

**Acts- Sunday School
September 25, 2011**

A. Prayer

B. Introduction to the book

1. This letter/book was written by Luke, one of the companions of Paul and is his second book/letter after the Gospel of Luke. Luke was a physician, a journalist, historian and faithful follower of Christ. Church Fathers, Irenaeus (AD 150) and Clement of Alexandria (AD 150) and then much later Eusebius (3rd Cent. AD) a Greek Historian, all credit Luke as the author of both books. There is no discussion of authorship found in the writings on the discussions during the time of the formation of the Canon. Luke's authorship has been accepted by all credible authorities. Luke wrote both books in Classical Greek which was only used at the time by the highest level of educated people.
2. The book is dated somewhere between AD 60 and 64 since the book ends with Paul in prison waiting to appear before Caesar and this was around AD 64. Paul's death was around AD 68. Luke seems to indicate that this was the time of the "Pax Romana" = Roman Peace which enabled the church to grow in some "peace" just before the persecutions began in earnest under Nero.
3. The Gospel of Luke was written to inform us of Jesus and what He did...His life and ministry. The Acts of the Apostles is written as a continuation of Jesus ministry, by the Spirit through His people. It is not simply a history of the early church as many have said...but also a history of the mission of the early church. He does not give us a complete description of all the dimensions of the life of the primitive church. He is primarily interested in showing us the spread of Christianity — how it broke through barriers of all sorts to change lives, families, cities, peoples. So Luke uses real history, to teach us about being men and women of the gospel. Therefore, when we look at the introductory words of Acts, we should study these two issues:
 - a. Luke claims to be giving a historical account — not a fabricated or fanciful series of stories.
 - b. Luke immediately shows us how Jesus prepared the first disciples for mission before he sent them out. No one doubts that the "*former book*" of Acts 1:1 is the gospel according to Luke. They are so closely tied that some have called them "Luke-Acts".
4. The book of Acts is still important to us today because:
 - a. It is God's Word to His Church,
 - b. It is God's account of how He empowered His church to spread the gospel...not just proclaiming the truth but also living the truth before men in a multi-cultural setting...pluralistic society much like our own today...where everything is acceptable and permissible...an experiment that gave birth to the despotism of Nero and others who

- persecuted all non-Roman religions but specifically Christianity because of its allegiance to the One true God.
- c. The principles and commands herein will guide us today in how we are to spread and live out the gospel. The book of the Acts of the Apostles is about God growing His church which will not end until Christ returns so the principles and commands found within apply in all generations.
 - d. We are not to want to go back to the 1st century but we are to glean the principles and commands and incorporate them into our daily lives today.

C. Opening Questions

1. We have looked at some of how God looks at His Church, His people, His Bride, His Temple... over the last few weeks. What observations have you acquired and incorporated into your lives that will strengthen your concept of the Church and your part in God's Church?
2. Since the Church is God's community...His Word is given to all of us for the benefit of the whole. We are to look at ourselves in the context of that community not as individuals. So with this in mind what separates the Church from any human organization? **(1) not a human organization; (2) God's chosen people...we didn't chose it, He chose us...just as He chose His Apostles/disciples, revealed himself to them/us; commissioned us as his witnesses; promised and gave us His Spirit.**
3. As we study this book it is important to personalize it. When you read this book in preparation for class read this with this church...Christ Presbyterian Church...in mind...as if Luke was writing this to us. Michael Novak asked this question in his sermon to this church a few weeks ago, "*What is the glue that binds together Christ Presbyterian Church?*" How did you answer that question in your mind? **His answer was the gospel plain and simple...the answer this book reiterates over and over again...we have a "common" bond, a "common" goal", and a common Savior...Jesus our Immanuel.**
4. As we prepare to jump into this book let's continue for a moment this reflection. What is the difference between saying the Church is called to proclaim the gospel to impact society or saying the Church is called to change society? ***"God does not send out his church to conquer. He sends us out in the name of the One who has already conquered. We go only because He reigns."* – Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert**

D. Let's consider together 2 texts: Luke 1:1-4 and Acts 1:1-2.

1. In the Luke 1 passage, how did Luke come to know the events to which he speaks?

a. **Luke uses other resources, "...many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us..."**

b. **"eyewitnesses and ministers of the word" that carefully guarded and delivered to us what they saw...**

c. **Luke's own personal research and experience. He claims that *"Therefore, since I myself carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also for me to write and orderly account..."* (Luke 1:3 NIV). Or, *"...it seemed good to me also, (that is to investigate and confirm every shred of evidence) having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account..."* (ESV).**

(1) Luke is here claiming that he did not rely on one eyewitness (say, the account of one of the apostles), but that he compared all his sources and *"carefully investigated"* them. This would have been quite possible for Luke, who personally knew many of the apostles, possibly Mary and hundreds of other eyewitnesses. He would have been in a position to check the accounts through interviews with many others. Luke here tells us his method. He used both historical accounts and eyewitness material, which he carefully compared with one another and investigated with his own personal research.

(2) His goal was so that readers, specifically Theophilus, and then the greater church would *"know the certainty"* of the events they had learned about.

(3) Luke is then making a very direct claim to painstaking historical accuracy in both his account of Jesus' life, and of the early church. This puts the reader in a very interesting bind. It means that we cannot read Luke or Acts and say, *"these are legends that grew up about Jesus and the apostles — some of them are true, but many of them are embellished."* Luke's claim means that we must either assume he is writing accurate history or that he is writing an extremely deliberate set of lies to promote this new religion. Luke's language is not that of a compiler of stories and myths. He most emphatically denies that he was doing that.

He says he wrote nothing down unless it was historically checked and certain.

2. Acts 1:1-2.

- a. What does Luke say that his gospel was about, by way of re-cap to Theophilus? **It is about all that Jesus began to do and teach.** If that is what the Gospel of Luke is about what would you say Acts is about? **About what Jesus continues to do and teach through His Apostles.**
- b. If this is true, and I am here to say it is, then how do these first 2 verses separate Christianity from all other religions? **Most religion speak of the founding and ending of their founders ministry as completed during his lifetime. Luke says in his gospel what Jesus began to do and teach, and now in Acts he is telling us that after His resurrection, ascension, and gift of the Spirit He continued His work, first and foremost through the ministry of His chosen apostles and subsequently through the post-apostolic church of every period and place. This Jesus we believe in is both the historical Jesus who lived and the contemporary Jesus who lives, and directs through the Spirit.**

Acts- Sunday School
October 2, 2011

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What does Luke say that his gospel was about, by way of re-cap to Theophilus? **It is about all that Jesus began to do and teach.**
2. If that is what the Gospel of Luke is about what would you say Acts is about? **About what Jesus continues to do and teach through His Apostles.**

C. Acts 1:1-5

1. According to this passage, in what ways did Jesus prepare and equip His apostles to continue His Ministry and life on earth?
 - a. **He chose them**
 - b. **He showed Himself to them after the Resurrection...walked among them for 40 days**
 - c. **He commanded them/ commissioned them/ instructed them...through the Holy Spirit...seems to be a reference to commissioning them to preach the gospel...**

d. He promised them the Holy Spirit...Jesus had already promised this now He is reminding them of His promise.

2. What was the significance of the fact that Jesus showed Himself to the apostles and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive? How is this fact important to us today? **Since the church's identity and authenticity is built and depends on whether or not Jesus resurrected it was extremely important.** What proofs do you have of Jesus' Resurrection? How confident to you feel communicating these truths? Why would you say, in your own words, that the resurrection is important? **I Cor. 15- Without the resurrection our faith would be futile—useless.**
3. Knowing people, how would you say that the Apostle's ministry would be affected by the fact that Jesus chose, commissioned, instructed them and gave them the Holy Spirit to enable them? How does knowing that we have been chosen, commissioned, and instructed and have the Holy Spirit help us as we seek to do God's will today?
4. Let's look at Luke 24:36-49 for a moment. What seems to be the climate among the disciples at this time between Christ's resurrection and His ascension? **Frightened, confused, disoriented, not thinking about preaching the gospel with boldness...WHY? The Spirit had been placed in them because they believe but the Spirit had not been given to them that would give them the boldness they would need that was still coming.**
5. What seems to have been the main topics of discussion during that 40 days when you put together the passage in Luke and verses 1-5 of Acts? **The Kingdom and the Spirit's coming. Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Joel had explicitly spoken of how when the kingdom of God is established, Hw ill then, also pour out His Spirit...the Spirit of God will make the rule of God a living and present reality to His people.**

D. Acts 1:6-11

1. What evidence do we have in this text that the disciples still don't understand what Christ had just accomplished? **Verses 6-7. Obviously they weren't paying attention top what Jesus had been saying for if the Spirit iis soon to come as Jesus told them it would then that would imply that the kingdom is at hand as well. At hand is not time bound as we understand it because Jesus said that the kingdom of God was at hand when He began His earthly ministry...and it was...but the fulfillment of it would not be here until the Spirit was fully poured out to empower His people. Just as an aside: there error is evident in the words they chose for the question:**

- a. **"Restore" is the Greek word used when speaking of expecting a political and territorial kingdom, and then that is confirmed with the use of the next word...**
 - b. **"Israel"- by using this they had in mind a national kingdom, like King David's, then...**
 - c. **"at this time" designates they were expecting an immediate establishment of this earthly kingdom.**
 - d. They envisioned a territorial kingdom. What is wrong with that picture? **God's kingdom is not bound by human definition. Old habits and understandings die hard.... It is hard to change life long understandings and habits.**
2. How did Christ answer their question? **Verse 7-8.** How might this be a better answer than the one they wanted? Why is it a better answer for us today than the one we would want as well? In other words, what harm would it be to know when Christ was going to set up His kingdom? **People being people we would wait until the last possible moment to get at it....also, we need to be doing God's will rather than searching for times and dates of Christ's next coming...in fact, with this admonition He makes it a sin to want to know to the exclusion of what we are supposed to be focused on.**
3. According to the text, what is the primary way these disciples would be equipped? What would be the results of this equipping? (See also John 14:15-31) What ministry are the disciples commissioned to perform?
4. What according to this text is our calling as believers? How does this work itself out as far as the church being the church?
5. How do you think you would handle watching Jesus ascend, especially after you have just been told that everything you have understood about God's kingdom was wrong and even after Jesus' extensive 40 seminar on the Spirit and the Kingdom you were still confused? What does this reveal to us about the nature of man...even believing men like the disciples? **They needed the Holy Spirit's power to fully understand. This does not speak of a 2nd baptism of the Spirit it speaks of what happened then to these men who would lead because the rest of the NT reveals to us that we receive the Spirit when we believe then we are empowered along the way to do the work that He sends us to do. But for the disciples they had had the Son personally with them...and now we have the Spirit personally with us. Just as the Spirit had come upon Jesus to equip Him for His public ministry (interesting thought don't you think?), so now the Spirit was to come upon His people to equip them for their public ministry in growing the kingdom.**

6. According to this text, in what form will Christ return? **Resurrection body coming on the clouds...and revelation tells us that all will know He is coming either to their great joy or their judgment.** Why is this important?

Acts- Sunday School
October 9, 2011

- A. Prayer
B. Review

1. Read Acts 1:1-11.
2. What points are significant in these first few verses for the Church today...for us CPC?

- C. Acts 1:12-26

1. Who were the key people mentioned in verses 13-14? **The Eleven.** What you know about each of these individuals that would be helpful in your own walk with the Lord?
2. Jesus told them to not begin their mission until they receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (1:4-5). What do they do to prepare for this gift in 1:13-14? **Prayer!** How many of them are there, according to this text? **120 plus or minus**
3. What were the characteristics that we see in this practice of prayer that are important for us today?
 - a. **Corporate- "all of these" vs. 14- men and women**
 - b. **United- "with one accord"**
 - c. **Constant- devoting themselves to prayer= persistent and diligent in prayer regularly. It doesn't say how often or for how long but the word indicates that it was happening with regularity and maybe even vast amounts of time.**
4. Why is it so important for God's people to be of "one accord"? Why was it so important that they "devoted themselves to it"? I, mean, after all, Jesus said to wait and the Spirit would come. What did they need to be praying for? **Jesus had established a pattern of regular and fervent prayer when He was with His disciples. God's promises do not remove the need for prayer. In fact, it is His promises which give us the reason to pray and the confidence that He will hear and answer.**
5. Why would prayer be more important for them now than before?
6. Why is it important to the growth of the church that we be of one accord and we be devoted to praying together? (Church Fathers have suggested that these 2: devotion to prayer together and being of one accord are essentials to effective prayer.) **It reveals the mettle of our resolve...our commitment to God.** If that is true

then why don't we do it more? (Thinking about our own church and knowing our propensity to complicate our time when do you suppose it would be a good time to form a prayer group of this type...day and time? Think about that for we have tried mid-week, Sunday night...and none of these have been satisfactory.)

7. What seems to be Peter's role in this group? Does it surprise you? Why or why not?
8. Why does Peter bring up the whole thing about Judas? What were his conclusions about Judas? How does psalm 69:25 prove peter's point? What does this tell us about apostolic authority and how Scripture proves Scripture?
9. Why does it appear "necessary" for there to be 12 disciples? **They may have remembered that Jesus had drawn a parallel between the 12 apostles and the 12 tribes of Israel. For they saw the continuity of God's people through the ages and as such would have been compelled to keep the number.** How does the Psalm 109:8 passage seem to spur him on? What does this tell us about being well versed in Scripture? **If it is meant to direct us then we must know it and what it says and also believe it and accept the Spirit's interpretation of the text for our daily walk. The risen Lord had both opened the Scriptures to His disciples and opened their minds to understand the Scriptures (Luke 24:45-49). As a consequence to this teaching irregardless of their misunderstanding concerning the timing of the kingdom, there seems to be a new grasp of the OT and stimulated by Jesus they may have sought the Scriptures with a renewed intensity. We know for instance that a list of OT references/testimonies to the Messiah, His coming, His suffering and His resurrection were compiled and circulated. Another characteristic of a people ready to be used by God to grow His kingdom...a people well versed in His Scripture understanding how they fit into day to day life.**

Acts- Sunday School

October 16, 2011

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. Re-Read chapter 1:1-20
2. What 2 characteristics are exhibited here that reveals how the church remains strong in adversity, hard times and times of celebration? **Corporate prayer and being in one accord.**
3. What does being in “one accord” look like for us today?
4. Why does it appear necessary for there to be 12 apostles according to Peter? **Peter with his apostolic authority speaking with the authority of Scripture said so. It was because of Judas’s defection not his death that a replacement had to be found.**

C. Acts 1:21-26

1. What were the qualifications for the person that would replace Judas?
 - a. **Male- by referring only to the brothers he was being exclusive as to the pool from which to choose...another reminder that church spiritual leadership is exclusively male.- vs. 16, 21... “one of the men...”**
 - b. **A man who had been with them from the beginning. A man who had witnessed (and experienced) everything the rest of the Apostles had seen Jesus do. Vs. 21**
 - c. **A man who was a witness to Jesus’ resurrection and ascension. Vs. 22- witness = something seen and something that can be attested to.**
 - d. **Chosen by the LORD. Vs. 24**
2. Why were these qualifications so important? **These were the qualifications of the office of apostle. The reason why, especially because of B and C, there can’t be any today!** How would these qualifications be helpful in fulfilling the goals God placed before the disciples?
3. What about the ascension, why is this piece important? We have seen what the ascension did for the apostles...and we will see more...but what does it do for us? What is the permanent value of the ascension for us today?
4. Just so we are clear, who was it that ultimately decided on Judas’ replacement? **The people whittled down the possible**

appropriate candidates with prayer and before they “voted” cast lots...they prayed to the Lord the “heart-knower” (literal translation of “who knows the hearts of all”) asking Him to show them whom He had already chosen and then they watch as God appointed Matthias. (Casting of Lots was an OT practice that does not appear to have been used again after the Spirit had come.) How can we say that God is the One who ultimately chose Judas’ replacement?

- a. **The Scriptures led Peter to replace Judas...Ps. 109:8 specifically.**
 - b. **Next they used the qualifications that Jesus had used to develop each of them into His apostles...**
 - c. **They prayed to Christ for His leading on this weighty matter. He wasn’t physically there but they knew Him to be still accessible to them by prayer...they had learned some things from what He had taught them....**
 - d. **They drew lots , by which they trusted Jesus to make His choice through this time honored tradition. See Prov. 16:33. In the ancient mind lot casting was a way that proclaimed God’s sovereignty over a situation but at the same time involving His people. They did the work and God in Christ simply affirmed His choice...that s how human responsibility and God’s sovereignty work together with no room for second guessing.**
- 5. Did you ever ask the question, whatever happened to Matthias? Do you know anything at all about Matthias? I mean, anything at all? Matthias is a shortened form of Mattathias. (gift of Yahweh) This extraordinary man given this extraordinary office of the twelfth – or, if you like, the thirteenth – apostle, and we hear absolutely nothing about him. (Greek historians say that Matthias part of the 70 or 72 that Christ sent out. Clement of Alexandria believed his proper man may have been Zacchaeus...perhaps the Zacchaeus of tax collector fame. Later traditions place him as a missionary to the Ethiopians.) It was still important, not because of who Matthias was, and not because of what Matthias did, but because the overarching thing that Luke wants us to see here is that Jesus is building His church. And by the power of the Holy Spirit which will come not many days from now, He intends for the church to do what Peter has been doing here: ransacking the word of God and coming in the presence of His people and saying “Whatever it is the Bible says, that we will do, no matter how insignificant it may seem to be.” Oh, if we could learn just that lesson...just that lesson! “Whatever the Bible says, that we will do”, we will have learnt a lesson that will make the knees of Satan buckle. May God help us to learn it.**

6. What part did prayer play in this decision? How is this an example of how we should choose our own spiritual leaders in the church?
A matter of urgent prayer concerning who is to lead us and we are seen as being in one accord by whom is placed in election and who is affirmed in election... a close type of the “lots” of the OT. What do these leaders look like?
- a. **Male... there is sufficient Scriptural evidence to support that the ordained offices are to only be filled by men without negating the giftedness of women...a function thing.**
 - b. **A Man of deep faith on whom the Spirit is obvious...one that lives out his faith before God's people and the rest of the world...One that willingly joins in the sufferings of Christ for God's people. This is seen in his being available and involved in the life and ministry of God's people...the church. Wherever God's people are he is there as well as often as possible.**
 - c. **A Man chosen by God is affirmed by God's people. This is a man who is already exhibiting the qualifications of an elder as laid out in God's word long before he senses God's call on his life and before the people of God affirm that calling.**
7. How important is prayer in your life? Would anyone know you are a praying person? How?

Acts- Sunday School
 October 23, 2011

- A. Prayer
- B. Review

- 1. How can we say from this text that shows us the people doing things, that God is the ultimate chooser of Matthias to be Judas' replacement?

2. What were the 2 main ingredients that led them to be certain of God's will on this matter?

C. Read Acts 2:1-13

1. Vs. 1 says, "*When the feast of Pentecost came...*" Why is it talking about this in a way that sounds like it has always existed? **Because it has existed (See Exodus 23:16 and Deut. 16:9-10.) The feast had 2 meanings...one agricultural and one historical. Originally it was the middle of the 3 annual Jewish harvest festivals and was called the Feast of Harvest...celebrated the completion of the grain harvest. It was also called the feast of Weeks (Ex. 34:22; Lev. 23:15-22; Deut. 16:9-12) or Pentecost by the NT era immersed because it took place 7 weeks or 50 days (pentekostos= fiftieth) after the Passover and because many wished to celebrate the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai since it was taught that this happened 50 days after the Exodus. Why then do you suppose some churches teach this as a new event dealing with the emergence of the Church?**
2. With this little information of this Jewish festival instituted by God in the OT, why is it appropriate that the Holy Spirit was given on Pentecost? **50 days between the resurrection and Pentecost. (40 days between the resurrection and the ascension...10 more days between the ascension and Pentecost= 50 days)**
3. In Verse 2 we read, "*Suddenly....*" 3 things happen. What were the three phenomenon that Luke says happened to these Christ's followers?
 - a. ***"...a sound like a mighty rushing wind..."* – was NOT wind as has often been talked about, but the sound of something like a hurricane force or tornadic wind.**
 - b. ***"...and divided tongues as of fire appeared..."* – was NOT fire but it resembled it...**
 - c. ***"filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance."* these were Not incomprehensible utterances but languages that were not known to any other them in the since of being able to speak them themselves.**
4. What would you say each symbolized or stood for?
 - a. **The noise LIKE wind would stand for POWER such as Jesus promised in Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:8.**
 - b. **The sight that appeared like fire stands for purity...like the live coals of Is. 6:6-7 and to go along with John the Baptists prophecy in Luke 3:16.**
 - c. **Other languages speaks of the universality of the Christian Church... believers will come from every people, nation and tribe.**

5. Why do you suppose that Luke spends so much time expressing the international make up of the crowd? **Universality of the proclamation and the universal nature of God's election from EVERY tribe, nation, and tongue.**
6. Verses 5 says, *"Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven..."*. What are we to make of this statement? Do you suppose "every" nation was represented? What does it mean? **Every nation was not there physically but that every nation was there representatively. Luke's Table of Nations is comparable to the one in Gen. 10. Shemites or Semites are represented in the Elamites which head up both lists, Egypt and Libya represent Hamites and Cretans and people of Rome represent Japheth....The Parthians and Medes and Arabs wind out the rest of the known world....thus "representing" every nation.**
7. Why does Luke seem to concentrate on the "tongues speaking" more than the other 3 signs? **"Glossolalia"= speaking in a known tongue that was formally unknown to the speaker...since the term is defined here and not any where else it seems then to be the definitive text by which to define all the rest...interpret the unexplained in the light of the explained. It shows that it is directly a miracle from the Holy Spirit. Gets the people asking questions...they are so unsettled ...God has come down and He has prepared many to receive Him in this way...**
8. What according to vs. 11 are the disciples proclaiming in the languages of the people? **"The mighty Works of God"** What do you suppose they were specifically proclaiming? **Resurrection and Ascension perhaps.**
9. How might this activity be a direct reversal of the curse of the Tower of Babel? **(See Gen. 11:1-9) This activity on this particular day symbolizes the beginning of a new unity in the Spirit that transcends race, nationality or even linguistic in some cases. Tongue speaking while still speaking in a known language formerly unknown to the speaker takes on different purposes after this day within the church with finely defined guidelines of its purpose and use. At Babel human languages were confused and the nations were scattered; in Jerusalem the language barrier was supernaturally overcome as a sign that the nations would be gathered in Christ...prefiguring the,... from every nation, tribe, people and language... Also, at Babel earth sought proudly to ascend to heaven, whereas in Jerusalem heaven humbly came down to earth. On the day of Pentecost the Church becomes worldwide.**
10. What does this event tell us about God?

11. What were the different reactions to these events? Why were the crowds confused? (1) Noise seems to refer to the violent wind not the speaking in many different languages...yet. as they move to determine where the wind came from...what caused it... as they move towards the place where the believers are THEN they hear the message spoken in their languages. So between the 2 events they are confused it seems. (2) They make a racial slur about Galileans that was obviously well known about how "ignorant"/ uneducated they were that they wouldn't know numerous languages. Also, there seems to have been inbred into Galileans had difficulty pronouncing guttural word and a bad habit of swallowing syllables when speaking. You can image how such a speech impediment might affect how a more cultured people might look at Galileans. (3) Some seemingly understood none of the languages and so they made fun of the believers saying that they had had too much wine.

Acts- Sunday School
October 30, 2011

A. Prayer

B. Read Acts 2:14-41

- 1. How does he answer the accusation that the followers of Christ were drunk in vs. 15? Why does he answer such a mocking? Peter is speaking to these folks right where they are even those making fun...he leaves no one out.**
- 2. Who is the central figure in Peter's message? Christ. Why then would he begin his sermon with the Joel passage?**
 - a. These were mostly Jews the OT passages would set the stage for his argument of the One that fulfills the prophecy.**
 - b. Also, this reveals something particularly important for us on this Reformation weekend. The importance of Scripture. Peter shows a wonderful knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures of the OT.**
 - c. Not only a knowledge and understanding but he is treating them as authoritative...the OT IS the word of God for His people. It is trustworthy to even explain such events as these...in fact, it is the only authority that can speak to these events. What do these say to us**

as the Church today? **That we are to have an equal understanding of it absolute authority and then secondly to have a good use of it.**

3. Let's consider how well Peter explains the amazing events that have occurred. How does this portion from Joel explain the phenomenon of tongues to Peter's hearers? How does vs. 22-35 speak to the amazing events experienced at Pentecost? **There are many interesting things here but consider a moment this statement... "a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through Him as you yourselves know..."** There is no doubt at least in the mind of most of Peter's hearers that Jesus was a great teacher and that many signs and wonders were done through Him...the kind of thing they might expect from a great prophet...Messiah? Not sure yet perhaps...Today, people are very much in doubt as to whether Jesus did the miracles and made the claims that the Bible says he did. But Peter's crowd knew all this for themselves. This is one of the reasons the Reformation is still so pertinent today because of the evangelical worlds seemingly laziness concerning the Word of God. The big question today is this ...Do believers really believe that the Bible is the Word of God?
4. What is Peter specifically telling these people in vs. 23? Interesting words used here: (1) **"definite plan"** (horizio). What does this word sound like? What is seen on the horizon? The Greek word literally means "to mark out with a boundary" or "to determine beforehand" similar meanings, huh? That is why many versions use the word "predestined". This word signifies the destination at the end of the journey, one marked out before hand. Sort of like going to Google Maps to map out your destination or using your GPS...you put in the beginning and the end and it gets you there, hopefully. The traveler would see his destination on the horizon before arriving there. (2) **"Foreknowledge"** (prognosis). What does this word sound like? This word means much more than God knew something before hand. Louis Berkhof breaks down the definition of the word this way: *"The Greek word denotes a selective knowledge which regards one with favor and makes one the object of love."* The prefix "fore" indicates that this love relationship was established beforehand. The word points to a deep regard and loving favor by the Father for the Son before the foundation of the world. In this context the Son was foreordained by the Father to die upon the cross to glorify the Father and to save lost sinners who had been chosen before the foundation of the earth as well. (Eph. 1) Soooo... Jesus' crucifixion was by the predetermined counsel and foreknowledge of God. It didn't take God by surprise. And for Peter, do you see, that's the explanation of the horrendous day on which Jesus was crucified. It's his understanding of history that events happen and terrible things happen, and awful things happen – like Katrina – and men and women lose

everything. He has a confidence, a certainty, a conviction not only about the Bible, but a conviction about providence, a conviction about history, a conviction about where he is at this moment in time on this Day of Pentecost, with all of what lies before him. Interesting that he doesn't get any reaction to the indictment of murder that he levels on them!!!

5. How does Peter's reference to Psalm 16 in verses 25-28 help Peter to establish the truth of the Resurrection? **He's saying this could only be true of Jesus Christ. It couldn't be true of David. It can only be true of Jesus Christ, because you've seen Him raised from the dead, and ascended, and now sitting at God's right hand; that what David had written had come true in Jesus. Peter isn't saying that what Psalm 16 is saying was once true of David, but has now become true of Jesus Christ. No, he's saying it was never true of David. It never at any time applied to David. It couldn't possibly be applied to David. It was always, even when David wrote it, it was always about Jesus Christ. And do you see what that says about the Old Testament? That the Old Testament is about Christ! It's about the seed of the woman that God had promised in the Garden of Eden, that seed that will usurp and throw down the forces of darkness and of Satan. What importance do we place on the resurrection day to day? Can we defend it? Why is it necessary to defend it?**
6. On what basis does Peter announce that God has made this Jesus both Lord and Christ in verses 29-36? **Once again, he has shown this through the Scriptures of the OT.**
7. How did the people respond to Peter's clear proclamation of the truth about Jesus in verses 37-41? **Luke says by way of description that *"they were cut/pierced to the heart."* They were cut to the heart that the word of God had come. And do you see, it had come in power – this word about Jesus had pierced their hearts. This is covenantal language... it means that they saw the deep personal relevance, and that they were convicted of their need. It was like a dagger thrusting them in the side, and it had rendered them in such a state that they're crying out now at the end of the sermon, *"What are we supposed to do?"* They want to know what to do about their sin. What is Peter saying to them and to us when he answers their questions concerning what they should do?

 - a. **They're to repent. Repent. And the word that he uses is the word that suggests a change of mind, a change of attitude. You must change your attitude, you must change your stance, you must change your thinking about God, about yourself, about sin, about Jesus Christ, about these fundamental things. It's of course the great theme of the preaching of the New Testament. Jesus came preaching, "Repent." Necessarily involved in "repentance" is "faith".****

- b. Next, baptism: they are to be baptized. This was a remarkable thing to ask of Jews. Jews believed Gentile converts needed to be baptized, because they saw the Gentiles as being spiritually unclean. Now Peter says that every one who wishes to be a Christian needs to be baptized — and to do it in the name of the one that previously had been rejected. That would be a public sign in the strongest terms that they had repented — had completely changed their minds about who Jesus was. Baptized with a view to the forgiveness of sins; baptism which pictures what the forgiveness of sins as the washing away of our stain of our sin; the sign and seal of God's covenant promise; the outward picture that we can trust what God says, and that His word is true.**
- c. One other thing hear: Vs 39 speaks of the promise... covenantal language that would have drawn them in...and how it is for all whom *the Lord our God calls to Himself*. Peter is announcing here that only God calls individual sinners to Himself if they are to receive salvation and all who God calls do in fact receive salvation. The Greek word (kaleo= to summon to appear). All of us on one level or another hates to be summoned to appear before the judge. I love this from F.F. Bruce, "Those who call upon the name of the Lord are those whom the Lord Himself calls and called effectually." In other words Peter is clearly saying, no sinner seeks the Lord until he is called and all that are called will receive salvation.**

Acts- Sunday School
November 6, 2011

A. Prayer

B. Acts 2:1-41

1. What do we learn from this passage about the witness you should have as an individual Christian? The witness we should have as a church?

a. Individual Christian-

(1) We need to recognize people come in process. There were three stages here. First, the people had interest created ("what do these things mean"?). Only when that happened were they open, second, to a full gospel presentation. And even that was fairly general. And third, only when they came

under personal conviction (“what should we do?”) is a direct statement made on how they can become Christians. This is not the only way to consider evangelism...just one.

(2) We need to know the Bible. We need to know the evidence for the gospel.

(3) We need to really know where the listeners “are” religiously. Peter appealed at several points to “what they themselves knew”. We need to know what they DO believe — what their worldview is, and so on. We have to spend a lot of time listening.

(4) We need to have a joy and power about us, which is what attracted the crowd to the disciples in the first place. And then we need to remain authentic, not wavering in the Bible’s positions and then living the way we say we believe before people in general which will be what appears to be the greatest form of evangelism that we will see in Acts.

d. Church

(1) Churches need to focus on true worship which a) knocks believers and non-believers out of their complacency, b) gives basics of the truth, c) shows the personal relevance of the truth to human life, d) gains credibility for the gospel.

(2) Churches need to be focused on teaching the Scriptures in a broader sense. Since details will not and cannot be what marks a sermon... the church needs to have Bible studies, home fellowship groups, areas where the Church is preparing the members to share and explain the gospel in a way that can reach into the lives of those who God brings into their lives daily. Groups built around the Word.

(3) Churches need to be preparing people with the Gospel...the A to Z of life...to speak to the culture about life, family, politics, work and recreation. Being authentic about our faith and how it truly affects our lives makes us relevant in today’s world.

e. In Acts 2:37, we see an example of the Spirit convicting the world of sin, righteousness and judgment (John 16:8-11) as Peter spoke to the crowd at Pentecost. He was preaching the gospel boldly. We can too.

(1) Understanding where the power lies:

- a. Romans 1:16 – What are we told about the gospel? How does this verse challenge our attitude about witnessing and to whom we witness?
- b. I Cor. 1:17,18 & 22-24 – What was Paul's central message to the Greeks at Corinth, in spite of their intellects, morals and philosophies?
- c. I Cor. 2:1-5 – How did Paul proclaim the gospel that he said he was not ashamed of and what comfort does this offer to us?

(2) Accepting the ministry God gave us.

- a. II Cor. 5:17-20 – What is God's messenger called? What specifically does he do? Where does he get his authority? What does God's messenger talk about? What's the message? How would you define 'reconcile'? In this passage, who is reaching out to whom?

Acts- Sunday School
November 13, 2011

A. Prayer

B. Acts 2:39-47

1. What do phrases like "...whom our Lord calls to Himself..." and "...And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved..." tell us? **Only God adds to His church. God sovereignly builds His church by Himself adding to its numbers.** How does "knowing" that God builds His church "free" us up to boldly proclaim the gospel? **We don't save so we do have to worry about that who we speak to...we don't have to worry about doing it right...we don't have to worry that we may have prevented someone from the kingdom because of our not so "perfect" presentation. Knowing these things are true doesn't enable us to be sloppy or not to care about our presentation of the gospel in word and deed.**
2. See vv.40-41. Why do you think Peter tells them to save themselves from "this generation"? What does this statement imply about the church, and about becoming a Christian?

