him free from the harassing connection with the Jews, to give him moments spent with God.”

Acts 25:1 “FESTUS THEREFORE, HAVING ARRIVED IN THE PROVINCE, THREE DAYS LATER WENT UP TO JERUSALEM FROM CAESAREA.”

This verse introduces chapter 25 and may we focus on the “THREE DAYS.”

In this chapter there are seven references to time being mentioned.

1. Verse 1 “THREE DAYS”
2. Verse 6 “THE NEXT DAY”
3. Verse 13 “SEVERAL DAYS”
4. Verse 14 “MANY DAYS”
5. Verse 17 “THE NEXT DAY”
6. Verse 22 “TOMORROW”
7. Verse 23 “THE NEXT DAY”

Through Acts 25 is the awareness of time passing. We also learn from the verse preceding this one, Acts 24:27,

“BUT AFTER TWO YEARS HAD PASSED, FELIX WAS SUCCEEDED BY PORCIUS FESTUS; AND WISHING TO DO THE JEWS A FAVOR, FELIX LEFT PAUL IMPRISONED.”

Acts 25:1 “FESTUS THEREFORE, HAVING ARRIVED IN THE PROVINCE, THREE DAYS LATER WENT UP TO JERUSALEM FROM CAESAREA.”

In this chapter there are at least seven things that are not mentioned.

1. There is no mention of Paul's friends visiting and encouraging him.
2. There is no mention of anyone getting baptized in the Holy Spirit.
3. There is no mention of an angel helping him like in Acts 12:5-7.
4. There is no mention of the Lord speaking to encourage his faith.
5. There is no mention of anyone wanting to help Paul.
6. There is no mention of anyone getting saved.
7. There is no mention of miracles happening.

Time passed, but did Paul's devotion to Jesus pass?

In Acts 24:24, Paul preached about Jesus Christ.

In Acts 26, Paul was preaching about Jesus Christ. Paul had gone so long imprisoned yet his devotion to our Lord Jesus never diminished. When we go through times similar to what Paul had to endure, do we remain devoted to Jesus Christ? As time passes, has our love for Jesus passed?

Acts 25:8 “I HAVE COMMITTED NO OFFENSE EITHER AGAINST THE LAW OF THE JEWS OR AGAINST THE TEMPLE OR AGAINST CAESAR.”

When we read these words in the context to what has taken place we find them to be quite remarkable. Paul did nothing wrong, but Acts 24:27, shows he was kept in prison for two years.

Then we come to Acts 25.

In verse 2, the chief priests and Jews attacked him with accusations.

In verse 3, the Jews had even planned to ambush and kill Paul.

In verse 4, Paul was still being kept in custody.

In verse 5, we hear Festus siding with the Jews.

In verse 6, another eight to ten days dragged on.

In verse 7, the Jews were all around and accusing him falsely.

**Acts 25:8 "I HAVE COMMITTED NO OFFENSE EITHER AGAINST THE LAW OF
THE JEWS OR AGAINST THE TEMPLE OR AGAINST CAESAR."**

With these events we again consider the words Paul spoke in verse 8. When we read what Paul spoke there is calmness and peace in his voice. There is not frustration, bitterness, or anger in his tone of voice.

When we are confronted with difficult circumstances what comes from our mouth?

Do calm, peaceful, words spring forth?

Or does frustration, bitterness, and anger come forth from our mouth?

Do you cry out to God in your trials?

Or do you cry out against God in your trials?

In the midst of the severest of trials the Lord wants to help us have this same inner strength that He gave to Paul.

As we cry out to God to help us, He enables us to be as Paul.

Acts 25:23 “AND SO, ON THE NEXT DAY WHEN AGRIPPA HAD COME TOGETHER WITH BERNICE, AMID GREAT POMP, AND HAD ENTERED THE AUDITORIUM ACCOMPANIED BY THE COMMANDERS AND THE PROMINENT MEN OF THE CITY, AT THE COMMAND OF FESTUS, PAUL WAS BROUGHT IN.”

Here is King Agrippa and Bernice in an atmosphere of great pomp accompanied by prominent people.

Then a prisoner named Paul is brought in.

King Agrippa had pomp.

King Agrippa had prominent people.

Paul had a prison.

In the opinion of the world King Agrippa would seem the success and Paul the failure. But God's opinion is in Psalms 49:12,

“BUT MAN IN HIS POMP WILL NOT ENDURE; HE IS LIKE THE BEASTS THAT PERISH.”

King Agrippa was highly esteemed before people.

Paul was highly esteemed before the King of Kings.

Acts 25:24 “THE WHOLE JEWISH COMMUNITY HAS PETITIONED ME ABOUT HIM IN JERUSALEM AND HERE IN CAESAREA, SHOUTING THAT HE OUGHT NOT TO LIVE ANY LONGER.”

Here we read of the Jews wanting Paul dead. They wanted Paul dead not because he had done something wrong, but because they were wrong. It is often the people who accuse someone of wrong doing are the ones doing wrong!

Now focus on the last part of the verse,

“SHOUTING THAT HE OUGHT NOT TO LIVE ANY LONGER.”

The Jews were not quietly asking for Paul to be killed. Shouting reveals much about a person. It is often the person who is doing the shouting that is wrong. Insistent shouting is very demanding and it reflects an arrogant attitude. Jesus did not shout. Paul did not shout. Do we sometimes shout? Often it is the person who is not shouting that should be listened to rather than the person who is shouting.

**Acts 26:14 “SAUL, SAUL, WHY ARE YOU PERSECUTING ME?
IT IS HARD FOR YOU TO KICK AGAINST THE GOADS.”**

This the second time in the book of Acts where Paul shares his testimony of how Jesus met him, had mercy on him, and saved him. The other time was before the Jews in Acts 22:7.

Paul begins in Acts 26: 1 to describe his life prior to the Jesus saving him. Paul had done many wicked things to Christians, and now he was witnessing to a King about the King of Kings!

It pleased the priests when passionately, punishing, powerful, pursuing, Paul put people in prison.

But now Paul was powerless against the powerful Christ.

As we read the testimony of Paul from Acts 26: 1 to 18 we can sense a depth greater than what is sensed back in Acts 22 when Paul shared his testimony.

**Acts 26:14 “SAUL, SAUL, WHY ARE YOU PERSECUTING ME?
IT IS HARD FOR YOU TO KICK AGAINST THE GOADS.”**

Now Paul was deeper in his faith than he was back then.

This brings us to ask a question.

Are we deeper in our faith than we were a few years ago?

As the years passed in the life of Paul, he still shared how Jesus saved him. As the years have passed in our lives, do we still share how Jesus saved us? Paul shared about his life before and when Jesus saved him.

What Paul said is reflected in Deuteronomy 5:15,

**“AND YOU SHALL REMEMBER THAT YOU WERE A SLAVE IN THE LAND OF
EGYPT, AND THE LORD YOUR GOD BROUGHT YOU OUT OF THERE BY A MIGHTY
HAND AND AN OUTSTRETCHED ARM.”**

Acts 26:18 “TO OPEN THEIR EYES SO THAT THEY MAY TURN FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT AND FROM THE DOMINION OF SATAN TO GOD, IN ORDER THAT THEY MAY RECEIVE FORGIVENESS OF SINS AND AN INHERITANCE AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SANCTIFIED BY FAITH IN ME.”

These words are part of the vision and calling that Jesus gave to Paul in Acts 26: 16 to 18. To study of these words that Jesus spoke to Paul may we please look at them in the following seven parts.

1. “TO OPEN THEIR EYES”

When we consider these words we understand the opposite of the word “**OPEN**” is “closed.” When a person’s eyes are closed the person cannot see where he or she is going. Who is Jesus referring to when He said the words “**THEIR EYES?**” In the preceding verse Jesus mentioned both Jews and Gentiles as those to whom Paul was being sent to preach to.

That takes in the entire population of the world.

Acts 26:18 “TO OPEN THEIR EYES SO THAT THEY MAY TURN FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT AND FROM THE DOMINION OF SATAN TO GOD, IN ORDER THAT THEY MAY RECEIVE FORGIVENESS OF SINS AND AN INHERITANCE AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SANCTIFIED BY FAITH IN ME.”

2. “SO THAT THEY MAY TURN”

These words tell us that **“THEY”** are Jews and Gentiles, and **“THEY”** were, and still are going in the wrong direction.

The word **“THEY”** is all inclusive as opposed to words like “some” or “a few.” Going a wrong direction leads to a wrong destination.

This word **“TURN”** communicates a sudden, abrupt swing when a person realizes the direction they are headed is leading them to disaster.

The word **“TURN” communicates** that the people addressed realize their lives are in grave danger and need to change the direction they are headed. People are in darkness and need to change the direction they are headed. The only thing that can help them is the gospel.

Acts 26:18 “TO OPEN THEIR EYES SO THAT THEY MAY TURN FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT AND FROM THE DOMINION OF SATAN TO GOD, IN ORDER THAT THEY MAY RECEIVE FORGIVENESS OF SINS AND AN INHERITANCE AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SANCTIFIED BY FAITH IN ME.”

3. “FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT”

There is a separation between “DARKNESS” and “LIGHT.” In Genesis 1:4 it says, “AND GOD SAW THAT THE LIGHT WAS GOOD; AND GOD SEPARATED THE LIGHT FROM THE DARKNESS.”

From the beginning God has separated light from darkness.

God never mixes the two. Man mixes light and darkness and the result is grayness. This same pattern is in 2 Corinthians 6:14,

“DO NOT BE BOUND TOGETHER WITH UNBELIEVERS; FOR WHAT PARTNERSHIP HAVE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND LAWLESSNESS, OR WHAT FELLOWSHIP HAS LIGHT WITH DARKNESS.”