3. See vv.42-47. How does this text correspond and compliment Acts 1:8?
4. Make a list of the characteristics and functions of the early church which are evident in this passage. **This list can be broken down in many ways. I will make a longer list here —**
 - a. **The church trained and educated its members.** (*"devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching" v.42a*).
 - b. **The church spent much time in group prayer** (*"devoted themselves...to prayer" v.42d*) which occurred, evidently in both homes and large public gatherings.
 - c. **The church moved members into relationships of mutual support and fellowship** (*"they were together" v.44a; "the fellowship" v.42b*).
 - d. **The church practiced the sacrament of the Lord's Supper constantly.**(The term *"the breaking of bread"* in v.42 and v.46 is thought by most scholars to be a description of a meal together at which the Lord's Supper was observed. The key indicator that this is the meaning of the phrase is the word *"the"* before the *"breaking of bread"*.)
 - e. **There were deeds of power which accompanied and verified the truth of the apostles' preaching** (*"And awe came upon every soul and many signs and wonders were being done through the apostles." v.43.*) The people were in awe of God's work much like we were last week...and the Lord was working through His apostles signs and wonders.
 - f. **The church practiced radical stewardship, economic sharing and "mercy ministry"** at least within the community. People got practical financial and material help for their needs (*"And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all. As had any need." v.45*). I heard of a ministry this week that got all of its people to commit to bringing in all the "junk" gold to cash it in and set up a fund for the needy in the church. Out of 300 people they raised \$150,000.00 for such a fund.
 - g. **The church brought its members together constantly for worship and fellowship —** *"Day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received food with glad and generous hearts"(v.46)!* They couldn't stay away from each other.
 - h. **There was a general spirit of joy** (*"glad and generous hearts" v.46*) and praise (*"praising God" v.47a*) which permeated every meeting at every level.
 - i. **This community life was extraordinarily attractive to outsiders**(*"..and having favor with all the people" v.47*).

- j. **Many would say that “The church was evangelistically effective in the extreme, with new conversions everyday. (“The Lord added... daily those who were being saved.” v.47)** What type of evangelism do we see here in practice? Is this the only type we are to use? Why or why not? Why was it necessary for Luke to highlight God’s work in salvation rather than the people’s evangelistic work?
- k. **Conversions were not seen individualistically. When a person was saved, they were “added to their number” (v.47) — they were incorporated into a deep relationship to the church body, not just to the Lord.**
- 1. **OR—The Four Functions of the Church See Handout... Or the 5 ministries of the Early Church**

5. How do you personally respond to the work of the Spirit as you see it in this chapter? How will it affect your thinking going forward?

Acts- Sunday School
November 20, 2011

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. Re-read vss. 42-47. Considering all that we said about this text how does it correspond and compliment Acts 1:8?
2. How do you personally respond to the work of the Spirit as you see it in this chapter? How will it affect your thinking going forward?

C. Acts 3:1-10

2. Describe, in your own words, as if you were there, what has happened in these first 10 verses. How did the crippled man respond? The people?

3. What is striking about the healing of the crippled man? What does it tell us about how God works in our lives? **Luke wrote that Jesus many signs and wonders were done by the apostles (2:43), and now he provides an example. Some things to notice about the incident:**
 - a. **It demonstrates the historicity of what happened.** The comment “*..ninth hour...at three in the afternoon*” (v.2) is a detail that is the mark of an eyewitness account. Legends do not contain such unnecessary details. This was the time of prayer after the evening sacrifices and was observed by all pious Jew...the reason the crippled man was there ...to beg when the crowd was there.

 - b. **It demonstrates the power of God.** Luke’s medical expertise comes out here for the physical ailment was not a passing injury, but was congenital, severe and permanent “*a man crippled from birth*”. (v.2) he emphasizes the fact the man could not walk before healing by making reference to it 4 times in this text.

 - c. **It is demonstrates that the Messiah has come... a fulfillment of prophecy.** This is a fulfilled prophecy. Isaiah said that when the Messiah came “*Then will the lame leap like a deer*” (Is.35:6), and that is what this man does — “*walking and jumping*” v.8. The “jumping” is a vivid, wonderful picture, and it is another mark of an eyewitness account detail.

 - d. **It demonstrates a first principle of God’s work** — that divine power comes to re-create/restore.

 - e. **It demonstrates a second principle of God’s work** — that usually we begin by seeking far less than God wants to give us. All the man wanted was money (v.3), but he got physical healing (v.8) and probably salvation (4:14 indicates that the man now took up with the company of disciples). Even so, a person ordinarily goes to God just for help with a problem or strength in time of need or forgiveness for a particular sin, because we are so short-sighted — but when we come to the real God He ends up making far greater changes in our lives than we ever envisioned.

 - f. **It demonstrates that God uses changed lives to draw others to hear the gospel.** It was because of the clear change in the man’s life(v.10) that a crowd gathered and was open to hearing the gospel (v.11-12).

4. What do you think was the purpose of signs and wonders in the New Testament especially since these don't appear to be repeated in every age of the church? **They proclaim Jesus as Lord and Savior...they confirm that He is still involved with His people... they give aid to bring people to Himself.** So if all of this is true why do we not see them today?
 - a. **First, Jesus didn't come to heal people physically...or He would have healed everyone..**
 - b. **Second, this wasn't the Apostles purpose either...or they would have been more healings...Paul would have healed himself.**
 - c. **So it is not our purpose either.**
 - d. **Jesus came to restore...build the Kingdom...the Apostles...us.**
 - e. **In the early stages of growing His church these were necessary...commanding people to do things they couldn't do...like walk or see when they were blind. These represent spiritual blindness and lameness something we can't fix on our own...but the Word of God through the Holy Spirit can and will for His people.**

D. Acts 3:11- 26

1. What similarities are there between these Peter's first two sermons?
 - a. **Both amazed/astonished...raised the curiosity of the crowd.**
 - b. **Just as the Pentecost event had been the text for His first sermon, so the cripple's healing is the text for the second.**
 - c. **Both were mighty acts that exalted Christ and proclaimed Him to be Lord and Savior.**
 - d. **Both diverted the peoples attention away from the actual events to the One who was responsible for the events.**
3. Why does Peter begin with the question he does in verse 12? **To show that there is a continuity with the OT writings concerning the person and actions of the Messiah and Jesus.. The OT stated that the Messiah would do these things...and here Jesus is doing these things.**
4. List some of the OT characters that Peter uses in His sermon. How would Peter's use of them help his cause? **The OT was considered authoritative by his audience.** What is the importance of seeing the centrality of Christ in the OT?

5. Look at the titles that Peter gives to Jesus. How do each of these speak to the Christ's uniqueness?
 - a. **Speaks of Jesus' sufferings and glory, His character and mission, His revelation and redemption...**
 - b. **"suffering servant- (vs. 13, 18)"...Moses like prophet (22-23)... the Davidic King (24)... The seed of Abraham (25-26)**
 - c. **God the Father has likewise honored Him in this..**

Acts- Sunday School
November 27, 2011

A. Prayer
B. Review

1. What was the purpose for Peter referring to all the OT personalities that he does in chapter 3:11-26?
2. Why was it so important for them to "see" Jesus in the OT? For us today?

C. Acts 3:17-26 continued for a moment:

1. Peter ends his message by challenging... even warning them (see vs. 19-23) with the necessity of repentance. This has often been referred to as Peter's fire and brimstone sermon since his purpose seems to be to frighten or shock the Jews to reconsider the ways they had been thinking and what was being taught about the Messiah from modern sources. What relevance does verse 23 have for Christians today?
2. However he also speaks of the covenant. (see verse 25) What blessings does he speak of and how will they come to God's people according to these last verses? **By reiterating the covenantal promise of God...he is confirming that the blessing is not simply forgiveness of their sinfulness but also the gift of righteousness ...see verse 26.**

D. Acts 4:1-22

1. What roles have the priests, the captain of the temple, the Sadducees, and the Sanhedrin played before in the NT? Why would the preaching, the healing and the resulting ministry especially disturb them? **I find it interesting that the answer given from them has to do with their perception of these men preaching**

about the resurrection and that this healing somehow substantiates that. How could they make such a jump?

2. What was it that caused many to believe according to these first few verses? **Proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.** How would that one doctrine have moved people and cause many to believe? What can that teach us for today?
 - a. **1st, there are many things that people know instinctively to be true about God... believers and non-believers believe in some type of higher power...call Him God....all people at their core know they have a need to be “forgiven” and restored though they may not have a clue what that restoration is and unless they have their hearts changed they will not ever understand...remember the consequence of the Fall was for all mankind. Redemption...or the idea of the underdog winning always inspires us especially when great obstacles are overcome...**
 - b. **2ndly, understanding this about all people we are then better able to listen to them...**
 - c. **3rdly... we know by the Holy Spirits each persons NEED to hear the truth, whether they can accept it or not... it is one reason why someone who claims to be an atheist can respect a Christian when they are authentic and consistent in their faith.**
3. Look at verse 7. Why is the issue of power and authority so important to these religious leaders again?
4. Let's look again at verses 8-12? Knowing what we know about the religious leaders and the times...it hadn't been that long since they had crucified Jesus...what are some things you find extra ordinary about Peter's speech? **Though he starts out respectful he does not hold back with the accusations. Maybe they could handle those but what about the truth claim of vs. 12? When Jesus even hinted at this He was crucified.**
5. Now let's look at verses 13-22. What do we learn about the attitude of the religious leaders toward Peter and John?
6. Now a point of using Scripture. How would you explain the connection between the healed cripple and salvation? **The cripple couldn't heal himself...he wasn't even looking for healing, he was looking for something of far less value...His healing could only come from the work of Jesus just like our salvation in the finished work of Jesus.**

Acts- Sunday School
December 3, 2011

A. Prayer

B. Re-read 4:1-22

1. What does this event tell us about the role of the Church in society? Is this how you have always seen it? If not, what has changed your perception?
2. Look again at Luke 21:12-15. What light does this passage shed on what is expected of us as God's church in the societies in which we find ourselves?
3. What principle (s) do we see here for civil disobedience? **The Sanhedrin is a church court but also the governing authority as well so the question still applies. See there is a good reason for a separation of Church and government as long as that separation is not established as a way to oppress believers. The separation envisioned is one where the church has the right to speak into the government where and when it side steps the laws of God...an accountability and uplifting relationship...being able to encourage and support the government placed over us by God. A God ordained "checks and balances."**

C. Acts 4:23-31

1. How important is the role of prayer in the life of these believers? Why? **It is evidence of the Spirit at work in His people. The desire to be and stay connected to God and one another is evidence of restored creation relationships. A church that prays together naturally is one that reflects God's restorative power... Pentecost all the time.**
2. How have the opponents of Jesus, Peter and John fulfilled David's prophecy in verses 25-26? **(See 27-28)** Why does God use evil men and their intentions to fulfill His plans?
3. Where did they learn to pray like this? **There wasn't a class that we know of...or even a topical sermon series on how to pray, the need to pray together, or simply the need to pray. It is in and of itself a sign of the Spirit working in His people to drive them to prayer as if it was second nature... many of whom were brand new believers. And not just driving them to prayer but driving them to prayer corporately. (See 2:42-47...the crucible of learning how to do Christianity and be a Christian.)**
4. What does verse 28 tell us that these new and old believers "knew" about the nature of God? **He predestined these events to occur just as they did...He is sovereign over all! Christ's death was not**

an after thought. To believe in the sovereignty of God one MUST believe that these actions were predetermined before the foundations of the world... part of the eternal plan of God. These words do not like the words in Chapter 2 do not even hint at the possibility that God was waiting to see if we would need to be saved before He determined to send the Savior...or... that God merely looked down the proverbial tunnel of time and passively saw Jesus crucified for “all” people....which opens the door to some not “choosing” to be saved...hence saying that Christ’s death and resurrection only makes it possible for those who chose to be Christians to become Christians. Saying that His death is sufficient for all to believe even waters down this doctrine which emphatically states that Christ’s death and resurrection SECURED life for ALL who are His. How did they come by this knowledge of God’s complete sovereignty? The presence of the Spirit, again and the clear teaching of God’s Word by Peter. (See 2:23) If it was so easy for them to see this doctrine why do you suppose it is so hard for many in the Church to see it today? A practical answer to this could be that they had such a “high” view of God already. An understanding that they had been brought up to believe in the absolute authority of God or in the case of the pagans...their gods...with a little “g”. While that sounds plausible, what is ultimately wrong with that conclusion? God or gods simply did not play that big of a place in their lives or they would have already been part of the remnant/ part of the Church. They couldn’t simply “get back to God” as many would have us do in our nation today...as if people can just choose to get back into a relationship that time has shown hasn’t been there for a long time. What was happening was a true transformation in these people...in the same proportion as a Paul. Within that transformation the “dots were being connected” for the Jews and answers to the questions of life were being made clear for the first time too the pagan...hearts were changed by God so that eyes and ears were opened.

5. What are some interesting characteristics of this prayer? How might it be a bit different than you would expect given all that Peter and John have been through?
 - a. **It is corporate in nature.**
 - b. **They filled their minds with thoughts of God’s divine sovereignty before making a request... God of creation vs. 24; He is the God of revelation, who spoke through the Holy Spirit through the mouth of David (vs. 25-26; Psalm 2); he is the God of history ...who caused even his enemies to do what His power and will had decided beforehand would happen (vs. 27-28)**
 - c. **It is not spoken in a defeatist way...of “woe is us they are on to us”, on the contrary...**
 - d. **It exhibits the boldness they are praying for...**

- e. **It is short...long prayers may have their place...but this one gets to the point of the matter.**
 - f. **God's sovereignty can be summed up in 3 words according to this prayer... *made, spoke and decided...* Their world revolved around these characteristics of the One True God...His creation , His revelation and His history...**
6. What specifically do they ask God for to enable them to stand against the coming persecution in verse 29-30?
- a. **Enable your servants to speak God's Word with great boldness..**
 - b. **That God would reveal Himself in healing and in signs and wonders through the Name of Jesus.**
7. What does this "boldness" look like for these folks? **(See 4:8-13)** Where does it come from...the boldness that is? **Another sign of the Spirit at work in His people... People willing to give an answer for the hope that is within them.** What does this look like today?
8. What do you suppose is going on in verse 31? **All our confirmations of the power of the Spirit at work...shaking of the place would be a confirmation from God using something familiar to confirm His presence and the power of the Spirit in them afresh would be revealed in their witness of word and deed. It is an answer to prayer as well...but they are first and foremost signs of what God had already confirmed in sending His Spirit into these people. What I mean by this is that we have to put the first thing first....or... it may appear that we are saying that God does what He does because we prayed...is what it always sounds like when Christians say God answered my prayers because I prayed. He does answer our prayers but He does it from our perspective "when" we pray. When we are in prayer...the Spirit is already revealing Himself because we went there...top priority...in the first place. We see the Spirit at work here in their boldness before they ever prayed for it. So why pray? The big reason is this: He commands and expects us to pray to stay in relationship with Him. But, it is also the methodology that God uses to reveal to us His grace. When we pray we are of a mind to see and experience God's answers in this temporal world. When we don't seek Him through His Word and prayer we will never fully experience His presence and we will always question what God is doing...never being able to fully trust Him. Prayer along with studying and implementing His Word along with the sacraments and church discipline are ALL the building blocks of the faith. Neglecting any of these put the others in jeopardy of being shallow at best and non-existent at worst.**
9. What truths from this passage equip you to face the resistance that will come against the Gospel and the Church?

Acts- Sunday School
December 11, 2011

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. In the prayer of verses 23-31, they ask for and receive “boldness” from God even as they are asking. What does this boldness look like for these folks? **(See 4:8-13)** Where does it come from...the boldness that is? **Another sign of the Spirit at work in His people... People willing to give an answer for the hope that is within them.**
2. What should this boldness look like today for the church? Give specifics.

C. Read Acts 4:31-37

1. Something else we need to consider. Looking back over chapter 4 we see something occurring soon after the Spirit comes upon the church that we need to take heart of as believers today. What is it that occurs at the beginning of the chapter? **Peter and John are thrown into prison and required to give answers before the authorities for preaching and healing. Satan launches his attack on the Church. He starts through intimidation to hurt the church. Let us not forget that he is always around in one way or another seeking to undermine God's Church. Persecution had begun now beyond Jesus' death. It started slow but it will continue to grow. In fact over the course of the next few chapters we will see him seek to destroy the church through persecution from outside the church, through moral compromise and corruption within the church, and through distraction...placing so many fires before the leadership that they are unable to do their task. In fact, Satan's greatest work is done from within the church. Christ stands for unity...Satan stands for disunity. Christ supports His own...Satan seeks to pit us against the other. So these are the tools he always uses...he is not very imaginative...persecution, moral compromise and distraction.**
2. How are verses 31-37 an answer to their prayer of 4:24-30? What is happening that is a clear sign of being filled with the Holy Spirit? **They immediately are speaking the Word of God boldly...how did they do this specifically...vs.33...they opposed the Sanhedrin's command and fulfilled their apostolic responsibilities. They were generous and unified and caring towards one another as well.**
3. It has been often stated, falsely to be sure, but stated none the less, that these verses along with the verses in Acts 2:42-47 make it clear that Christians are NOT to own property. How would you refute that

claim from the text itself? ***“...no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own...”*** Obviously they own things...we will see this also confirm in the next chapter where peter affirms Ananias “right” to own property. ***“...from time to time those who own lands or houses sold them...”*** to be able to contribute to the need... this was a sacrificial act on their part. Was this an early form of spreading the wealth making everyone equal...kind of thing? Show me from the text. **The text clearly reflects distribution of such moneys were to be proportionate to true need...it had nothing to do with everyone being economically equal...vs.35 clarifies this.**

4. John Calvin wrote these contemporary words in 1555 or so. *“We must have hearts that are harder than iron if we are not moved by the reading of this narrative. In those days the believers gave abundantly of what was their own; we in our day are content not just jealously to retain what we possess, but callously to rob others... They sold their own possessions in those days; in our day it is the lust to purchase that reigns supreme. At that time love made each man’s own possessions common property for those in need; in our day such is the inhumanity of many, that they begrudge to the poor a common dwelling upon the earth, the common use of water, air and sky.”* (Calvin’s Commentary on The Acts of the Apostles, Vol. 1) So what is Luke saying according to this text are signs that someone is filled with the Holy Spirit? **Word and deed. There was a fundamental solidarity of love which the believers enjoyed...their economic sharing was simply one expression of the union of their hearts and minds through the filling of the Spirit.**
5. What truths from this passage will equip you to face the resistance that will come against the Gospel and the Church?

Acts- Sunday School
December 18, 2011

- A. Prayer
- B. Review

1. How are verses 31-37 and answer to the prayer of verses 24-30? What is happening that is a clear sign of these believers being filled by the Spirit? **They immediately are speaking the Word of God boldly...how did they do this specifically...vs.33...they opposed the Sanhedrin’s command and fulfilled their apostolic responsibilities. They were generous and unified and caring towards one another as well.**

2. How are these verses an example for us today?

C. Acts 5:1-11

1. Generally speaking, why do you think Ananias and Sapphira's offenses were so grave? **Generally speaking, it went against everything that was just displayed in verses 32-37. Their compromise and personal corruption could affect the unity that God had put into place.**
2. Were Ananias and Sapphira required to sell the land and lay all the money at the apostle's feet? **No there was no mandate...but if the piece of property was sold based on verses 32-37 the whole amount was to be delivered.** What then was their sin? **Hypocrisy=lying=self-exaltation=wanting to look good in the eyes of others =idolatry. Nothing has hurt the witness and work of the church more than hypocrisy...a lack of authenticity. G.K. Chesterton once said, "The greatest argument against the truth of Christianity is the lives of Christians."** There is a story told of Henry VII King of England's personal physician/chaplain. It is said that one day this man was talking with his priest, his mentor, and the priest knowing this chaplain to be a man who could read, coming from the elite of society, (since most people didn't read unless they were of a higher station) gave him his Greek copies of the Gospels to read. After reading them he brought them back to his priest with a concerned look on his forehead. The priest inquired as to the problem with the man, his student, and the chaplain/physician to King Henry said, "Either these are NOT the gospels or I am not a Christian."
3. What would they gain by lying about the money they received? **He would look generous in front of the Apostles and the others. They would look sacrificial when in fact they weren't. They would look like they cared for the needs of others when they were more interested in themselves. They wanted to feel important and benevolent.**
4. These were all things they determined to do. So what was satan's role in this? How was he trying to destroy the church? **Moral compromise and corruption from within the church. If this could happen to people in our midst it could happen to us all thus seeking to cause paralysis within the body. God nipped this in the bud early but it would always be a way that satan would seek to divide believers.**
5. Luke clearly intends for us to see the death of Ananias and Sapphira as a work of divine judgment. Why was the punishment so severe?
 - a. **The gravity of their sin. They had lied not against Peter as they had presumed but against the Holy Spirit. Peter stressed this by repeatedly saying that their lie was not**

directed against him , but against God. God hates liars and hypocrites.

- b. **They also sought to break down the unity they were all exhibiting. The witness was that they were to act one way as a people and A and S were duplicitous. God's people are to live transparent lives before one another. We are not to place anything between one another.**
 - c. **It shows the need for church discipline. Church discipline is done not so much because of the sin committed but because of the lack of repentance. There was no repentance only hiding the truth ..deception comes at a high cost. Christ is exalted by the integrity of His church.**
 - d. Which of these lessons strikes you as something we need to learn today?
6. If you had been one of the young men who buried Ananias and Sapphira, how do you think you would have felt? Twice the text tells us that "fear struck" the believers. Why? **They knew they were in God's presence. They saw His swift decisive act against one of their own. They worried about their own misdeeds. Knowing that God was there did what it had done to others who knew they were in God's presence...caused great fear and trembling. A recognition of their own sinfulness. A recognition as C.S. Lewis stated once...he is not safe...but He is good.** How do you respond to the severity of God's judgment?
7. 5:11 states, *And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard these things.*" How would this type of "fear" help the church then and now? **This passage testifies, along with the rest of Scripture, that there is to be a healthy and appropriate place for fear in the life of faith. We are never to get to comfortable with God. When we do we will not bring Him glory as the Almighty God. This is a holy fear that is not to be watered down into mere respect. Jesus may have said to us, "Fear not!" But He also said, *I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear Him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you fear Him!*"** Jesus is telling us not to waste our fear on anyone less than the Almighty God...for when we fear the Lord we have nothing to fear from satan or ourselves. Many are not comfortable with this word "fear"... feeling it too strong, since we relate "fear" to horror we can't apply this term to our relationship with our Heavenly Father after all I John says, *"There is no fear in love. Perfect love drives out fear."* But to be honest with the text that one doesn't really speak too the issue at hand. However, we would rather use terms like "awe" or "reverence". We say this is all the Bible really means when it speaks of the *"fear of the LORD."* But in reality it means even more. Think of those who have stood before God and trembled...

- a. **Look at Isaiah 6. What causes true humbleness if it is not a combination of reverence and good ol' fashioned fear?**
- b. **See Prov. 8:13. One cannot love righteousness without hating sin, especially our own sin. We fear God for we know we are not yet totally purified and completely holy yet...so to stand in His presence is a fearful thing and should be and we should consider all of life as standing in His presence.**
- c. **Look at Phil. 2:12. We should not be surprised to find our flesh trembling and quaking before our relentless God who will not leave us alone, but is constantly pushing us beyond what we think we can endure... there is always a true and good fear of those who push us.**
- d. **See Prov. 9:10. The fear of the Lord is the BEGINNING of wisdom...it is not the end of wisdom for the end of wisdom is perfect love in which there is no longer any fear...that is the meaning of the I John passage. As the hymn reminds... "Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved."- Amazing Grace**

Acts- Sunday School
January 8, 2012

- A. Prayer
- B. Review

- 1. How would this type of "fear" still help the church in the 21st Century?
- 2. How do texts like Prov. 8:13; Prov. 9:10; Isaiah 6:1-7; and Phil. 2:12 help us in our discussion of this concept?

- C. Acts 5:12- 16

- 1. Solomon's Portico or porch was a piece of Solomon's temple that had been spared by the Babylonians. It is thought that it was in disarray and no one used it much... (Josephus speaks of a work order put forward when Herod was rebuilding the temple to renovate this area but it appears to have been denied.) Jesus walked there, it is here that the lame man was healed and Peter preached his 2nd sermon in Acts 3, and it is where the early church met according to our text.

2. Verse 13 is an interesting verse. What is it communicating?
Interestingly enough, it is communicating that God had placed the fear of God into any curious ones...those who were insincere...they were not going to be part of such a "scary" movement. However, these early Christian were held in high regard. What do you suppose that means?
3. Having said that though we then have verse 14. What is being communicated here? Taking into account these 2 verses we see the on-going paradox of how some are alarmed and even turned away by the Word of God while others are drawn in and it is appealing to them.
4. What is the purpose for all of these signs and wonders if faith is not by sight? **Confirming God's presence with this "new" church...giving them signs and wonders just like He did in the OT because He knows of our need to know. Also, and not at all least among the reasons...is that He was also confirming the Apostles authority to speak and act for Him and that He was not with the religious leaders of the day. Remember as we have said many times these signs and wonder are given primarily to authenticate the message. They back up the Word. Also, this demonstration of these signs and wonders demonstrated God's power in mercy and grace just as He had demonstrated His power in judgment.** What is the purpose for this information today when we obviously don't see these things happening like this?

D. Acts 5:17-41

1. What reasons do you find for the actions that the high priest and the Sadducees took? What do they seem to realize? **They are losing control of the people...or that they already had lost control. They also realize that they are not the ones God is speaking to even if they had a misguided understanding that they did now they knew God was speaking to these simple men...and they were jealous.**
2. How does God intervene on behalf of the Apostles the first time? **He releases them to preach for Him... to oppose the Sadducees and the high priest...to humiliate them.** How does God intervene, at least, at the beginning of the 2nd incarceration? **He places the fear of the people in the guards...and even the court realizes that the teaching of the apostles have "filled " Jerusalem and that the apostles had found "them" guilty of Jesus' blood...so much for their authority and power... the courts that is.**
3. How did Peter and the Apostles respond to such questioning? What does their response teach us for today?
4. Why then was the council enraged/furious with them? How does God intervene next? **Gamaliel's speech. Gamaliel was actually a Pharisee (highly respected because of his being a grandson of**

Hillel a very prominent Rabbi), a more tolerant group that may have sympathized with these new Christians to a certain degree because of their stand on resurrection and their uneasiness toward the Sadducees. Interestingly enough that the names and information can be loosely confirmed in the writings of Josephus.

5. After Gamaliel's speech the council is quieted and they bring the men in and have them flogged. Why do you suppose God doesn't intervene here but allows them to be flogged? **40 lashes minus 1 as the law demanded... but the Jews were not known for the same cruelty for which the Romans came to be known with their lashings (no steel or glass pieces placed in the whip like a cats claw... "just" a whip.) but all the same, each of them would have come away with their backs lacerated and bleeding.**
6. Given everything else we have seen in the chapter what was God communicating with allowing them to be flogged?
7. What was their response? **Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 5: 10-12...they rejoiced in persecution... Look at Hebrews 12: 2.** What would that have communicated to the people who knew about the judgment on them?
8. Persecution of the church defined by voices from the past:
 - a. ***"Kill us, torture us, condemn us, grind us to dust...The more you mow us down, the more we grow; the seed is IN the blood of Christians."*-Tertullian (160-220 AD)**
 - b. ***"Without bleeding the church fails to bless. Persecution will refine the church, but not destroy it. If it leads to prayer and praise, to an acknowledgment of the sovereignty of God and of solidarity with Christ in His sufferings, then...however painful...it may be welcome."*-Bishop Festo Kivengere in February 1979 on the 2nd anniversary of the martyrdom of Archbishop Janani Luwum of Uganda**
9. We are so blessed it would be hard to even think of an answer to this question but, what would you be willing to be flogged for? What is it that really matters to you?

Acts- Sunday School
January 15, 2012

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. How did Peter and the apostles respond to the affliction they endured?
How was that a good witness to those outside watching?
2. Why does God bring persecution upon His Church?- **To strengthen our faith in Him...our resolve...our unity with one another.**

C. Read Acts 6:1-7

1. What positive character traits has the early church been exhibiting up to this point? **Unity in prayer and ministry...in purpose. Desire to be together and share even suffering together. Maturity in faith, giving and growth in numbers as well....**
2. What is going on in this section of the chapter? **Conflict!** How is that possible? **They haven't even been together that long. Christians in conflict...an interesting concept...one that shakes many believers world . BUT...conflict is normal...it is part and parcel with life since we are a fallen people...even when things are "good" conflict happens. That Bible demonstrates that over and over again.** Does that mean that our salvation is defective? Why or why not? **Conflict is one of the "training devices" God uses to strengthen us to cause us to rely on Him more and to rely on one another more. The Word tells us to be prepared for it...not to go looking for it. We are not to be surprised by it.**
3. What has happened since the people prayed for boldness?
 - a. **5:1-16- Corruption with the church with Ananias and Sapphira- but God judge and that corruption was stopped for the moment and the church grew.**
 - b. **5:17-42- Persecution ...not just of the church but of the apostles the leaders of the church...but God sent Gamaliel to stop the death sentence the Sadducees wanted to carry out...they were flogged and the church grew.**
 - c. **6:1-7- Distraction and dissention...the Apostles demonstrated leadership and the church grew some more.**
4. So to the text specifically. What conflict arises here in the midst of God's church? - **The Greek speaking widows were being neglected as far as one group was concerned. This was probably a valid concern since historically it seems the Jews took care of their "own" first.**

5. A thought to pursue: It seems that the Jews were giving preferential treatment to their "own." This is wrong by all of God's standards. But this is not the only problem or "conflict" at play here. It seems that when dissention occurs in one area it is cultivated in other areas as well. So while the Christians of Jewish descent were in the wrong...so weren't the Greeks. How so you might ask? Look at this word "complaint"= whispering or quarreling behind the backs of the leaders...not going to them directly. It would appear from the construction of the text that this complaint came to the 12 through other sources. There is no indication that the people came to them directly...the word also allows for something that goes on in the church a lot "secret discussions/complaining" among themselves...which only foster disunity and dissention even more.
6. What leads you to believe that the 12 see this as a serious issue? **When they heard about it they got right on it.** What was their solution? Does this seem as if they are just shifting the buck to someone else?
7. What is significant about the fact that at least 5 of the 7 of the early "deacons" seem to be Greeks?
8. There seems to be enough to sin to go around...the Jewish Christians not reaching out and caring for their Grecian sisters in need and then the Grecian Christians talking behind the backs of the Apostles causing division and dissention. With this going on and probably more why weren't these sins really addressed...they simply made sure the need was taken care of? **They seem to have determined to concentrate on the foundational problem of getting the needs of the widows met rather than spend time dealing with the quarreling...showing great leadership for they seemed to know once the people were back doing for one another the quarreling would stop. They concentrated on the issue at hand then spending all their time simply putting out little fires.**
9. Why is their solution the right one for the church? **If they are distracted from their calling ...preoccupied with administrative type work...neglecting their calling for the tyranny of the urgent the church is left defenseless against false doctrine and further dissentions. They didn't neglect the concern... they found a solution that was best for the church so they could continue in the work they were called to... and the upshot was the LORD grew the church.**
10. What principles can we glean from this as to how the church should function in relationship to problem solving? In relationship to ministry?

Acts- Sunday School
January 22, 2012

A. Prayer

B. Review

11. Why was the Apostles solution to the issue that arose in the early church the right one? **If they are distracted from their calling ...preoccupied with administrative type work...neglecting their calling for the tyranny of the urgent the church is left defenseless against false doctrine and further dissensions. They didn't neglect the concern... they found a solution that was best for the church so they could continue in the work they were called to... and the upshot was the LORD grew the church.**

12. What principles can we glean from this as to how the church should function in relationship to problem solving? In relationship to ministry in general? **The church needs boundaries...God's people need structure so that people's gifts can be utilized to God's glory. This gives security in Christ that helps us accomplish meaningful things. Structure rather than chaos...everyone doing what is right in their own eyes...gives lasting and effective results for God's glory.**

C. Read Acts 6:8-15

1. First Peter and John were hauled before the Sanhedrin, then all the disciples, now Stephen. What is Satan doing? **Seeking to scare the church even more...obviously persecution has gotten progressively worse. What is God doing? Setting the stage to initiate His worldwide ...preparing to bring in Paul.**

2. What are some things we about Stephen in our text?

- a. **A man full of the Spirit and wisdom. (From Acts 6:3,5)**What does that statement mean? **No one could oppose his debating...and the truth of what he said and the way he said it...vs. 9. This fulfilled the Prophecy of Jesus ...See Matt. 10:16-23; Luke 12:12; 21:15**
- b. **A man full of grace and power.** Again what does this mean in modern language? **Gracious-Christ-like...loving- some have defined the term as a combination of sweetness and strength- a perfect balance...God did signs and wonders through him.**
- c. **A man of great conviction in his preaching...**proclamation of the Word. **So much so that just like Jesus his words were twisted because he was speaking the truth. A trait that will occur with almost everyone who is speaking the truth...your words will be twisted by others.**
- d. **A man who stirred up opposition...**like Jesus...especially among freed slaves. **The Synagogue of the Freedmen were freed slaves and their descendants...but what of the other Jews mentioned? These all had been freed from slavery ...had suffered for their "faith" and had made the pilgrimage back to Jerusalem...they may have been some of the most**

zealous/legalistic of the Jews...so they would also be among the most outspoken against any Jew who converted...it is supposed that Saul of Tarsus may have been from the group from the region of Cilicia. Since they could thwart him in open debate they did the next "best" thing...start a smear campaign full of lies. Vs. 11-13.

3. What were the charges levels against him in verse 13-14? How would these stir up the people against him? **The charge went from blaspheming against Moses and God and then the lies were elaborated on by bribed witnesses to include that he never stops speaking against the holy place and the law. Nothing was more sacred to the Jew, especially these "radical" Jews, than the Law and the temple. Moses and God were of course associated with the Law. When speaking of the temple they always had in mind the "holy of holies"... God's personal room from their perspective... so to speak against either was to be blasphemous! Just like the charge against Jesus.**
4. However, in what sense did Stephen speak against the temple and the law? **Answer...vs. 14! Who else had been accused of saying the same thing? So Stephen was certainly repeating what he had heard Jesus say. Matt. 12:6; John 2:19-21. What Jesus taught was that the temple and the law would find their God-intended fulfillment in Him. Jesus replaces the need for a temple...the reason there won't be one in the New Heaven and the New Earth and He fulfills the law. They misunderstood Jesus so they would naturally misunderstand Stephen.**
5. This section closes with an interesting statement, *"And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel."* See Ex. 34:29-30. What would be significant even ironic, perhaps, about this statement? **Here they have just accused him of blaspheming Moses and what do these physically see? They see his face shining like an angel's...exactly what happened to Moses after receiving the 10 Commandments. So what is God doing through this miracle? God is doing something interesting here before these men...it seems that He deliberately was showing that both Moses' ministry of the law and Stephen's interpretation of the law had His approval. Stephen's grace and power, his irresistible wisdom and the shining face were all God's way of revealing to any who were paying attention...those that He was calling to himself... that He was in fact WITH Stephen in all respects.**

Acts- Sunday School
January 29, 2012

- A. Prayer
- B. Review
 - 1. What was Stephen being accused of and why did it get these Jews so upset?
 - 2. What is Satan trying to do in this story? What is God doing?
 - 3. Why are these event even important 2000 years later?
- C. Read Acts 7: 1-53...long read but it is the whole thing!!!
 - 1. You gotta love this man...when confronted with the charges against him what does he do? **Preaches a sermon!!!** What was significant about this sermon? **He did not simply rehearse key features of the OT that the Sanhedrin would have been familiar with, but he draws lessons from these sections that had been missed, forgotten or purposefully overlooked overtime. He was in fact, proving the purpose of the Messiah to do exactly what he and Jesus said it would be to replace the temple and fulfill the law as the OT clearly taught...going so far as to implicate their rejection of the true meanings of God's Word and their disregard for the law.**
 - 2. Now let's look at the particulars of Stephen's sermon/defense. What do we see in these first verses that tell us how Stephen feels and knows about God? **"the God of Glory" communicates that Stephen fully understands who God is and his immense respect and faith in Him. ...speaks to God's sovereignty. Providence and election.**
 - 3. What was God's promise to Abraham and how did He fulfill this promise? **See Gen. 12:1-3; 15:12-21 God chose to speak to a pagan and call him out of his pagan beliefs into the true faith. Verses 3-5, 17. A seed too numerous to be counted and a land...of His choosing. So long before there was a "holy place" there were a holy people to whom God had pledged Himself by covenant.**
 - 4. What point is he making concerning Joseph in verses 9-19?
 - a. **First, the patriarch rejected their own brothers message from God. Vs. 9.**
 - b. **Egypt is named at least 6 times in 7 verses showing the connection between what was promised to Abraham about God's people being in a land where they would be strangers and slaves for 400 years...**
 - c. **And the people died along ways away from the "promised land" and yet God was with them before there was a temple.**
 - 5. How does Stephen communicate his respect for Moses? **The largest section of his sermon seems to be devoted to Moses. See verses 20-22, 38.** What is his point concerning how the people responded to

Moses? **(Verses 39-43) They in turn refused to listen to the will and Word of God but rather turn to their own understanding...** What would have been especially significant and cogent to the conversation about his references in vs. 33, *“Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place you are standing is holy ground.”* And then the reference of vs.48, *“Yet the Most high does not dwell in houses made by hands...”* and then referring to Isaiah 61:1? **Wherever God is... is holy ground...and God is everywhere, especially wherever His people are. So if He has a home anywhere on earth , it is with His people but He cannot be contained in a simple or elaborate building. According to His covenant...wherever His people are, He is there also.**

6. What is Stephen’s particular accusation in verses 51-53 and does it relate to the previous 50 verses? How are Stephen’s accusers guilty of that which they accused him of according to Acts 7:51-53?
7. So to wrap up, how did Stephen’s sermon speak to the accusations against him?

D. Read Acts 7:54-8:4

1. Why would the Sanhedrin be so upset with Stephen sermonizing? **They were wanting to kill him anyway because of the influence of his words...they put him on the same level with Jesus since he could so effectively interpret the Word of God...he accused them of murder...and perhaps he had convinced many of them of that fact...much to their shame so he must be dealt with.**
2. What else do we learn of Stephen’s character here in this section?
3. How is the death of this true influential servant of God good for the cause? The thousands of other martyrs as well...how do their deaths help the cause?
4. How does Stephen promote the mission and life of the church? **What interests many people is that Stephen was the first Christian martyr. But Luke’s main concern lies elsewhere. He would rather show more about Stephen’s witness and ministry than about his death...emphasizing the role that God was having him play in the worldwide mission and growth of the church throughout his teaching and his death. Stephen’s martyrdom supplemented the influence of his teaching. ...for it shocked and stunned the church and the church was scattered... all but the apostles. The scattering of Christians was followed by the scattering of the good news of the gospel...wherever they went they proclaimed Christ.**

Acts- Sunday School
February 5, 2012

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What seems to be the main purposes for God having Luke tell us about Stephen?
2. According to verse 4 what was the result of Stephen's death?
3. Why does the text inform us that the Apostles did not leave Jerusalem? What is significant about this for us today?

C. Acts 8:1-25

1. What else seems to have been going on on the day of Stephen's death? **The text says... "And there arose on that day a great persecution..." There seems to have begun a well-engineered "house to house search" beginning of the persecution of the whole church on the day of Stephen's death...his death was not an isolated event.**
2. What according to this text is Saul's desire? Why? Why do you suppose that God chose to do things this way? **"A great persecution"= "Ravaging/destroying"= a brutal and sadistic cruelty...according to 9:1; 22:4 Stephen was not the only death that Saul facilitated. He had much blood on his hand.**
3. After reading this section, how would you say that we are seeing Acts 1:8 being fulfilled? **The Jewish diaspora...exile... led to the growth in Judaism among the people groups that the Jews went into...now a similar Christian diaspora was taking place which led to the proclamation of the gospel among different people groups.**
4. What is significant about Philip, a Jew, going to Samaria and the Samaritans actually listening to him? **We definitely see the power of the gospel to overcome even hard-core prejudice here. Hostility between the Jews and the Samaritans had lasted for a 1000 years. It began with the monarchy in the 10th Cent. BC when the tribes defected, making Samaria their capital, leaving only 2 tribes loyal to Jerusalem...(The Northern Kingdom and Southern Kingdom split)...Things got steadily worse when Samaria was captured by Assyria in 722 BC. Thousands of its inhabitants were deported and repopulated by foreigners. In the 6th Cent. BC, when the Jews returned to their land, they refused to help the Samaritans rebuild their temple. Things went along for a couple of hundred years until the 4th cent. BC when relationships hardened between the Jews and the Samaritans when they completed their rival temple on Mt. Gerizim and they rejected all the OT with the exception of the Pentateuch. The Samaritans were so despised by the Jews for their blasphemy and their inter-marriage that they set up trade routes around Samaria and no reasonable Jew would go there even**

if it would save time to cut through Samaria on a trip North or home. In John's gospel we see the relationship illustrated by the words, "For Jews had no dealing with Samaritans." But...what does Jesus reveal in His association with the Samaritan woman that foreshadows this event? His heart went out to her and them by virtue of His association and His trip through their "airspace". Jesus has a heart for "all" His people wherever they are found.

5. What comparisons can be made between Simon the Sorcerer and Philip in verses 5-13? What contrasts? **Simon was doing things to make himself look like a "god" and be held in such high esteem by the people...all that he did was based on the people being able to see...belief by sight and yet they were being deceived by Simon into believing he had some great power... Greek Language the word for "great" and the word for "magic" are the same word, interestingly enough...so we see a little play on words here. Justin Martyr...who was from Samaria...and Irenaeus both report this man as being a man of many heresies and considered to be a god among the people. Philip on the other hand was preached the good news of the gospel and did all that he did in the name of Jesus Christ...not his name.**

6. Why do you think it was important for the Jerusalem church to send Peter and John to minister to these new believers in Samaria in verses 14-25? **Interesting side note that John would be one of the Apostles to be sent to Samaria to check out this. It seems that his prejudice against the Samaritans was well known...see Luke 9:51-56. Why do you suppose that God would withhold from these believers...for we are told that they.... "...had only been baptized into the name (into the allegiance or the ownership of) of the Lord Jesus." ... the Holy Spirit until the apostles arrived? The gospel had obviously changed people here as all could see by the reports but the question remained would the Samaritan Christians be accepted into the fold? Would they be welcomed by the Jewish Christians or would there need to be a separate faction of Jewish Christians and Samaritan Christians in the Church of Jesus Christ? Of course, this would not do. Remember just as Pentecost was unique so isn't this work in Samaria and is not to be equated with the way god works in every generation...in fact we don't see this type of thing again. The rest of the Scriptures Old and New tell us that regeneration is an experience of the Holy Spirit, just as the belief of these Samaritans was an experience of the Holy Spirit—because we cannot believe apart from the Holy Spirit. Faith is a gift of God, created in us by the Holy Spirit, and just as the apostles believed having experienced the Holy Spirit in that way, they then subsequently experienced the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. So God in His wisdom waited for the outpouring of the Spirit on these so that all would see that God had in fact brought them into the whole church . The laying on of hands was a specific act by the Apostles as a sign of their inclusion publicly. They were to be considered BONA FIDE Christians to be incorporated into the community of the redeemed on precisely the same terms as Jewish converts.**

Acts- Sunday School
February 12, 2012

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What comparisons can be made between Simon the Sorcerer and Philip in verses 5-13? What contrasts? **Simon was doing things to make himself look like a “god” and be held in such high esteem by the people...all that he did was based on the people being able to see...belief by sight and yet they were being deceived by Simon into believing he had some great power... Greek Language the word for “great” and the word for “magic” are the same word, interestingly enough...so we see a little play on words here. Justin Martyr...who was from Samaria...and Irenaeus both report this man as being a man of many heresies and considered to be a god among the people. Philip on the other hand was preached the good news of the gospel and did all that he did in the name of Jesus Christ...not his name.**
2. After reading this section, how would you say that we are seeing Acts 1:8 being fulfilled? **The Jewish diaspora...exile... led to the growth in Judaism among the people groups that the Jews went into...now a similar Christian diaspora was taking place which led to the proclamation of the gospel among different people groups.**
3. Now... what is up with Simon the Sorcerer? He seems to have made the same conversion as the others before the Holy Spirit had come upon them. But here in our text (vs. 18-24) we see that he obviously hadn't. So what is it we see here that we need to be aware of in the church today? **There are those who make profession and are even baptized but are not of the fold. You see, there are only believers and non-believers in God's economy not Jew and Samaritan. How did Peter know that Simon was not a believer? Simon had not repented of his past life and was instead still seeking to “use” whatever he could to his advantage. The Greek in verse 20 is much clearer. Peter says is “To hell with you and your money!” And he says it that way because he's picking up, by the language that he goes on to say about being “in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity,” he's using the language of Deuteronomy 29, the language of covenantal cursing. In other words, what Peter is doing is pronouncing a covenantal curse on what Simon the magician has actually said, because it is totally out of accord with the language of someone who believes in Jesus Christ. And what Peter is saying is that Simon the magician has no share in the blessings of the gospel, but rather is under the umbrella of the curses of the covenant of God.**
4. What is Simon's response to Peter's judgment? **It is not as encouraging as it might appear...remember Simon has made a living in deceit. Peter had commanded Simon to repent and pray to Lord...perhaps then the Lord might forgive the intent of his**

heart...note he was not saying that HE would be forgiven...in fact, he had just condemned him. So instead of praying for forgiveness and repenting he ask Peter to do it for him. What seems to concern him most was not to receive pardon from God in salvation but to escape God's judgment.

5. How does verse 25 once again confirm the role that the apostles had defined for themselves in Acts 6?

Acts- Sunday School
February 19, 2012

- A. Prayer
- B. Review

1. Recount for me what has gone on in chapter 5 up to this point.
2. What has point the overriding point that Luke has been seeking to communicate?

- C. Read Acts 8:26-40

1. We have talked about Philip, now lets consider for a moment the Ethiopian...he was a eunuch which was common for most courtiers...especially those working for the royal women. He was also a treasurer for Candace the text tells us. Candace was actually a royal/dynastic title for the Queen Mother. Why would an Ethiopian travel to Jerusalem to worship? **It seems that he may have been born into Judaism and it was important to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The reason I say this is that Luke seems to indicate that Cornelius was the "first" Gentile convert. So we see how God is converting His people even from among the Jews...in this case...one who is removed from the formality of day to day life in Jerusalem and has only the Scriptures to influence his thinking...which are the power of salvation.**

2. Where is Philip when the Ethiopian is reading the book of Isaiah? **Running alongside the chariot. Anyone else running alongside a chariot come to mind? Elijah, perhaps?!? And he is running alongside close enough to hear what the man is reading out loud and close enough to ask the Ethiopian a question, “Do you understand what you are reading?” How can I, unless someone guides me?”** If only all evangelistic encounters would be so easy!!! Calvin contrast the Ethiopian's modesty and humility in acknowledging his inability to understand with the person who is “swollen-headed with too many confidences in his own ability”...someone who think too highly of himself. Calvin goes on to say: “This is also why practically the reading of Scripture bears fruit with such a few people today, because scarcely one in a hundred is to be found who gladly submits himself to teaching...any teaching.
3. What divine providences do we see at work here in the life of this Ethiopian?
 - a. **Worshiping in Jerusalem...**How would this prepare him to receive the teaching of God truly? What might have been some of the natural impediments to his hearing the Gospel? **He would have been taught about a Messiah that would be triumphant over the oppressors of Israel...he would have been taught what he did in worship is what might cause God to show Him favor...He wouldn't have any assurance except in his religion...being a Jew that is...to the exclusion of everyone else.**
 - b. **enabling him to obtain a copy of the scroll of Isaiah**
 - c. **giving him a clear mind prepared to want to understand...which requires a humble spirit before God...a repentant heart...**
 - d. **then sending to him Philip to teach him what the words meant...Interesting how this is similar to the events on the road to Emmaus right after Jesus' resurrection.**
4. What is the passage that the traveler is stuck on? **Isaiah 53:3-5.** Who is the passage about?
5. What happens next in verse 36? **So well prepared by the Spirit was the Ethiopian's heart that it seems he believe immediately and wishes to be baptized.** What “good news” does Philip actually tell the Ethiopian? **Jesus used this passage to describe Himself. (cf. Mk. 10:45, 14:24ff; Luke 22:37)**
6. This guy makes things so easy for Philip. Or I should say the Spirit was making it easy for Philip. Wait where is verse 37? **See note. These were side notes in later copies of the original. They seem to have been used in early baptismal liturgies for adults. It is felt that they were inserted into the text by a later scribe who figured that Philip would certainly want to make sure the Ethiopian made a public profession of faith which would have revealed his heart... as**

opposed to Simon the magician whose heart was not right before God. It sounds good but it is not in the original. It would seem that it was consider profession enough the a life-long Jew who was willing to give up his Judaism ...leaving behind his past life of unbelief was sufficient “evidence for Philip. The other would be a work which is what Judaism taught was necessary to receive God’s favor... not what Christianity teaches.

7. Just for fun, what do you suppose is being taught about the mode of baptism in the text? **Not much really...it can’t support total immersion as many have tried...simply because the grammar is clear that if one was immersed both would have to be immersed...and it is rather hard to baptize someone if the one doing the baptizing is under that water too. “went down into the water” proves nothing as to the depth of water for we go down into the water when we walk along the shoreline and our feet get wet...so the mode may suggest that they went down into the water together ...whatever the depth...and were baptized by pouring water scooped up from the water probably out of a container of some kind but could have been done with hands.**

8. How does this passage fulfill the prophesy of Acts 1:8? **Ethiopia was the “furthest south “ the extreme boundary of the habitable world as far they knew....so this would begin to fulfill the part of the prophecy that stated “to the ends of the earth.” Philip was next called to Azotus or the Ashdod of the OT (see I Sam. 5:1) and he was called to evangelize up the Philistine coast. What do we know about the relationship between the Jews and the Philistines? The Jews were supposed to have annihilated them when commanded by God and they didn’t. So God made them a serve thorn I their flash ever since. But God...sent Philip to the Philistines as well. By miracle or not... snatch up and delivered on the “wind” or simply that was his next port of call just like the one that brought him to the Ethiopian it doesn’t seem to really matter...interestingly enough there are no recorded conversions. This doesn’t mean there weren’t any but we can’t read into the text that there were...we only know that Philip did what the Spirit directed and the results were up too God.**

9. Luke has brought us 2 examples of evangelism in this chapter. So let’s compare and contrast them.
 - a. **Comparisons:**
 - (1) **The same pioneer spirit...or cold calling type of evangelism was seen...he didn’t know them in anyway...simply went where he was led Samaritans and Ethiopian.**
 - (2) **They both had a similar foundation of at least the first 5 Books of the scriptures.**
 - (3) **He proclaimed the same message...the good news of Jesus Christ. (12, 35)...for there is only one gospel.**

(4) In both there the same response...belief and baptism...(12, 36-38).

(5) In both the same result...joy...(8, 39)

b. Differences:

(1) The Spirit was received differently..

(2) There is no apostolic delegation sent to teach the Ethiopian...

(3) The people were different in race, rank and religion. The Samaritans were mixed at best...1/2 Jew and 1/2 Gentile while the Ethiopian was African, though probably a Jew by birth. Samaritans were ordinary citizens, the Ethiopian was a distinguished public servant. The Samaritans did not hold to the prophets, while the Ethiopian is seeking truth from the prophets.

c. Methods employed:

(1) For the Samaritans you could say he employed "mass evangelism"—the Billy Graham approach...with a few signs and wonders thrown in for good measure...to prove the message he was proclaiming.

(2) For the Ethiopian we see "personal...one-on-one...cold calling evangelism"

(3) Though he could alter his methods the message remained the same.

10. What would you say is missing from this evangelistic presentation of those who were saved? Where is the call to repentance from Philip?

Only 6 times in Acts is the word repent or repentance used.

- a. **Acts 2:38- Peter preaches to the Jews at Pentecost...**
- b. **5:31- "repentance of Israel" before the Sanhedrin...**
- c. **11:18 Peter explaining what God has done...He grants repentance and people respond accordingly...it is not something they can do on their own.**
- d. **17:30- Paul before the Greeks...God is revealed and all people are required to repent...**
- e. **20:21- Paul explaining his style of preaching...what was in his message**
- f. **26:20- Paul doing the same thing as above with emphasis on the fact that true repentance is witnessed in faithful works. So we have a standard to know if one is truly saved.**
- g. **What might this lack of mentioning of repentance say to us today? Obviously a call to repentance is to be part of evangelism but it doesn't appear to be absolutely necessary...or as necessary as many would leave us to believe. It is God that works repentance...we need to remember that. The most important aspect of the presentation is the correct teaching of the Scriptures...the good news.**

Acts- Sunday School
February 26, 2012

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. How does chapter 8 begin to fulfill the prophecy and command of Acts 1:8?
2. What divine providences do we see at work here in the life of this Ethiopian?

C. Acts 9:1-9- Saul's Conversion

1. What motivates Paul to act as he has and does based on Acts 7:58; 8:1-3 and 9:1-2? **His absolute belief in his belief system...not the God of the Bible or the Hebrew Tanakh...the Jewish Bible...the Midrash...the Tanakh is a composite of the 3 main sections of the Jewish Bible. Torah (The Pentateuch)...Nevi'im (the Prophets)...and the Ketuvim (the Writings). Saul approved of Stephen's brutal death and then set out almost singlehandedly to destroy...the Greek word here is the word used to describe "wild and ferocious beasts that tear their prey limb from limb" the church going house to house dragging believers off to prison and to their deaths. The picture is more of a wild beast in the way he treated Christians than a respected man of the temple. Some speculate that Saul may have actually met Him and heard Him speak and he was so moved by Jesus... and so conflicted by his own worldview that he went almost completely mad "against" Jesus...running in a sense until he couldn't run any more. Then he met with Jesus. ..again??**
2. What was this new "religion" being called at this time? **The Way=disciples of the Lord. They wouldn't be called Christians until Antioch.** What is ironic about this name that has obviously been given by the Jewish officials?
3. Why do you suppose that Luke has given us these 3 pictures of Saul, each seemingly getting worse? **He has been mentioned each time as a bitter opponent of Christ and His church...each time his description reveals more evil intent of Saul. Luke now says the Saul is STILL in the same mental condition of hatred and hostility. He himself says of himself in Acts 26:11 that he persecuted them with a "raging fury". In other words, he was in no mood to consider the faith claims of Christ any other way but as extreme heresy... a threat to his very way of life. (this gives us some understanding why many oppose Christianity so vehemently...it is a threat to the way they wish to look at life.) This was not a man who was seeking...he was not like the Ethiopian who was seeking to know. Consider Isaiah 8:11-22 as another possible reason for Saul's anger. We remember that Jeus generated anger pretty much wherever He went especially from the religious elites. When He was speaking the truth the truth was repulsive to those who**

should have known it best ... but the problem seems to be that it was this same truth that was exposing their falsehoods and sins and He didn't even need to speak always...just His mere presence caused great hatred. So Saul was being exposed along the way by the truth that he held in such high esteem and it was making him uncomfortable as the Spirit engaged him causing this tension. And he would soon be a believer...this is sort of a trial by fire or like being born as he later relates as it being a violent birth which most births are.

Acts- Sunday School March 4, 2012

A. Prayer

B. Review

- 1. Describe in a few words Saul's conversion experience on the road to Damascus. Talk about how it happened as well. The sovereign grace of God through Jesus Christ...the same things that causes our conversion. The answers seems to be to tell men for all time that faith is NOT something that we can choose....it is not something we decide to do...Saul is a picture of all men without Christ none of whom are NOT able to choose Christ...It is Christ that decided for him before the foundation of the world. It is Christ that intervened in his life. It is Christ who changes this wild beast...the evidence is undisputable. Paul would not and could not have chosen Christ even if he wanted to which , of course, he didn't. God arrested Saul, if you will, at the moment he had murder on his mind.**

- 2. Why is it important that God through Luke gives us such a clear picture of God's work in our salvation?**

C. Let's look specifically for a moment at the conversion....verse 3-9.

- 1. What is Jesus communicating to Saul when He says, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? He links Himself with His people completely.**
- 2. Why do you think God would want to use such a man as Saul? What character traits does he possess that might be useful to God's calling? Look at his compassion and his conviction! Look at his knowledge of the Scriptures... he didn't understand them the way they were meant to be understood but he probably had at least the Pentateuch memorized, if not the whole Tanakh.**

3. Does Luke intend for us to regard Saul's conversion experience as typical of all Christian conversions or as the exception? Why or Why not? **Obviously, we don't need to be struck by lightning, fall of a donkey, or hear our name called out in Aramaic...and we certainly don't need to go on some religious pilgrimage along the Damascus or Emmaus roads in order to be converted. Nor is it possible to have a resurrection experience or a call to apostleship.... So not everything is going to happen like Paul's Damascus Rd experience.** But what things are applicable to us today?
 - a. **We must experience a personal encounter with Jesus as He comes to us;**
 - b. **Which enables us to receive faith from God and repent of our sins;**
 - c. **This enables us to recognize His call on our lives into His service.**
 - d. **We cannot choose for Christ...Christ must have chosen us.**
4. Why do you suppose God used such a dramatic means to get Saul's attention? **He literally had to break him. He had to stop him cold...so Paul would be able to witness to the way God loved him. In Gal. 1 he writes, in so many words, "It pleased God to reveal His Son to me." This way Saul would never be able to take any credit...for he knows what he was going to do...he knew what he had been doing...becoming a follower of Christ was not in any way on his list of things to want to do. Remembering, perhaps, what Jesus had said and the way He had said it... in Acts 26:14, and here in some versions, there is this proverb offered in the conversation, "It is hard for you to kick against the goads." God was bringing Saul to himself and He was teaching Him along the way things that he would later realize after his conversion. ... and this Pharisee bowed. God uses whatever method necessary to get us off our high horse...or in this case donkey!**
5. Could Saul have denied Christ at this point? Does God "make" him convert? Is there any evidence that Saul wanted to deny Christ working in his life? Why are questions like this important when considering this man especially... but us as well? **If it was his choice...where was the NO, I don't want to? He had a voice. He asks, "Who are you, Lord?" So he could speak and he could still wonder...but by the time he got out the title of Jesus there seems to be some recognition of whom he was messing with. His response was free and rational. When does he become a Christian? Luke does not seem to be caught up in the science of conversion. We simply know that somewhere in this encounter he becomes a believer.**
6. In verses 10-19, we find Ananias...a popular name obviously. What is the significance of Ananias' ministry to Saul? What does this communicate for us 2000 years later?
7. What evidences do we have that Saul did in fact become a Christian?
 - a. **Vs. 10- he is fasting...not enough**

- b. Vs.11- he is praying- Luke offers this up as a way to show Ananias that Saul was truly a convert..**
 - c. Vs. 17-his faith is confirmed by other believers and he receives the Holy Spirit...presumably a leader in the church there just like the apostles coming to Samaria...**
 - d. Vs. 19- he is baptized in the Way, physically identifying with the followers of Christ...which also symbolizes union with Christ...**
 - e. Vs. 19- he was received into the fellowship of the Way.**
8. Interesting side note, in verse 2 he came to Damascus, "...so that if he found any belonging to the Way...he might bring them bound to Jerusalem." Here in verse 19 we see that he did in fact find followers of the way and now he is bound to them. "For some days he was with the disciples at Damascus."

Acts- Sunday School
March 11, 2012

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. In what ways does Saul's conversion demonstrate the marvelous grace of God? Why is this important for us today?
2. What is the significance of Ananias' ministry to Saul?
3. What does this communicate for us 2000 years later?

C. Read Acts 9:19-31

1. How does Saul reveal that he is a changed man right away?
 - a. He freely associates with them immediately...**
 - b. He begins to preach and teach "proving" the Jesus was the Messiah**
 - c. He begins to be persecuted himself...interesting change of station.**
 - d. Acts 26:16 tells us of Saul's commissioning, *"But rise and stand upon your feet, for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things in which you have seen me...I am sending you to the Gentiles, to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me."* All of the above shows us he is following Christ's command and appointment.**

2. Just an aside, for a moment...Saul was commissioned to be a servant and a witness to Christ by Christ...The divine eternal and holy God...His commission is very similar to the prophets of old... *rise and stand firm or upon your feet*...Typical commissioning language which he would have understood...part of his life experience as well as his biblical knowledge. I wouldn't be surprised if something similar wasn't said to him when he was commissioned to go and bring back bound followers of the Way. He is no longer a servant of the Sanhedrin but now a servant of the Way...of Christ. Then there is the whole meaning of the word "witness" which is the Greek word "martyr" which of course, is where the word "martyr" comes from. From the very beginning it is communicated to Paul that his life is required to do the work God is calling him to...whether that be his actual physical life or everything he has and is to be focused on God and His message. Verse 16 stated clearly to this point, *"For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name."* And, of course, as we know, it did mean ultimately giving up his physical life. Total commitment. I wonder how many of us understand this calling on our life?!?

3. Practically speaking how is it that Saul is able to "prove" that Jesus is the Christ/Messiah? **He knew the OT like the back of his hand and now all the passages began to make sense.** What does that reveal for us...the Church... 2000 years later?

4. How long was it before Saul actually went to Jerusalem? Turn to Gal. 1:11-18. **3 years... perhaps the "when many days had passed" passage of Acts 9:23... of Bible School if you will and seminary all wrapped up in his time in the desert. The Apostles presumably had not heard anything about him during this time. I am sure they knew of him from reports but 3 years is a long time without hearing from him they probably moved on to other things. He meets with Cephas/Peter and James, the brother of Jesus, and All things go well after that.**

5. Turn to Isaiah 19:16-25. Listen to these words closely. How are these words finding their fulfillment even in the Acts passages to this point? **God bringing in His people from all nations, tongues and tribes...the Gospel going into all the world bringing unity to those who were once enemies over coming old prejudices...even deep seated ones...whether that be from old oppressors or from the religious elite . this passage is yet another OT passage that speaks clearly of God's deliverance going out to all the nations beyond the borders of Israel...Israel forgets this to their detriment.**

6. How does Barnabas take over where Ananias left off? What might that communicate to us? **We will be called upon to have our "brothers backs"...even the new brother or sister. We are not to hold over them their past life...we are to move forward with what we know. But we are not to move ahead blindly...** What can I possibly mean by this statement? **Just because someone calls themselves a Christian**

doesn't mean they are...look at what Barnabas "knows" about Saul...and based on what he knows he presents Saul before the brothers. He stands in for Saul...placing his reputation on the line...based on what he knows and what he has been told by other trusted leaders in the church. Saul was not accepted blindly on a simple profession. How might this type of discernment be helpful in your life and in the church today? An example of why the elders of the church seek to hear a credible profession of faith from someone and why the leadership should not rush to allow people to join in membership of the church. True conversion always is seen in desiring church membership as well...wanting to actively join publically is a sign of true conversion. Actually, it would be easy if God would give us so many "proofs" as He gave to Saul's true conversion. But then on the other hand...He does give us, especially those of us vested with looking closely signs to look for...Every new convert becomes a changed person, and has new titles to prove it, namely:

- a. **"disciple" vs. 26 or "saint" vs. 13 as related to God; or a**
 - b. **"brother/sister" related to the church ;**
 - c. **"Witness" as in 26:16**
 - d. **If these 3 are not "seen"... made known... in professed Christians, we have good reason to question the reality of their conversion. But when they are visible, we have good reason to praise God and include them into the fold.**
7. What do you suppose that Peter and James, the brother of Jesus, might have been talking to Saul about? **The word for "visit" in Galatians is the word used to describe visit with a purpose to receive information from the main Apostles.**
 8. What connection do you see between Saul's conversion and the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria enjoying a time of peace?
 9. What 5 characteristics are seen in this church that should be seen in ours?
 - a. **Peace**
 - b. **Strength**
 - c. **Godliness...walking in the fear of the Lord**
 - d. **Comfort...enjoying "paraklesis"... the special ministry of the Holy Spirit in their midst**
 - e. **Growth...multiplying numerically**
 10. Look back at Acts 4:23-31. How does Saul's conversion fit into this prayer? **Luke alludes to his boldness in the face of persecution once in verse 20 and then clearly attests to his boldness in vs. 27 and 28. Interesting in this prayer they don't pray for God to remove the threats but rather they prayed for boldness to preach while all of the persecution was going on. He also openly debated with the Grecian Jews. Saul was healed miraculously. Power of the Holy Spirit was upon him vs. 17 and 22.**

11. What can we learn from this chapter that can be incorporated into the life and ministry of our church?

Acts- Sunday School
March 18, 2012

A. Prayer
B. Review

1. What connection do we see between Saul's conversion and the peace that the "whole" church was experiencing at this time? **Literally an enemy was subdued...showing everyone God power to grow His church...to preserve His church...to fulfill His promise to redeem His church. What is there then "really" to be afraid of?**
2. How does Saul's conversion and ministry fit into the prayer of the believers from Acts 4:23-31?

C. Acts 9:32-43

1. What was Peter doing? **Preaching and teaching...visiting/shepherding the saints.** Before, the Apostles remained in Jerusalem with one outing to Samaria but now Peter seems to walk freely. What has happened? **Vs.31.**
2. Why do you suppose that Luke tells us of these miracles? What are they for? How are they linked?
3. How was the power of God demonstrated in this text? And what were the results?
4. What do you suppose is significant about Luke telling us that Peter stayed with Simon the tanner? **Tanners worked with dead animals, in order to convert the skins into leather so they were regarded as ceremonially unclean much of the time. Not a profession for most Jews but some did get into the trade because there was good money to be made. Peter disregards this station in life which seems to show that he was already in a state of mind that would fit him for the vision he is about to have.**

D. Acts 10:1-9

1. As we move into this chapter, we know that Peter was given "the keys to the kingdom" by Jesus. How has he used the keys effectively up to this point? **Opening up the kingdom to the Jews on the day of**

Pentecost and then to the Samaritans soon afterwards...now he is using them to open the kingdom to the Gentiles.

2. Cornelius was a centurion of the Italian Cohort. As a centurion he would be in charge of a century/or company of men 100 plus strong. All centurions must be literate, have letters of recommendation and commendation, be at least 30 years old be expert in all forms of warfare and weaponry...the best of the best...and a strict disciplinarian of Roman standards for cleanliness, care of weapon and military strategy. He would be a Captain or a Major in our modern Army. A Cohort consisted of 6 centuries of at least 100 men each with its own centurion. 10 cohorts made up a legion=1000 to 5000 men depending upon the decree of the Emperor. The Italian Cohort or Regiment was probably one of the Roman auxiliaries established by Caesar Augustus to supplement the Roman legions who were normally only made up of Roman citizens and they were not usually stationed in places like Judea during peace times. These auxiliaries were made up of most volunteers and some conscripts who would remain in the service for a minimum of 25 years. At the end of this time they would have conferred on them complete Roman citizenship which then could be handed down to all their family into perpetuity. Who saw the movie *King Arthur* with his Sarmatian warriors/Knights? At the end of their service they received their Roman citizenship...that is if they lived.
3. *What evidence was there in the character of Cornelius that the Spirit was already at work in him? **God got his attention for a purpose that would fulfill God's will. He and his family were devout...God-fearer= one who would almost be Jewish in religion but had not undergone circumcision... he was after all a centurion. He had accepted monotheism and the ethical standards of Judaism and attended synagogue services of such type of followers. Without circumcision he was still a Gentile. No pious Jew would sit down at the table with a Gentile no matter how well liked they were in the community for it was forbidden to be familiar with a Gentile. The Jews were convinced that election meant God's favoritism toward them alone. So they became filled with racial pride and hatred of the Gentiles just like the Samaritans...and they developed traditions that actually kept them apart....***
4. What are some similarities between the Lord coming to Cornelius and how he came to Saul?