The religious name for mixing darkness and light is ecumenism. God is not ecumenical.

Acts 26:18 “TO OPEN THEIR EYES SO THAT THEY MAY TURN FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT AND FROM THE DOMINION OF SATAN TO GOD, IN ORDER THAT THEY MAY RECEIVE FORGIVENESS OF SINS AND AN INHERITANCE AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SANCTIFIED BY FAITH IN ME.”

4. “AND FROM THE DOMINION OF SATAN TO GOD,”

These words reinforce the words “FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT.”

These words cut across all cultures and religions of the world.

Before God saves a person, no matter how religious or benevolent he or she is, they are under “**THE DOMINION OF SATAN.**” When a person hears the gospel, believes the gospel, repents, and is born-again, then that person comes “**TO GOD.**” With these words Jesus made a very clear, uncompromising distinction between those who are saved and those who are not. Jesus described non-Christians as being in “**DARKNESS**” and “**THE DOMINION OF SATAN.**”

In 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 it says, “**AND EVEN IF OUR GOSPEL IS VEILED, IT IS VEILED TO THOSE WHO ARE PERISHING, IN WHOSE CASE THE GOD OF THIS WORLD HAS BLINDED THE MINDS OF THE UNBELIEVING, THAT THEY MIGHT NOT SEE THE LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY OF CHRIST, WHO IS THE IMAGE OF GOD.**”

Jesus did not use mushy religious jargon to describe non-Christians as “un-churched” or of “other faith communities.”

Acts 26:18 “TO OPEN THEIR EYES SO THAT THEY MAY TURN FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT AND FROM THE DOMINION OF SATAN TO GOD, IN ORDER THAT THEY MAY RECEIVE FORGIVENESS OF SINS AND AN INHERITANCE AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SANCTIFIED BY FAITH IN ME.”

5. “IN ORDER THAT THEY MAY RECEIVE FORGIVENESS OF SINS”

These words tell us that salvation is possible in the present.

The word “**RECEIVE**” tells us salvation is a gift. When you “**RECEIVE**” something it communicates that someone else paid for it and is offering to give it to you. You choose to either “**RECEIVE**” it or not.

We also learn from these words that forgiveness from sins is something received, rather than something earned. Salvation is a gift, paid for by Jesus Christ dying on the cross. Salvation is free and it will cost you everything!

Jesus gave 100% for you and He requires that much in return!

Acts 26:18 “TO OPEN THEIR EYES SO THAT THEY MAY TURN FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT AND FROM THE DOMINION OF SATAN TO GOD, IN ORDER THAT THEY MAY RECEIVE FORGIVENESS OF SINS AND AN INHERITANCE AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SANCTIFIED BY FAITH IN ME.”

6. “AND AN INHERITANCE”

Salvation is now, “AND AN INHERITANCE” is in the future.

As Christians we have this wonderful promise of a glorious future.

As Christians our focus is towards the future rather than the past.

The unsaved person often lives in the past because they do not have a future.

As a person gets older the realization of a “AN INHERITANCE” becomes more of a reality compared to when the person is still young.

For Christians growing physically older and who are living right before God, the reality of “AN INHERITANCE” soon coming to them should get them pretty excited about getting old. The non-Christian will often not want to grow old because they have nothing to look forward to.

Acts 26:18 “TO OPEN THEIR EYES SO THAT THEY MAY TURN FROM DARKNESS TO LIGHT AND FROM THE DOMINION OF SATAN TO GOD, IN ORDER THAT THEY MAY RECEIVE FORGIVENESS OF SINS AND AN INHERITANCE AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SANCTIFIED BY FAITH IN ME.”

7. “AMONG THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN SANCTIFIED BY FAITH IN ME.”

Now let us consider what “**SANCTIFIED**” means. It means to cleanse, washed, consecrated, purified. Now consider the words “**SANCTIFIED BY FAITH IN ME.**” There is only one source of cleansing. These words were spoken by the Lord Jesus so faith in Him is the only source of cleansing and purification from this filthy, corrupt world. As we walk by faith in God’s word we experience His cleansing, purifying power at work in our lives.

Acts 26:19 “I DID NOT PROVE DISOBEDIENT TO THE HEAVENLY VISION.”

Paul is describing that he did not disobey the vision the Lord had given him.

Notice the verse reads, **“I DID NOT PROVE DISOBEDIENT.”**

Paul was focused on obeying the Lord.

Paul was not focused on others disobeying the Lord.

Paul was not comparing himself with other people.

Paul is speaking about himself and not what other people did or did not do.

Has the Holy Spirit birthed a vision in your heart? Are you satisfied with what God has given you to do, or do you secretly envy the vision God has given someone else? Do you think the vision someone else has is more exciting than yours? If you are not content, repent!

Acts 26: 20 “I PREACHED THAT THEY SHOULD REPENT AND TURN TO GOD AND DEMONSTRATE THEIR REPENTANCE BY THEIR DEEDS.

With the Holy Spirit to illuminate this verse let us examine this verse in three parts.

1. “I PREACHED”

In this verse we learn what Paul preached. His message was consistent through all his life as a Christian. As the years passed in the life of Paul he constantly faced opposition. Yet he did not dilute the delivery of the gospel. Paul did not retract but stayed on track!

The Lord had called Paul to preach and that is what he did.

Paul had repented of his sins and he proved it by doing what God wanted him to do.

2. “THEY SHOULD REPENT AND TURN TO GOD”

We learn a certain order is evident. The word “**REPENT**” comes first, and “**TURN TO GOD**” comes second. A person does not “**TURN TO GOD**” unless they have “**REPENTED.**” It is not a correct statement to say, “When I found God,” because it is God who found us.

We are the ones that were lost, and not God.

Acts 26: 20 “I PREACHED THAT THEY SHOULD REPENT AND TURN TO GOD AND DEMONSTRATE THEIR REPENTANCE BY THEIR DEEDS.

3. “AND DEMONSTRATE THEIR REPENTANCE BY THEIR DEEDS.”

From this part of verse 20 we learn that repentance can be proven, and how it can be proven. The deeds a person does after repentance will prove if the repentance was genuine or not. When we are in a religious gathering where the gospel is addressed and someone repents, it is advisable to not rush to congratulate the person for repenting. It is best to see if the person's deeds are different after repenting.

Here it is Paul saying these words so let us consider the deeds that followed his repentance. In Acts 9:1 it says,

“NOW SAUL, STILL BREATHING THREATS AND MURDER AGAINST THE DISCIPLES OF THE LORD...”

Then further on in Acts 9:11 it says about Saul, **“HE IS PRAYING.”**

**Acts 26:21 “FOR THIS REASON SOME JEWS SEIZED ME IN THE TEMPLE
AND TRIED TO PUT ME TO DEATH.”**

These two verses show us a picture of before and after repentance.

Paul's repentance was proven by the deeds that followed. We are to do good works, but good works are only good if a person has first repented from their sins and saved through Jesus Christ. In these words Paul is telling Festus and King Agrippa of a horrific experience he suffered because of the Jews. In Acts 21:30-32 Jews stirred up the crowd and they dragged Paul out of the temple and beat him. Paul went through a traumatizing experience, but in Acts 26: 24 we see how Festus responds to Paul.

Festus was insulting rather than sympathizing.

Festus was critical rather than compassionate.

Festus was sarcastic rather than sympathetic.

Festus was caustic rather than concerned.

As we consider this verse, let us examine our own hearts. When someone tells us of a horrible situation they have been through, how do we respond?

Acts 26:22 “AND SO, HAVING OBTAINED HELP FROM GOD, I STAND TO THIS DAY TESTIFYING BOTH TO SMALL AND GREAT, STATING NOTHING BUT WHAT THE PROPHETS AND MOSES SAID WAS GOING TO TAKE PLACE.”

As always we need the Holy Spirit to give us light in these seven parts.

1. “AND SO,”

These words continue what was addressed in the previous verse. At first glance these words may seem insignificant yet God used them in the Bible.

Do you feel like these words?

Do you sometimes feel insignificant?

If you do then be encouraged because God wants to use you. In the NIV the word **“BUT”** is used in place of the words **“AND SO.”** In NASB, the last word in verse 21 is **“DEATH.”** But the story does not end with death **“BUT”** goes on in this verse to describe that God helped Paul. The beginning of this verse brings hope. Death is not the end of the story. The Lord never leaves us feeling hopeless but always gives us hope.

Acts 26:22 “AND SO, HAVING OBTAINED HELP FROM GOD, I STAND TO THIS DAY TESTIFYING BOTH TO SMALL AND GREAT, STATING NOTHING BUT WHAT THE PROPHETS AND MOSES SAID WAS GOING TO TAKE PLACE.”

2. “HAVING OBTAINED HELP FROM GOD,”

From these words we learn five things about Paul so we can compare our lives with him and ask ourselves five questions.

1. Paul gave God the glory for what he did.

Do we give God the glory for what we do?

2. Paul knew he needed God to help him.

Do we know we need God to help us?

3. Paul also knew God did help him.

Do we know God does help us?

4. Paul told Festus and Agrippa that he needed God to help him.

Do we ever tell people that we need God to help us?

5. Paul told Festus and Agrippa that God helped him.

Do we ever tell people that God helps us?

Do we know we need God to help us?

If we do not know we need God's help, then we really need God's help. Humility knows it needs God, but pride does not.

Acts 26:22 “AND SO, HAVING OBTAINED HELP FROM GOD, I STAND TO THIS DAY TESTIFYING BOTH TO SMALL AND GREAT, STATING NOTHING BUT WHAT THE PROPHETS AND MOSES SAID WAS GOING TO TAKE PLACE.”

3. “I STAND TO THIS DAY”

Paul said these words in the present tense.