Acts- Sunday School
March 25, 2012

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. Read 10:9-23 gain. How did God prepare Peter for the meeting with Cornelius? **Speaking to him 3 times...would have probably shaken him up to be sure and he wouldn't have been able in the least to dismiss this event.**
2. What would have the command of verse 15 meant to Peter? **He had heard this before. Jesus had made it clear in all of His teaching that it is not goes in a man's mouth that is the problem but what comes out. Peter is fighting this for a couple of reasons...1. he doesn't want to do it...2. He may be concerned with how this will make him look to the Jewish believers. Old prejudices die hard. Maybe a third reason....that old voice within our heads that keep taking us to our default when we are in crisis.**
3. When you read a statement like the one the Spirit said to Peter, *"Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them."*...what do you think is being communicated? **The Greek phrase has a natural meaning of without hesitation or without misgivings...but interesting enough it could also mean "making no distinctions"... that is "making no gratuitous distinction between Jew and Gentile." This seems to fit the context of the whole chapter much better given the cultural and racial problems that would be stretching the church in the days to come. So though the vision seems to be making a distinction between clean and unclean food the Spirit defines this as really a distinction between clean and unclean people and is basically telling him to stop making such distinctions...Peter gets it as well...vs. 23 by inviting them into Simon's house to stay the night...also his words of vs. 28.**
4. Who would you say is the main character in this chapter? Why? **While much time is devoted to Cornelius...the main character is actually Peter. He needs to learn something. Again what was it that Peter needed to learn? He needed to have his deep-seated racial intolerance broken down. So it is not so much the conversion of Cornelius that was the reason for Luke's writing but rather the conversion... the opening the heart and mind of... Peter. This whole thing emphasizes to Peter that Jesus' sacrifice did in fact fulfill the law...something that a Jew would have a problem with fully comprehending because of their upbringing. The Law was what defined them...every part of their lives...and here Peter is having to come face to face with a worldview change...for this whole story makes what Jesus had said the Gospels even more true...what goes into a man's mouth does defile him but rather what comes out. So the bottom line for the Jewish believers is this...if you believe in Jesus then you can't hold on to the ceremonial laws any more...see also the argument supporting this in Hebrews.**
5. What does this have to say to us today?

C. Acts 10:24-48

1. We looked a little at how the Spirit had been working on Cornelius back in the first part of this chapter. What more do we see here in this section between verses 24-33? **verses 24-25 tells us that Cornelius was expecting something wonderful to happen...he had called all his family and closest friends for knew of Peter's stature/position before God and sought to honor him and be prepared to hear him and his words. In verses 33 we see him saying that he had called all these people together.... "in the presence of God..." to hear the word of God that Peter would bring to them...ready and open to listen.**
2. So, even though Peter is the main character in this drama of chapter 10 God does have a message for Cornelius, what is it from vss. 33-43? **He is included in God's family and he doesn't have to do anything to gain God's favor...he already has it. God's grace is not based on race nationality or class.** Was the message to the Gentiles different from the one for the Jew? Why or why not? **The message was simple it was the gospel that centered around the message of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ and how this gospel is to be proclaim universally so that His people from all nations, tongue and tribes can hear and be brought in in God's time...and that "everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name."**
3. Why would the pouring out of the Spirit on these Gentiles and their response which was very similar to Pentecost with the Jews have astonished these Jews who were with Peter? **Proved again just like the same message being preached that everyone is equal before God and the old prejudices needed to go away...otherwise they would be denying God's power and work.**
4. Just a question here as we conclude this chapter. If these believers had the Spirit why did they need Peter to stay to teach them? (That is what is being implied by the grammar of the statement. He was asked to stay for a purpose that had to do with his stature of apostle.) **Unlike many churches the gift of the Spirit is NOT proven ineffective if we allow earthly trained teachers to pass on their knowledge to others. Some church's teach that we are left to the mercy of the Spirit to give us all the words that are needed to tell others the gospel. That it is almost anathema if you want to go and get specialized training of any kind. But God trains as has been seen in the last couple of chapters so that all have the same message not opinion but a certainty of one message...His message!**
5. Turn to Isaiah 19:16-25. Listen to these words closely. How are these words finding their fulfillment even in the Acts passages to this point? **God bringing in His people from all nations, tongues and tribes...the Gospel going into all the world bringing unity to those who were once enemies over coming old prejudices...even deep seated ones...whether that be from old oppressors or from the religious**

elite . this passage is yet another OT passage that speaks clearly of God's deliverance going out to all the nations beyond the borders of Israel...Israel forgets this to their detriment.

D. Acts 11:1-18

1. Why do you suppose the brothers in Jerusalem would be so concerned about Peter's actions among the Gentiles?
 - a. **Just like with the Samaritans they needed to confirm the work of God....the apostles needed to endorse the Samaritans conversion so there wouldn't be any questions in the church so too here.**
 - b. **It could be a "called to the principle" moment where the more legalistic believers were wanting to call into question what Peter had done based on the reports/rumors they had been told. However, Peter went up to Jerusalem on his own accord ... *"So when Peter went up to Jerusalem..."* communicates he determined to do this probably to report the wonders of God and the circumcised party jumped on him first. These could be the people that Paul will have to eventually cast out of the Church or they simply could be people who had previously been Jews and they were concerned with the reports since they weren't there.**
 - c. **Whenever believers seek to do God's will there will always be opposition from within the church because it is not how they would have done it...or in this case they wouldn't have bothered to go to the Gentiles because they were so bound to the law...they were not free...God was freeing Peter up to bring Himself glory.**
2. The differences between Saul and Cornelius abound, to be sure, but once again how were their conversions similar?
 - a. **Both were converted by the grace of God in Christ;**
 - b. **both received forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit;**
 - c. **both were baptized and welcomed into the Christian family on equal terms;**
 - d. **This is a singular testimony to the power and impartiality of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is still, *"the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes; first to the Jew and then for the gentile."* (Rom. 1:16)**
3. What lessons does this ancient story teach us today?
 - a. **It teaches that God makes no distinctions in His kingdom, and we are not at liberty to make them either. But as we look at these Jewish believers we need to see ourselves all too often.**
 - b. **It teaches us of the need for true unity. The history of the Church is full of prejudice and hatred...it has not learned yet the definition of unity or equality in its members and this doesn't just mean people of other races and colors but also among ourselves already within the church.**

- c. **Factions still rise against leaders they themselves voted into position...affirming God's call on the lives of people... people take sides against brothers and sisters in the fold rather than seeking what is best for the whole. And like Peter in just a little while we can't seem to separate ourselves from our prejudices completely. (Gal. 2:11-14)**
- d. **We need to take seriously the true work of the Spirit in conversion. The gift of tongue is NOT a universal Christian blessing but the gift of the Spirit is! And the events of Cornelius receiving the Spirit counteracts the argument for a 2-stage application of the Spirit...it all happens at the time of his repentance and believing.**
- e. **Growth doesn't stop with conversion. We are always to remain humble so that we remain teachable.**
- f. **Faith comes from God alone by God's choice alone. No matter how "good" you are in the eyes of the world...no matter how many "good" things you do this is not what earns you favor with God. God grants that favor to His elect alone.**

Acts- Sunday School
April 1, 2012

- A. Prayer
- B. Review

1. What do these historical events teach us for today?
 - a. **It teaches that God makes no distinctions in His kingdom, and we are not at liberty to make them either.**
 - b. **It teaches us of the need for true unity. The history of the Church is full of prejudice and hatred...it has not learned yet the definition of unity or equality in its members and this doesn't just mean people of other races and colors but also among ourselves already within the church.**
 - c. **It teaches us to trust our leaders and to be willing to submit to those God has placed over us. Factions still rise against leaders they themselves voted into position**
 - d. **We need to take seriously the true work of the Spirit in conversion. The gift of tongue is NOT a universal Christian blessing but the gift of the Spirit is! And the events of Cornelius receiving the Spirit counteracts the argument for a 2-stage application of the Spirit...it all happens at the time of his repentance and believing.**

- e. **Growth doesn't stop with conversion. We are always to remain humble so that we remain teachable.**
- f. **Faith comes from God alone by God's choice alone. God grants that favor to His elect alone.**

2. Once again, who is the main player in this event in Chapter 10 and Why? What did he need to learn? **This whole thing emphasizes to Peter that Jesus' sacrifice did in fact fulfill the law...something that a Jew would have a problem with fully comprehending because of their upbringing. The Law was what defined them...every part of their lives...and here Peter is having to come face to face with a worldview change...for this whole story makes what Jesus had said in the Gospels even more true...what goes into a man's mouth does NOT defile him but rather what comes out. So the bottom line for the Jewish believers is this...if you believe in Jesus then you can't hold on to the ceremonial laws any more...see also the argument supporting this in the epistle to the Hebrews.**

3. What does this have to say to us today?

C. Acts 11:19-30

1. Luke ended the previous section with these words by the brothers, *"And they glorified God saying, 'Then to the Gentiles also God has granted repentance that leads to life.'"* What does this declaration reveal about what the brothers in Jerusalem have begun to realize? **God's plan, God's reconciliation and God's power to overcome all barriers for the sake of the Gospel...especially to the Gentiles...the very people that they had been taught to avoid like the plague. In verse 20 we read, "to the Greeks/Hellenists also..." The connection between verses 18 and 20 seems purposeful. Can you imagine why? The word "also" or "kia" in the Greek tells us that the evangelization of the Gentiles must (divine directive) begin. As Paul will write later almost as a refrain in some places the gospel is intended "first for the Jews, and then also for the Gentile." Just an aside: Don't get caught up in who the Hellenists are. This term is only used 3 places in all of Scripture and not in the greater literature of the day. It seems to speak not so much of nationality as a word used to describe the influencing culture.**
2. Just when it would seem that it would be a good time for the church to be together for growth and maturity they are scattered all over by persecution according to verse 19. Why does God scatter His church? **God scatters His church for the purpose of growing His Church. This was referring to pre-Saul conversion days was persecution was rampant. The Scripture is clear that this was the scattering that took place at the time of Stephen's death where Saul was watching and waiting to go to Damascus to arrest believers before his conversion. The spread of the Gospel! After Saul's conversion the Jewish persecution seemed to settle down for a time...hence Peter and the other apostle's ability to move around "freely" to meet with the believers.**

3. According to these first few verses who was doing the ministry of spreading the Word? **The people...those who had been scattered. Then with the help of Barnabas and Saul as they were trained.** What is significant about this answer? **The people are the ministers and the proclaimers of the Word...you don't have to specially trained to spread the gospel...this is not a profession...we are expected to live and speak from the heart of God's truth.**
4. Look at verse 23. What would you say that it would take to "*remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast purpose with all their hearts*"? **perseverance and wholeheartedness...in fact Luke tells us what that should look like when he describes for us Barnabas's character.**
5. What different efforts were made to nurture the new believers at Antioch? **Barnabas was sent to train and then Barnabas sent for Saul and they remained there a year to train these new believers.** What does this say to us about the importance of discipling young Christians? What evidences do we see of this church's maturity?
 - a. **It was here that the disciples were first called Christians...which could mean that they so lived their life and proclaimed the Word of Christ they the term stuck...whether a positive term of a negative term...they were obviously exhibiting the life of Jesus the Christ before people. The Greek structure of the word makes it clear that the general populace saw them as people belonging to...following the teaching of Jesus Christ as if Christ was a name. Think Herodians.**
 - b. **The sending of Saul and Barnabas back with aid to the churches in Judea....they understood family...connection...and the need to be unified.**
6. What does the reference here in verse 30 to the elders of Judea communicate to us today? **This indicates a particular structure/polity that had arisen within the church...that is being elder led in the true fashion of the Scriptures. Elders were considered to be the spiritual and judicial leaders of the people in the OT...the shepherds of God's people. This role had obviously devolved over time to where this had become a joke because of such abuses being done in the name of the position. But they knew enough not to throw the baby out with the "dirty" bath water...so what we have here is a renewal of the biblical position from the perspective of its original intent.**

Acts- Sunday School
April 8, 2012

D. Prayer

E. Acts 12:1-19

1. What do we learn about King Herod Agrippa I (this one was the grandson of Herod the Great. He shared many of his grandfather's unstable characteristics. He had been given the title of King by Emperor Caligula and it was reaffirmed under Claudius. He was despised by the Jews because of his relationship with the Romans and because like his grandfather he was an Edomite...a sworn enemy of Jewish people.) in these first 4 verses? Why would it be important for him to please the Jews? **His main task was to keep the peace and so he would do whatever it would take to be on the good side of the Jews to keep uprisings down. This James was the Apostle John's brother...the same one Jesus had said that they both would drink His cup...which meant death for James and exile for John. He also seizes Peter and the plan was to have him executed as well after the Passover.**
2. What could this little community of Jesus do, in its powerlessness, against the armed might of Rome? **Pray! Verse 5 uses the word "earnest" in the ESV. NIV "earnestly". NKJV= "constant". NASB= "fervently." Or "most strenuously" in some other translations. Luke uses the word "ekentos"- fervently... strenuously... in earnest...this word was used previously to describe the intense agony of Jesus in Gethsemane. Prayer is the power that enables us to use the armor of God effectively. This was not the defeated type of prayers prayed today...these were prayers of boldness and certainty that God was doing something even if they didn't know what.**
3. Why do you suppose Herod Agrippa had Peter bound so securely? **Chapter 5:19-25. ..regarded him as an escape artist!?! ☺ Or that someone might come and rescue him. Normally it was enough to handcuff a prisoner to one guard...but Peter was so "dangerous" that he had a guard handcuffed on both sides... "two chains" reference.**
4. How is it that Peter could sleep when his world might end on the next day? **The great 4th century preacher Chrysostom said this; "Peter and Paul showed themselves equally defiant of death"...it held no control over them. He is confident that death is not the end...and if it be God's will that he die here...after all Jesus had prophesied that he would die a martyrs death...then so be it. How would the church be if we had such an attitude about death as this? You gotta' love verse 7! Peter is sleeping so soundly on the night before his death that the angel has to "strike" him on the side to wake him up. He was**

sleeping so hard that his head is not clear until a little while later. We know what waking up in the middle of REM sleep is like. ☺

5. What is Luke communicating about Peter when he uses the phrases; *When Peter came to himself...* and *When he realized this...*?
Obviously he is fully awake at this point. He had been awakened from REM sleep and was walking around in a fog... we have all been there. BUT...the first reference is reminiscent of another event where the prodigal son came to himself in the pig sty. He is at once aware of the power and presence of the Lord in a way he has not been made aware to that point. This is not a dream...it is really happening...WOW!!!
6. How did the Christians who had gathered to fervently pray with so much certainty in their prayers respond when Peter appeared at the door in verses 12-17? **They may have thought that the secret police had found them...so perhaps they waited in suspense to see what would happen next. They sent a servant girl...which would have been appropriate and would not have caused suspicion. So their response was one of "Shock" ...interesting ...even with praying with all the boldness and assurance they could muster.** What is going on here? **It was customary in those days that when someone came to the house that the visitor would knock and call out. But rather than believe her after her insistence that it was in fact Peter they say it must be "his angel."** Now just so we are all clear they do not think he was dead yet...his death was going to happen in the morning...and you didn't mess with the schedule ☺ ☺... What the text is referring to is an angel that "corresponds to Peter" rather loosely thought of as a guardian angel. F. F. Bruce says, *"that the angel here is conceived of as a man's spiritual counterpart."* What do you see in Rhoda's behavior that may be reminiscent of your own sometimes? It is not as if they hadn't seen God work before miraculously?
7. Why are we so surprised by God answering prayers, especially the impossible ones? What does that say about our faith?
8. Verse 17b tells us, *"Tell these things to James and to the brothers. Then he departed and went to another place."* Where did Peter go? What if anything have you heard or been taught about this trip? **Obviously, he simply went into hiding for a time. However, there are sources such as the Acts of Peter, an apocryphal book written approx. at the end of the 2nd Century. ..that stated that Peter went to Rome and he stayed there for 25 years as the 1st pope. What we do know for sure is that maybe a year or 2 later we see Peter in Antioch ...Gal. 2:11...and then back in Jerusalem for the meeting of the Council in Acts 15.**
9. The death of the soldiers was typical of Roman law. A jailer and the guards were liable to the same charge as the prisoner they had charge over if that prisoner escaped.

F. Acts 12:20-24

1. What was the cause of Herod's death? Why? **Let's see...he just lost his number one prisoner...he had the guards killed...he is wondering what the report from Rome would look like...he is wondering what the Jews will do...he seems to have been quarreling with the people of Tyre and Sidon...or the text says in the Greek... he "was furiously angry" with them...they came to see him in a Honda Accord...didn't bring the limo...he was probably aware that they had bribed the king's trusted personal servant/chamberlain for an audience...You talk about being under intense stress. The people knowing of all his stress and what he was capable of when under stress listened intently to his oration...which some say the Greek here is the word "harangued them" or yelling at them with threats and condescension... then shouted, *The voice of a god, and not of a man!* ...to make him feel better...then *"Immediately an angel of the LORD struck him down, because he did not give God the glory, (...or he usurped the honor due God...) and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last."* Josephus describes Herod's death by saying it was God's judgment for his glorifying himself rather than God but rather than speaking of being eaten by worms he says, "a severe pain arose in his belly which became so violent that he was carried back into his palace where he died 5 days later."... bleeding ulcer?? Or intestinal worms which seemed to be common in those days...still today sometimes. Either way he was eaten up inside to be sure. Antiochus Epiphanies was said to have died such a violent way with an incurable pain in his bowels with excruciating internal torture.**
2. If you were to tell me based on Acts alone what would you say is the purpose for God's angels? **They are His servants to do His bidding whatever that may be.**
3. What does Herod's death tell you about God? How is this death similar to Ananias and Sapphira's death?
4. What are some of the ironies in this chapter that are there to encourage His people then and now?
 - a. **The most powerful force on the earth seems to be disarmed by the powerlessness of a small rag-tag group of people ...praying of all things.**
 - b. **The most powerful army was disarmed of their prisoner by God the most powerful.**
 - c. **When things seemed bleakest a Light shined in the darkness...The chapter opens with James dead, Peter in prison and Herod triumphing and its closes with Herod dead, Peter free and the Word of God triumphing.**
 - d. **Herod/man plans and God follows through with His.**
5. According to this passage and passages like it, how does God use suffering to extend His kingdom? Strengthen the church?

Acts- Sunday School
April 15, 2012

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What are some of the ironies of the last chapter?
 - a. **The most powerful force on the earth seems to be disarmed by the powerlessness of a small rag-tag group of people ...praying of all things.**
 - b. **The most powerful army was disarmed of their prisoner by God the most powerful.**
 - c. **When things seemed bleakest a Light shined in the darkness...The chapter opens with James dead, Peter in prison and Herod triumphing and its closes with Herod dead, Peter free and the Word of God triumphing.**
 - d. **Herod/man plans and God follows through with His.**
2. Read Acts 12: 24. According to this chapter and chapters like it, how does God use suffering to extend His Kingdom? Strengthen the Church?

C. Acts 12:25-13:4

1. What do you think would be most difficult about being a missionary?
2. The Acts of the Apostles recounts for us the way in which the ascended Christ marches across Europe. Having ascended up to heaven, He pours forth His Holy Spirit and equips, and commissions, and sends out His ambassadors to take the gospel from Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, and to the end of the earth. These are the acts of the Holy Spirit. Three times in verses 1-12 Luke will refer to the Holy Spirit. These are the acts of the Holy Spirit, the acts of the risen, ascended Christ; they are the acts of God fulfilling His word and purpose: that He intends that the seed of the woman will crush the very head of Satan. And He will build His church, the church of His dear Son, Jesus Christ, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. And we see a macrocosm – we see a big picture of the purposes of God, of the decree of God being fulfilled before our very eyes as we turn the pages of The Acts of the Apostles, and the church expands forth into Europe. The scene here is in Antioch. This is Antioch in Syria. Antioch is the third largest strategic city in the Roman Empire, after Rome and Alexandria in North Africa. It has this marvelous port city close by of Seleucia, from which they will sail to Cyprus.
3. A couple of side notes here:
 - a. **“prophets and teachers”-Luke does not explain how he understands these distinctions...may simply be early attempts to distinguish between the offices of elder...like us Teaching Elder and Ruling elders...but this is pure**

speculation on my part. For he gives no particular “powers” to these men.

- (1) Barnabas—we’ve seen Barnabas already. Barnabas, whose real name is Joseph...they call him Barnabas...it’s a nickname. It means *son of encouragement*. We’ve seen him as he brings Saul of Tarsus to Jerusalem that very first time. We’ve seen him as he is sent as the delegate from Jerusalem to Antioch to investigate Gentile inclusion in the church. We’ve seen him as he goes off to Tarsus to find Saul and bring him back to Antioch and Jerusalem. Every church should have a Barnabas with a great heart, a heart that beat for the things of God and a personality that went with it.**
 - (2) Simeon, or Niger, an African. Probably a black African. There’s a conjecture that he might be Simon of Cyrene who carried the cross of Jesus, and whose sons were Rufus and Alexander. (Mk 15:21; Rom. 16:13) No great evidence to support that, but there’s this nagging tradition that says he’s Simon of Cyrene.**
 - (3) Lucius of Cyrene, from Libya—North Africa, again.**
 - (4) Then there is Manaen. Luke calls him a *syntrophus*, meaning a companion; meaning someone who was raised in the same house as Herod. This is not the Herod who died in the previous chapter. This is the Herod before that, the Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great. The Herod Antipas whom Jesus called a fox; the Herod of Jesus’ execution. That Herod. Isn’t that extraordinary, by the way? That a man raised in Herod’s household, Manaen, as a *syntrophus*, which is a pretty close relationship—God has saved him. God has brought this man into the kingdom, and he’s there in the church in Antioch.**
 - (5) And there are some other companions, and we know that John Mark is there somewhere.**
- b. Luke tells us that they were worshiping, in verse 2 and 3, he says that they were praying or ministering together, and they were also fasting. They were seeking the face of God. They needed guidance. They needed direction. And because this was an extraordinary moment in the history of the church needing divine guidance and direction, they spent time fasting.**
- 4. What if anything do you find interesting in the way this church sends off the 1st missionaries? It seems that they have these enormously talented people in leadership and among them are Saul of Tarsus and Barnabas. Then the Holy Spirit said ‘I will chose the two best ones there, the two most gifted ones there: Barnabas and Saul. And I will send them.’ Then the leadership and the church confirmed this with more prayer and fasting and “sent them off.” The Greek word here could easily be translated “let them go” as in discharging**

them from their teaching responsibilities at Antioch in order for them to have a wider/ missionary ministry...they were being sent out from the church. I wouldn't want Barnabas to leave my church! I want to keep Barnabas in my church. And then there is Saul...look at how the Lord has used him to grow the church in Antioch. The question this event brings me to is this, "This church sent out the best they had, without a fight...so are we sending out the best that we have?" Are we prepared to forego the very best for the purposes of the advancement of the kingdom of God?

5. Is there anything here that the 21st century Church should learn or re-learn concerning how we send off missionaries? **Would it not be true to say that the Spirit sent them out, by instructing the church to do so, and that the church sent them out, having been directed by the Spirit to do so? This balance would be a healthy corrective to opposite extremes that seem to plague our missionary endeavors.**

- a. **First extreme is individualism, by which a Christian claims direct personal guidance by the Spirit without any reference to the church. This one is hard to judge. Do they have a personal call or not? We may not be at liberty on the face of this alone to deny any validity but for everyone's sake it is healthy and safe to proceed in the relationship between the Spirit and the church.**
- b. **Second, is the tendency to institutionalism, by which all decisions are made by the church without any reference to the Spirit.**
- c. **A balance would be how we do it...at least in principle...a personal call must be in place as well as that call being confirmed by the church...or sending agency in the case of a para-church organization. The church's "job" if you will is to seek God's leading and then confirm or affirm this call...all are involved in this way.**
- d. **It is the responsibility of the elder/leadership of the church to confirm such calls and the responsibility of the one seeking affirmation to submit to this leadership.**
- e. **Also, is the pattern of sending with the missionaries an "apprentice" part of this equation? Vs. 25 John Mark will be going with them as well.**

D. Acts 13: 4-12

1. Once again who all went out on to the missionary field? **Barnabas and Saul and John Mark.** What were they doing? Where did they go first to proclaim the gospel? Why? Where did they have an immediate impact? **Not with the Jews but with a Greek proconsul. Their first ordained ministry is preaching to the Jews and their first convert is a Gentile. I think it is somewhat interesting the Paul the Christian is found preaching to Paul the Gentile the good news of Jesus Christ.**

2. Compare and contrast Sergius Paulus and Bar-Jesus. **Sergius Paulus was obviously superstitious and curious at the same time. Bar-Jesus/ Elymas seem to have been the court wizard/counselor of the proconsul and he provided for the proconsul a way of entertainment perhaps. Sergius, like the Greeks that Paul would encounter later was a true seeker of knowledge...so the Word of God was a new thing and He wanted to hear it. Elymas was a fraud...didn't want to lose his job...was a manipulator and false prophet...he didn't want to be exposed. Sin hates to be exposed and will do everything in its limited power to keep that from happening.**
3. Why now do we see Saul being called Paul? **As he moves into more Greek and roman areas this name will serve him best. Paul is no longer called Saul in Luke after this point.**
4. Why does Paul need to so severely reprimand Elymas at this point? **The Apostle sees this a serious attack upon the evil one and it must be dealt with quickly and surely. So Paul confronts this magician the way Peter did in Chapter 8. The gospel will Not be hindered in any way.**
5. Why does Luke also tell us at the juncture that Paul is filled with the Holy Spirit? **To show us that all Paul's boldness, all his outspokenness and power come from the Spirit not from Paul...which will be the cornerstone of Paul's testimony.**
6. What was the proconsul most impressed with? **"Astonished" = deeply impressed or shaken to the core by the teaching of the Lord...the sign confirms the teaching again.**

Acts- Sunday School
April 22, 2012

- A. Prayer
- B. Review

1. The first part of chapter 13 talks about the beginning of Paul's 1st missionary journey. What did we learn that would help us better send out missionaries the way God expects?
 - a. **A balance would be how we do it...at least in principle...a personal call must be in place as well as that call being confirmed by the church...or sending agency in the case of a Para-church organization. The church's "job" if you will is to seek God's leading and then confirm or affirm this call...all are involved in this way.**

- b. It is the responsibility of the elder/leadership of the church to confirm such calls and the responsibility of the one seeking affirmation to submit to this leadership.**
- c. The Church itself needs to be participating in this process always praying that God would raise up people who could be sent out from its midst...church planting/missionary service.**

2. What was the proconsul most impressed with according to 13:12?

“Astonished” = deeply impressed or shaken to the core by the teaching of the Lord...the sign confirms the teaching again. What does this tell us today that is significant?

a. **How important it is for us to be people of the Word...so we can:**

(1) Not be so focused on the sign and wonder but to focus on the Word....for it is the Word that is the power unto salvation.

(2) Combat false teaching,

(3) Willingly be able to stand for the truth...stand up against evil,

(4) Not put so much emphasis on methods

(5) Live the life prescribes as well as proclaim the truth in the face of untruth,

b. Being people of the Word we can be who God wants us to be...His children that bring Him glory and impact the culture around us with His truth.

C. Acts 13:13-52

1. Some things to think about as we move into this section verse 13-15.

a. They crossed from Barnabas's native island...Cyprus...to enter the south coast of Paul's native land, Asia Minor...the roman providence called Galatia. They probably landed at Attalia and then walked 12 miles or so to Perga.

b. In Perga John Mark leaves them. Luke simply mentions it with no commentary but in Acts 15:38 Paul sees John Mark as having deserted them. Why would he have done this? We don't know but men being men there is conjecture put forth...homesick, missing his mother and the servants that served him. He may have resented the partnership between Paul and Barnabas. Or did he not like the fact that Paul seems to take over for Barnabas as Paul is taking the lead. Did he disagree with evangelizing to the gentiles? Or was it that he looked at the mountains knowing that there be "bandits" in them thar' hills (the route to Antioch in Pisidia would take them up a trek of 3600 feet above sea level and then a foot trek of approx.. 100 miles after that.) With that before him maybe he said, "Nope, not going there...see ya!"

c. The text says that on the Sabbath day they entered the synagogue and sat down... the service would have opened with the call to worship...the Shema... *"Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the LORD is One. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might..."* Deut. 6:4-5), then some

prayers, followed by 2 readings by members of the congregation ...one from the Pentateuch and one from the Prophets, followed by an expository sermon (the most important part of a synagogue service), and concluded with the Aaronic Blessing from Numbers 6:24-27.

- d. *After the reading from the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent a message to them saying, Brother, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it.*” In other words do you want to give the expository sermon? Interesting for this was a Jewish audience...not a believing audience...so the question comes to mind ...do they know who he is? Saul of Tarsus or Paul the Christian? In these synagogues in gentile communities such as this they became like community centers for learning, meeting community needs, a place for general meetings and a court of justice. The laws of cleanness and uncleanness were as observed as say in Jerusalem. There would be at least 4 groups of people in the synagogue worshiping together on that Sabbath: Jews born in Israel or in the dispersion, converts to Judaism, God-fearers (uncircumcised followers), and Gentiles who displayed an interest but had not made a commitment. In these local synagogues of the dispersion it was customary to ask visitors to bring a message. So we begin to see why it was so “easy” for Paul to have access to speaking in synagogues.

Acts- Sunday School
April 29, 2012

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. How is God fulfilling the prophesy of Acts 1:8 up to this point?
2. What are some reasons that this is important for us to see this today?
3. What if anything has been “eye” opening up to this point in our study? Something you have not seen before...something that has been made clearer to you...something that has confused you?

C. Acts 13:16-41

1. How do we see God’s grace emphasized in Paul’s history of Israel?
2. Paul jumps from David to the promised Messiah/Savior...Jesus. What truth about Jesus does he proclaim? **He speaks of Jesus as the One referred to in Psalm 16 that did not see decay in death for He was resurrected just as God said. Because of this Jesus IS the forgiveness of sins for those who have been justified...declared righteous by God before God. There is no salvation through the**

Law of Moses. How does Paul show that each of the people he mentions in his sermon point to Jesus?

D. Now let's look at Acts 13:42-52

1. What are the consequences of Paul's sermon in verses 42-52? **At first everyone is amenable to their continuing on...but when they got bigger crowds than the church leaders the leaders get jealous and begin to talk against them ...to contradict them. The Jews rejected but the Gentiles accepted ...and all who were appointed to eternal life believed.** What does that last statement say to us and to the rest of the church today? **Many commentators have tried to soften what they call "extreme predestinarianism" (used by John Stott in The Spirit, The Church, and the World) Interesting to me since the Greek word here "tasso" means to "obtain or appoint" as in the sense of assigning someone to a certain classification. Other uses have been translated as "enroll" or "inscribe" as in the case of referring to the Book of Life. So either way this is something done by someone in authority to someone else. It is not by the power of the individual but the one who is assigning them or inscribing them in the book of Life.**
2. What is the relationship between the influence of God's Word and opposition to it? **Remember what happened when Jesus espoused the doctrines of grace in John 6. When He made it clear that people don't choose to be save and that their salvation is not based on how "good" they are or what "ethnic" background they are...thousands left Him...even to the point of asking His disciples if they too were going to leave...but Peter ...on point that day said, Where would we go...you have the Words of life?**
3. What can we learn from Paul and Barnabas about interacting with those who are hostile to the gospel? Where do we see the whole, "...they shook off the dust from their feet against them..." come from? **Jesus example and command against those who are not His.**

Acts- Sunday School
May 6, 2012

- A. Prayer
- B. Review

1. In Paul's sermon in Acts 13: 16-41 he gives an excellent overview of redemptive history. Why is the history lesson important to these folks and to us today?

2. Look closely at verse 48 before we leave this chapter. What is being communicated here? **Every one of God's chosen ones will surely believe and be saved! See also Amos 9:11-15; Chapter 15:7 and 17.** What is it about this text that makes it so "scary" for many today? **We have no "control"...our "free will" is hindered... it doesn't make sense since because "everything" else in life requires us to do something to get something!...** Is that really true? Can you think of things that don't require us to do anything to get them? **(Think gifts...in fact if we have to do something to get them they are "payment" for work rendered... "bonuses" at the end of the year are just that bonuses...supplement to your salary ...a salary is payment for work rendered...not a gift....really...There may be a way to look at these as gifts but that really is confusing the line a bit.)** What is Paul teaching the church here? **Paul knew something that many in the church fear today...that the truth of divine election isn't really a hindrance to his outreach seeing sovereign grace as the central truth of the success of the gospel. "Appointed"- to inscribe or to enroll"...in other words, those who believe have been enrolled (think adopted) by God before the foundation of the earth into His family tree. Appointed is in the perfect tense in the Greek which means an action in the past with continual relevance in the future. A.W. Pink explains it this way: *"Here we learn 4 things: First, that believing is a consequence and not the cause of God's decree. Second, that a limited number only are 'ordained to eternal life', for if all men without exception were thus ordained by God, then the words 'as many as' would be grammatically meaningless. Third, that this 'ordination' of God is not mere external privileges but to 'eternal life', not to service but to salvation itself. Fourth, that all...namely "as many as" and not one less...who are thus ordained by God to eternal life will most certainly believe."* This, of course, also supports Jesus' own words when he spoke that He would raise up all that the Father had given Him. John Calvin says, *"This verse teaches that faith depends on God's choice...He does not begin to choose us after we believe, but by the gift of faith He seals the adoption that was hidden in our hearts and makes it manifest and sure."***

C. Acts 14:1-28

1. As we look at verse 1-7, how does Paul and Barnabas' experience in Iconium differ from their experience in Pisidian Antioch? How was it similar?
2. Now let's look at verses 8-20. What was the result of the lame man's faith? **He sprang up and began walking.** Does this support the whole "name it and claim it" mentality in the church today? Why or why not?
3. How do Paul and Barnabas react to being perceived as gods in verses 14-18? Why? **A little historical perspective will help in understanding why the people did what they did. 50 years previous the Latin Poet Ovid had narrated a local legend in one of his works. Supposedly in this legend Jupiter (Zeus to the Greeks) and his son**

Mercury (Hermes to the Greeks) visited this hill country disguised as mortal men. In disguise they sought hospitality from the people but were turned away a thousand times. At last, they were offered lodging in a tiny cottage put together by products from the marsh so it was an extremely poor family that had given them shelter. Later the gods rewarded them by turning their home into a lush temple to the gods, but destroyed all the homes of those who had turned them away. The people of Lystra would have known this story so they wouldn't want to make the same mistake again if these be gods. Interesting enough a stone altar and inscription found at Lystra in an archeological dig indicates that Zeus and Hermes were both worshiped as local patron deities.

Acts- Sunday School
May 13, 2012

- A. Prayer
- B. Review

1. Look closely at verse 13:48 again. What is being communicated here? **Every one of God's chosen ones will surely believe and be saved! See also Amos 9:11-15; Chapter 15:7 and 17.** What is it about this text that makes it so "scary" for many today? **We have no "control"...our "free will" is hindered... it doesn't make sense since because "everything" else in life requires us to do something to get something!...** Is that really true? Can you think of things that don't require us to do anything to get them? **(Think gifts...in fact if we have to do something to get them they are "payment" for work rendered... "bonuses" at the end of the year are just that bonuses...supplement to your salary ...a salary is payment for work rendered...not a gift....really...There may be a way to look at these as gifts but that really is confusing the line a bit.)** What is Paul teaching the church here? **Paul knew something that many in the church fear today...that the truth of divine election isn't really a hindrance to his outreach seeing sovereign grace as the central truth of the success of the gospel.**
2. Now let's visit verses 14:8-11 again. What was the result of the lame man's faith? **He sprang up and began walking.** Why is this significant?
3. We know what was wrong about what the people said in verse 11 in reaction to what God had done through Paul and Barnabas...but just for fun, what is it that is correct about their statement?

C. Acts 14:19-23

1. Persecution raises its ugly head again vs. 19, violently to be sure with the stoning of Paul. Where does this persecution come from and how does it aid in the growth of the kingdom? **There were disciples from**

the city of Lystra...vs.20...so there were some who believed. We see at least 4 churches (possibly 6 if you include Perga and Attalia) being founded Lystra, Derbe where many became disciples, Iconium, and Pisidian Antioch...with elders being chosen for each church plant. Paul's steadfastness in carrying out God's will ...like Jesus... was not distracted by either flattery or opposition.

2. What do you suppose would have been going through Paul's head as he is being stoned? **Stephen's death...which he attended. Would he have prayed the same prayer?** What other event comes to mind when you read of the reaction of this crowd from healing of the lame man to the stoning? **Jesus was hailed as He came into Jerusalem only to be the brunt of an angry mob a few days later wanting His death. Paul would say to the Galatians in his letter soon *"I bear on my body the marks of Jesus..."***
3. What did Paul and Barnabas do to ensure that the churches they left behind had a solid foundation on which to grow?
 - a. **Cool stuff...After Paul recovered from the stoning they went back into the city...What kind of affect do you imagine that would have had on the people. Given who they thought Paul was can you imagine to see a "dead man" walking around...you have to love God's sense of humor...leaving them in their ignorance and fear for the moment.**
 - b. **Leaving Lystra and going on in the mission...perseverance under tremendous persecution...Remaining true to the faith...in other words to remain true to the teaching of the Prophets and the Apostles...God's Word, that walking this walk will bring tribulations and struggles...it won't be easy...persecution is part of the identity of God's church, but they are not alone...the Spirit is within them,... *"to continue in the faith..."* means *"...that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."***
 - c. **They preached the Gospel and many were saved by the power of God's word...even in Lystra, Iconium and Antioch...**
 - d. **Paul and Barnabas appointed/established elders ...a plurality of elders...to teach , encourage and to discipline which will enable the church to grow well...No autonomous/independent or Lone Ranger churches...no single elder/pastor churches...this concept is unknown in the Bible...then...**
 - e. **Paul and Barnabas *"commit them to the Lord..."* ...Since the church belongs to the Lord He will take care of them.**
4. In verse 24-28 why do the missionaries return home? Why not just continue on? What principles do we see here for today's church? **This was there sending church...and they needed to give an answer for the things God had sent them to do. It was their responsibility to**

stay connected to the church that had commended them to the grace of God. Reporting has become a significant part of missionary service and obviously there is a time for needed rest and relaxation among brothers and sisters in Christ built into God's plan for missionary service. But it seems to be part of the plan that the missionaries only stay as long as God wants them there....so the church does not become dependent upon these groundbreakers or beach stormers...the church needs to be left the way Paul and Barnabas left these churches so that their dependence is upon God.

5. When these missionaries return to their home church what did they do?
Reported to the whole church all that God had done with them. "With them" is an interesting word in the Greek. Literally "in conjunction with them, as His instruments, His agents, His co-workers."...but they took no credit upon themselves they gave all the glory to God the Father. They had been gone for close to 2 years so they stayed awhile with the brothers in their home church.
6. What are some reasons that it was important to include these events here... not just for the people in Antioch but also for us today?

Acts- Sunday School
May 20, 2012

- A. Prayer
- B. Review
 1. Why was it important for the missionaries to return home?
 2. What were some reasons that it was important to include these events here in chapter 14... not just for the people in Antioch but also for us today?
- C. Acts 15- The Jerusalem Council –the First General Assembly
 1. The Bible is never silent concerning conflict with in the church...conflict in general...between believers...non-believers...worldviews...political systems...you name it it is dealt with in the Bible. There are those among us whose whole outlook on Christianity has been drastically affected as a result of a church split/ conflict.
 2. What does this tell us about what God wishes to communicate to us?
 - a. **There will always be conflict in this life,**
 - b. **There is a standard to deal with conflict,**
 - c. **We are required to deal with conflict,**
 - d. **We are not allowed to deny its presence even with in the church,**
 - e. **We are specifically gifted to be peace-makers in conflict...not peacekeepers...for we have God's standard.**

3. How do we usually deal with conflict in the church? Why is dealing with conflict “correctly”(that is, by God’s standards) important to the continued unity, peace, and purity of the Church as well as our witness in the world?
4. Let’s look at verses 1-5. What is the main issue that has caused this council to be called? **How the Gentile believers would be incorporated into the Church...the place of the Law...the acceptance of Gentiles at all.** Why is this issue so important? **The decisions made here would lay the foundation for admittance to God’s church either by God’s standards or by man’s. This meeting was also the 1st council of the church seeking to achieve doctrinal clarity on issues like God’s grace and the law.**
5. What might be some compatible issues that are causing conflict in today’s church?
6. Describe the process that the leaders of the church use in verses 6-21 to seek to resolve this conflict.
 - a. **Prayer: these were men of prayer, while it may not have been said this had been their practice up to this point and it would have most likely been their practice here as well before, during and after their discussion they would have sought the direction of the Holy Spirit, believing the He would give them an answer (How can I speculate this argument out of silence from the text? As I said it was their practice up to this point; also God seems to bless this decision. Other places when men seemingly do not seek God he judges them some way for their lack...not here)**
 - b. **Discussion: focused on what God had done and is doing**
 - c. **Approval by the church leadership. Where is the vote of the people? This is no warrant in Scripture for congregational form of government...or hierarchical/episcopal either. (While this is better perhaps than congregational...Peter himself made it clear that all elders stand before God equal in authority and power...not one is higher than another.)**
7. So according to what we have seen up to this point, what decisions concerning church polity (government and governing) have the people been directly involved in? **Choosing Deacons.** What about elders? Who had chosen them up to this point? **Paul and Barnabas appointed elders wherever they went. .** Why? **The people were not spiritually mature enough...they had not been taught what to look for...they were not ready to choose their own leaders.** Who chooses now? **The people chose their own leaders by confirming God’s call on the life of the man who “senses” a call to this office.** How are we able to do this today? **God has given us a standard for these men...He has defines the calling...He has defined how this man should be living before they sense the calling... He gives the criteria the Church should use in judging the man’s call...and He expects that we will pray about and over these men who are called upon to lead us.**

8. Once again, look at verse 7-11. What is Peter speaking about here to these Jewish believers? **Peter is saying very clearly that God not only chose Jews to be in His kingdom but also Gentiles. Addressing the Jerusalem Council, Peter argued for salvation by grace alone on the basis of the doctrine of divine election. The salvation of the Jews and Gentiles is not conditioned by circumcision, but by grace alone, rooted and grounded in God's election. He is moving away from the Law which has been misunderstood to grace which is a somewhat new concept to them...and the grace of God which He has spoken about from the beginning enables them to see God's greater plan to include the Gentiles...it is NOT a Jewish Church.**

Acts- Sunday School
May 27, 2012

- A. Prayer
B. Review

1. Why does God seem to highlight conflict in the Bible?
 - a. **To tell us that there always will be conflict in our lives..**
 - b. **To show us that there is a standard with which to deal with conflict...His!**
 - c. **To remind us that we are to deal with conflict**
 - d. **To help us understand that we are not at liberty to deny conflicts existence or that it is our responsibility to do something about it.**
 - e. **To encourage us to use our role as peacemakers in conflict holding both sides to the same standard...God's!**
2. So according to what we have seen up to this point, what decisions concerning church polity (government and governing) have the people been directly involved in? **Choosing Deacons.** What about elders? Who had chosen them up to this point? **Paul and Barnabas appointed elders wherever they went.** Why? **The people were not spiritually mature enough...they had not been taught what to look for...they were not ready to choose their own leaders.** Who chooses now? **The people chose their own leaders by confirming God's call on the life of the man who "senses" a call to this office.** How are we able to do this today? **God has given us a standard for these men...He has defines the calling...He has defined how this man should be living before they sense the calling... He gives the criteria the Church should use in judging the man's call...and He expects that we will pray about and over these men who are called upon to lead us.**
3. In review a moment let's look at 15:7-11. What is Peter speaking about here to these Jewish believers? **Peter is saying very clearly that God**

not only chose Jews to be in His kingdom but also Gentiles. Addressing the Jerusalem Council, Peter argued for salvation by grace alone on the basis of the doctrine of divine election. The salvation of the Jews and Gentiles is not conditioned by circumcision, but by grace alone, rooted and grounded in God's election. He is moving away from the Law which has been misunderstood to grace which is a somewhat new concept to them...and the grace of God which He has spoken about from the beginning enables them to see God's greater plan to include the Gentiles...it is NOT a Jewish Church.

C. Acts 15: 19-21.

1. What is the basis for James' (the half-brother of Jesus) declaration?
God's divine election of these Gentiles...just like them by God's own grace alone...hence the Church should not burden men with more stuff. James was showing the different "sects" within the church by using the Amos passage (Amos 9:11-12) (and he could have used many others from Isaiah to Jeremiah to Haggai) that the inclusion of the Gentiles was not an afterthought on God's part but one that had full prophetic support.
2. Having said that the church shouldn't burden the Gentiles, why does James now say what they should NOT do?
 - a. **Abstain from the things polluted by idols,**
 - b. **Abstain from sexual immorality,**
 - c. **Abstain from the meat of what has been strangled,**
 - d. **Abstain from the consumption of blood.**
 - e. What was the purpose for these "rules"? **James and the council was saying to the Gentile believers that they did not expect them to "add" to their faith all the requirements of the law namely circumcision. But these things are crucial for the Church harmony, unity...not offending one another. Please abstain from practices forbidden by the Scriptures and things that might offend their brothers and sisters. The truth of the gospel had been secured and the principle of concession established.**

D. 15:22-35

1. In these verses what do the leaders do to make sure the Church hears and understands the decision of the council? **They sent out representatives of the council and they sent a letter directly from them to be read and clearly explained by the representatives. Why?**
 - a. **Because they needed a physical presence before the people just like those who were attempting to stir up the church.**
 - b. **They wanted to make sure the message was clear and face to face is the best so that when questions arise you can deal with them right away.**
 - c. **By disassociating themselves with these folks they are also disassociating themselves with the requirement of circumcision as a sign of the covenant.**

2. Why are they quick to disassociate themselves with those with stirred up the church over this matter?
 - a. **The circumcision party stands on the Law as the means to salvation and the Apostles stand on the grace of God alone.**
 - b. **A form of discipline against these professed brothers- They said clearly, "...some persons have gone out from us and troubled you...or with the purpose of troubling you...without our authorization...we gave them no instruction." ... in others words They do not speak for the Church or the Gospel....harsh language but false teachers must be exposed for what they are. Paul will speak of these people again in Galatians.**
3. At the end of the letter we read, "If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well." This might sound obvious, but what are they communicating here to the Gentiles and the rest of the church? **Since this is NOT placed in the form of a command they are NOT burdening these new believers or any others by that matter with stuff you must do to PROVE you are a Christian. They are simply saying to them by recommendation that in order to maintain unity with other believers you might want to be careful not to cause your brothers to fall in their liberty.**
4. How important to God is clear communication? What can we learn from this practice today?

E. 15:36-41

1. As we finish up this chapter, what was the disagreement between Paul and Barnabas? **Paul judges John Mark unworthy because of his previous desertion of Paul and Barnabas when they went through the area at first.** How did they deal with their disagreement? **They didn't agree and they separated and went on to God's calling in their life.** What are we to learn from this conflict today?
 - a. **That there are times that we will agree to disagree...**
 - b. **That we must hold our ground sometimes even when we disagree with a fellow Christian..**
 - c. **Sometimes brothers won't agree but it should not hinder the work of the LORD.**
 - d. How does the church seem to react to this disagreement? What does that tell us about how Paul and Barnabas must have separated? **It was amiable...they disagreed but no one sinned in the process so the church could commend them to do more ministry.**
2. What have you learned about conflict management and resolution from this chapter?

Acts- Sunday School
June 3, 2012

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What are some of the things we learned about conflict management and resolution from this chapter?

2. I want to re-visit a section of chapter 15:19-21, for a moment...the abstentions. What were they again?

- f. Abstain from the things polluted by idols,**
- g. Abstain from sexual immorality,**
- h. Abstain from the meat of what has been strangled,**
- i. Abstain from the consumption of blood.**
- j. Having said that the church shouldn't burden ("not trouble") the Gentiles, why does James now say what they should NOT do? What was the purpose for these "rules"? James and the council was saying to the Gentile believers that they did not expect them to "add" to their faith all the requirements of the law namely circumcision. But these things are crucial for the Church harmony, unity...not offending one another. Please abstain from practices forbidden by the Scriptures and things that might offend their brothers and sisters. The truth of the gospel had been secured and the principle of concession established.**
- k. 3 of these seem to be ceremonial law oriented...one seems to deal with the moral law. Sexual immorality seems to be the moral law. Why do you suppose it is amongst these others? Christian chastity is a sign of obedience... commanded by Scripture for all of God's children. So the Apostles would not have to break this out separately...it would have been taught and expected. The 3 main sins in Jewish eyes were "idolatry, immorality, and murder". I think it is interesting, because the Roman Catholics have 7 mortal sins. With these "3" being highlighted this begs the questions if the other 10 Commandments are open for debate. The Greek word here is "porneia" = every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse. Okay so how does this fit with the others...Well since the others come from the ceremonial and civil laws found in Leviticus there is also found legislation against irregular and unlawful marriages. So it would seem to fit in the context that this is referring to all the irregular marriages listed in Leviticus 18, in particular but not the only, marriage within the degree of blood-relationships. If this be correct, then all 4 fall into the category of ceremonial laws laid down in Leviticus 17 and 18. 3 of which deal with dietary requirements that the Gentile believers are being asked to consider so as not to offend their Jewish brothers still tied to these laws...these would be courteous and temporary, hopefully as the Jewish brothers moved farther and farther way from the**

restrictions of the law. The 4th would become self-evident in time to be prudent as grace and law will clearly co-exist all people will see the principles that still remain in the ceremonial laws even though Christ fulfilled them.

C. Chapter 16

1. Let's look at Acts 16:1-5. Thinking about all of the conflict management and resolution of the last chapters...and after all the discussion at the Jerusalem council about Gentiles not having to be circumcised, why do you think Paul circumcises Timothy before taking him on the journey with Silas and himself? **Paul was all about removing (pun intended) any obstacle to the gospel that didn't compromise the Gospel. Paul's convictions are based in the gospel and he was willing to make concessions when they did not necessarily strike at the heart of doctrine. He was about preserving Christian solidarity among a culturally diverse group like the Jewish believers ...who still were in need of understanding the doctrines of grace...and the Greek believers who whole beginning was founded in the doctrines of grace. Paul was willing to make himself and Timothy a slave to this because he was free... John Newton wrote of Paul here, "*Paul was a reed in the non-essentials and an iron pillar in the essentials.*" Martin Luther wrote in explaining this text, "*A Christian is perfectly free of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.*" How does Luther's quote shed light on this text?**
2. Vs. 4 says, "*As they went on their way through the cities. They delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem.*" What does the word "observance" communicate here? **This term speaks of the authority of the council and the binding nature these decisions had on the churches at that time.**
3. Based on all that we have seen up to this point, how would you evaluate the spiritual health of the Church at this time? **They are just babes...the Jews were uncertain how much of the Law they could let go of to make God happy...the Gentiles were still learning how much liberty they had so as to not offend their brothers in the Lord. Both sides still learning what the doctrines of grace really meant in building up...strengthening the faith of all believers.**
4. What would you say is the connection between being "*strengthened in the faith and they increased in numbers daily*"? What does this mean for us today? **Correct teaching linked with a willing heart makes for glorifying God in all we do which then communicates to everyone around us what God is doing. (See Matt. 5:13-16.) When God's people are convicted by the Gospel we naturally live the way God prescribes... We have been saved, our natures HAVE been changed to where sin is not the first thing we think or do... and that being the case, we want to do God's will. It is God's grace that changed our heart to be willing... it is the Word and the Spirit that empowers/enables us to actually do what God says to do. Oh, we**

still battle but the issue of control has been accomplished...sin no longer controls us as it did... it influences us but it no longer controls us because victory has been won by Christ.

5. Now let's read 16:6-15. How involved is God in directing the journey of Paul and his companions in these verses? **The Holy Spirit directs right down to telling them where to go and where not to go and then to whom they will go. God had prearranged appointments set up that Paul had to get to at God's set time. He has them for us as well.** How is this a proof text in a way for what we were just saying about the connection between growing/ strengthening/ maturing in the faith and the numerical growth of the church? **We do not have to beg the Spirit to guide us, like Paul we simply need to seek the truth of God's Word and to be faithful to what God has already revealed in His Word to be His will and the Spirit will reveal to us who to go to and what we are to do. In other words; if we are focused on God and His revealed will...our specific task will be revealed to us in His time...and by the way...nothing will be late....everything happens right on time!**
6. How do we see the Holy Spirit honor and work through their obedience in this passage?
7. How does Lydia come to faith? **By the grace of God... "The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul."The message came from Paul...but it was God's Word...and it was the saving initiative of God to change her heart. Paul's preaching/ proclamation was not affective unto salvation, but the Lord worked through it to accomplish His purpose of salvation.**

Acts- Sunday School
June 10, 2012

- A. Prayer
- B. Review

1. Why did Paul believe it was necessary to circumcise Timothy after he had just made such a big deal about the Gentiles not HAVING to be circumcised? **Paul was all about removing (pun intended) any obstacle to the gospel that didn't compromise the Gospel. Paul's convictions are based in the gospel and he was willing to make concessions when they did not necessarily strike at the heart of doctrine. He was about preserving Christian solidarity among a culturally diverse group like the Jewish believers ...who still were in need of understanding the doctrines of grace...and the Greek believers whose whole beginning was founded in the doctrines of grace ...needing to learn restrain in their "liberty". Paul was**

willing to make himself and Timothy a slave to this because he was free... Also, a more practical reason that would have not set well was the fact that timothy was from a Jewish mother and had not been circumcised and they might have taken that as an affront. John Newton wrote of Paul here, *"Paul was a reed in the non-essentials and an iron pillar in the essentials."*

2. How does Lydia come to faith according to 16:14? Why is the "right" answer to this significant? **By the grace of God... *"The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul."*** The message came from Paul...but it was God's Word...and it was the saving initiative of God to change her heart. **Paul's preaching/proclamation was not affective unto salvation, but the Lord worked through it to accomplish His purpose of salvation.**

C. Now onto 16:16-40

1. What was Paul and Silas' response to the mockery, flogging and being thrown into jail according to 16:25? How could they be so joyful? **The order was to the jailer to *"keep the prisoners safely."* Just so you know their situation...they were to be placed in the innermost cell of the prison and locked in stocks. So with lacerated back and limbs locked up in the stocks...obviously in great pain...they were praying and singing hymns to God....no wonder the other prisoners were listening to them.**
2. Why would God do such a thing to them after they have had such wonderful success up to this point? **He had another appointment for them that included a jailer...how best to reach a jailer than at his place of work? You have to love God's sense of humor though it can be painful as well.**
3. Why do you think the jailer asked the question, *"What must I do to be saved?"* **Practically speaking he may have been thinking he was going to die and he wanted Paul to give him an out to save him from an eminent death... "Tell, the authorities that I didn't fail in my position...Tell them, everyone is still here...then maybe they wouldn't kill me as if I had lost all the prisoners that I have sworn with my life to keep." The Spirit seems to also be working on his heart to cry out to the Apostle but it is not until the Jailer hears the word preached that he comes to faith.... him and his whole household...he may have been asking for a physical salvation of some kind and Paul knowing his greater need pointed him to the one need that mattered most and in that moment his heart was at a place that he could receive what Paul was offering. How is his coming to salvation similar to Lydia's? Well, **Scripture teaches that man cannot come to the Lord on His own...so God Himself opened up the heart of the jailer to believe and he did. No one who is appointed to life will be left behind!** How does the response of the jailer compare to Lydia's response to the gospel.**

4. How would you answer the same question? What does all of this tell us about the nature of the gospel?
5. Why do you suppose Paul made a “fuss” about having been mistreated to the point of invoking his Roman citizenship? **He refused to move until the Roman officials themselves came themselves and apologized. He wanted the officials to recognize and fulfill their God-appointed task. They had made a mistake and they needed to fess up publically. An injustice had been performed in the name of profit...they were Roman citizens and as such they were not to be treated as common criminals.** How do you suppose a stand of this type based in Roman law would help the church that was left behind by Paul?

Acts- Sunday School
June 17, 2012

- A. Prayer
- B. Review

1. Why do you think the jailer asked the question, “*What must I do to be saved?*” **Remember this probably had one meaning for the jailer and another for Paul...the jailer at first may have been seeking something of a physical salvation ...in the form of Paul speaking on behalf of the jailer doing his job correctly...Paul knew his greater need and presented him with the gospel and he was saved for eternity. The jailer was seeking temporary salvation and God granted him eternal life. The Spirit had changed his heart already to bring himself to cry out to a prisoner in the first place...why would he have done that unless God was in it?**
2. Why do you suppose Paul made a “fuss” about having been mistreated to the point of invoking his Roman citizenship? And how might this stand help the church that was left behind by Paul?

C. Acts 17:1-15

1. It was a 100 mile trip from Philippi to Thessalonica. They passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia maybe stopping for lodging but that is all. Their destination was Thessalonica, the capital of the province of Macedonia. It was a harbor town, commanding trade by sea across the Aegean and by land along the east-west route *Via Egnatia*... the Way of Knowledge ...this major highway in the Roman Empire was a flow of sources of energy and the information for the Empire. Paul and his friends seemed to have stayed in Thessalonica for several months as we read the letters I and II Thessalonians.
2. How would you describe Paul’s strategy in Thessalonica...first with Jews and then later with the Greeks? **Aggressive? For 3 weeks he**

preached the gospel to them. What verbs describe Paul's approach to the Thessalonians and their response in verses 1-4?

- a. **Reasoned...explaining...proving that the Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead. ...**
 - b. **This was the standard apologetic towards Jewish people...Interesting this was Jesus' own methodology...Luke 9:22, 24:25-27, 44-46.**
 - c. **Proclaiming Jesus *...is the Christ*— that is he told the story of Jesus of Nazareth: his birth, life and ministry, His death and resurrection, His exaltation and the gift of the Spirit, his present reign and future return, His offer of salvation and warning of judgment. Jesus is the Messiah...they have awaited.**
 - d. **And some were persuaded and joined... \$ groups of influence—Jews, Greeks, God-fearers and well-known women**
3. What were some of the other unfolding responses to Paul's preaching and teaching in verse 5-9? **Jews were jealous...of Paul's/the gospels influence over the influential...the Jews pulled together the "rabble"/ troublemakers and formed a riot to bring them out to the crowd. The word "crowd" is the word "deemos" (where we get our word demonstration) for "the People assembly" or a citizen council. Attacked Jason at his house and drugged him before the authorities.**
4. What is really cool about the phrase, "*These men who have turned the world upside down have come here also...*"? What are they admitting without thinking about it? **They were charging them with "high treason" judicially but they were also acknowledging the power of the gospel. I see this as another form of God revealing to non-believers that they have someone special. Even in their anger they recognize God is doing something and they are praising Him without even knowing it consciously...God will be praised...even the "atheists" of today do it by keeping God's name in the public eye so much...just like the rulers in Acts 4, "*Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.*"**
5. Could Paul have changed his strategy to prevent the riots? How might a change in strategy have affected the more positive results of Paul's preaching? What can we learn from this?
- a. **Paul has had believers oppose him and his message...**
 - b. **Paul has had Jews oppose him and his message...**
 - c. **Paul has had Greeks oppose him and his message...**
 - d. **Paul keeps on proclaiming the same message!**
 - e. **We are to proclaim the same message...no matter the consequences.**

6. How are the Bereans different from the Thessalonians in verses 10-15? What things set them apart? **Jews of more noble character= “open-minded”. They met with Paul on a daily basis not a weekly basis as the Jews in Thessalonica. They examined the Scriptures daily to see if what Paul was saying was true. It appears Luke is trying to communicate to us that they willingly set aside their presuppositions concerning the accepted interpretations to examine the “truth” of what Paul was saying. “Examine” is the Greek word used for judicial investigation so they were using critical questions to get to the heart of the teachings. Ever since this time the term Berean has been applied to people who study the scriptures with impartiality and great care.**

Acts- Sunday School
June 24, 2012

A. Prayer

B. Read Acts 17:10-15.

1. How are the Bereans different from the Thessalonians in verses 10-15? What things set them apart? **Jews of more noble character= “open-minded”- willing to step past their traditions to look at scripture...they were not content to simply be told. This is an amazing position. They understood how important it was to search the Scriptures even before the Reformation made that a central issue for believers. They had access to the “scrolls” as well it seems. That fact that many of the traditions had already been broken down made Paul’s job a little easier. God was preparing the way by the way these people were doing church differently than say those in Jerusalem at the time. Already by their actions more “open” in a good and positive way. They met with Paul on a daily basis not a weekly basis as the Jews in Thessalonica. They examined the Scriptures daily to see if what Paul was saying was true. It appears Luke is trying to communicate to us that they willingly set aside their presuppositions concerning the accepted interpretations to examine the “truth” of what Paul was saying. “Examine” is the Greek word used for judicial investigation so they were using critical questions to get to the heart of the teachings. Ever since this time the term Berean has been applied to people who study the scriptures with impartiality and great care.**
2. What was the response of the Bereans? **Not a unanimous acceptance...there was division just like at Thessalonica. Those who believed were again Jews, prominent Greek women and many Greek men...Jews from Thessalonica came and agitated the non-believers.**
3. John Stott describes this interchange this way...*“It was inevitable in Jewish evangelism that the OT Scriptures should be both the textbook*

and the court of appeal. What is impressive is that neither speaker nor hearers used Scripture in a superficial way. On the contrary Paul “argues” out of the scriptures and the Bereans “examined” them to see if his arguments were cogent. And we can be sure that Paul welcomed and encouraged this type of response.” I know I do!!! ☺

4. What is Paul teaching us about how we should evangelize/ tell others about Jesus?
5. What do you appreciate the most at this point about the ministry of Paul, Silas and the others in the midst of difficulty? What are they saying to us today?

C. Acts 17:16-34

1. What is an idol? **A God substitute is a good short answer. Any person or thing that occupies the place God should have is an idol.** With this definition in place what idols would Paul see in our day and age? **Covetousness, ideologies, fame, wealth, youthfulness, power, sex, food, alcohol, drugs, family and friends....work, recreation, Internet, possessions.**
2. What caught Paul’s eye immediately about the city of Athens...the cultural capital of the world? **Idols...and he was greatly distressed/ provoked/ indignant/ grieved/ irritated/ exasperated... interestingly, this word in the Greek here “paroxyno” is the verb regularly used in the Septuagint (LXX...Greek OT) to describe The Holy One of Israel’s reaction to idolatry! So Paul found their actions... “inexcusable” (as one of the people from Sunday School class put it)...they had been given so much like a bright intellect...they should have known better... but it clearly displays how “depravity” blind people to even what makes sense! So he was personally and internally upset over such displays by those created in the image of God...those who have been so gifted to be able to create such aesthetically pleasing architecture and sculptures along those who strove for intellectual perfection... to see that the city was given over to idolatry. The idolatrous use of these gifts made Paul indignant over the waste of the gifts God had gifted these people with. Idolatry...not the other things is what defined this great city! That was a waste... we look back and define the city and its people by their “great intellect”, their architecture, their art, their politics and yet sees that the city really is defined by the idolatry. Idolatry was everywhere. The word Paul uses here to describe this is used no place else in Greek literature... “kateidolos” what is normally translated “full of idols”... can be better translated as “given over to idols” in the sense that the city is “under them”...smothered in idols...a “veritable forest of idols.” So Paul was not upset in a sinful way as some have tried to argue but rather in a righteous way because of his hatred of idolatry. What can we learn from Pauls’ attitude and reaction?**

3. Now what did Paul do in response to what he saw? **You have to love this...He didn't go into a foreign city and start bad mouthing all the idols or throw up his hands in despair or simply leave thinking that these people were a lost cause...rather according to verse 17...he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with devout persons (God-fearers), and in the marketplace every day....He shared with them the gospel...the good news of Jesus Christ. His righteous indignation opened his mouth to give testimony concerning life rather than offering up what he thought of all the idolatry. His heart was so open to these people knowing how badly they needed to hear the gospel he was compelled to proclaim Christ. He did some street preaching day by day in the agora/ marketplace... the center of public life.**
4. It is interesting as a side note that the philosophers said, *"He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities..."*. What/who were they talking about? **Jesus and Anastasia (?).Who was Anastasia? ...The feminine form of the word for resurrection. Paul was speaking of Jesus and the resurrection and they thought he was talking about 2 separate deities...2 more gods for them to consider.**

Acts- Sunday School
July 1, 2012

- A. Prayer
- B. Review

1. What did Paul see when he came into Athens? **Idols literally everywhere. From his perspective it was the idols that defined the city taking away from all the other accomplishments of these gifted image-bearers of the true God.**
2. What were his responses? **Indignation...he saw their activity about these gods as inexcusable given all that had been "revealed" to them...but his heart went out to them because he knew they needed to hear the truth.**

- C. Acts 17:22-33- Paul in the Areopagus

1. It should be impressive to us that Paul was equally conversant with the religious people in the synagogue as he was with the casual passer-by in the marketplace and the highly sophisticated philosophers. Look at verses 22-23. How does Paul open his message at the Areopagus- (the hill of Ares or Mars)- Mar's Hill and how does this type of opening prepare his listeners to accept what he has to say about the true God?
 - a. **First it shows he knows them...understands their thinking and their ways...**
 - b. **Also shows he knows there methods of debate, which would have impressed them,**

c. So he contextualized the gospel for this crowd to hear it...