Paul knew the only reason he was able to stand was because of God's help.

If God did not help him he would have fallen. The same is true for us. If God does not help us stand, we are stranded! The only reason we are able to stand is because of God's grace.

If God did not constantly help us every second of every day we would fall.

Acts 26:22 “AND SO, HAVING OBTAINED HELP FROM GOD, I STAND TO THIS DAY TESTIFYING BOTH TO SMALL AND GREAT, STATING NOTHING BUT WHAT THE PROPHETS AND MOSES SAID WAS GOING TO TAKE PLACE.”

4. “TESTIFYING TO BOTH SMALL AND GREAT,”

The words “SMALL” and “GREAT” can refer to numerical quantities in an audience. The words can refer to people in low positions or high positions. Whichever or both, Paul preached to them without distinction. Both were equally important. Paul preached about prophecies concerning Jesus Christ. The source for Paul's preaching material were the Scriptures rather than reading and plagiarizing sermons someone else wrote.

In Preachers and Preaching, Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said, “Preachers who have to go to books to get sermons are generally caught out! This was brought home to me when I lived in South Wales. There was a famous religious bookstore in a certain town, and preachers from the outlying district used to go into the market and to visit the bookstore once a week or more. They all went to this bookstore and bought the various books. The tendency was, naturally, for all to buy the same books, and the result was that many of them were preaching the same sermon.”

Acts 26:22 “AND SO, HAVING OBTAINED HELP FROM GOD, I STAND TO THIS DAY TESTIFYING BOTH TO SMALL AND GREAT, STATING NOTHING BUT WHAT THE PROPHETS AND MOSES SAID WAS GOING TO TAKE PLACE.”

5. “STATING NOTHING BUT”

Paul believed and taught in line with what the Prophets and Moses said. Paul carefully spoke in agreement to what the Scriptures said.

Paul never taught beyond what the Scriptures taught.

Are we careful to believe and speak in line to what the Scriptures teach?

If it does not go by the Word, it does not go.

Acts 26:22 “AND SO, HAVING OBTAINED HELP FROM GOD, I STAND TO THIS DAY TESTIFYING BOTH TO SMALL AND GREAT, STATING NOTHING BUT WHAT THE PROPHETS AND MOSES SAID WAS GOING TO TAKE PLACE.”

6. “WHAT THE PROPHETS AND MOSES SAID”

Paul referred to two areas of the Scriptures, the “PROPHETS AND MOSES.”

Paul did not just say one without the other.

Paul taught what was supported by different areas in Scripture.

Paul did not just take one part to support his doctrine.

Does the doctrine we believe have its support from more than one verse?

For example 1 Corinthians 13:10 says,

“BUT WHEN PERFECTION COMES, THE IMPERFECT DISAPPEARS.”

Acts 26:22 “AND SO, HAVING OBTAINED HELP FROM GOD, I STAND TO THIS DAY TESTIFYING BOTH TO SMALL AND GREAT, STATING NOTHING BUT WHAT THE PROPHETS AND MOSES SAID WAS GOING TO TAKE PLACE.”

Some may use this verse to explain why God apparently does not perform signs and wonders today. Some refer to this verse as referring to the completion of the Holy Bible. But the context does seem very clear to be referring to the second coming of Christ.

In Surprised by the Power of the Spirit, Dr. Jack Deere wrote,

“Others attempt to argue that “perfection” refers to the completed canon of Scripture. When the last book of the Bible was written, the church had its complete Bible and no longer needed the miraculous spiritual gifts.”

Paul supported his teaching by more than just one source and we are to follow his example. What **“THE PROPHETS AND MOSES SAID”** about Jesus the Messiah were in harmony rather than contradictory.

The Bible does not contradict itself.

Is our speech in line or in agreement to what the Scriptures say?

Acts 26:22 “AND SO, HAVING OBTAINED HELP FROM GOD, I STAND TO THIS DAY TESTIFYING BOTH TO SMALL AND GREAT, STATING NOTHING BUT WHAT THE PROPHETS AND MOSES SAID WAS GOING TO TAKE PLACE.”

7. “WAS GOING TO TAKE PLACE.”

These words speak of certainty. The Scriptures say something will occur and it does. The Bible does not use words like “probably” or “maybe.”

In the two parts of the Old Testament Paul is referring to prophecies about Jesus Christ.

Prophecies that come to pass are from God.

Prophecies that do not come to pass are not from God.

In Deuteronomy 18:22 it says, **“IF WHAT A PROPHET PROCLAIMS IN THE NAME OF THE LORD DOES NOT TAKE PLACE OR COME TRUE, THAT IS A MESSAGE THE LORD HAS NOT SPOKEN.”**

**Acts 26:24 “AND WHILE PAUL WAS SAYING THIS IN HIS DEFENSE,
FESTUS SAID IN A LOUD VOICE,”**

Up until this verse Paul was speaking. Then we suddenly hear Festus interrupting Paul in the middle of what he was saying. Notice as well Festus interrupted in a loud impatient tone of voice instead of a soft voice. Festus's actions are in stark contrast to how Jesus acted towards people.

In Mathew 22:24 to 28 we read the words the Sadducees said to Jesus.

In this example Jesus waited before answering these people in verse 29. The action of Jesus reflects humility in His character.

Festus did not wait for Paul to finish speaking.

Jesus waited for people to finish speaking.

Which of them do we resemble, Festus or Jesus?

**Acts 26:24 “AND WHILE PAUL WAS SAYING THIS IN HIS DEFENSE,
FESTUS SAID IN A LOUD VOICE,”**

The behavior of Festus is reflected in Mark 14:43 to 45 where Jesus was speaking and Judas came up and said, “**RABBI!**” Judas interrupted Jesus as Festus did with Paul. Do we interrupt people when they are speaking?

If we do, then we know who our behavior resembles. In Proverbs 18:13 it says, “**HE WHO GIVES AN ANSWER BEFORE HE HEARS, IT IS FOLLY AND SHAME TO HIM.**”

Waiting for the other person to finish speaking shows patience. Interrupting shows impatience.

**Acts 26:24 “PAUL, YOU ARE OUT OF YOUR MIND!
YOUR GREAT LEARNING IS DRIVING YOU MAD.”**

From Acts 26:2 Paul was speaking. In this verse Paul was abruptly cut off. Festus had been listening but in verse 23 Paul described Jesus suffering and His resurrection from the dead. What Paul said got an abrupt reaction from.

Now consider four things how Festus reacted to the truth.

1. Did Festus abruptly stop Paul because he was feeling uncomfortable?
2. Did Festus abruptly stop Paul because he did not like hearing the truth?
3. Did Festus abruptly stop Paul because he was feeling conviction of sin?
4. Did Festus abruptly stop Paul because he was getting his sin exposed?

**Acts 26:24 “PAUL, YOU ARE OUT OF YOUR MIND!
YOUR GREAT LEARNING IS DRIVING YOU MAD.”**

Now ask yourself four questions based on how Festus reacted to the truth.

1. Do we abruptly stop reading because we are feeling uncomfortable?
2. Do we abruptly stop reading because we do not like what it is saying?
3. Do we abruptly stop reading because we are feeling conviction of sin?
4. Do we abruptly stop reading because we get sin exposed in our hearts?

When you read the Bible do you ever abruptly stop and refuse to read a certain part that is making you feel uncomfortable?

As we continue reading Acts 26 we notice Festus no longer interacted with what Paul was saying.

Paul spoke to king Agrippa but not to Festus. What this teaches us is when we refuse to listen like Festus did; the Bible does continue speaking to others but not to us. We need to heed the injunction of Hebrews 12:25, **“SEE TO IT THAT YOU DO NOT REFUSE HIM WHO IS SPEAKING.”**

**Acts 26:25 “BUT PAUL SAID, “I AM NOT OUT OF MY MIND,
MOST EXCELLENT FESTUS, BUT I UTTER WORDS OF SOBER TRUTH.”**

Back in Acts 24:27 Paul had been left in jail two years. Paul had done nothing wrong yet wrong was being done to him.

Now in this verse Paul is speaking in a very respectful manner to Festus who had been very arrogant and rude to him.

In John Wesley’s Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible, John Wesley said, *“How inexpressibly beautiful is this reply! How strong! Yet how decent and respectful.”* The way Paul responded, reflected what Peter wrote about Jesus in 1 Peter 2:23, **“WHEN THEY HURLED THEIR INSULTS AT HIM, HE DID NOT RETALIATE, WHEN HE SUFFERED HE MADE NO THREATS.”**

Paul did what 1 Peter 3:9 says, **“DO NOT REPAY EVIL FOR EVIL OR INSULT FOR INSULT, BUT WITH A BLESSING.”**

When we suffer, how do we respond to rude or hurtful people?

The temptation is to be like them, but as Christians we are to be like Jesus. As we humble ourselves before the Lord, He gives us the grace to do what pleases Him.

**Acts 26:27 “KING AGRIPPA, DO YOU BELIEVE THE PROPHETS?
I KNOW THAT YOU DO.”**

For our study of this verse it is important as always to consider the context to which it is found.

In Acts 26: 23 we read of Paul witnessing about Jesus Christ.

In Acts 26: 24 Festus interrupted Paul right in the middle of what he was saying. Festus was rude and did not apologize, yet Paul did not get distracted from what he was saying. The distracting voice did not distract Paul from his line of thought. In this verse Paul kept right on going without being angry or frustrated. Paul kept on witnessing about Jesus Christ even though he was treated rudely by an arrogant person. In life are many distracting voices just like that of Festus’.

**Acts 26:27 “KING AGRIPPA, DO YOU BELIEVE THE PROPHETS?
I KNOW THAT YOU DO.”**

Arrogant voices try to distract our attention off the Jesus.

But with the Lord's help we will not be distracted.

Arrogant voices try to make us angry.

But with the Lord's help we will not get angry.

Arrogant voices try to make us frustrated.

But with the Lord's help we will not get frustrated.

Arrogant voices try to make us sway.

But with the Lord's help we will not be swayed.

Arrogant voices try to make us stray.

But with the Lord's help we will not stray.

Arrogant voices try to make us critical.

But with the Lord's help we will be compassionate.

Arrogant voices try to make us hard in our hearts.

But with the Lord's help we will have soft hearts.

May we be like Paul, when people try to hurt us, let us keep testifying about our Lord Jesus.

**Acts 26:27 “KING AGRIPPA, DO YOU BELIEVE THE PROPHETS?
I KNOW THAT YOU DO.”**

Remember Festus was with King Agrippa. In Acts 26: 24 Festus rudely interrupted Paul. As we read through Acts 26 we get a sense that Agrippa was open to what Paul was saying whereas Festus most definitely was not. May we consider that when sharing the gospel it is often best to talk to someone when they are alone without someone to interrupt.

Acts 26:28 “AND AGRIPPA REPLIED TO PAUL, “IN A SHORT TIME YOU WILL PERSUADE ME TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN.”

Here we see Agrippa was confronted with the gospel. The last we hear about him is in Acts 26: 32 where he was speaking to Festus. After that we never hear of him again. As far as we know from Scripture he never repented from his sins. The Holy Spirit had this situation with Paul witnessing to Agrippa included in Scripture even though Agrippa never repented. We learn from verse 29 that Paul most certainly wanted Agrippa to become a Christian. We might be tempted to think Paul failed in this situation. But humility dares to admit when things do not go as we wanted. The Bible not only records successes but also failures. We are wise to not just talk about our success but also our failures.

A wonderful example of this is the book of Jonah. It is very likely Jonah wrote the book of Jonah. Yet he wrote about his rebellion against God.

Jonah wrote about his disdain for the lost souls in Nineveh.

Jonah was honest about his negative attitudes, and not just the success and the incredible revival in Jonah 3.

Acts 26:29 “AND PAUL SAID, “I WOULD TO GOD, THAT WHETHER IN A SHORT OR LONG TIME, NOT ONLY YOU, BUT ALSO ALL WHO HEAR ME THIS DAY, MIGHT BECOME SUCH AS I AM, EXCEPT FOR THESE CHAINS.”

In this verse we hear a pleading in the words Paul spoke. A pleading not that he would be freed from his chains but for his listeners to be freed from the chains of sin in their lives. Paul was pleading that they be released rather than he be released.

In verse 24 Festus said, **“PAUL, YOU ARE OUT OF YOUR MIND!”**

Festus certainly was not concerned about Paul by the way he insulted and put him down. Yet by the grace of God, Paul was concerned for people who were not concerned about him.

Now please focus on the words, **“BECOME SUCH AS I AM.”**

Paul wanted these people to become Christians. May we ask ourselves a question. When we look at neighbours and people at work, do we wish they would become Christians?

Are we concerned about those who are not concerned about us? In the words Paul spoke we can hear concern for them and not for himself.

Are we concerned for the lost? Or are we concerned about what they might think about us? Are we more concerned about wanting people to accept us than we are about them accepting Jesus Christ?

Acts 26:29 “AND PAUL SAID, “I WOULD TO GOD, THAT WHETHER IN A SHORT OR LONG TIME, NOT ONLY YOU, BUT ALSO ALL WHO HEAR ME THIS DAY, MIGHT BECOME SUCH AS I AM, EXCEPT FOR THESE CHAINS.”

In the NASB, verse 29 is composed of seven parts. Let us examine them

1. “AND PAUL SAID,”
2. “I WOULD TO GOD,”
3. “THAT WHETHER IN A SHORT TIME OR LONG TIME,”
4. “NOT ONLY YOU,”
5. “BUT ALSO ALL WHO HEAR ME THIS DAY,”
6. “MIGHT BECOME SUCH AS I AM,”
7. “EXCEPT FOR THESE CHAINS.”

As we read what Paul said to Agrippa certain words communicate his conduct and character, control, compelling, convicting, concern, concise, calm, clear. Reading from Acts 26: 26 to 28 we get the impression Paul was in charge rather than Agrippa. Then we come to the final words in this verse, “**EXCEPT FOR THESE CHAINS.**” Then we realize Paul was in chains as he was speaking to these powerful people.

Acts 26:29 “AND PAUL SAID, “I WOULD TO GOD, THAT WHETHER IN A SHORT OR LONG TIME, NOT ONLY YOU, BUT ALSO ALL WHO HEAR ME THIS DAY, MIGHT BECOME SUCH AS I AM, EXCEPT FOR THESE CHAINS.”

Imagine Paul in chains.

Imagine Agrippa in charge.

Imagine Paul a prisoner.

Imagine Agrippa with his; perks, pomp, power, prestige, and pageantry.

Agrippa had a throne, Paul was thrown in a prison.

Yet Paul the prisoner was preaching to a mere king about the mighty King of Kings. Now let us compare each of these men.

To the world, Agrippa would seem successful while Paul would seem a failure. But Paul went to heaven. As far as we know Agrippa did not.

Now who was the successful one?

Acts 27:10-39

Acts 27:10-39 provides us with a graphic picture of the storm and subsequent shipwreck that Paul experienced on his way to Rome.

Through this chapter are a considerable number of vital lessons for each of us to learn and apply.

The lessons can be divided into three distinct parts. We shall now go through these three parts and pray for the Lord to help us.

1. Causes for going into storms.
2. Reactions in storms.
3. Purposes of storms.

Acts 27:10-39

Now please consider this first point.

1. Causes for going into storms.

Under this point are two parts.

A) Disobedience and B) Obedience.

Here are three causes for going into storms.

A) Disobedience.

1. Verse 10 and 11.

“MEN, I CAN SEE THAT OUR VOYAGE IS GOING TO BE DISASTEROUS AND BRING GREAT LOSS TO SHIP AND CARGO, AND TO OUR OWN LIVES ALSO. BUT THE CENTURION, INSTEAD OF LISTENING TO WHAT PAUL SAID, FOLLOWED THE ADVICE OF THE PILOT AND THE OWNER OF THE SHIP.”

Acts 27:10-39

In verse 10 Paul is giving godly, wise counsel.

Then in verse 11 the centurion chose to listen to the pilot and owner of the ship's advice rather than listen to Paul.

May we stop and ask ourselves, who do you think was richer, the owner of the ship or Paul? The answer is of course, the owner. This observation mirrors Ecclesiastes 9:16,

“...THE WISDOM OF THE POOR MAN IS DESPISED AND HIS WORDS ARE NOT HEEDDED.”

Instead of heeding the advice of Paul he sought the opinions of others.

Do we submit to godly counsel? Or do we ask people for advice which agrees with what we want to do? If you ask enough people, sooner or later you will find someone who will tell you what you want to hear. In this Acts 27 the result of refusing godly counsel was shipwreck. When we refuse to listen to godly counsel, the result will be the same.

Acts 27:10-39

2. Verse 12.

“SINCE THE HARBOUR WAS UNSUITABLE TO WINTER IN, THE MAJORITY DECIDED WE SHOULD SAIL ON, HOPING TO REACH PHOENIX AND WINTER THERE.”

In this verse a decision is made that is contrary to Paul's words in verse 10. As we look at the words, there is no reference to praying for guidance.

This verse is an example of rationalism.

Rationalism are opinions deduced from reason.

Rationalism opposes inspiration and revelation.

Rationalism disagrees with the supernatural.

Paul's words were prophetic as we later see in verse 22. These people made their decision based on reason rather than a prophetic word.

Shipwreck is certain when we make decisions contrary to God's word.

Acts 27:10-39

3. Verse 13.

“WHEN A GENTLE SOUTH WIND BEGAN TO BLOW, THEY THOUGHT THEY HAD OBTAINED WHAT THEY WANTED; SO THEY WEIGHED ANCHOR AND SAILED ALONG THE SHORE OF CRETE.”

In this verse we find three things that contribute to going into a storm.

1. In verse 13 is self-reliance.

Notice the words “WHEN A GENTLE SOUTH WIND BEGAN TO BLOW.”

When they started out, everything was sailing along smoothly.

When everything in our lives is sailing along smoothly there's a temptation to rely on ourselves instead of the Lord.

When we do not think we need the Lord that's when we need the Lord.

Acts 27:10-39

2. In verse 13 is presumption.

Notice the words “THEY THOUGHT.” They trusted in their understanding rather than ask the Lord for guidance.

3. In verse 13 is self-centeredness.

Notice the words “THEY THOUGHT THEY HAD OBTAINED WHAT THEY WANTED; SO THEY WEIGHED ANCHOR.”

In this part of the verse the word “THEY” appears four times.

They were only thinking about themselves and not the Lord.

They were thinking only about what they wanted and not about what the Lord wanted. When we make decisions based on what we want rather than what the Lord wants, then we are heading for a storm and shipwreck.

Acts 27:10-39

B) Obedience.

This is now the second section concerning causes for going into storms.

We see in Acts 23:11 the Lord told Paul that he must testify about Him in Rome. Then in Acts 28:16 Paul finally did arrive in Rome. Yes Paul arrived in Rome alright, in a boat carrying prisoners rather than on a luxury ocean liner. Between being called by the Lord to testify in Rome and actually arriving in Rome, Paul had to pass through a storm. Paul's obedience did not exclude him from going through a terrible storm. When the Lord calls us to do a particular task we should not be too surprised at having to go through a terrible storm before we accomplish the task.