2. What 5 things does Paul say about God to these Athenians in verses 24-31?

- a. God is the creator of the universe...vs. 24.** Why would this have been significant? **This is very different from their worldview. .. the Epicureans emphasis on a chance combinations of atoms for creation for they believed that the gods were so remote that they didn't even really take an interest in the affairs of men...so everything was based on chance and a random course of actions making the pursuit of pleasure (the most important thing in life) seeking utopia...seeking a life detached from pain, passion and fear....to the Stoics who believed in a supreme god but in a pantheistic way...in other words we need to live in harmony with nature and reason developing our own self-sufficiency as we endure pain and suppress desires. The idea of a personal creator...would have been offensive to some and intriguing to others.**
- b. God is the sustainer of life...vs. 25.** More personal involvement with His creation....we depend upon God but He does not depend upon us.
- c. God is the ruler of all nations their place/time in history and the limits of their territory...vss. 26-28a.**interesting to note that Paul quotes in 28a from the poet Epimenides a 6th century BC author from Crete. Sounds extremely biblical don't you think?
- d. God is the Father of all human beings...vss. 28b-29** Paul quotes from the Stoic author Aratus. Why would Paul so freely quote these pagan poets to make his point? And what can we learn from his strategy of evangelism here?
- e. God is the Judge of the world... vss 30-31.** How does Paul seemingly "get away" with calling these folks...the best minds of the day "ignorant"? **The Athenians had acknowledged in their alter inscription to an "unknown god" that they are ignorant of God and Paul has been giving them evidence of this ignorance...the now Paul goes step further to tell them they know the truth and that they need to repent of their ways that they are accountable and responsible for. And this command is present because of the certainty of the coming judgment.**

3. Compare and contrast the responses to Paul's message about Jesus to the responses you see today. **Many still questioned...some believed.**
4. I wonder, considering all the teaching and preaching and the fact that so many claim to be followers of Christ today, why is it that this seems to make little difference in our world today? **Do people see the message as false OR...and this is where I am for the most part, do they see the message to be trivial?**
 - a. **People want to see an authentic faith that is integrated into our lives which makes sense. And the whole counsel of God does in fact give people an authentic look at something real...that speaks to their condition.**
 - b. **People also want to see "believers" who are convinced and convicted...WE don't have many today that feel about the gospel as Paul... they don't speak as Paul...we are not really stirred up about the idolatry in our culture to the point of our hearts breaking for those who need to hear the truth.**
 - c. **People want to love or hate genuine people of faith. If we are non-genuine we are no threat and if we are no threat we are unimportant...so God becomes unimportant.**
 - d. **Because Paul was a student of God's Word he saw the big picture, he felt the depth and urgency of the Word and so he spoke as one who has a cure to those who are dying without a cure.**

Acts- Sunday School
July 8, 2012

- A. Prayer
- B. Review

1. I am sure Paul was upset that the synagogue in the city of Athens had not made any more of a dent in the culture than it had. What would Paul think of our culture today? What would he think about how little the church seems to be impacting the culture around it? In other words, why is it that the Church seems to make so little of a difference in our world today?
2. I posted this question last time. Does the culture see the message of Christ as false or trivial? Why?
 - a. **People want to see an authentic faith that is integrated into our lives which makes sense. And the whole counsel of God does in fact give people an authentic look at something real...that speaks to their condition.**
 - b. **People also want to see "believers" who are convinced and convicted...WE don't have many today that feel about the gospel as Paul... they don't speak as Paul...we are not really stirred up about the idolatry in our culture to the point of our hearts breaking for those who need to hear the truth.**

- c. **People want to love or hate genuine people of faith. If we are non-genuine we are no threat and if we are no threat we are unimportant...so God becomes unimportant.**
- d. **Because Paul was a student of God's Word he saw the big picture, he felt the depth and urgency of the Word and so he spoke as one who has a cure to those who are dying without a cure.**

3. What distresses you spiritually about the city of Victoria? What specific needs do you see? How can we meet those needs?

C. Acts 18:1-18

1. The city of Corinth was at the very narrow bridge of land (only 3 and a half miles wide) that connected the Peloponnese peninsula with the mainland of Greece to the north. It not only was at the center of the north-south trade route, but also of the east-west route. Goods could be brought to a port just to the east of Corinth and transported over land a few miles to a port to the west — this saved a 200 mile journey by ship around the south of the peninsula. As result, Corinth was a major commercial and finance center. Like many urban centers based on business and wealth — Corinth became famous for a degree of corruption and immorality that was remarkable even for the ancient world. In classical Greek *korintheazdo* (literally, to “Corintheanize”) became a synonym for sexual promiscuity/fornication. At the center of Corinth was the temple of Aphrodite, which employed thousands of female slave/priestesses who roamed the city as prostitutes. This city was immense, especially by the standards of the time. In 1850 there were only four cities in the world with over 1,000,000 inhabitants, yet in Paul’s day, we believe that Corinth was nearly 750,000, and Rome over a million. To put things in perspective, it may be helpful to think of Athens as the intellectual center of the empire (like Boston in the U.S.), of Corinth as the commercial center (like New York City), and of Rome as the political power center (like Washington, DC).
2. What is something new we learn about Paul from verses 1-4? **He was a tent maker.** What were/may have been some of Paul’s reasons for doing this?
 - a. **Because he had a need for money to live**
 - b. **He didn’t want to be a burden on the small struggling churches-I Thess. 2:9**
 - c. **Acts 20:33-34 will tell us to avoid the appearance of greed.**
3. In verses 5 we seem to see Paul setting aside his tenting making work to be “occupied with the word.” (The Greek could read... “*Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching the word, testifying...*”) What would cause him to do this?
 - a. **His friends and fellow workers were back with him so now he could concentrate on what God has commanded him to do,**
 - b. **Phil. 4 and II Cor. 11 seem to indicate that an offering had been taken up to help allow him to preach and teach,**

- c. **I Thess. 3 seems to indicate as well that at least some of the churches were doing well enough financially that they were sending him funds to maintain the ministry.**
4. What drastic action does Paul take with the Jew in verses 6-7? What is he communicating to them? (See Ezekiel 18:10-13, 33:4)
 5. With all the “good things that have just happened why do you suppose God needed to remind Paul of such basic stuff in verses 9-10? **He like us needed the encouragement. It is extremely taxing work to handle God’s word and in his case be God’s mouth piece to the people. He is tired, afraid...perhaps for his people and the ministry, dissolutioned to the point of thinking of giving up...these are the type of emotions that all preachers of the Word deal with from time to time.**
 6. Why would Paul be discouraged?
 - a. **Paul tells us in I Cor.2:2-3 that he came to Corinth with an unusual amount of “fear and trembling”. This was probably because of the reputation Corinth had for spiritual darkness. Like New York City, it was filled with very proud, confident, tough, hard, sophisticated, and immoral people who were quite proud of being everything on that list! There was no place in the Empire, not even Rome, where there was more bald-faced corruption.**
 - b. **Second, overwork and or not enough rest, a person becomes drained of any real satisfaction in what he or she is doing. Often when “success” comes, the person suddenly realizes that he/she is too tired, numb, and hardened to enjoy it.**
 - c. **He needed the reminder just like Joshua in Joshua 1 to keep up the fight.**
 7. What is God communicating specifically too Paul with this “vision”?
 - a. **Nothing new. “Do not be afraid...I am with you.” Is as old as the hills. ☺**
 - b. **God preaches to the preacher...reminding him of what is true since even he has begun to question it.**
 - c. **This encouragement from God told him that there would be “success” even in this city. The phrase “for I have many in the city who are my people” seems to have a triple meaning...
 (1) there are those who have been saved already and
 (2) there are still others who will be saved...God’s chosen, those purposed/predestined to believe...who simply have not responded yet...
 (3) And lastly, Paul is told not to look at Corinth as a city full of enemies, but rather full of friends.**
 8. As Paul travels around we see a pattern in his ministry. What is it?
 - a. **He begins proclaiming the Good News in the synagogues on the Sabbath, reasoning from the Scriptures...**

- b. **He hoped to persuade them of the Truth and prayer. Note the word "tried" in v.4. He simply persisted faithfully at the same approach.**
- c. **The he goes to the Gentiles, preaches, prays and sees conversions. Meets with Titius Justus, a "god-fearer"...and he obviously invited family and friends to this home Bible study where Crispus, his household and many other Corinthians believed and were baptized.**
- d. **There is trouble from the Jews and/or the Greeks...there will always be trouble from those who oppose the gospel. The enemies of the gospel are all around us...the opposition is continual...just not as hard as at other times. Vss. 12-17.**
- e. **He has a long term discipleship ministry as he stays here 1 ½ years teaching them the word of God. This word means teaching them how to understand and apply it to their lives ...hence discipleship.**

Acts- Sunday School
July 15, 2012

A. Prayer
B. Review

1. What is God communicating to Paul by giving him the vision that He does in 18:9-10?
 - a. **Nothing new. "Do not be afraid...I am with you." Is as old as the hills. ☺**
 - b. **God preaches to the preacher...reminding him of what is true since even he has begun to question it.**
 - c. **This encouragement from God told him that there would be "success" even in this city. The phrase *"for I have many in the city who are my people"* seems to have a triple meaning...**
 - (1)there are those who have been saved already and**
 - (2)there are still others who will be saved...God's chosen, those purposed/predestined to believe...who simply have not responded yet...**
 - (3)And lastly, Paul is told not to look at Corinth as a city full of enemies, but rather full of friends.**
2. As Paul travels around we see a pattern to his ministry. What does that pattern look like for the most part?
 - a. **He begins proclaiming the Good News in the synagogues on the Sabbath, reasoning from the Scriptures...**

- b. **He hoped to persuade them of the Truth and prayer. Note the word “tried” in v.4. He simply persisted faithfully at the same approach.**
 - c. **The he goes to the Gentiles, preaches, prays and sees conversions. Meets with Titius Justus, a “god-fearer”...and he obviously invited family and friends to this home Bible study where Crispus, his household and many other Corinthians believed and were baptized.**
 - d. **There is trouble from the Jews and/or the Greeks...there will always be trouble from those who oppose the gospel. The enemies of the gospel are all around us...the opposition is continual...just not as hard as at other times. Vss. 12-17.**
 - e. **He has a long term discipleship ministry as he stays here 1 ½ years teaching them the word of God. This word means teaching them how to understand and apply it to their lives ...hence discipleship.**
- C. Verses 18-23—Paul leaves Corinth with Priscilla and Aquila and goes to Ephesus, leaving Priscilla and Aquila there he travels on throughout the area where he had gone on his 1st Missionary journey to encourage and strengthen the brothers.
1. Now let's read vs. 24-28. What things do we learn about Apollos here in these verses?
- a. **Apollos is admired by Paul for being both eloquent (*man of words*) and competent (*a thorough knowledge of...well versed*) in the Scriptures. (v.24) Apollos was very much a man of the world — he did not only read and study books and thinkers who agreed with true religion he also had a mastery of the Bible. This is a balance we need.**
 - b. **Apollos had been disciplined by someone...it seems the disciples of John the Baptist taught him in the ways of the Lord, that is from what they knew...John pointed to Jesus so their testimony would have been limited at best...vs. 25a, 25c**
 - c. **Apollos also combined “fervent in spirit” = enthusiastic- a heart full of devotion and an “accuracy (strictness, exactness) in the things pertaining to Jesus” (v.25). This too is something of a rare combination. Many Christians who put emphasis on doctrinal accuracy and cognition are lacking in spiritual and emotional fervor, warmth and action. Our churches are very often divided into “teaching” churches on the one hand, where education is important but worship/prayer/witnessing is stagnant, or fervent, emotional churches which are just the reverse.**

- d. **Apollos finally, was a teachable man. On the one hand, Luke says that he taught about Jesus accurately (v.25), but he knew only John the Baptist's teaching and baptism and therefore needed to know the way of God "*more accurately*" (v.26). We know that John the Baptist pointed to Jesus, and therefore Apollos, having learned about the Messiah through John's disciples would have known much, but not all he needed to understand. See Acts 19:1-7...this seems to be what Apollos was teaching at first in Ephesus. Yet despite the fact that he had obviously been called to proclaim Christ and debate...be the upfront person...he was willing to listen to two Christian brethren who knew better than he at certain specific points. This is remarkable and rare. He even listened to a woman....recognizing the equality in the Lord.**
2. What do we learn about Priscilla and Aquila in these texts? **Priscilla and Aquila were both bold and gentle in their approach. They spoke to him privately, in their home, rather than confronting him in a public place (v.26). There's the gentleness. Yet it took real boldness to speak to such a formidable preacher about anything in his preaching. How might their response to this powerful preacher be an example to us?**

Acts- Sunday School
July 29, 2012

- A. Prayer
B. Review

1. What are some things we learned about Apollos last time?
- a. **Eloquent- a man of words**
 - b. **Competent- a thorough knowledge of or well versed in the Scriptures**
 - c. **Been discipled by John the Baptists' guys so understanding incomplete...**
 - d. **He serves as an OT prophet type...the type who explain the scriptures not the type who receive revelation.**
 - e. **Enthusiastic= fervent in spirit**
 - f. **Given to accuracy—strictness and exactness about what he knows**
 - g. **Teachable- from men or a woman.**
 - h. **It was mentioned in class this morning that: "It was interesting that Apollos did not seem to feel the need to change his name...God redeems all things."**

2. What did we learn about Priscilla and Aquila?
 - a. **Respectful, honoring- did not confront Apollos in public but in the quiet and privacy of their own home...**
 - b. **Gentle in their approach**
 - c. **Bold in the devotion to the truth even in the face of this preacher.**
- C. Acts 19:1-22
1. The city of Ephesus was the principle city, the capital of Asia Minor, the area that Paul was originally forbidden by the Spirit to enter (16:6). Though Ephesus was a commercial center as well, it was pre-eminently a center of pagan religions and occult practices. The Imperial cult flourished there, with three temples dedicated to the practice. But the pride of the city was the Temple of Artemis (Diana) whose building was four times the size of the Parthenon and called one of the Seven Wonders of the World. The temple was such an attraction that it drew huge numbers of people from all over the world. As a result, the temple became an enormous economic boon to the city, generating a great deal of income from “tourism”, and serving as a banking institution in its own right. Because of the prominence of those two cults, a tremendous variety of occult groups and practices flourished in Ephesus.
 2. When we consider verses 1-7 there are a few questions we need to consider.
 - a. How is John’s baptism different than being baptized in to the name of Jesus Christ?
 - b. Why is the Holy Spirit important in this process?
 - c. What is significant about the fact that they spoke in tongues and prophesied? **This is a physical connection to Pentecost... a mini one if you will... 12 men, interesting number. Note: this does not happen again so all the more reason NOT to think that this behavior is normative for the church.**
 3. Now as we look at 8-10. What was Paul’s main method of “evangelism/discipleship” here in Ephesus and how did it compare and contrast with his methods in Corinth and Athens?
 - a. **Similarities:**
 - (1) **He began again with the synagogue, where he always can get two things done: (1) discharge his passionate obligation to win his own people to Christ (cf. Rom.10:1), and (2) to win the strategic people, the “God-fearers” who are the**

**natural bridges to the broader pagan society.
This he did both in Athens and in Corinth.**

(2) After winning some “disciples” there (v.9b) he took them into a new venue to reach the Gentile public, by going into the “lecture hall of Tyrannus” (v.9). (Interesting name “Tyrannus.” It has been speculated that this surely wasn’t someone’s name because it means “tyrant or despot”. Maybe, some have said, that this was the “ Since like today many of these halls were named after a prominent teacher it has been speculated that this might have been the nickname of a professor/teacher given the man by his pupils because of a less than compassionate approach to training and debate...☺☺ Paul did something similar in Athens (by going into the public marketplace) and in Corinth (by going into the home of Titius Justus) but in this case this was a more academic setting than the others. What would be an equivalent today to this type of “evangelism”? Francis Schaeffer held studies in his home. But also in the local coffee shops and meeting areas in Switzerland and then in England and then in the US with the growth of their retreat centers. The Francis Schaeffer Institute at Covenant Seminary has been hosting a monthly discussion at the Barnes and Nobles called Friday Nights at the Institutes to talk about everything from “ants to sexual orientation” and what the Bible has to say about each topic.

(3) Finally, his teaching resulted in an uproar, the riot of vv.23- 20:1a. In Athens, the uproar was very mild, it took the form of mockery and intellectual scorn by the Areopagus. In Corinth, it was more serious, with the Jewish leaders making a lawsuit against Paul to stop his ministry. Here we have a riot by a pagan mob. But in every case, there was some sort of strong public resistance to the work of the gospel that Paul had to respond to.

b. the dissimilarities:

(1) The lecture hall ministry was a first for Paul, though it was something like the marketplace

ministry in Athens. This was a public meeting place, a school, a more academic setting.

(2) It is important to see that this was NOT preaching, but rather was “reasoning daily”. The Greek word is *dialogomenos* —“to dialogue”. We would consider this like a forum today...teaching through debate. This is very daring, because it allows the nonbelieving listener to partially set the agenda, to raise questions and respond. It is not like either a sermon or a “gospel presentation”, it allows give and take. It is mostly like a class. So this “dialogue” evangelism in a public place with all comers is different than “preaching evangelism” in the synagogue, the “contact evangelism” of the marketplace and the “friendship evangelism” in homes and the “apologetic or didactic evangelism” of the Areopagus.

4. What seems to be the signal throughout Acts for Paul to stop teaching in the synagogue? **Open opposition. A lack of willingness to look at the Scriptures.** What was the criterion that Jesus gave to His disciples concerning meeting people and then moving on? And what can this teach us about ministry in general?
5. What drove Paul to keep doing what he was doing? **It was a lot of things...**
 - a. **his sense of call...**
 - b. **his sense of duty...**
 - c. **his passion...**
 - d. **his desire for his people to come to a correct understanding...**
 - e. **God had brought him to an understanding of his own depravity and rescued him from his sin...and now he saw all the people around him falling into that same category and his heart went out to them...**
 - f. **Before he was angry and wanted to do away with the WAY for he thought that they were standing in the way of the pure understanding of Scripture as taught by the Pharisees...now his desire is to grow the WAY...to grow God’s kingdom...**
 - g. **His mission is guided by the sheer numbers who are lost and dying...he knows he can’t save them but at the same time he knows he must tell them the truth**

Acts- Sunday School

August 5, 2012

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What seems to be the signal throughout Acts for Paul to stop teaching in the synagogue? **Open opposition. A lack of willingness to look at the Scriptures.** What was the criterion that Jesus gave to His disciples concerning meeting people and then moving on? And what can this teach us about ministry in general? Having said this...

2. What drove Paul to keep doing what he was doing? It was a lot of things...

a. **his sense of call...**

b. **his sense of duty...**

c. **his passion...**

d. **his desire for his people to come to a correct understanding...**

e. **God had brought him to an understanding of his own depravity and rescued him from his sin...and now he saw all the people around him falling into that same category and his heart went out to them...**

f. **Before he was angry and wanted to do away with the WAY for he thought that they were standing in the way of the pure understanding of Scripture as taught by the Pharisees...now his desire is to grow the WAY...to grow God's kingdom...**

g. **His mission is guided by the sheer numbers who are lost and dying...he knows he can't save them but at the same time he knows he must tell them the truth**

C. What kind of man has Paul become since his conversion back in chapter 9? If he was preaching and teaching today how do you think he would be looked at given all that he has been through up to this point? **After discussion handout Dear Abby letter...**

D. Now let's read vss. 11-22

1. What was the purpose for the miracles and the overpowering of the sons of Sceva?

a. **To authenticate the message of the power of the gospel...to show that the pagan gods were impotent just like God did with the gods of Egypt.**

b. **"Extraordinary miracles"- blessed handkerchiefs and aprons touched by Paul= healed sickness and drive out demons...this was obviously not typical behavior since we don't see it again... to assert Apostolic credentials (see II Cor. 12:12)...since there are no true Apostles today this is not something that mere men ought to dabble in see Sons of Sceva story next... (used to get these in the mail in the 70's and early 80's sent by one charlatan or another ...the way they would be activated is when you sent the money in to the ministry then they would miraculously be "activated" or better yet when you were watching the TV**

preachers show AND you had sent in the money he would say the “magic” words and the pieces of cloth would be activated....

- c. **A sad but funny story here. Did you hear the one about the Seven Jewish exorcists who had heard that there was “power in Jesus name”, and decided to “try it out”. They clearly don’t understand the gospel for themselves. They say, “I command you in the name of Jesus, who Paul preaches” (v.13) because they themselves do not preach or present Jesus. The demon says, in effect: “I know Jesus and Paul — but who the heck do you guys think you are?” and jumps them! The point is there is nothing mechanically or automatically powerful about the sound “Jesus” made when the breath passes through the voice box in a particular way. The efficacy of Jesus “name” lies only in the understanding of what Jesus came to do — it’s the gospel of Jesus which is powerful. When we use the gospel of Jesus on our lives, it cleanses and transforms and heals. But therefore Jesus’ name has no second-hand power — it only works first hand, when appropriated through personal understanding and commitment.**
- d. **What was the result of the display of God’s power? Many came believing and confessing burning their evil books of great worth.**
2. **What spiritual counterfeits do you notice in our culture today? How do you distinguish the true from the false, especially when some seem to come in Jesus’ name...at least calling themselves Christian?**
3. **Now 23-41. What were the stated reasons and what were the real reasons for such explosive opposition (23-34)? Which was more important to Demetrius? What can we learn about human nature from this? Think Unions today...at least those who have become more and more corrupt and political.**
4. **Why do you suppose the talk about Artemis (Diana= Roman goddess) aroused the people so much? The main goddess of the city...even bigger than the Imperial worship.**

Acts- Sunday School
August 12, 2012

- A. Prayer
B. Review

1. **Back to verses 19:23-41 a minute. What were the stated reasons and what were the real reasons for such explosive opposition (23-34)? Which was more important to Demetrius?**
2. **What can we learn about human nature from this? Think Unions today...at least those who have become more and more corrupt and political.**

3. What do we learn about crowds in general in verse 32? Why is that important?
4. What is the main concern of the city clerk? How does his concerns clash with that of the craftsman...(think unions today)? What is the ultimate cause of the failure of the craftsmen plan? **Being reminded of the law- PAX ROMANA was the law of the land that gave religious freedom, of sorts, to worship as individuals saw fit as long as it did not interfere with their citizenship to the Empire.** Why is this story important in the grand scheme of the gospel expansion? **But Luke wants to show us ultimately that God is in control of all the events of men!**
5. What is the significant about the fact that this is the 3rd time that Roman law has protected Paul in the ministry?
 - a. **First in Philippi the officials were embarrassed and afraid that they had unlawfully imprisoned a Roman citizen,**
 - b. **then in Corinth the proconsul had refused to even hear the complaints of the Jews,**
 - c. **now in Ephesus the town clerk implies that the opposition is purely emotional.**
 - d. **Thus the fear of the officials in Philippi, the impartiality of the proconsul in Corinth and the friendship, of a sort from the town clerk in Ephesus all combine to give the gospel freedom. Or as John Stott says of Luke's reasons for telling us these things, "Luke wanted to show that Rome had no case and no power against Christianity in general and Paul in particular." God is in charge and nothing will keep His kingdom from growing.**
6. Now with this information we need to ask ourselves a couple of questions as a church.
 - a. From what do you need to protect your spiritual leaders today? Why? How?
 - b. From what do you need protection? Why How?
7. What lessons can we learn from Paul's ministry in Corinth and in Ephesus about how best to evangelize the masses?
 - a. **Studies have shown that 70 to 80 % of people come to church because a friend or a family member asks them to come and the same studies say that the same number 70-80% of people come to know the Lord through a one on one encounter with the Word of God. Most people do not come to know the Lord through a church service...irregardless of alter calls which, by the way, we have none of those in Scripture.** Let's say that we agree with these studies, what do they reveal to us? How might they cause us to change the way we do things?
 - b. **John Stott said, "Because Paul believed the gospel to be true, he was not afraid to engage the minds of his hearers. He did not**

simply proclaim his message in a 'take it or leave it' fashion; instead he marshaled arguments to support and demonstrate his case...When we contrast contemporary evangelism with Paul's its shallowness is immediately shown up. Our evangelism tends to be limited to inviting people to church or too emotional appealing for people to make a decision for Christ without a fundamental basis for understanding...no real teaching or proclamation only insistence... our evangelism is too superficial, making brief encounters and expecting quick results...whereas Paul taught, reasoned and tried to persuade (persisted in teaching);and stayed in Corinth and Ephesus for 5 years faithfully sowing gospel seed and in due time reaping a harvest.

8. Considering all that we saw over the last few months, what is God communicating to us about all of the troubles that Paul is encountering?
 - a. **Just like David, in the psalms...if you are called to lead there will be opposition;**
 - b. **That the Word does in fact divide people...it is as Jesus said an offense especially to the unbeliever;**
 - c. **To expect troubles, trials, and hardship when standing firm for the Word;**
 - d. **To know He is with us and to be able to seek Him out in times of trouble.**

Acts- Sunday School
September 2, 1012

- A. Prayer
- B. Review

1. What lessons can we learn from Paul's ministry in Corinth and in Ephesus about how best to evangelize the masses?
 - a. **There are many methods to reach people with the Gospel..**
 - b. **We need to know the people we are around...**
 - (1) **Know their real need—the Gospel**
 - (2) **Know their perceived needs as well as we are able**
 - (3) **Listen, watch and then speak the truth...**
 - (4) **Be people of Issachar- "who had understanding of the times to know what Israel /the Church might do..." then with wisdom be able to speak into the culture...**
 - (5) **Remember what John Stott said, "Because Paul believed the gospel to be true, he was not afraid to engage the minds of his hearers. He did not simply proclaim his message in a 'take it or leave it' fashion; instead he marshaled arguments to support and demonstrate his case...When we contrast contemporary evangelism with Paul's its shallowness is**

immediately shown up. Our evangelism tends to be limited to inviting people to church or too emotional appealing for people to make a decision for Christ without a fundamental basis for understanding...no real teaching or proclamation only insistence... our evangelism is too superficial, making brief encounters and expecting quick results...whereas Paul taught, reasoned and tried to persuade (persisted in teaching);and stayed in Corinth and Ephesus for 5 years faithfully sowing gospel seed and in due time reaping a harvest.

2. Studies have shown that 70 to 80 % of people come to church because a friend or a family member asks them to come and the same studies say that the same number 70-80% of people come to know the Lord through a one on one encounter with the Word of God. Most people do not come to know the Lord through a church service...irregardless of alter calls which, by the way, we have none of those in Scripture. Let's say that we agree with these studies, what do they reveal to us? How might they cause us to change the way we do things?
3. Considering all that we saw over the last few months, what is God communicating to us about all of the troubles that Paul is encountering?
 - a. **Just like David, in the psalms...if you are called to lead there will be opposition;**
 - b. **That the Word does in fact divide people...it is as Jesus said an offense especially to the unbeliever;**
 - c. **To expect troubles, trials, and hardship when standing firm for the Word;**
 - d. **To know He is with us and to be able to seek Him out in times of trouble.**

C. Acts 20

1. In 20:1-5 what characteristics of Paul's ministry do you see?
 - a. **Uproar- Jews plotting against him**
 - b. **A ministry of encouragement to the churches**
 - c. **He never travels alone**
 - d. **He favored human companionship**
 - e. **He favored teamwork in the work of ministry...he has placed a team together that reflects each of the areas he had ministered to and would be visiting.**
2. Why people of different ethnicities?
 - a. **People of different languages and cultures to help in ministry in this area.**
 - b. **Declares physically the promises of God that peoples from every nation, tribe and language will be brought into God's family.**
3. What is Luke communicating to us in verses 7-12? What are the purposes of Paul here?

- a. **Luke wants us to know that this is an eyewitness account... “we were gathered together...”**
 - b. **Vs. 7 tells us of the practice of worshiping on the 1st day of the week...Sunday**
 - c. **This was an evening service after everyone was finished with their day at work**
 - d. **More over the purpose was to “break bread” ...which Luke understood as the Lord's Supper...**
 - e. **Paul wants them to worship the Lord and to learn from His Word**
 - f. **Paul does what needs to be done and then goes back to his other duties as if this was just one more piece of his sermon... So then what was the purpose for Eutychus' death and resurrection if Paul didn't make much of it?**
 - (1) Mainly because...it wasn't about Paul but about God and what He would do to affirm and substantiate the message of Paul.**
 - (2) He was sitting in a window because of all the lamps in the rooms it would have been very stuffy...but even with the window as aid he was having a hard time according to the text of staying awake...Luke is watching all of this occur...he may have been near the boy at the time...NIV and ESV capture what Luke wants to proclaim...the boy fell 3 stories and was killed immediately from the fall. Paul went and in the fashion of Elijah and Elisha on different occasions fell upon the boy and God brought life back to them...the statement that Paul makes is not one of clarification that the boy was not dead but rather he is made alive by the fact that Paul embraced him and God gave the boy back breath.**
 - (3) Paul doesn't seem to take this incident as a rebuke for his long speaking...**
4. What can we learn about Christian worship from this Sunday evening worship service in Troas?
- a. **People have always fallen asleep in worship...☺ ☺**
 - b. **It is okay for pastor's to be long winded...as long as you are not in a crowded 3 story room with only one window! ☺ ☺**
 - c. **Vs. 7 seems to signal a normal practice in worship of meeting and receiving together the Lord's Supper...at least the normal practice of the church in Troas.**
 - d. **There is a sermon (homileo) in the service...a long one to be sure...1st half from sundown to midnight and 2nd half from midnight to sunrise**
 - e. **Teaching time as well...dialegomai= discussion**
 - f. **So, the Word and the sacrament have been a part of the universal church since the NT times....God's gospel in communicated through these mediums...**
5. How do you think you would have been affected by the worship service at Troas in these verses? What is the truth you take away from this event?

- a. **Worship is not a matter of convenience or preference...God has defined how he is to be worshiped and given the place these people worshiped what was most important to them was THAT they were able to worship somewhere as long as they were together and the word and sacrament were there...they would be there.**

Also...in a real way everyone came away KNOWING the resurrection to be true!

Acts- Sunday School
September 16, 2012

- A. Prayer
B. Review

1. So what was the purpose for Eutychus' death and resurrection if Paul didn't make much of it?

(4) It validated the message and the messenger...after all his message always dealt with the resurrection of Christ.

(5) Mainly because...it wasn't about Paul but about God and what He would do to affirm and substantiate the message of Paul.

(6) Background: He was sitting in a window because of all the lamps in the rooms it would have been very stuffy...but even with the window as aid he was having a hard time according to the text of staying awake...Luke is watching all of this occur...he may have been near the boy at the time...NIV and ESV capture what Luke wants to proclaim...the boy fell 3 stories and was killed immediately from the fall. Paul went and in the fashion of Elijah and Elisha on different occasions fell upon the boy and God brought life back to them...the statement that Paul makes is not one of clarification that the boy was not dead but rather he is made alive by the fact that Paul embraced him and God gave the boy back breath.

2. How do you think you would have been affected by the worship service at Troas in these verses? What is the truth you take away from this event?

b. Worship is not a matter of convenience or preference...God has defined how he is to be worshiped and given the place these people worshiped what was most important to them was THAT they were able to worship somewhere as long as they were together and the word and sacrament were there...they would be there.

c. Also...in a real way everyone came away KNOWING the resurrection to be true!

- C. Read Acts 20:17-35.

1. What are some of the unique features of this speech?

- a. **There is a finality to this message that we don't see anywhere else.**
 - b. **This is the 1st speech to a solely Christian audience; all the others were evangelistic in some nature or speeches before Roman authorities that can also be looked at as evangelism in a way.**
 - c. **This speech is specifically given to "elders" (17), "overseers/bishops" (28a) "shepherd/pastor" (28b) and it is evident that Paul considers these titles to be for the entire leadership of Ephesus. Shepherds/pastors seem to be the "generic" term for these men...they were each called to tend, feed and protect the flock.**
 - d. **There was a plurality of elders at this church...setting the stage for ours position for a plurality of elders not simply "one" elder but 2 or more...there is no biblical warrant for a Lone ranger or One man band pastorate...or for a hierarchical structure of church government as well. There is no indication as some have suggested that each elder had a house church of their own...the text does not in any way confirm that... rather the weight seems to bend toward a plurality or team approach to leadership.**
 - e. **Luke writes as an eye witness of all that occurs.**
2. What do we learn from this section about how the church was governed?
- a. **Plurality of elders/leaders- "elders" and "overseers" are plural words, John Stott (who was an Episcopalian) infers from this that *"there is no Biblical warrant either for the one-man-band (a single pastor playing all the instruments of the orchestra), or for a hierarchical or pyramidal structure in the local church (a single pastor perched at the apex of the pyramid). It is not even clear that each of the elders was in charge of an individual house-church. It is better to think of them as a team, some perhaps with the over-sight of house churches, but others with specialist ministries according to their gifts, and all sharing the pastoral care of Christ's flock. We need today to recover this concept of a pastoral team in the church."***
 - b. **We see a non-hierarchical form of early church government; There are three important words that all equally refer to the leaders of the Ephesian church — the word *presbyteroi* (v.17), *episkopoi* (v.28) and *poimenoι* (v.28). The word *presbyteroi*, from which the word "Presbyterian" comes, means "elders" — mature and wise. The NIV translation of the word "*episkopoi*" in v.28 is "overseers" supervisors in authority. But the word "overseers" masks the import of the phrase. "*Episkopoi*", from which the word Episcopalian comes, means "bishops". Lastly, the word "*poimenoι*" which is translated "*shepherd*" means "pastor". Now what does this mean? It means that in this church the bishops, the elders, and the pastors were all the same group. There is no concept of elders who sit as a kind of overseeing board but who don't pastor people. Nor is there the concept of one pastor who is paid by the elders to do all their**

ministry. Nor is there any indication that bishops were a “higher rank” than pastors who are a higher rank than elders.

3. How does Paul describe himself and his ministry among the Ephesians in verses 18-28 and 33-35?
 - a. **As Bold...proclaiming the whole counsel of God...**
 - b. **He had been thorough in his teaching and caring for God’s church...**
 - c. **He also, realized that his whole ministry was guided by the Holy Spirit (19:21 and 20:22) even the call to go to Jerusalem when so many would tell him that it wasn’t a “good” idea.....**
 - d. **He was thorough in his mission to reach the lost in the city...and he expected that these men would do the same...**
 - e. **He also sees this as the way of his Master...suffering did not and would not deter him in his ministry just like it had not deterred Jesus in His...**
 - f. **Why? Because he is making clear to them what their ministry should look like after he is gone.**

4. What does Paul say to these leaders that are just as important for leaders of the church today in verses 28-32?
 - a. **We are all to keep watch over each other and ourselves...which requires:**
 - (1) **Plurality of leaders...**
 - (2) **The elder to have each other’s back... not only to care for but also to hold one another accountable...for their care of themselves before the Lord and care of the people...**
 - (3) **Only then, do we do the same for the flock over which we are overseers..**
 - b. **Take care of their spiritual, emotional, and physical selves...as well as take care of each other...**
 - c. **To consider themselves shepherds first and foremost (poimaino= to tend and lead a flock to pasture so it can eat “good grass” and lie in green pastures) Ezek. 34:2...not administrators...not board members...but shepherds with our primary role being the care, tending and feeding of God’s flock.**
 - d. **“Shepherds of the Church of God which Christ obtained with His own blood”...not “my or our” church but God’s church which we have been called to care for, manage, and oversee, in God’s name...**
 - e. **The elders must be on their guard as a sheep dog and shepherd because there be wolves within the church and without...false teachers...false leaders who set themselves up as authorities without being recognized as such...some will rise within the church distorting the truth to lead sheep away from the leaders they have sworn to follow...so like the Ephesians elders they are to stand guard to watch over and protect. It is not matter of “if” but “when”. The letter to the Church of Ephesus in**

Revelation and the history of the church proves Paul's point to have been true.

5. What specific character traits does Paul talk about in verses 18-36 that every elder/leader needs to lead affectively God's church?
 - a. **They need to be selfless- vs. 19- the cost of our redemption...the cost of purchasing the church is that God sent His Son to die for us and shed His blood for us. That's the cost. The elders are to be prepared to give up everything for the flock. Because the example is this: that Christ did not spare Himself. He shed His blood for us.**
 - b. **They need to be alert...always watchful of themselves and the flock.**
 - c. **They need to be BOLD... never afraid to proclaim the whole counsel of God (vs. 27)... The word *counsel* or *purpose* is one of those Greek words...a cluster of words...that revolves around the notion of election and predestination, and the eternal plan, and the eternal purpose of God...twice he says he does not "*hesitate*" to minister the word (v.20 and v.27) even though he knows that he is bound for death...he makes it clear that they will have to stand against even their own ...false teachers/elders...and the world's persecution...**
 - d. **They need to be humble... Paul speaks of his tears...these leaders are to be men who can show their emotions...**
 - e. **A congregation rarely rises above the level of godliness portrayed in its own eldership. And the continuing eldership is also based on the growth and maturity of the previous eldership. (Vs. 29)**
 - f. **They are not to be greedy...Paul's own example again in verses 33-34.**
 - g. **How can they live this way? He directs them to grow through the Word of God. He tells them to grow through *the word of grace which is able to build you up* (v.32). When we go to the Bible, we see a) it is all about grace as a central theme, and b) it has a vitality to grow and build us up spiritually.**

Acts- Sunday School
September 23, 2012

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. In Chapter 20: 17-35, what was specifically unique about this message in comparison with his others?
 - a. **There is finality to this message that we don't see anywhere else.**
 - b. **This is the 1st speech to a solely Christian audience; all the others were evangelistic in some nature ...**

- c. **This speech is specifically given to “elders” ...Shepherds/pastors seem to be the “generic” term for these men...they were each called to tend, feed and protect the flock.**
 - d. **There was a plurality of elders at this church...**
2. What specific character traits does Paul talk about in verses 18-35 that every elder/leader needs to lead affectively God’s church?
- a. **They need to be selfless- vs. 19-**
 - b. **They need to be alert...always watchful of themselves and the flock.**
 - c. **They need to be BOLD... never afraid to proclaim the whole counsel of God (vs. 27)...**
 - d. **They need to be humble...**
 - e. **They need to be submissive to authority...**
 - f. **Compassionate- Paul speaks of tears...**
 - g. **They are not to be greedy...Paul’s own example again in verses 33-34.**
 - h. **A congregation rarely rises above the level of godliness portrayed in its own eldership. And the continuing eldership is also based on the growth and maturity of the previous eldership. (Vs. 29)**
 - i. **How can they live this way? He directs them to grow through the Word of God. He tells them to grow through *the word of grace which is able to build you up* (v.32).**
- C. Chapter 20: 36-38.
1. Why was Paul not afraid to leave the church in Ephesus in the hands of these leaders/elders?
- a. **They are God’s men for the most part...called by God’s Spirit to oversee, God’s own church...**
 - b. **God promises to watch over His Church even if His men don’t do a great job.**
 - c. **He had worked with these men for a long time...he chose them, trained them, and appointed them...so even knowing their weaknesses he still has trust in them as long as they keep growing in God’s Word...the same thing God told to Joshua in so many words. He had been trained by Moses; he had watched Moses...so God could now remind Joshua what He expected of him and how Joshua could actually sustain God’s requirements.**
2. John Stott in his book, The Spirit, The Church and The World says this: *“Each of the 3 persons of the Trinity has a share in overseeing the church. To begin with, the church is “God’s church.” Next, we read that He bought it with His own blood...the blood of Christ. And over the church the Holy Spirit appoints overseers/elders. This splendid Trinitarian affirmation should humble us to remember that the church is not ours, but God’s. And it should inspire us to faithfulness. The people of the church are the flock of God the Father, purchased by the precious blood of God the Son, and supervised by overseers appointed by God the Holy Spirit. If the 3 persons of the Trinity are thus committed to the welfare of the people, should we not be also?”*

3. What was the result of this charge and challenge given to these men?
 - a. **Knelt together in prayer...**
 - b. **Tears over his leaving..."weeping" the text says...so not simply a few...they were going to miss their pastor and friend...one that they would probably not see again...their wasn't a dry eye in the house or at the dock...**
 - c. **They embraced and kissed him goodbye...**
 - d. **They followed him to the boat...they wished to remain in his presence as long as they could...**
 - e. **They didn't take his words as a rebuke but rather as a challenge and a charge for the work that lay ahead...**
 4. In Chapter 20 what part do personal example, fellowship, and instruction play in the strengthening and encouraging of the young churches?
- D. Acts 21:1-17. Paul's journey to Jerusalem.
1. What continued warnings did Paul receive about going to Jerusalem?
Vs. 4 and 10.
 2. What is going on in verse 4? Is there a contradiction in process here? The text says the disciples in Tyre were speaking to Paul through the Spirit and telling him not to go to Jerusalem. Is Paul being disobedient? How would you support your answer using the text?
Given the full context of these events we can know that Paul is not rejecting the Spirit's wisdom through the disciples at Tyre. Based on the account of Agabus we know that because of what the Spirit had revealed to them and to Paul about what was going to happen to Paul they resisted his going to Jerusalem...just like when Jesus was counseled not to go to Jerusalem.
 3. How did Paul respond to those warnings? **With singularity of focus. He had been instructed by the Spirit to go to Jerusalem in 19:21 and 20:22 and so he must go.**
- E. Acts 21:18-26.
1. In your own words tell me what is going on between Paul and the brothers in Jerusalem?
 2. Things that should be noted about this meeting:
 - a. **Not the first time these men have met...at least 4 times so far... Gal. 1:18-19; 2:1,9; Acts 15:22ff and here.**
 - b. **Both were Apostles...equal in authority and prominence...both were also on the same page doctrinally...proven at the Acts 15 Council.**
 - c. **James and Paul meet as the representative leaders of 2 parts of Christianity... James is the head of Jewish Christianity and Paul the Gentile branch**

Acts- Sunday School
September 30, 2012

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. Why did Paul have such confidence in these men at Ephesus? (Chapter 20:17-38)
2. Was there any contradiction between Paul's mission to go to Jerusalem and the warnings he kept getting from the people? Why or why not?
 - a. **There are not contradictions in Scripture ...only things we may be confused about...there is no confusion in the Word.**
 - b. **Based on the wider context of chapter 21:1-17 we see that because of what was revealed by the Spirit to the people and to Paul about what was going to happen to Paul... the people resisted Paul's going to Jerusalem while Paul embraced the will of God.**

C. Acts 21:17-26

3. Considering the text before us and the approach of James and Paul, to what extent were both men willing to go for the sake of Jewish- Gentile solidarity? **Ceremonial cleansing even to the extent of shaving of the hair which showed that Paul was a law abiding Jew. Just like when he willingly had Timothy circumcised.**
4. Why was it "necessary" for Paul to do this? **It wasn't "necessary" in the sense that he was compelled to do so by the council as if he was in trouble with them...for he was not...it was about Christian charity... having concern for the weaker brethren in this case...without compromising the grace of the gospel. Paul was balancing what was essential with that which was not essential for the good of his brothers...had it been a doctrinal issue we would be having a different discussion but as it was it was simply a cultural and traditional practice.**
5. Though both men were obviously willing to make concessions when it came to the cultural and traditional practices, was there any difference between them doctrinally and ethically? How do we know?
 - a. **All the brothers received Paul gladly/joyfully. James along with the other elders equally praised the work among the Gentiles (all the things that had occurred since Acts 15)...they glorified God because of this work.**
 - b. **They called him "brother" acknowledging his position among them...not simply an affectionate term.**
 - c. **James reiterates the letter sent by the Jerusalem Council to the Gentiles as a way of making it clear that the 2 churches are united in doctrine, the Council had already affirmed the same doctrinal positions as Paul ...**

- d. **Both also affirmed the place of the moral law... civil practice is separate as long as the practice does not become equal to the moral law. Individual Jews were free to practice the “old ways” as long as those did not get in the way of correct doctrine...that salvation is by grace alone...the law does not and cannot save anyone. According to 24:17 the Jerusalem church also received the offering from the Gentile churches in support of the church’s needs...it is likely that Paul would have presented this when he arrived which probably added to the Jerusalem’s church warm greeting, as well. I mean, everyone likes extra cash...right? By receiving this offering the Jerusalem church was also acknowledging what the offering symbolized ...unity and solidarity between them and the Jewish Christians.**
 - e. **Mutual submission one to another. PCA elders take vows to be submissive to their brothers... other elders.**
6. **We can see the grace in this position towards a weaker brother...but what about the weakness in carrying this position too far? The letter to the Hebrews reflects how the Jerusalem church seems to have denied the stronger teachings of doctrine for the people were reverting back to the works righteousness of Judaism. Interesting how the letter to the Galatians and the letter to the Hebrews has much to say to us today and the Pelagian views the Church is espousing all over again. When the church leaves the simple doctrines of grace the church is weakened to the point of ineffectiveness and it lacks authenticity because our doctrine can so easily be picked apart by even non-believers.**
 7. **So what is the issue that the people have with Paul according to James? It is just like in Chapter 15 at the Council ...it was all ceremonial or cultural practices that might lead to offense between Gentile and Jew. It is NOT about salvation at this point (that will come later)...but rather about how Paul is discipling the people...specifically the Jews that lived among the Gentiles...vs. 20. The Council had said the circumcision was unnecessary for salvation and that the law cannot save but the Jews in Jerusalem did not want the “old ways” to go untaught to the Jews living among the Gentiles. The “rumor” was that Paul was NOT teaching the Jews to observe Jewish cultural practices. And the reality was that their claims were probably right.**
 8. **Reformed believers have been falsely accused of not having a heart when it comes to the weaknesses of other believers. I say falsely, because very often simply standing for the true gospel as opposed to an Arminian or Pelagian understanding often looks and feels judgmental...and sometimes is. However, we DO NOT have all the answers and we certainly don’t live any differently than our Pelagian or semi-pelagian brothers sometime...so with this in mind what are some ways that we can better show grace to our brothers and sisters in Christ**

that do not hold the same understanding of what we teach that Scripture teaches? Let this chapter up to this point be your guide!

- a. **First of all we should probably remove as often as we can labels like the ones I was just using. IF we believe they are Christians then we should not label them with anything other than brother and sister...**
- b. **Also, with this in mind, we approach them accordingly...not to make them feel inferior...for we are sinners as well...but with a desire to see them come to God's point of view. It is not a Reformed view against the rest of the views...we need to be so versed on the Bible that it is always the Bible's view we have in mind....the doctrines of grace...rather than say, "the 5 points of Calvinism". are God's doctrines that He expects His church to live by. The "5 Points" are good in illustrating what the Bible teaches but they can never be our foundation. The Bible alone as God's Word is our only foundation for faith and practice.**

D. Acts 21:27-36

- 1. What 2 accusations are made against Paul by the angry crowd? **See verse 27-28.**
 - a. **Paul was teaching AGAINST Judaism...**
 - b. **Paul brought Greeks into the Temple area where only Jews could go.**
- 2. How are these accusations both inaccurate and ironical?
 - a. **The Jews misunderstood Paul the way they had misunderstood Jesus and even Stephen...Paul was not speaking against the Law but he was speaking about the fulfillment of the law in Jesus...and also that the moral law should still be kept by all believers... through the work of the Holy Spirit.**
 - b. **An irony is that this is what Paul used to do...arrest the Christians...those of The Way... for the same thing...the same "misunderstanding".**
 - c. **One irony is that this should have been a charge at all since he himself was undergoing purification so that he would not defile the temple.**
 - d. **The Greek believer never went into the temple as far as we can tell...the text says that *"they supposed Paul had brought him into the temple..."***
 - e. **So they were willing to lie to stir up the crowd rather than to listen to the truth...for the truth is not important to those bent on tearing down someone else... (Gentiles were permitted to enter only the outer court ...the Court of the Gentiles...of the temple. There was a stone wall of partition about 4 ½ feet high with an inscription that forbid any non-Jew from going any further under the penalty of death. Rome had given the Jews the permission to kill any non-Jew for in desecrating their temple by going beyond the barricade...even a Roman citizen.)**
 - f. **Another irony perhaps is the way Paul was "cared" for by the Roman consulate/tribune by taking him into protective custody to get him away from such a lynch mob...and then we hear them**

saying... “Away with him.” Or could that have been, “Crucify him!?” Not to go to far with this but the similarities are striking to be sure.

Acts- Sunday School
October 7, 2012

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. We saw last week how Paul and James were willing to make some concessions without compromising the faith for the good of the peace and unity in the church that comprised Jews and Gentiles. As we were applying some of what we learned last week to our day to day life, I talked about how Reformed people historically have often acted without a heart...so consumed with doctrine that we miss the need of the person we are talking to. In our opposition to Arminianism and Pelagianism we have sometimes forgot that while they maybe perusing the wrong path they indeed may be brothers and sisters in Christ and we have a mandate to treat one-another with love, honor and respect as we are able.
2. With this in mind I posed this question: Since it is certain that we DON'T have all the answers, what are some ways that we can better show grace to our brothers and sisters in Christ who do not hold the same understanding of Scripture as we do?
 - a. **First of all, we should probably remove as often as we can labels like the ones I was just using. IF we believe they are Christians then we should not label them with anything other than brother and sister...**
 - b. **Also with this in mind, we approach them accordingly...not to make them feel inferior...for we are sinners as well...but with a desire to see them come to God's point of view. It is not a Reformed view against the rest of the views...we need to be so versed on the Bible that it is always the Bible's view we have in mind....the doctrines of grace...rather than say, “the 5 points of Calvinism”...are God's doctrines that He expects His church to live by. The “5 Points” are good in illustrating what the Bible teaches but they can never be our foundation. The Bible alone as God's Word is our only foundation for faith and practice.**
 - c. **READ Conversation between Charles Simeon a Reformed Anglican pastor with John Wesley...** This is a conversation between Charles Simeon and the aging John Wesley. Simeon was a stout Calvinist as a minister in the Anglican church but he preferred to be called biblical but he chose to be charitable to Christian with different understanding like John Wesley's apparent Arminianism. This is a conversation he had with the aging Wesley to show his approach:

“Sir, I understand that you are called an Arminian; and I have been sometimes called a Calvinist; and therefore I suppose we are to draw daggers? But before I consent to begin such combat, with your permission I will ask you a few

questions. Pray, Sir, do you feel yourself a depraved creature, so depraved that you would never have thought of turning to God, if God had not first put it into your heart? Yes, I do indeed. Wesley responded.

And do you utterly despair of recommending yourself to God by anything you can do; and look for salvation solely through the blood and righteousness of Christ? Yes, solely through Christ; was Wesley's response again.

But Sir, supposing you were first saved by Christ, are you not somehow or other to save yourself afterwards by your own works? No, I must be saved by Christ from first to last, demanded Wesley.

Allowing, then, that you were first turned by the grace of God, are you not in some way or other to keep yourself by your own power? No!

What then, are you to be upheld every hour and every moment by God, as much as an infant in its mother's arms? Yes, altogether, Wesley responded again.

And is all your hope in the grace and mercy of God to preserve you unto His heavenly kingdom? Yes, I have no hope but in Him.

Then, Sir, with your leave I will put up my dagger again; for this is all my Calvinism; this is my election, my justification by faith, my final perseverance: it is in substance all that I hold, and as I hold it; therefore, if you please, instead of searching out terms and phrases to be a ground of contention between us, we will cordially unite in those things wherein we agree."
(Reprinted from the book The Roots of Endurance by John Piper. Pg. 87-88)

3. Considering the talk we have made about the concession being for the peace and unity of the church...let's consider together now a side issue. What would be "good" reasons for leaving a church/fellowship of believers?
 - a. **A trick question on one hand- no "good" reasons...save perhaps death or moving.**
 - b. **God hates us to break "vows"...it would be better that we never make them on one hand, but on the other vows are crucial in our life as well. (Number 30:2)**
 - c. **But there are reasons to consider leaving. Calvin gave us only 3.**
 - (1) Wrongful preaching of the Word of God;**
 - (2) Inappropriate understanding and administration/practice of the sacraments;**
 - (3) No oversight and/or discipline of membership...of God's flock.**
 - (4) If you can't submit to the leadership because they exhibit these or other non-biblical tendencies it is time to discuss this with your leadership before you simply up and leave in a huff...In fact, I would submit that as believers we do not have the right to ever leave a fellowship of God's people in a**

huff ...(It is sinful on our part. For the Body is denied and we treat everyone in that body with the same disdain by simply leaving)...without first approaching those that offend and going through appropriate channels of the leadership before determining what God is calling you to.

C. Acts 21:37-22:29

1. In what ways did Paul demonstrate his sensitivity to the crowd as he boldly gave his testimony in verses 21:40-22:21?
 - a. **Addressed them in the Hebrew language...not the trade language...Greek...but their own language...and because he used this language ...they listened.**
 - b. **He spoke of his Jewish heritage and education even with the great Gamaliel...well known and respected in Jewish law and logic....and how he had been trained “according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers...”...memorization of the whole text...re-writing the text...even to persecuting those who seem to stray from the text...**
 - c. **He speaks of “our fathers”...speaking of the patriarchs... the Law of Moses and then the God of our father’s ...Abraham, Isaac and Jacob...**
 - d. **He spoke of how he persecuted Christian...those of the Way...**
 - e. **Even spoke of Ananias as a devout followers of the traditions ...**
 - f. **He spoke of Jerusalem and the temple..**
 - g. **Then he spoke of being sent to the Gentiles...and of course he was now right back to where he was before He spoke...for the people were unwilling and unable to accept that even though it had also been prophesied by their own prophets of old.**
2. Why does Paul seem to be giving a testimony rather than a defense or a sermon? **He is seeking to show that he is still a Jew, though now he is a Christian.** Why would you think that personal testimonies may be more effective sometimes than preaching or designed apologetics?
3. What was the heart of Paul’s message in this testimony? **Faith is through Christ alone and that there is hope in the resurrection. (see Acts 23:7)** How is Paul’s testimony different from the way we often give our testimonies today? **Paul confesses who he was and he emphasizes what Christ did for him....today most men speak of who they were and then how they chose Christ...what they decided...and how that now helps them individually.**
4. How do Roman law and justice come to Paul’s aid again in verses 22-29? Why did he do it? **Simple...it was not time for his death...there was still work for him to do. God had granted him this privilege for times such as these. It is not that he shunned suffering as we do today...but he knew by virtue of the Spirit’s leading when to suffer and when it wasn’t necessary beyond measure.**

Acts- Sunday School
October 14, 2012

A. Prayer

B. Acts 22:30-23:11

1. Paul is facing death at any minute. What do we see here is one of the secrets of his boldness? **Paul says that "I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience" (23:1). This is an important theme for Paul ...see how he appeals to it again in Acts 24:16 and II Timothy 1:3. Here we see that the secret of confidence before human beings is confidence before God. He has not been as concerned to please people as to please God and fulfill his obligations to the Lord. As a result, there is a boldness. As Paul says elsewhere, "if God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31)**
2. Why would Paul's statement in 23:1 anger the High Priest so?
 - a. **Paul had made it clear that he was now a Christian ...a follower of the Way himself...BUT...he was also saying that he was still a "good" Jew, having served God with a good conscience since his conversion... *"even to this day."* A "good" Jew in Paul's mind was being linked with the likes of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David...not the likes of this High Priest. Josephus speaks of this High Priest this way; *"a great hoarder of money, he even took away the tithes and offerings that belonged to the priest by force."***
 - b. **So Paul, in a sense, was saying that he was a "true" Jew in contrast to the high priest who was a false Jew and worldly. Just like in the time of Jesus the priest got exactly what was being said. So to Ananias Paul was blaspheming.**
 - c. **He was purposefully making a contrast...he was appropriately qualified to do so given his past life and the life he now lives in the Spirit with complete understanding of God's Word.**
3. How can we have a good conscience when we know we are sinners? **Heb. 9:14 says, *"How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!"*. If he didn't believe the gospel, Paul's statement would be totally terrifying! But because of the gospel, Paul can turn to God's assessment of him, rather than to his own feelings or to the opinions of others. And as long as we are a) obeying the will of God and b) serving with our gifts enough to evidence that we are really his — then our consciences stay clear, not because we are being perfect, but because our behavior confirms that we are his adopted children, pardoned and loved. Let's take inventory! In order to have a clear conscience:**
 - a. **You must not be living in contradiction to what you know is God's will. Of course we disobey God, but are you living in a pattern of disobedience in any area(s)?**
 - b. **You must be using your gifts and opportunities to serve him. Are you willing to be identified as a Christian to those around**

you? Are you giving time to ministry that fits your temperament and gifts?

- c. **You must know that a) and b) cannot ever make you right with God, but can only provide evidence that you are really an adopted child, saved by grace, and now completely accepted by God. Do we understand this?**
4. What was the purpose of Paul's apparent anger in verses 2 & 3? **He was ordered to be struck and then he was struck...a breach of protocol in Jewish law...you had to be tried before you were sentenced and punished. So Paul spoke the truth. Was Paul's anger justified or was it wrong? Why?**
- a. **1st, there is no reason why Luke could not show us Paul sinning. After all, the Bible shows us Abraham, Moses, David, Peter—all sinning badly. But I don't think that Paul's anger is unjustified.**
 - b. **2nd, it was illegal to strike and punish a man who has not even been convicted of a charge. The rights of defendants were safeguarded by both Jewish and Roman law. This was a complete disregard of them both.**
 - c. **3rd, Paul's characterization of the offender as a "white-washed wall" (v.3) is very fair. The metaphor refers to a wall which was rotten and ready to fall but which had its condition hidden by a coat of whitewash. If Paul really did not realize that it was the High Priest who gave the order, he was thinking that some religious leader had done it. Whoever it was, that was a person who on the outside was "whitewashed" (appearing religious and holy) but who internally was proud and cruel.**
 - d. **The text seems to show us one who has great self-control not really anger above pointing out where they were wrong and condemning them for their hypocrisy.**
 - e. So if this be true then where does Paul get his self-control?
 - (1) **He was an avid debater...so his skills were well honed???**
 - (2) **What is remarkable is Paul's mastery of the Scripture. In such a highly-charged situation, he knows the Scripture so well that relevant texts jump to mind! This is how he gets control. He uses the Word of God on himself. Paul was able to use Scripture to "hear his Master's voice.**
 - (3) **John Sanderson a PCA pastor and scholar says this about Paul here, "What impresses us about Paul is the instantaneous submission to the law of God, once he was made aware that the speaker who so unlawfully ordered him to be struck was the high priest With all the pressures flooding in upon him — the threats of the mob to lynch him, the feeling that he could not get a fair trial, the injustice of the command to hit him — Paul had the presence of mind to recall the Exodus command... [As Jesus said], 'My sheep hear my voice'. As soon as Paul heard the voice, every faculty was called into obedience..." —, The Fruit of the Spirit,**
5. (We talked at length about his issue last week but here it is in the form we discussed.)The question that has confounded many through the

ages is how is it that Paul would not have known who this was that gave the orders to slap him? **There have been many speculative answers put forth :**

- a. **He may have lost his temper and by the doctrines of the gospel he would need to apologize for losing control and responding inappropriately to the High Priest an office that deserved respect even if the person did not;**
 - b. **It could have been an informal meeting of the Sanhedrin and thing as had not yet settled down when he was confronted with the first question and having answered and been slapped did not know who it was that gave the command;**
 - c. **Or maybe it was so loud that he didn't know where the command came from;**
 - d. **Augustine and Calvin agree that because of the possible grammar Paul was saying, *"I brothers, recognize nothing priestly about this man"* ...in other words according to them Paul was denying Ananias's right and claim to be regarded as a priest of God;**
 - e. **Or maybe even more probable is that he couldn't see clearly enough by this time to know...any of these are plausible.**
6. Of what import does Paul seemingly give to the law in verse 5? How does this disprove the claim of the High Priest and the Jews? **Paul holds the Law in high regard as he quotes it in his apparent apology but no one seems to pick up on that...another reason to possibly support the conjecture that there was so much confusion in the hall that Paul may not have known who his punisher was.**
7. What was the source of the conflict between the Pharisees and the Sadducees? **Paul's claim to be a Pharisee and his alliance with them on the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead.** Was Paul justified in deliberately setting the Pharisees and the Sadducees against one another? Why or why not?
- a. **Paul certainly saw the resurrection as the central tenet of the gospel and he saw a way just like with the use of his Roman citizenship to keep on doing what God had called him to do. The only motive from Paul was the ability to be used of God until God called him home...**
 - b. ***"A Sadducee could not become a Christian without abandoning the distinctive theological position of his party; a Pharisee could become a Christian and remain a Pharisee – in the early decades of Christianity at least. It was not until 90 A.D. or thereby that steps were taken to exclude Jewish Christians from participation in synagogue worship."* (F.F. Bruce, p.453).**
 - c. **So Paul's statement was not only savvy, it was a witness for the truth. Paul was genuinely concerned with true doctrine, and the anti-super-naturalist stance of the Sadducees was hostile toward the gospel.**
8. What does Paul teach us here about how to take on apostasy within the church?

- a. 1st, we need to not fear to speak the truth...
 - b. 2nd, we need to not only know the Word but be living it as well so that it empowers us..
 - c. 3rd, it is okay to hold accountable those who claim to be believers but aren't living that way...
 - d.
9. If you had been Claudius Lysias, the tribune, what would you conclude after this meeting as to the reason why Paul was being so accused? **Remember this is his 3rd attempt to get to the bottom of this...he had even kept Paul in jail to find out, though I am sure he would say he kept Paul there for Paul's own safety.**
- a. Just like with Pilate...everyone seemed to have a separate reason to accuse Paul;
 - b. Since the Romans were pretty much convinced that Christianity or The Way was simply an off shoot of Judaism , he probably walked away in confusion saying...if this is how this religion works then Rome need not fear anything of this for it will soon kill itself off...literally.
 - c. This is what congregational form of government looks like? ☺ ☺
10. What effect do you think the Lord's appearance and message had on Paul in verse 11? **All that Paul had experienced the last couple of days certainly had to leave him wondering how in the world he was going to get out of this alive...or that the warnings might have been true that his end was near. Even though he was prepared for this if this be God's will...he was human so I am sure he probably wondered. The Spirit had sent him to Jerusalem to bear witness/testify about Him to the people...and He has done that. Now Jesus will be sending him to Rome to do the same thing.**
- a. The Lord's appearance definitely confirmed the fact the God is always with us;
 - b. It confirms God's promise to be near the needy and that He hears our prayers;
 - c. It confirmed that Paul wouldn't die...at least not now for Jesus still had more work for him;
 - d. It confirmed that he was right where God wanted him to be doing exactly what he was supposed to be doing and that God was pleased;
 - e. And if Paul was thinking clearly, and he probably was since his death seems to have been on his mind a lot...not in a morbid sense but in a real one knowing that when he was finished with what God had for him to do God would call him home and so he was always ready...for he said it best, *"...Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."* ...As I said if he was thinking clearly he would know that his trials were not over yet...Jesus came to

minister to him as the angels came to minister to Jesus just before Jesus went to the cross.

Acts- Sunday School
October 21, 2012

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. What are some general principles that Paul teach us here about how to take on apostasy within the church?
 - a. **1st, we need to not fear to speak the truth...**
 - b. **2nd, we need to not only know the Word but be living it as well so that it empowers us..**
 - c. **3rd, it is okay to hold accountable those who claim to be believers but aren't living that way...**

C. Acts 23:11-35

1. Let's take a minute and look at verse 11 again. What does v.11 guarantee for Paul? Do we have anything like the same guarantee or promise that Paul was given? **It guarantees only that Paul will be an effective witness. He knew that no one had any power over him except that which was lent to them by his Lord, for his purposes. (Cf. John 19:11 –“You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above.”) Notice, by virtue of inference, that Jesus does assure him that he will not escape captivity or suffering or injustice or even death. He is not promised freedom or security or safety — As far as our “guarantee”...we may not have anything quite this specific...or do we?**
 - a. **First, we have the assertion in Eph.1:11 that God “works out everything in conformity with the purpose of His will”. Thus we see that the circumstances of life — every one of them — are being influenced by Him so that they follow His plan.**
 - b. **Second, this bare fact becomes a remarkable assurance in Romans 8:28. There we are told that God “works” (controls, directs) “in all things” (every single circumstance and event) “for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). This is a guarantee that God's plan is for our good, and nothing can thwart it. This profound and comprehensive promise should have the same effect on us as the Acts 23:11 promise had on Paul.**
 - c. **Third, we too will suffer for Christ.**
 - d. **“Everything is necessary that He sends; nothing can be necessary that He withholds.” (John Newton)**
2. What caused such a pitched fever against Paul this time? **No one could or would put Paul to death so they felt like it was a miscarriage of justice and so the only answer to that is to resort to vigilantism knowing that the High Priest would condone such action. Paul was**

such an affront to these Jews that he must die. Nothing new for Paul or even this budding Christian religion.

3. How do you think Paul felt after hearing of this latest plot to kill him?
Interesting that this came after Jesus had come to minister to Paul giving Paul his traveling orders to go and witness to Him in Rome...so it is doubtful that Paul worried much...at least not at this point. Jesus tells us we can all have this confidence Matt. 10:28-32... but it does require us to trust Him that He will ultimately do as He promises.
4. John Stott writes: “the most... cunning of human plans cannot succeed if God opposes them.” How does this passage show that God is in control and that nothing happens outside of His control? (Trace the “coincidences!”)
 - a. **1st, the plot itself...God engineered the hearts of these men to make it necessary for Paul to be sent to Rome...**
 - b. **2ndst, the plotters were so prideful they didn’t keep their plans silent. They immediately told the High Priest of their plans who would have sided with them...but there is always politics involved so others may have heard that shouldn’t of...Like Paul’s nephew...as the word spread as to what was happening Paul’s nephew over hears the plot went and told Paul of what was being planned.**
 - c. **3rd, Paul’s nephew had to have courage to be able to tell a Roman tribune such information...willingly turning in his own people. God’s hand was on his heart. If the assassins had gotten word that he was talking to the Romans he could have been killed as well.**
 - d. **4th, the commander had to make the right choice. Surely it was a great deal of trouble and bother to send out such a large entourage of soldiers and cavalry just to save one prisoner. But we see that:**
 - (1) **Claudius Lysias was a man with a basic sense of justice (cf. v.29 “there was no charge against him that deserved death and imprisonment”).**
 - (2) **And in addition, he probably felt that it was time to simply be rid of the potential political trouble that Paul would continue to bring him. After all — what would be next?**
5. Concerning the letter sent by Claudius to Tiberius Antonio Felix, a former slave now governor of Judea (just as an aside Felix and his brother were personal friends to Emperor Claudius...Felix’s brother was we might say extremely close to Emperor Claudius); what things does Claudius assert and what things does he leave out?
 - a. **He asserts that he “rescued” Paul because He knew he was a Roman citizen. He knew nothing of the sort at the time.**
 - b. **He didn’t bother to tell how he got his intel.**
 - c. **There is interestingly no mention that he almost had Paul flogged.**

- d. **He speaks of the plot against Paul's life, but he doesn't speak of how large it was how far it extended and the number of troops he sent with Paul to ensure his safety....by the time they get to Caesarea there are only 70 horsemen with Paul.**
 - e. **Why?**
 - (1) He had to make himself look good before Felix because of Felix's close connection to Caesar's family.**
 - (2) Remember the tribune had had to pay for his citizenship probably taking on the name of the Emperor in his loyalty...**
 - (3) Making things look right might win him favor with the governor and the Emperor ...so anything he could do to work his way up the latter...well why not?**
6. **How extensive an operation does the commander organize to protect Paul on his trip to see Felix, the governor? 470 soldiers I all...over $\frac{3}{4}$ of the whole garrison stationed in Jerusalem which would be approximately 600 men in total. Caesarea was the military headquarters for Rome in Judea. They also provide Paul with multiple mounts for the trip...to carry books, companions and stuff??? Why? If something happened to Paul it would be his head and he understood this...but if God had not been directing matters it could have been different.**
 7. **What if anything is significant about Paul being "held" in Herod's praetorium? This had been one of Herod's palaces so it was overdone in luxury to be sure. It was not the governor's mansion and it had "cells" in it to hold prisoners but having no charge against him and being a Roman citizen Paul was more than likely treated extremely well...a respite ...an oasis from all the turmoil that he had been through the last few days. God provides for His children in the time of need.**
 8. **Once again, how important is Roman justice to the spread of the gospel?**
 9. **Luke is always interesting in what he leaves out of an account.**
 - a. **There is interestingly no mention of them in anyway coming to Paul's aide and he had been in their midst just one week before. Where is the church of Caesarea? Why haven't they showed their faces? Are they afraid of something? Are they saying to themselves, "We told you so?"!**
 - b. **Nothing concerning what Paul was thinking. No reflection by Paul on all that had happened in such a short period of time. Nothing about what he was looking forward to.**
 - c. **God is in charge and His hand has been evident in the activity but there is no specific mention of God's control in this text. He is in charge of every event to get Paul thus far and he will get Paul onto Rome though it will be 2 more years before Paul actually makes it. Every detail, every circumstance, every set of contingencies, big things and little things; God is working His plan. God is fulfilling His purpose.**

10. Let us recap...What do verses 12-35 tell us about God and His character?
- a. **God promises to protect and deliver...in this case using a youth and a Roman tribune to do these for Him...**
 - b. **God does what He says He will do...provided away for Paul to go free and begin the first leg of his journey to Rome...**
 - c. **Provides for us abundantly more than we can imagine...look at where he is staying at a palace built for Herod the great being used as the governors official residence...the praetorium. Since Paul was a Roman citizen and was facing no charges he would have been treated well... “under guard” may have been a euphemism for having a servant...probably a lesser guard... with him to attend him.**

Acts- Sunday School
October 28, 2012

- A. Prayer
- B. Review

- 1. If you were to describe Paul based on the first 23 chapters what words would you use? **Bold, interestingly different than his counterparts, not much even like todays preachers!**

- C. Chapter 24

- 1. Read 24:1-9. What was Tertullus seeking to do in his opening remarks before he got to the charges? **Soften up the judge by extolling him as a great ruler when in fact the opposite was true. Tertullus spoke of the “peace and reforms” that had come under Felix’s reign and the truth was that he had violently put down several insurrections that plagued his kingdom. He was so violent that his nature was compared to that of Herod the Great...one to be feared by the Jewish population and all others for that matter depending upon his mood.**
- 2. What 3 charges did Tertullus make against Paul in verses 5-6?
 - a. **Found this man to be a plague/troublemaker...(a perfect pest)...stirring up the Jews all over the world... interesting what this says about Paul’s influence...contrasting to the king...**
 - b. **He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect. the use of the word “sect” makes it sound like another part of Judaism...the Sadducee party and the Pharisee party were also called “sects” in their own language...it would only come to possibly heretical sect later starting perhaps with 28:22 and there it is only implied.**
 - c. **He tried to desecrate the temple...this was the belief that Paul had brought into the Temple Trophimus, the Ephesian (see**

21:29)...no evidence to this fact was available of course. The Romans had given the Jews wide powers in dealing with offenses against the temple even death if the temple was desecrated by a Gentile or in any other way even by a Roman citizen.