Please be encouraged, the Lord will take us through any storm we might face. In Luke 8:22-26 is a wonderful example of this pattern.

Acts 27:10-39

2. Reactions in storms.

Under this are two sub-headings.

A) Negative reactions.

B) Positive reactions.

We will examine eight points, four negative reactions and four positive reactions.

A) Negative reactions.

1. The first negative reaction is compromise.

Verses 14 and 15. “BEFORE VERY LONG, A WIND OF HURRICANE FORCE, CALLED THE “NORTHEASTER,” SWEEPED DOWN FROM THE ISLAND. THE SHIP WAS CAUGHT BY THE STORM AND COULD NOT HEAD INTO THE WIND; SO WE GAVE WAY TO IT AND WERE DRIVEN ALONG.”

We see the storm came suddenly. Everything was going along fine then trouble hit and they gave up. Here is a picture of people no longer resisting the pressure and influences of the world. In the midst of the sudden storms in life there comes the temptation to compromise our devotion to Christ and give in to the pressure, and thus being driven along like this ship.

Acts 27:10-39

2. The second negative reaction is self-effort.

Verses 16 to 19. “AS WE PASSED TO THE LEE OF A SMALL ISLAND CALLED CAUDA, WE WERE HARDLY ABLE TO MAKE THE LIFEBOAT SECURE. WHEN THE MEN HAD HOISTED IT ABOARD, THEY PASSED ROPES UNDER THE SHIP ITSELF TO HOLD IT TOGETHER. FEARING THAT THEY WOULD RUN AGROUND ON THE SANDBARS OF SYRTIS, THEY LOWERED THE SEA ANCHOR AND LET THE SHIP BE DRIVEN ALONG. WE TOOK SUCH A VIOLENT BATTERING FROM THE STORM THAT THE NEXT DAY THAT THEY BEGAN TO THROW THE CARGO OVERBOARD. ON THE THIRD DAY, THEY THREW THE SHIP’S TACKLE OVERBOARD WITH THEIR OWN HANDS.”

From these words we find several examples of self-effort. The sailors did everything possible to save themselves, except cry out to God to save them. Self-effort leads to self-destruction.

Acts 27:10-39

3. The third negative reaction is hopelessness.

Verse 20, “WHEN NEITHER SUN NOR STARS APPEARED FOR MANY DAYS AND THE STORM CONTINUED RAGING, WE FINALLY GAVE UP ALL HOPE OF BEING SAVED.”

There was not any sun or stars for many days. In these people’s lives they were going through a time of terrible darkness. We notice the words “**WE FINALLY GAVE UP HOPE**” and understand that in this dark time they had given up hope. In times of darkness we are tempted to feel hopelessness and despair. In the Amplified Bible it says, “**HOPE OF BEING SAVED WAS FINALLY ABANDONED.**” In dark times we might feel abandoned by the Lord.

Acts 27:10-39

4. The fourth negative reaction is fear and trying to escape.

Verse 29 and 30. “FEARING THAT WE WOULD BE DASHED AGAINST THE ROCKS, THEY DROPPED FOUR ANCHORS FROM THE STERN AND PRAYED FOR DAYLIGHT. IN AN ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE FROM THE SHIP, THE SAILORS LET THE LIFEBOAT DOWN INTO THE SEA, PRETENDING THEY WERE GOING TO LOWER SOME ANCHORS FROM THE BOW.”

Fear manifests in various forms. Here it manifests in fear of the future, and fear of dying. In verse 24 an angel from God said, “DO NOT BE AFRAID, PAUL. YOU MUST STAND TRIAL BEFORE CAESAR, AND GOD HAS GRACIOUSLY GIVEN YOU THE LIVES OF ALL WHO SAIL WITH YOU.”

The men on board believed the very opposite to what the angel from God had said and the result was fear.

Fear is the fruit of believing the opposite of what the Scriptures say.

Fear was a result of believing what they saw rather than what God said.

In difficult situations it is common for people to try to escape. Often the Lord wants to change us before He changes our circumstances.

Acts 27:10-39

B) Positive reactions.

1. The first positive reaction is to encourage others.

Verse 22. “BUT NOW I URGE YOU TO KEEP UP YOUR COURAGE, BECAUSE NOT ONE OF YOU WILL BE LOST; ONLY THE SHIP WILL BE DESTROYED.”

Here and in verses 25, 33, and 34 Paul is encouraging others in the midst of a storm. In the midst of a storm in our own lives it requires a lot of self-denial to encourage others. The tongue does not want to deny itself from expressing self-pity in storms. We also learn that in Paul's words there is no faultfinding, or criticism. When we are in storms of life, are we faultfinding and critical?

Acts 27:10-39

2. The second positive reaction is be discerning.

Verses 23 and 24. “LAST NIGHT AN ANGEL OF THE GOD WHOSE I AM AND WHOM I SERVE STOOD BESIDE ME AND SAID, “DO NOT BE AFRAID, PAUL. YOU MUST STAND TRIAL BEFORE CAESAR; AND GOD HAS GRACIOUSLY GIVEN YOU THE LIVES OF ALL WHO SAIL WITH YOU.”

In these two verses an angel from God is speaking in agreement to what Jesus said in Acts 23:11. Practice discernment by comparing what we hear people say with what the Bible says. In the midst of storms is the strong temptation to entertain thoughts flooding our minds which are contrary to the word of God. Thoughts that contradict Scripture are demonic in origin. Other verses that relate to this thought include,

Acts 17:11, Galatians 1:8, Ephesians 6:16, and Hebrews 5:14.

Acts 27:10-39

3. The third positive reaction is keep trusting the Lord.

Verse 25. **“SO KEEP UP YOUR COURAGE, MEN, FOR I HAVE FAITH IN GOD, THAT IT WILL HAPPEN JUST AS HE TOLD ME.”**

The storm that Paul was going through revealed the depth of his faith. Storms in life reveal the depth of faith in our lives.

In verses 23 and 25 Paul verbally confessed his faith in the Lord while in the midst of a storm.

We are advised to follow Pauls' example and verbally confess our faith in God's promises in the midst of stormy circumstances.

In Romans 4:20 it says, **“YET HE DID NOT WAVER THROUGH UNBELIEF REGARDING THE PROMISE OF GOD, BUT WAS STRENGTHENED IN HIS FAITH AND GAVE GLORY TO GOD.”**

Here are nine words to remember.

Take God's Side. Expect a Miracle. Never Give Up.

Acts 27:10-39

4. The fourth positive reaction is concern for others.

Verse 31. “THEN PAUL SAID TO THE CENTURION AND THE SAILORS, “UNLESS THESE MEN STAY WITH THE SHIP, YOU CANNOT BE SAVED.”

In the midst of the storm Paul was concerned for others. Paul was concerned for people who were not concerned about him.

In storms the temptation is to only be concerned about yourself.

To be concerned about others, especially those who are not concerned about you requires considerable self-denial.

Acts 27:10-39

3. Purposes of Storms.

Verse 18. “THEY BEGAN TO JETTISON THE CARGO;”

Verse 19. “THEY THREW THE SHIPS TACKLE OVERBOARD.”

Verse 38. “THEY LIGHTENED THE SHIP BY THROWING THE GRAIN INTO THE SEA.”

In these verses the sailors got rid of things in the boat. The storm caused them to get rid of things that were on board.

Storms reveal things in our lives that need to be removed.

Storms reveal wrong attitudes and wrong responses that are dormant in our hearts. Every attitude in my heart that does not agree with the Holy Bible is wrong and needs to be thrown overboard.

Acts 27:10-39

Verse 23. **“FOR THIS VERY NIGHT”**

Storms test us to see if we will obey God’s word. From this part of the verse we learn it was night. Night is a dark time. Storms are characterized by times of darkness. We need to walk in the light of God’s word in dark times.

Verse 24. **“YOU MUST STAND BEFORE CAESAR;”**

Storms prepare us for the task God has for us. Before Paul was to stand before Caesar he had to withstand a storm.

Verse 25. **“KEEP UP YOUR COURAGE, MEN, FOR I BELIEVE GOD.”**

Storms test our faith in God and what He has said to us.

Storms force us to either believe God or belittle God.

In this verse Paul is giving strength to the men because he had received strength from the Lord.

In the storm Paul was confessing his faith in the Lord. When we are in dark times it is vital we confess our trust in the Lord.

Acts 27:10-39

Verse 32. **“CUT AWAY THE ROPES OF THE SHIP’S BOAT,”**

Storms show us ropes in our lives that need cutting off. For instance, ropes of self-confidence, verse 12, and self-reliance, verse 13.

God lets storms last until these ropes are cut off. Once ropes are cut then comes verse 33,

Verse 33. **“THE DAY WAS ABOUT TO DAWN.”**

Verse 39. **“AND WHEN DAY CAME,”**

We conclude this study and see the storm in Acts 27 was temporary and the storms in our lives are temporary. God delivered Paul for His purposes and He will deliver us from all of life’s storms for His purposes.

**Acts 27:23 “LAST NIGHT AN ANGEL OF THE GOD
WHOSE I AM AND WHOM I SERVE STOOD BESIDE ME.”**

From this magnificent verse is considerable light to receive as the Holy Spirit illuminates it in these four parts.

1. “LAST NIGHT AN ANGEL.”
2. “OF THE GOD.”
3. “WHOSE I AM AND WHOM I SERVE.”
4. “STOOD BESIDE ME.”

Now let us begin our study of these four parts.

1. “LAST NIGHT AN ANGEL.”

This event that Paul experienced was very recent. It was not something that happened long ago, back in the good old days. His spiritual experiences were current. Paul was not living on experiences that happened long ago. Are you currently experiencing anything in your Christian experience, or are the experiences only things that happened years ago? If we are not experiencing God's work in our life then we need to ask why. If we are experiencing God's work in our life we can thank Him for His grace.

**Acts 27:23 “LAST NIGHT AN ANGEL OF THE GOD
WHOSE I AM AND WHOM I SERVE STOOD BESIDE ME.”**

2. “OF THE GOD.”

The order these words appear are significant. “GOD” comes before “I” in this verse. Does “GOD” come before “I” in our daily lives?

Now consider that the angel from God had a specific purpose for appearing to Paul. The angel came to help so Paul would survive the terrible circumstances he was confronted with. The angel was sent to help Paul and make sure he was able to fulfill what God wanted him to do.

In Acts 23:11 it says, **“TAKE COURAGE; FOR AS YOU HAVE SOLEMNLY
WITNESSED TO MY CAUSE IN JERUSALEM, SO YOU MUST WITNESS AT ROME
ALSO.”**

The Lord spoke to Paul about going to Rome. The reason for going was to witness about Jesus. The angel was there to help that task to be done. The angel helped make sure the gospel would be advanced. This angelic encounter was supernatural. Any angel, apparition, or other supernatural being that does not glorify Jesus Christ is not from God.

**Acts 27:23 “LAST NIGHT AN ANGEL OF THE GOD
WHOSE I AM AND WHOM I SERVE STOOD BESIDE ME.”**

3. “WHOSE I AM AND WHOM I SERVE.”

From these words the Lord teaches something vital for believers.

First, position. **“WHOSE I AM.”**

Second, performance. **“AND WHOM I SERVE.”**

First, position is expressed through Jesus in Mark 1:11, **“THOU ART MY
BELOVED SON, IN THEE I AM WELL-PLEASED.”**

Second, performance is expressed through Jesus in Mark 1:15, **“THE TIME IS
FULFILLED, AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS AT HAND; REPENT AND BELIEVE IN
THE GOSPEL.”**

God the Father spoke to Jesus, then His public ministry began. This pattern of first, position and second, performance is seen in 1 Cor. 6:20, **“FOR YOU HAVE
BEEN BOUGHT WITH A PRICE: THEREFORE GLORIFY GOD IN YOUR BODY.”**

Those who are born-again by the Holy Spirit belong to God. We have been bought with a great price, the blood of Jesus. Therefore our response to such great love is great service to our Lord.

**Acts 27:23 “LAST NIGHT AN ANGEL OF THE GOD
WHOSE I AM AND WHOM I SERVE STOOD BESIDE ME.”**

4. “STOOD BESIDE ME.”

As we read these words we are compelled to ask, who stood beside Paul? The answer is earlier in this chapter where Paul describes an angel from God appearing to him. Before leaving this point may we consider that Paul did see an actual angel.

It was not an hallucination.

It was not a figment of his imagination.

Paul was not some sort of religious nut.

Paul was, under the anointing of the Holy Spirit and with the wisdom God gave him, the writer of a large portion of the New Testament, and he saw an angel.

With great commitment and great calling comes great revelation.

The deeper the dealing the higher the calling.

Acts 27:24 “DO NOT BE AFRAID,”

The angel from God spoke these comforting words in the midst of a horrific storm.

The words were spoken to a man who was mature in the faith.

The words were spoken to a man who saw incredible miracles.

The words were spoken to a man who was greatly used by God.

Yet even though Paul was greatly used by God, mature in the faith, and had seen miracles, there were times when circumstances would try to cause him to be afraid.

The fear Paul faced was fear we face.

There were two kinds of fear Paul faced, and they are ones we face.

1. Fear of the future.

2. Fear of the unknown.

These two fears try to paralyze us from going forward and obeying God. Fears feign friendship but are foes.

Acts 27:24 “DO NOT BE AFRAID,”

The words “DO NOT BE AFRAID” help use distinguish the voice of the Lord.

The words “DO NOT BE AFRAID” comfort rather than condemn.

The voice of the Lord comforts rather than condemns us.

That fact helps to discern the voice of the Lord as opposed to other voices that come in the form of thoughts. Other voices, either through people or in the form of thoughts that tempt us to fear, are not from God.

Acts 27:25 “I HAVE FAITH IN GOD THAT IT WILL HAPPEN JUST AS HE TOLD ME.”

In the midst of a storm tossed sea we see a stable Paul in unstable circumstances. From these words please consider the first part, “I HAVE FAITH IN GOD.” It seems Paul was the only one who had faith in God. Where is your faith? Is it in the promises of God or in the promises of people? What the circumstances were shouting were the opposite from what the Lord had told Paul. But Paul believed God rather than what negative circumstances were saying. We grow in faith when we believe what God’s word says instead of what anything or anyone says.

In The Fight, John White said,

“Strong faith is faith that continues to respond to the Word of God in the absence of outward encouragement. To put it another way, great faith is responding to God when it is hardest to do so.”

Acts 27:27 “BUT WHEN THE FOURTEENTH NIGHT HAD COME”

Notice it says **“THE FOURTEENTH NIGHT”** and not the “the fourteenth day.” Night of course refers to a time when all is dark. All is black. In verse 24 the Lord had given Paul a promise and for all those fourteen dark nights Paul had to believe what God had spoken to him rather than what the dark circumstances were screaming at him.

In verse 24, an angel from the Lord said, **“DO NOT BE AFRAID.”** We can almost hear these words spoken in a calm, almost gentle tone of voice.

But by the **“THE FOURTEENTH NIGHT,”** the circumstances and the other people were anything but calm and gentle. When the angel gave Paul comforting words in verse 24, Paul would not have known fourteen more nights would still have to be endured. Paul did not know the storm would last as long as it did. Storms last longer than we would like. Verse 24 came before **“THE FOURTEENTH NIGHT.”**

Acts 27:27 “BUT WHEN THE FOURTEENTH NIGHT HAD COME”

What do you think was happening to Paul for those fourteen nights?

The dark circumstances were likely trying to cause him to doubt what the Lord had promised.

How do you think our faith would be for those fourteen nights?

Perhaps we would be steadfast for the first few dark nights.

But as the nights continued would we waver in unbelief?

Too often dark times are much longer than we would prefer.

The extending of dark times reveals two things.

1. The depth of our faith.
2. The weakness of our faith.

In dark times we choose to listen to the comforting sound of the Scriptures or what horrible circumstances are shouting.

Acts 27:28 “THEY TOOK SOUNDINGS AND FOUND THAT THE WATER WAS A HUNDRED AND TWENTY FEET DEEP. A SHORT TIME LATER THEY TOOK SOUNDINGS AGAIN AND FOUND IT WAS NINETY FEET DEEP.”

As we study this verse please consider the context in which it is found. There are two phrases in verse 27 that are most significant.

1. **“THE FOURTEENTH NIGHT”**
2. **“WHEN ABOUT MIDNIGHT”**

In verse 28 the sailors were starting to realize the water was getting more shallow. Then in verse 29 it says, **“FEARING THAT WE WOULD BE DASHED AGAINST THE ROCKS.”** The picture here was a time when Paul and all those on the ship were having to experience very dark times. The ship was increasingly coming into shallow waters with the threat of shipwreck becoming more real. In those dark times they were in shallow waters.

Paul was in a dark time, and the water was shallow.

Paul however had a faith that was not shallow.

Paul had a deep faith and did not suffer shipwreck.

It is in dark times we find out if our faith is deep or shallow?

Acts 28:2 “AND THE NATIVES SHOWED US EXTRAORDINARY KINDNESS;”

When we read these words it is important to view them in relationship to what has just taken place. In Acts 27, they had gone through a severe storm for many days and had suffered a traumatic shipwreck.

When we read these words we hear gratitude in the speaker's voice.

There is a calmness in the tone of voice in the midst of a terrible situation.

Paul experienced a situation that was in was not his fault.

Paul however did not complain saying, “It is not fair!”

Paul showed no a hint of self-pity or anger for having gone through the difficulties described in the previous chapter.

May we ask ourselves some searching questions?

When we experience difficulties or personal storms in life, is our speech afterwards full of gratitude, calmness and grace? Or is our speech bitter, angry, and full of self-pity? Do we have a great attitude or a grating attitude? Is our speech like Paul's? In 1 Thessalonians 5:18 it says,

“IN EVERYTHING GIVE THANKS; FOR THIS IS GOD'S WILL FOR YOU IN CHRIST JESUS.”

Acts 28:2 “AND THE NATIVES SHOWED US EXTRAORDINARY KINDNESS;”

In these words we can hear a positive attitude being expressed.

Now consider Acts 27:12, **“THE MAJORITY REACHED A DECISION TO PUT OUT TO SEA FROM THERE.”**

The majority made a wrong decision.

The majority made a bad decision. But in Acts 28:2 the person speaking is not talking negatively about the wrong decision people made. The person speaking is saying positive things about people rather than negative things about people.

Do we talk about good things people did or the bad things people did?

Do we talk about wrong things people did or the right things people did?

Acts 28:3 “BUT WHEN PAUL HAD GATHERED A BUNDLE OF STICKS AND LAID THEM ON THE FIRE, A VIPER CAME OUT BECAUSE OF THE HEAT, AND FASTENED ON HIS HAND.”

With the Lord's help we could write several pages on this magnificent verse but for the present time we will consider seven points from it.

1. Consider the words

“BUT WHEN PAUL HAD GATHERED A BUNDLE OF STICKS.”

Now consider the context of this verse and what Paul had just gone through in Acts 27, where he had endured a terrible shipwreck.

Now we see Paul in this verse serving, by gathering sticks.

After going through a terrible situation, Paul was still willing to serve others.

After we go through a terrible situation, are we still willing to serve others?

When reading **“PAUL HAD GATHERED A BUNDLE OF STICKS”** did you think, “What is so important about gathering a bundle of sticks?”