- d. Then they also may have accused Claudius of interference of justice if the side note is any indicator to what else may have been said. This would completely reverse the facts making the riots Claudius' fault not theirs.**

3. Now read 10-21. How did Paul speak to each of the accusations?
 - a. He was emphatically not a troublemaker...and his accusers could produce no evidence that he had ...for he had only come to Jerusalem 12 days before then (remember he had spent at least 5 days in Caesarea...a couple of nights in Claudius' jail) which means he had less than 5 days to incite a riot when he had come only to worship.**
 - b. He was a follower of the WAY but this was not a sect as they referred to it because he worshiped the God of their fathers and believed the teaching of the Scriptures. In other words he was saying that he was following the true religion established by God.**
 - c. He denied desecrating the temple ...in fact he was going through a ceremony of consecration when they sought to take him. Why were not Paul's accusers in court to make their case against him if such a case could be made? And since his accusers weren't there they should state what crime he had been convicted of before the Sanhedrin...which of course, they had not convicted him of anything....In fact, the Pharisees had declared him innocent of any crime.**
4. In verses 14-16, what confessions/affirmations does Paul make before Felix and his accusers?
 - a. I confess...I worship the God of our fathers...**
 - b. I believe everything that agrees with the Law and the Prophets...**
 - c. I have a hope in God that these men (Pharisees) accept in the resurrection of the just and the unjust...**
 - d. I take pains/ strive in earnest to have a clear conscience before God and men.**
 - e. Why does he make these affirmations?
 - (1) A personal declaration of faith...**
 - (2) But also so that he stood with all who hold these views to be evident from Scripture...that this is the historical/ancestral faith...not a sectarian but he stood in the mainstream of Judaism...Christianity came from its connection with the OT teachings fulfilled in Christ...the WAY.**
5. Read 22-27. Why did Felix not come to any decision about Paul?
 - a. He had a rather accurate knowledge of The Way...which means that he may have known the truth of what Paul spoke...**

- b. He found himself in a dilemma...Claudius Lysias had found no fault in Paul, nor had the Sanhedrin convicted him of anything, and Tertullus brought no evidence to support his claims...so he could not convict a Roman citizen.**
- c. He needed Claudius' advice which apparently he never summoned...**
- d. He and his wife Drusilla, the daughter of Heron Agrippa I the sister of King Agrippa II that we will see in Chapter 25, seems to be genuinely interested in what Paul had to say...or at least Felix was interested in keeping his wife happy...it is possible that his conscience was troubled by his actions and his rejection of the God of his people as well so he sent for Paul often even after it became evident that no one would pay a bribe...in the same way King Saul was soothed by David's playing...**
- e. Felix was hoping for a bribe from Paul...Paul, I am sure was seeking above all else to convince them of their need for Christ...that was probably more important than his own release.**
- f. He wanted to use this internment to placate the Jews for a while...Paul was left in "prison" longer than Roman law allowed...**

D. Chapter 25

1. According to Josephus, Felix was recalled to Rome in order to explain his brutality against the Jewish people that Rome was at peace with even though they ruled them. He would have been severely punished, if not executed for his mishandling of many issues except for his brother Pallas' appeal to Nero the current Caesar. Not much is known of Porcius Festus other than the fact that history writes him in as more just and moderate ruler towards his subjects than Felix.
2. Read verses 1-27. What kind of person do you think Festus is based on the description and his actions in these verses?
 - a. He is punctual...☺**
 - b. He seems to want to get to know his people and waste no time in going into the nest of them...**
 - c. He seems wise enough to see through the Jews desires for Paul...**
 - d. He is just and knows Roman law and how it is to be used...**
 - e. He was truthful and consistent...not seeking favor from King Agrippa II when they met simply telling him the facts...**
 - f. But he lacked courage or desire to declare Paul innocent even though he had no evidence of guilt on the part of Paul...so he sought to walk the center of the road knowing he could not convict Paul in a Roman court but he also wanted to keep the Jews happy after all this was the first issue that had arisen since being given the post so he was hoping that Agrippa II would deal with this this and send his report before Caesar.**

Acts- Sunday School
November 4, 2012

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. According to Josephus, Felix was recalled to Rome in order to explain his brutality against the Jewish people that Rome was at peace with even though they ruled them. He would have been severely punished, if not executed for his mishandling of many issues except for his brother Pallas' appeal to Nero the current Caesar. Not much is known of Porcius Festus other than the fact that history writes him in as more just and moderate ruler towards his subjects than Felix.

2. Read verses 1-27. What kind of person do you think Festus is based on the description and his actions in these verses?

g. He is punctual...☺

h. He seems to want to get to know his people and waste no time in going into the nest of them...

i. He seems wise enough to see through the Jews desires for Paul...

j. He is just and knows Roman law and how it is to be used...

k. He was truthful and consistent...not seeking favor from King Agrippa II when they met simply telling him the facts...

l. But he lacked courage or desire to declare Paul innocent even though he had no evidence of guilt on the part of Paul...so he sought to walk the center of the road knowing he could not convict Paul in a roman court but he also wanted to keep the Jews happy after all this was the first issue that had arisen since being given the post so he was hoping that Agrippa II would deal with this this and send his report before Caesar.

C. Now let's break the text down.

1. Let's look closer at Acts 25:1-12. How do the charges differ this time?
 - a. They obviously added the charge against Caesar since Paul then defends himself against that one, for the first time, as well.**
 - b. It seems that they may not have brought up the charge of being a trouble maker since Paul does not answer to that one again.**
2. Why did Festus offer Paul a trial in Jerusalem? **To placate the Jews.** Why did Paul refuse Festus' offer of a trial in Jerusalem and claim his right to appeal to Caesar? **Safer and surer avenue for justice.**
3. Why would Paul want to be tried before Caesar rather than being tried before Festus again in Jerusalem?
 - a. He knows he is supposed to go to Rome and he knows this is how God had engineered his passage to Rome.**
 - b. He was not as many have said afraid to go back to Jerusalem. It is true he knew what lie there to be sure but that was not his reasons...He had been given a mission now he knew how it would be fulfilled.**

- c. **Appealing to Caesar was an ancient but still acceptable Roman right which protected Paul from, “summary punishment, execution, and from an actual trial from magistrates outside of Italy.” (A.N. Sherwin-White’s discussion found in Roman Society and Roman Law in the New Testament pg. 58)**
4. Now look at 25:13-27. What do Paul’s actions teach us about our relationship to civil authority?
- a. **Paul’s action show we must respect civil authority as reflecting God’s will in a limited way...see Rom. 13:1-4ff**
 - b. **Paul’s actions show that we do not have to fear even bad magistrates. God is in charge and He has historically used non-believers to meter out His justice.**
 - c. **Paul’s actions show that we must not just blindly or passively accept the actions of civil magistrates. Paul is extremely pro-active. He does not just give in, but rather protests injustice vigorously and “goes over the head” of Festus to save himself. In the same way, Christians can only give “qualified” respect to civil authority. We have a higher standard — the moral law of God — by which to judge civil authority. We can and must protest and resist injustice.**
5. How does Festus’s “spin” on the case to Agrippa reveal how Paul is a problem for Festus? **Festus has two problems, one obvious and one less obvious.**
- a. **The obvious problem is the one he mentions — he does not know how to discern “such matters” (v.20). He seems to realize that the Jewish leaders have lodged the civil charges as mere excuses to get at Paul for what they considered his real transgression — the preaching of Jesus. Festus rightly discerns that the theological issue is the real issue...**
 - b. **The less obvious problem is indicated by the fact that Festus needs to send along to Rome some statement of charges (v.27). The civil charges before the governor (of violating temple rules and creating riots) simply were not substantiated at all by Paul’s accusers. There was no evidence that Paul had defiled the temple or had instigated riots.**
 - c. **Why is Agrippa a help for him? Agrippa II “had a reputation of being an authority on the Jewish religion [see 26:3], and Festus decided that he was the man who could best help him to frame the report which he had to remit to Rome in connection with Paul’s appeal...” (F.F.Bruce, p.482) Festus hoped that Agrippa could listen to Paul and help him discover what about Paul was so disruptive of the peace.**

Probably, Festus hoped that Agrippa could provide some insights about why this case warranted a trial. Festus may have reasoned, “*this man must be doing something terribly bad or wrong to provoke such furious opposition*”. He hoped Agrippa could show him what it was.

6. Why was this meeting such a tremendous opportunity to proclaim the gospel?
 - a. **First, this is a very strategic opportunity for the gospel because “the chief captains and the principal men of the city” were assembled to hear Paul (v.23). Why? It was an social and political occasion — it was a way for the elite of the imperial capital to maintain cordial relations with the head of the nation. This is why there was “great pomp”. But what an opening for the gospel! Here is Caesarea, the royal capital in the part of the world, and all the leaders of the city are assembled to hear Paul’s testimony and message. Imagine any major city in the U.S. or the world having all the leading business and political leaders assembling to hear a preacher of the gospel. It hasn’t happened (if it has ever happened) in centuries. The strategic nature of the moment is better appreciated when we remember that up until this point the spread of Christianity had been mainly among the working class and the poor. In a highly class-stratified society, it was very difficult for the lower classes to share their faith with people of the upper classes. Thus an opportunity like this is worth its weight in gold.**
 - b. **Second, this is a very dramatic opportunity for the gospel, because here we see a face to face confrontation with the leaders of two completely opposed spiritual “kingdoms”. The Herods were the powerful royal family who, though professing the Biblical faith, had lived lives of violence and corruption for generations, mimicking the ways of the ruling classes of the world.**
 - c. Consider how many things God had to work together for this to occur. Refer to the last few chapters.

Acts- Sunday School
November 11, 2012

- A. Prayer
- B. Review

1. As we considered chapter 25 last time and we ended with Paul being brought before King Agrippa II by Festus just before sending Paul off to Rome we noticed

that Festus was frustrated by this case. Why? (Just as a reminder of some of his frustration re-read 25:13-27.)

2. As Paul was brought before all the upwardly mobile leaders of the area why was this meeting such a tremendous opportunity to proclaim the gospel?
3. What may be ironic, so far, about Paul's trial before King Agrippa II in verses?
 - a. **Herod Agrippa II was the great-grandson of Herod the Great who had tried to destroy the infant Jesus. Agrippa II's great uncle Antipas had beheaded John the Baptist. Agrippa's father, Agrippa I had James the son of Zebedee killed with a sword... All of them were of Edomite heritage. Why was that significant as well?**
 - b. **And now Paul stands before this great family who has a long history of opposition to truth and righteousness. And on top of that Agrippa II seems to have been married to his sister Bernice. Bernice was always seen with the king. History seems to indicate that he could do nothing without her consent...much like Ahab and Jezebel.**
 - c. **In his explanation of the charges Festus speaks of Paul being a follower of Jesus who was said to be dead by the Jews and alive by Paul...at the name of Jesus the family history would have come to mind.**
 - d. **It had to be an interesting moment for Paul to stand before this family apparently not intimidated by who he was in front of.**
4. Again, why would Paul not be shaken by this meeting? **He had a mission to go to Rome. He served a greater King and he had His promise that He was with Paul.** What should this say to us about adversity?

C. Chapter 26

1. Read verses 1-11. Why does Paul say he is on trial? **Because he believes in the resurrection.** What is significant about Paul saying why he is on trial?
 - a. **No one else has made a charge that will stick for anything else because they were trying to move the discussion from religion to treason. This is not about his being against Caesar this is about religious interpretation. A charge by the way that he had been found "not-guilty" of by the Pharisees.**
 - b. **Besides Paul was the first to speak so he is able to set the stage by which the discussion will be had by the parties which was his right as a Roman citizen.**
2. What are the main points about himself that Paul wished to make for King Agrippa in this section of verses?
 - a. **A strict believer ;**
 - b. **A familiar and strict Pharisee...he was known by many in the Sanhedrin and in the Way as the great leader among the scribes and Pharisees having been trained by Gamaliel .**
 - c. **A fanatical persecutor of the Way**

3. Read verses 12-18. What more does the King learn about Paul from these verses?
 - a. **He is on a “Mission from God”.**
 - b. **That Jesus personally intervened to stop Paul's persecution and to redeem Paul...this one that Paul had thought dead was now talking to him and saving him of all people...**
 - c. **Then this same Jesus commissioned Him as an apostle...**

4. Now what about this commissioning? What does Paul tell King Agrippa that would have sounded all too familiar?
 - a. **the sequence of his commissioning would have been familiar and reminded the King of one being called to the office of Prophet...Jesus command to Paul was, “*Rise and stand upon your feet...*”...This type of phrasing was used with the prophets once they fell upon their faces before the LORD the LORD would say “Rise and stand” as He then prepared to give them their commissioning. Paul's calling seems to have deliberately similar to Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah and others so that the Jews would not miss his authority but also...that Jesus was God!**
 - b. **Jesus said further to Paul, “*I have appeared to you for this purpose to appoint you as a servant and a witness...*”The Apostles tells the King of the specific purpose he is called as an Apostle is to be an eyewitness of Christ**
 - c. **Next he tells the King, “*...delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles...*” A similar promise of rescue was given to Jeremiah (1:8). No one will stop them from delivering the message of God.**
 - d. **“*I am sending you...*”This could be read, “I myself apostle you” he was called to be sent to the Gentiles by the God of the OT. The wording here is the same wording the Lord Jesus gave the original 12 on the first Easter day...In John 20:21 Jesus says, “*I am sending you.*” Paul was sent to open the eyes of faith to the unseeing Gentiles.**
 - e. **Once again these are all concepts that King Agrippa II would be familiar with as he was charged with picking the High Priest he had to know the Law and the traditions well.**

5. Read 19-29. In the earlier passages Paul supports the fact that he was a familiar and strict Pharisee. What in these passages does he say about his commitment to the Word of God in support of the faith in verses 19-23?
 - a. **He could not be disobedient to God direct call...**
 - b. **Paul said, “*so here I stand testifying ...*”...similar words to another great witness for the faith Martin Luther, “*Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason [for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves], I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. Here I stand. I can do no other. May God help me. Amen.*”**

- c. **He speaks nothing that hasn't been said before by the prophets and Moses...again just like Luther...he was charged with new ideas about the faith and Luther countered by saying, *"We teach no new thing, but we repeat and establish old things, which the apostles and all the godly teachers, like Augustine, have taught before us."***
- d. What was it that the prophets and Moses said would happen?
 - (1) **That the Christ...the Messiah would suffer (specifically Isaiah 53:4ff);**
 - (2) **That He would be the first to rise from the dead specifically Isaiah again Is. 52:13, 53:12**
 - (3) **That He would proclaim light both to our people and the Gentiles specifically Is. 9,42:6, 49:6**

Acts-Sunday School
November 25, 2012

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. How is Paul's heart's desire and commitment to his commission revealed again as he brings his defense to a close with King Agrippa?
 - a. **He was not intimidated by the King's comeback and command of the language with his question...and he came back equally with boldness and power,**
 - b. **He wished that the King and all in his hearing would believe and be set free from the bondage of sin.**
2. Paul had great confidence in God, and many others were profoundly affected by it. What promises from God was the foundation for Paul's great confidence that they would all arrive safely in Rome?
 - a. **He had been promised in a dream that he would testify in Rome prior to all of this...Acts 23:11**
 - b. **He had had a dream in verses 23 from God stating they would all be alright if they all stay together but that they must run the ship aground.**
3. To what degree is Paul's commission from Jesus Christ your own?

C. Chapter 28

1. Read verses 1-10. What do we come to know of the first people Paul and the lot encounter in verses 1-6?
 - a. **The term "native people" has often been translated as islanders-(NIV) or natives/barbarians-(NKJV, NLT and others) which were used to speak of people who did not speak Greek... only their own language.**
 - b. **They were friendly and hospitable. "...unusual kindness..."= reveals that they were the opposite of barbarians.**

- c. **They were superstitious folk and had strange customs and beliefs. Believing Paul to have been bitten they concluded that he must be a murderer and now after missing out on his judgment by drowning would now receive his just punishment ...death by viper. However, the wording merely implies that Paul may have been bitten, it never explicitly states that he was bitten...the snake could have easily coiled itself around Paul's hand/arm after being exposed to the fire with parts of it hanging from his hand/arm as snakes are prone to do and Paul simply shakes it off before it strikes...or it could have been a miracle but there is really not much to support that here. See Luke 10:19, Mark 16:17-18 as a possible support for how Christ had protected and given Paul authority which leads to simply not fearing and dealing with them accordingly.**
2. Paul dealt with many fickle crowds in his journey. How is the fickleness of the crowd in verses 1-6 displayed? **First, they call him a murderer then they refer to him as a god after he is seemingly unscathed by the viper....Just like the crowd in Lystra who first worshipped Paul and then later stoned him(14:11-19)**
 3. What do we learn about the group's next encounter?
 - a. **Next they meet Publius- the chief man of the island...the main man on the island...perhaps governor.**
 - b. **He too was extremely hospitable. Why would these people be so hospitable? Caesar's Roman guard...better to be friendly than enemies! Because word had gotten around that Paul had survived a viper's bite and was a god. I am not sure which of these 2 would cause this lavish of treatment... probably the latter more than the first.**
 4. Miracles authenticate the message. There was no verbal message given in this section, so what are the miracles there for?
 - a. **Apostleship verification...II Cor. 12:12**
 - b. **Verification of God's Word to all people that God takes care of his own...**
 - c. **That wherever His people are things are better for everyone...**
 - d. **God's common grace extends to all people believers and non...**
 - e. **A witness of God's power to the people of Malta but also to the Roman guard who had seen many such signs and wonders...**
 - f. **They are the message...**
 - g. **Just as a side note: the ailment of Publius' father has been identified as the Malta fever which was traced to the milk of the Maltese goats in the late 1800's.**

Acts-Sunday School
December 2, 2012

A. Prayer

B. Review

1. In verses 1-10 what is being portrayed and what import is it for us today? The facts are important. **They are factual and historical and so they are true.**
2. Miracles authenticate the message. There was no verbal message given in this section, so what are the miracles there for?
 - h. **Apostleship verification...II Cor. 12:12**
 - i. **Verification of God's Word to all people that God takes care of his own...**
 - j. **That wherever His people are things are better for everyone...**
 - k. **God's common grace extends to all people believers and non...**
 - l. **A witness of God's power to the people of Malta but also to the Roman guard who had seen many such signs and wonders...**
 - m. **They are the message...**
3. Again, why do you think so much time is placed on the details of this voyage and Paul getting to Rome? **God is in the details...To show the relationship between God's providential control of history and the witness and mission of the church.** Why is this such an important truth? **Reveals God intimate involvement with the acts of His people...He is NOT somebody who got this started and left us to fend for ourselves...He is not some mythical God looking down from on high being amused or angered as one is by watching a TV show...He is our God and we are His people and He is involved...His presence is real just as He has promised...these promises are crucial for us today they go right to the heart of hope and assurance.**

C. Chapter 28 continued:

1. Pauls' arrival in Rome verses 11-16. How would Paul have been encouraged by meeting with fellow Christians, first in Puteoli and then with the Christian in Rome? **Being with one's own people even if they did not know one another would be of great strength to him. To experience Christian fellowship would have strengthened him as there is much strength in the fellowship of believers. To see the church to which he had written his treatise/letter to Rome he would have given thanks for they have persevered.**
2. Paul is allowed to rent himself a place or one is rented for him but he must stay chained to one of the guards. Why? **Not all things are easy for the people of God...he is still under house arrest for no charge...he is truly a persecuted witness for the faith. He continues in spreading the gospel among the Imperial Guard...even though he is chained to the guard by the right wrist.**

3. Read verses 17-31. Why do you think Paul calls this meeting of the Roman Jews in verses 17-22?
 - a. **It was his custom and desire to go to the Jews...**
 - b. **To inform them he was in the city and see if there was any animosity to be found in Rome against him...**
 - c. **To size up his audience to see how receptive they would be to the message and how to give the message...**
 - d. **To tell them he had done nothing against the Jewish people or their customs, that the Romans wanted to set him free because they could find no fault in him, but it was because the Jews in Jerusalem had such an objection that he was compelled to appeal to Caesar.**
 - e. **That it was because of his position concerning the hope of Israel...the Messianic Hope that was fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth...it was for this reason he was a prisoner.**
 - f. **Having found none he is fulfilling his mandate to go to the Jew first and then the Gentile even in the Gentile capital of the world.**
 - g. **How did the Jews respond? They were curious! They had not heard about him in particular but were aware of the WAY...this sect that they had heard no good of and very much would like to hear him speak about it.**

4. What do Paul's movements in these verses tell you about his ministry strategy?
 - a. **He is a patient man. Sizing up or getting to know his audience so that he knows how to proceed with the gospel.**
 - b. **He's a man of consistency. He continues to go to the Jews first with his message (see Romans 1:16-17).**
 - c. **He's a man of integrity. It is amazing that, considering what the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem had done to him, that he was willing to call the Jews of Rome together and tell them of the charges against him! This shows that Paul did not deceive; he was a man who operated "up front".**
 - d. **He is a man of the Word. He uses the Law and the prophets to make his case for the true meaning of the kingdom and the true Messiah.**
 - e. **He is a man of words. He knew his material so well that he could reason ...he could testify clearly with God's words about the kingdom and the Messiah as one with authority.**
 - f. **He is a man of forgiveness and compassion. He says, "not that I had any charge to bring against my own people". Despite the great abuse Paul received, he says that he has "nothing against" his people's leaders.**
 - g. **He's a man of incredible relentlessness. Again and again he has seen that his preaching to Jews divides them and brings many to persecute him. Yet he does so again and the same thing happens (v.24-25). He doesn't give up.**
 - h. **Why does he keep this up? Because of his calling, his consistency, his integrity, and his compassion. If we are not patient and long-suffering with people, it is because we lack one or more of these.**

5. Now in verses 23-28 we see a large group meeting with Paul preaching and teaching these Jews about the WAY. What was Paul seeking to show these Jews?
 - a. **He testified to the kingdom of God...he preached from the Scriptures about God, His Covenant and His intention in fulfilling that covenant...**
 - b. **He sought to convince them that the covenant was fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth...in other words that Jesus is the Christ that they have awaited.**
6. What was their response? **Some believed...most did not! They “disbelieved”...in other words they rejected /refused to believe as they were intended to...what Paul was saying here...**
7. And what is Paul response to their response...at least to the ones who did not believe? **By quoting this section from Isaiah (Is. 6) he is clearly telling that these who rejected God's Word were rejecting God just as it had been ordained by God to be. And not only this but those you consider dogs...Gentiles that is...the truth of salvation is going to them and they will listen by God's decree, in contrast to the ones who will not hear nor understand, God's doing of hardening their hearts...their hearts has grown dull by God's hand...not all but those to whom it is given just like it had been in the Older Testament...but only those who were God's own would hear while everyone else would not. Does this seem harsh to you? Why or why not? Jesus had spoken these words as well in Matt. 13:14-15...and John had spoken of this as well in John 12:37-43.**
8. In what ways are the words of Isaiah found here in verses 26-27 an accurate description of Jewish response to Christianity? **The Jew has been rejected by God...however, having said that there will be those from among the Jews who will believe but at that time as now those who are not meant to hear/understand/be changed will NOT! It is not about a particular political people but it is about the true people of God.**
9. In what way is verse 28 an accurate description of the controversy and conflict found in the entire book of Acts? Would this prophecy concerning salvation going to the Gentiles be something new to these people? **Perhaps since they had not been being taught appropriately from God's word for some time...the priest would have conveniently left the portions out that spoke of the inclusion of the Gentiles into the covenant.**
10. Now where is verse 29? **This verse is not found in the earliest copies of the Bible it shows up after the 2nd Century in what is called the Western text which was prone to assertions...though history supports that it could have happened this way...it wouldn't have been the 1st group of Jews to leave Paul's presence, “arguing hotly between themselves.”**

11. Verse 30 states that Paul, *"lived there 2 years at his own expense..."* This is the same location as in verse 16 probably...his own rental house...hired dwelling.
12. The letter ends with Paul, *"...proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance."* How does this properly sum up the message of the whole book of Acts? (See also Acts 4:29)
 - a. ***"with all boldness" reflects the message and the power of the Spirit resident within His people to spread the gospel message.***
 - b. ***"Unhindered/ without hindrance" is an interesting word.***
 - (1) ***There is a play on the word "with" ...the first "with" speaks of what we have with power and boldness given to us...***
 - (2) ***The second "without" speaks clearly of nothing hindering the growth of the gospel... even when it appears to be hindered it is not...God's power overcomes even when our perspective doesn't see it...***
 - (3) ***Given all the road blocks to the spread of the gospel that we have seen in this book we see that it has gone exactly where it was supposed to go virtually unhindered... at the pace that God had set unhindered!***
 - c. ***The statement "boldly and without hindrance" is more significant than it looks. It means that there in the capital, the leading proponent of the Christian gospel was able to minister with the full awareness of Roman authority, under whose eye Paul worked. The gospel arrived in the heart of the empire and took deep roots.***

Acts- Sunday School
December 9, 2012

- A. Prayer
- B. Review

1. I want to revisit some things we talked about last time and some things that we didn't. Look back with me to Chapter 28:24 and let's begin here. What does Luke say was the response of the Jews after Paul has presented to them the truth concerning the kingdom of God and Jesus? ***Some believed...most did not! They "disbelieved"...in other words they rejected /refused to believe as they were intended to...Paul gives an irrefutable argument here...so interesting enough the Jews don't take issue with Paul...but rather with one another. God has placed this confusion in their hearts so that they want to debate rather than believe.*** What is the difference between "unbelief and disbelief"? ***Unbelief can be describe as a state of mind and the possibility remains open to belief... whereas with disbelief the evidence is "irrefutable" and yet the person chooses not to believe it and no matter how hard you make the case they will not believe it because God has hardened their heart to the facts...that is why Paul quotes the Isaiah 6 passage...that is why Jesus quotes it as***

well in Matt. 13:14-15 and John speaks of it in John 12:37-43 when explaining the hardheartedness of the Jews to Jesus' message... and this is the condition the Paul speaks of in Romans 11 as well. This disbelief is saying that the people's non-comprehension is actually attributed to their deliberately hard hearts, deaf ears and closed eyes...for otherwise they might see and believe. What is going on here, I thought as many in the church would teach us, that God would that all be saved? After all that passage comes directly from Scripture. So what is going on here and how can God hold these people accountable for a work that He has done on their hearts? He did the hardening but they are blamed for having hard hearts? How does that work?

2. These people had the problem of disbelief or more simply they "refused to believe". How do we exhibit this same quality today as God's children? What can we do to combat this "disease"?

3. The letter ends with Paul, *"...proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance."* How does this properly sum up the message of the whole book of Acts? (See also Acts 4:29)
 - d. ***"with all boldness"* reflects the message and the power of the Spirit resident within His people to spread the gospel message.**
 - e. ***"Unhindered/ without hindrance"* is an interesting word.**
 - (4) **There is a play on the word "with" ...the first "with" speaks of what we have with power and boldness given to us...**
 - (5) **The second "without" speaks clearly of nothing hindering the growth of the gospel... even when it appears to be hindered it is not...God's power overcomes even when our perspective doesn't see it...**
 - (6) **Given all the road blocks to the spread of the gospel that we have seen in this book we see that it has gone exactly where it was supposed to go virtually unhindered... at the pace that God had set unhindered!**
 - f. **The statement "boldly and without hindrance" is more significant than it looks. It means that there in the capital, the leading proponent of the Christian gospel was able to minister with the full awareness of Roman authority, under whose eye Paul worked. The gospel arrived in the heart of the empire and took deep roots.**

4. When you see that Paul was able to proclaim the kingdom of God and teaching continually about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance what does that communicate to us today about how we are to live since so few of us are called to the life of a preacher? **Though his hands are bound, his mouth was not. Though he was chained, the Word of God was not. These two words describe the freedom that the gospel enjoyed in a "closed" pagan culture and they also describe for us where Paul received his freedom in the faith. God's grace alone gave Paul his freedom...this is what Jesus**

meant when He said, ***"If you abide in my Word you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free...So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."*** (John 8:31-36) Being physically bound and falsely imprisoned were not hindrances to the ministry God called him to. Is this how Paul had envisioned his ministry? I doubt it. But he adapted and ministered where he was because he was called to do so wherever God placed him.

5. Why does Luke at the end of this letter by referring to Jesus of Nazareth as the Lord Jesus Christ?

6. Why does Luke leave us hanging like this? Does this seem like an appropriate ending to the book? Why or why not? What is the rest of the story? **Many have complained that the ending of Acts is anti-climactic. All we are told is that Paul was under house arrest and for two years was able to freely conduct a personal ministry of evangelism and discipleship. But why end there? And why tell us that he did it for two years — what happened then? We are never told if Paul meets the Emperor face to face (who was Nero), and we are not given any description of that dramatic encounter. However, the "two years" statement might be more significant than it looks. Some commentators point out that, since two years was the normal statutory period within which a prosecution could state its case, that Luke is telling us that no one ever appeared to bring a charge against Paul before Caesar. This is very likely what happened. "Roman law was apt to deal hardly with unsuccessful prosecutors, especially if their charges appeared under examination to be merely vexatious." (F. F. Bruce, p.535). It is difficult to imagine that the Sanhedrin wanted to travel to Rome to lodge charges before Caesar that they had not been able to substantiate before Claudius Lysias, Felix, or Festus. Most probably, the leaders of Jerusalem did not think it wise or practical to try to pursue Paul farther, and finally Paul was released by default of his accusers.**

7. So Paul never got his day before Nero?
 - a. **Even if the Sanhedrin never sent a prosecutor, the Emperor could have had a hearing, as did Festus and Agrippa. Did he? It is hard to know, because there is a good argument to be made on both sides. On the positive side, we have Jesus's promise to Paul that "you will stand before Caesar" (27:24). On the other side, we know that Nero in his early reign very seldom personally heard court cases, but usually delegated them and confirmed them afterward. Since Luke's mention of "two years" signals that there was never formal charges brought. So, why would Nero have heard Paul? And if he had, why would Luke leave it out?**
 - b. **On balance, I think Stott is right. If Jesus' assurance that Paul would reach Rome came true, why not His assurance that Paul**

would stand before Caesar. In this case we are permitted to imagine that the prisoner did in fact have his day in the court of Nero, just as he stood before Felix, Festus and Agrippa, he stood before Nero just as Jesus said he would. He stood once again in front of the world's most prestigious court ...which made Agrippa's spectacle pale in comparison...and shared the gospel of Christ. So Paul shared the gospel with Nero — something that would never have happened if not for his sufferings.

- c. Note: Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus are also written from prison in Rome, as are Philippians, Colossians, and Ephesians. But statements in Timothy and Titus about Paul's journeys do not square with anything we know about Paul from the book of Acts. Therefore, we believe that Paul was released after the first imprisonment (during which he wrote Ephesians, Colossians, Philippians and Philemon), and probably travelled and ministered for few years before being imprisoned again.**
8. The timing of Paul's death is always been somewhat of a mystery...he is in Rome for his first imprisonment till around AD 62..or as many put it he seems to have been gone from Rome before Nero burns Rome and blamed Christians otherwise he would have been put to death then. Interesting some say that he was imprisoned and died before AD 64 simply because Paul does not mention the burning of Rome in his works. But on the other hand many would say given all the traveling that the rest of the Epistles tell us about, even the possibility of making it to Spain, make it more plausible that he was imprisoned by Nero Claudius Caesar Augustus Germanicus... the last of the Julio-Claudian Dynasty... and put to death in Rome around AD 67.