It may not seem important, and sometimes what we do may not seem important. But serving is important no matter what the task is.

Acts 28:3 “BUT WHEN PAUL HAD GATHERED A BUNDLE OF STICKS AND LAID THEM ON THE FIRE, A VIPER CAME OUT BECAUSE OF THE HEAT, AND FASTENED ON HIS HAND.”

2. Consider that Luke wrote the book of Acts.

Luke wrote about Paul serving by gathering sticks. It is not Paul bragging about his serving.

Luke was praising Paul's servant-conduct and not Paul praising himself.

In Proverbs 27:2 it says,

“LET ANOTHER PRAISE YOU, AND NOT YOUR OWN MOUTH.”

3. Consider that under the Holy Spirit's inspiration, Paul wrote some fourteen books in the New Testament.

God used Paul in such a way, but he was still willing to serve. Writing books in the Bible is very significant, yet by God's grace Paul still did what might appear insignificant tasks.

Are we willing to do insignificant tasks? Are we faithful in small things?

Acts 28:3 “BUT WHEN PAUL HAD GATHERED A BUNDLE OF STICKS AND LAID THEM ON THE FIRE, A VIPER CAME OUT BECAUSE OF THE HEAT, AND FASTENED ON HIS HAND.”

4. Consider the words “A VIPER CAME OUT BECAUSE OF THE HEAT.”

Let us remember this was an actual experience Paul encountered. The fire that caused the heat and the viper were real. We do not want to discount the fact that we have made this clear. Let us realize when the viper attacked Paul. When was it? It was soon after Paul was serving others and because of the heat. This sequence of events provides a valuable lesson for us to be aware of when we set our hearts to serve the Lord and others, it is highly likely the viper, the old serpent the devil will attack us. The attack can come through various ways. When you serve, do not be surprised that the serpent will try to stop you.

Acts 28:3 “BUT WHEN PAUL HAD GATHERED A BUNDLE OF STICKS AND LAID THEM ON THE FIRE, A VIPER CAME OUT BECAUSE OF THE HEAT, AND FASTENED ON HIS HAND.”

5. Consider the words “A VIPER CAME OUT BECAUSE OF THE HEAT.”

Heat brought the viper. Notice that before the fire, before the heat, there is no mention of a viper. This situation serves as a graphic picture of the enemy's devices. The viper was a snake. A snake describes the evil one in Genesis 3:1. When things got hot because of the heat, the snake attacked. This is something to be aware of as Christians. If we are spiritually wet and cold we are no threat to the enemy. But when we by God's grace start getting serious about being a Christian, and start to heat up spiritually, be alert to the enemy trying to attack you.

Here is an illustration to explain. Imagine you watch T.V. every night and your spiritual condition has grown cold. Then you repent and decide to pray and study God's word daily and turn the T.V. off. Do not be surprised that various distractions try to stop you from getting hot for Jesus.

Acts 28:3 “BUT WHEN PAUL HAD GATHERED A BUNDLE OF STICKS AND LAID THEM ON THE FIRE, A VIPER CAME OUT BECAUSE OF THE HEAT, AND FASTENED ON HIS HAND.”

6. Consider the words “A VIPER CAME OUT BECAUSE OF THE HEAT.”

A viper is something nasty. And this nasty thing came out because of the heat. Nasty things come out in the heat.

7. Consider the words, “AND FASTENED TO HIS HAND.”

It is significant the viper attacked his hand and not some other part of Paul's body. Why the hand? Remember at the beginning of this verse it said, “PAUL GATHERED A BUNDLE OF STICKS.”

To gather sticks would mean Paul used his hands. It was his hand the viper attacked. The viper attacked the very thing that Paul was serving with.

Beware that the enemy attacks the area where we are serving.

**Acts 28:5 “HOWEVER HE SHOOK THE CREATURE OFF
INTO THE FIRE AND SUFFERED NO HARM.”**

Paul's action serves as a wonderful example for us to follow. Paul shook off the snake after it bit him and he suffered no harm.

If the serpent is latched on to you shake it off.

If the devil has bitten you, or fastened on to you, do not let him keep hurting you.

If the enemy has hurt you through circumstances or people, do not keep letting hurtful situations be fastened on to you in your thinking.

Shake off hurtful memories by forgiving and repeatedly forgiving.

Then you will not suffer any harm.

Notice as well that after Paul shook off the creature, Scripture does not record him ever talking about this hurtful situation.

Paul did not dwell on hurtful past experiences and neither are we.

Has the old serpent latched on to you and tried to hurt you after serving?

Shake him off and keep looking forward, not backward, keep focused on Jesus, not on hurtful experiences.

**Acts 28:8 “AND PAUL WENT IN TO SEE HIM AND AFTER HE HAD PRAYED,
HE LAID HANDS ON HIM AND HEALED HIM.”**

As we follow Paul through Acts we find he had suffered considerably for Christ. In Acts 27 Paul had just gone through a shipwreck, and if that was not enough of a trauma, a viper bit him as he was serving others.

Although Paul had been through so much, here we find him still praying and seeing people get healed. After all the sufferings Paul had gone through it did not stop him from continuing on in prayer or believing that the Lord heals people. After all that he had been through, it had not caused him to become cynical or discouraged. Have you been through a lot of difficult times?

Have those difficulties caused you to become cynical and discouraged? Have those difficult times caused you to stop praying and believing God heals? With the Lord to help us, let us continue on praying and believing. The fear that the man would not get healed did not stop Paul from praying and laying hands on the man to be healed. Does that fear stop us from praying and laying hands on the sick to be healed?

Acts 28:9 “AND AFTER THIS HAPPENED, THE REST OF THE PEOPLE ON THE ISLAND WHO HAD DISEASES WERE COMING TO HIM AND GETTING CURED.”

The first words “AND AFTER THIS HAPPENED” catch our attention and make us ask, what did just happen? Something happened rather than nothing happening. In verse 8 the Lord used Paul to heal the father of a leading man on the island.

What would have happened had Paul not prayed and laid hands on the man and saw him get healed? Well, nothing would have happened!

Acts 28:9 “AND AFTER THIS HAPPENED, THE REST OF THE PEOPLE ON THE ISLAND WHO HAD DISEASES WERE COMING TO HIM AND GETTING CURED.”

After the healing, everyone knew about it.

They did not have advertising to tell them to come and get healed.

They did not have internet.

They did not have T.V.

They did not have cell phones.

What they had was a miracle happen and they were excited and told other people about it. From the beginning of Acts 28, up to this verse the situation almost seems ordinary.

Paul was not preaching to thousands and seeing miracles taking place.

Paul was just on some island.

But the ordinary became extraordinary.

God can take our ordinary days and make them extraordinary days.

Paul was open to the Lord, and if we are as well, we shall see ordinary days become extraordinary days.

Acts 28:10 “THEY HONORED US IN MANY WAYS.”

Here the author is verbalizing how kind the people were to them.

This speaking about how people were kind was also described in verse 2,

“THE ISLANDERS SHOWED US UNUSUAL KINDNESS.”

The author mentions what good things people did for them rather than mentioning bad things people did to them.

Please note, the author did mention in Acts 27:42,

“THE SOLDIERS PLANNED TO KILL THE PRISONERS.”

The author mentioned it but did not keep on talking about it.

Do we mention the good things people do for us or do we just mention the bad things people do to us?

**Acts 28:15 “THE BROTHERS THERE HAD HEARD THAT WE WERE COMING,
AND THEY TRAVELED AS FAR AS THE FORUM OF APPIUS AND THE THREE
TAVERNS TO MEET US. AT THE SIGHT OF THESE MEN PAUL THANKED GOD
AND WAS ENCOURAGED.”**

We learn from this verse that the brothers came from far to meet Paul.
To travel some distance would mean time, effort and expense was made to see Paul. The effort they made showed what they were made of.
Paul was encouraged by believers who were hungry for God.
Paul saw these brothers and thanked God for them.
Paul was encouraged by their dedication.

In Psalm 119:74 it says, **“MAY THOSE WHO FEAR THEE SEE ME AND BE GLAD.”**
When we see Christians who love Jesus do we thank God for them?
People who love Jesus are a source of encouragement to those who love Jesus.
Christians who are carnal and worldly, discourage rather than encourage.
When Christians see us, do they thank God?
When Christians see us are they encouraged?

Acts 28:23 “SOLEMNLY TESTIFYING ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AND TRYING TO PERSUADE THEM CONCERNING JESUS, FROM BOTH THE LAW OF MOSES AND FROM THE PROPHETS, FROM MORNING UNTIL EVENING.”

For our present study of verse 23 we shall highlight these five points.

1. “SOLEMNLY”

The word means soberly, seriously, and earnestly. Paul did not use jokes at the beginning of his sermon to warm up the crowd. If we are not serious, how can anyone take what we say serious?

2. “TESTIFYING ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD,”

Paul showed tack, but he did not get side-tracked.

Paul did not get diverted preaching about social issues like abortion.

Although social issues are vitally important, Paul stayed on track preaching about the kingdom of God.

3. “AND TRYING TO PERSUADE THEM CONCERNING JESUS,”

Paul focused on Jesus rather than looking for “common ground” and talking about everything except Jesus. In verse 24, some of the listeners were persuaded and others were not. Paul tried even though some refused.

It is better to try than not try. It is better to try even when it is trying.

Acts 28:23 “SOLEMNLY TESTIFYING ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AND TRYING TO PERSUADE THEM CONCERNING JESUS, FROM BOTH THE LAW OF MOSES AND FROM THE PROPHETS, FROM MORNING UNTIL EVENING.”

4. “FROM BOTH THE LAW OF MOSES AND FROM THE PROPHETS,”

Paul preached from the law of Moses and the Prophets. In the Bible the Law of Moses precedes the Prophets.

Paul was orderly rather than disorderly.

Paul did not wander all over the place when he preached.

Paul preached from the Scriptures. He did not quote “famous” philosophers, religious, unscriptural theologians, or other people. Paul stuck to what the Scriptures say rather than what people say the Scriptures say.

5. “FROM MORNING UNTIL EVENING.”

Pauls' sermon did not have a time limit. His sermons were not a countdown to running off to a restaurant or somewhere else for Sunday lunch.

Acts 28:24 “AND SOME WERE BEING PERSUADED BY THE THINGS SPOKEN, BUT OTHERS WOULD NOT BELIEVE.”

In this verse are three parts. We shall divide it and briefly study each part.

1. “AND SOME WERE BEING PERSUADED”

The people who came to hear Paul are described in verse 23 as, “**LARGE NUMBERS.**” But in this verse the writer only says “**SOME**” were being persuaded. It does not say, “large numbers were being persuaded.”

What this teaches us is the writer did not exaggerate the number of people being converted. The writer was being honest. It is a temptation to exaggerate the number of conversions to make it look more successful than it really is.

2. “BY THE THINGS SPOKEN,”

What things were spoken? In verse 23 it tells us Paul spoke about the kingdom of God and about Jesus. Paul quoted from the Law of Moses and the Prophets rather than from non-Christian sources. Paul did not use jokes to make the audience feel more comfortable. The “**THINGS SPOKEN**” by Paul were about the kingdom of God and Jesus. Are those the things we talk about?

When we are together with other Christians what sort of things are spoken?

**Acts 28:24 “AND SOME WERE BEING PERSUADED BY THE THINGS SPOKEN,
BUT OTHERS WOULD NOT BELIEVE.”**

3. “BUT OTHERS WOULD NOT BELIEVE.”

It does not say, “could not believe,” or “can not believe.” The fact is people choose to believe or not believe. When a person says they cannot believe, it actually means they choose not to believe. It is an excuse to refuse to believe. If a person does not believe it is because they made a decision, or a choice to not believe. People choose to believe truth or lies. Here is an example, say a teacher tells a student that evolution is true. The student has Christian parents who says God created the world. Does the student believe the parent who loves them and provided for him since he was born, or does the student believe what a teacher, who they do not even know and who has never provided for them? Please note in verse 23 that Paul had preached from morning to evening, yet people still refused to believe the truth. Very often there is considerable resistance to believing the truth but virtually no resistance to believing lies.

Acts 28:31 “THE KINGDOM OF GOD,”

From the beginning of Acts to the end of Acts “THE KINGDOM OF GOD” is a central theme. In Acts there are seven references to “THE KINGDOM OF GOD.”

(Acts 1:3; Acts 8:12; Acts 14:22; Acts 19:8; Acts 20:25; Acts 28:23; Acts 28:31)

What exactly is “THE KINGDOM OF GOD?”

John Wimber in The Kingdom Of God, said,

“The kingdom is not a place and it’s not a people, the kingdom is a power and a presence. It is the kingdom power and presence of God. It is a power, a presence and a Person. It is the Person of God Jesus Christ ministering, ruling, working in our lives today.”

In Luke 11:20 it says,

“BUT IF I CAST OUT DEMONS BY THE FINGER OF GOD, THEN THE KINGDOM OF GOD HAS COME UPON YOU.”

Acts 28:31 “THE KINGDOM OF GOD,”

The expulsion of evil spirits is a clear manifestation of “THE KINGDOM OF GOD.” The people in a kingdom are not the kingdom, but are the subjects of the kingdom. A kingdom is a realm where a king reigns and rules over His subjects. In “THE KINGDOM OF GOD” Jesus is Lord. Jesus is King.

If Jesus is not Lord of a person then it is questionable if such a person is in “THE KINGDOM OF GOD.”

“THE KINGDOM OF GOD” is not a spectator sport for pew warmers.

To be in “THE KINGDOM OF GOD” means no longer being an audience but being an army.

Acts 28:31 “BOLDLY AND WITHOUT HINDRANCE HE PREACHED THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND TAUGHT ABOUT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.”

This is the last verse in the book of Acts and it has in it a wealth of truth for us to apply as the Lord enables us.

1. We begin with the word **“BOLDLY.”** At this time in the book of Acts, Paul was now well advanced in years. We also notice that in the word **“BOLDLY”** we see the word “old.” Paul was old but still bold! Are you old? Are you bold? Once while visiting Malaga airport in Spain my wife and I were saying goodbye to a missionary who was on her way to Paraguay. As we prayed together at the airport the Holy Spirit spoke to us through the airplanes taking off. As the airplanes went down the runway towards takeoff they accelerated in speed until they lifted off into the sky. The Holy Spirit impressed in my heart that this is a picture of what our lives are to be like. As we speed down the runway of life to when we lift off and go to heaven we are to increase with zeal for God and advancing the gospel. For many, they slow down as they are going along the runway of life, but here in this verse we see Paul going full throttle.

Acts 28:31 “BOLDLY AND WITHOUT HINDRANCE HE PREACHED THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND TAUGHT ABOUT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.”

2. This verse repeats what is seen in verse 23,

“TESTIFYING ABOUT THE KINGDOM OF GOD, AND TRYING TO PERSUADE THEM CONCERNING JESUS.”

When a thought is repeated we need to carefully consider what the Holy Spirit is emphasizing. Then in verse 30 it says, **“HE STAYED TWO FULL YEARS.”** The message Paul preached did not pass even though time had passed. What Paul preached then was the same as what he preached now.

Acts 28:31 “BOLDLY AND WITHOUT HINDRANCE HE PREACHED THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND TAUGHT ABOUT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.”

3. Another thought is Paul was preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ even though he had been a Christian for many years. Although many years had passed Paul was still witnessing for Jesus Christ. The years passed but Paul's devotion to Jesus did not pass. Paul remained consistent. This is the last verse in Acts, and right to the very end Paul was proclaiming the gospel.

Even though the years pass, has our devotion to Jesus passed?

Are we remaining consistent in our faith?

Are we still witnessing for Christ as when we were younger?

Are we making it our goal to proclaim the gospel right to the end?

Now let us who have been Christians for a few years ask ourselves, are we actively witnessing for Jesus Christ? Or was that just something we did when we were younger but not anymore?

Acts 28:31 “BOLDLY AND WITHOUT HINDRANCE HE PREACHED THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND TAUGHT ABOUT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.”

When was the last time you spoke to someone about the kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ?

In Who Cares, William Booth said,

“You have enjoyed yourself in Christianity long enough. You have had pleasant feelings, pleasant songs, pleasant meetings, pleasant prospects. There has been much human happiness, much clapping of hands and shouting of praises - very much of heaven on earth. Now then, go to God and tell Him you are prepared as much as necessary to turn your back upon it all, and that you are willing to spend the rest of your days struggling in the midst of these perishing multitudes, whatever it may cost you. ”

Acts 28:31 “BOLDLY AND WITHOUT HINDRANCE HE PREACHED THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND TAUGHT ABOUT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.”

4. Another thought is Paul had suffered terribly through the years but he had not become disillusioned and bitter. Paul was still witnessing about Jesus Christ.

One example of Paul suffering but continuing preaching is Acts 14:19,

“THEY STONED PAUL AND DRAGGED HIM OUT OF THE CITY, SUPPOSING HIM TO BE DEAD.”

Then in Acts 14:21 it says,

“AND AFTER THEY HAD PREACHED THE GOSPEL.”

Has suffering caused you to become disillusioned and bitter? As we go thru life we experience no shortage of suffering, but are you still witnessing about the sufferings of Jesus Christ on Calvary?

Acts 28:31 “BOLDLY AND WITHOUT HINDRANCE HE PREACHED THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND TAUGHT ABOUT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.”

5. Another thought is Paul encountered no shortage of religious people who rejected Jesus Christ, but he kept on witnessing about Jesus.

In 2 Timothy 4:10 it says,

“FOR DEMAS, BECAUSE HE LOVED THIS WORLD, HAS DESERTED ME.”

Perhaps you know people who were religious but have now rejected Jesus, but do you keep on witnessing about Jesus?

6. The final words in this verse and the book of Acts say,

“THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.”

Does the Lord Jesus have the final say in your life?

Notice it says **“LORD”** and not “Savior.” When you think of Jesus do you think of Him as **“THE LORD”** or “personal Savior?” It is true that Jesus is our Savior but is He your **“LORD?”** When Jesus is only described as “personal Savior” it can make for a cheaper gospel. When the gospel is presented where we are no longer in charge but Jesus is in charge, then the fruit in our life is different.

Acts 28:31 “BOLDLY AND WITHOUT HINDRANCE HE PREACHED THE KINGDOM OF GOD AND TAUGHT ABOUT THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.”

7. We conclude with the words “**JESUS CHRIST.**” Jesus is mentioned last in the book of Acts. Everything in this book has come before Him. Many people are mentioned in the book of Acts yet Jesus is mentioned last. Many people are put before Jesus.

Do we put people ahead of Jesus?

Do we like it when other people are put before us?

Do we like it when other people are mentioned before us?

A missionary named Dan Del Vecchio once said,

“Take the lower seat, it will always be empty.”

Jesus is mentioned in the first verse at the beginning of Acts, and in the last verse at the end. This reflects Revelation 22:13, “**I AM THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA, THE FIRST AND THE LAST, THE BEGINNING AND THE END.**”

This verse ends in the middle of what the Holy Spirit was doing through Paul. The book of Acts has no AMEN at the end because Acts will end with the second coming of Jesus. Thank you Lord.

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