

Acts Notes

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Introduction:

Acts covers a span of about 32 years, from Christ's ascension (about 30 AD) to Paul's imprisonment (about 62 AD). It mentions 95 different persons from 32 countries, 54 cities, and 9 Mediterranean islands. And a third of it deals with Paul's imprisonment. But Acts does not account for everything God is doing through His Church at this time in human history. These accounts are selected for a specific purpose.

- Written: by Luke to Theophilus. (Acts 1:1; Luke 1:3; see also Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:11; Philemon 24)
 - Luke is with Paul at the end of the book. (Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-21:25; 27:1-28:16)
- Date: written around 63/64 AD during Paul's imprisonment in Rome
- Outline/Key Verse: 1:8 – Jerusalem (ch. 1-7), Judea/Samaria (ch. 8-9), ends (10-28)
- Key words: “one accord” – 6x; “witness” – 29x; “word” – 40x+; “Holy Spirit” – 59x

“This book [Acts] may be studied to gain understanding of the principles that ought to govern the church of any age.” (NIV Study Bible, p. 1642)

It is the Holy Spirit that continues the work of Jesus in the body of Christ; the Church. Vs. 1 – says “Jesus began...”

When it comes to the Holy Spirit, we often error in one of two directions. Either we over-emphasize the Spirit, detracting from Jesus and leading us into strange, aberrant behavior. Or we reduce the role of the Spirit while living shallow, ineffective lives. It is not my intent to be charismatic or conservative, I want to be Biblical.

That is why the Bible must frame our experience and not the other way around. The Holy Spirit will never lead us to things outside the Bible. But He will lead us into things the Bible says are to be ours. Jesus said “greater works than these will he do.” (John 14:12)

- “My own work on the story has impressed me with the glorious regularity of the irregular in the work of the Church by the Holy Spirit. It is a powerful argument against the stereotyped in Christian organization and method; and consequently a plea for room of the Spirit.” (G. Campbell Morgan)

Chapter 1:

1:1 – “Theophilus” – means “lover of God.” (Luke 1:3)

- He is given the title “most excellent” in Luke, but here the title is dropped.
- “began” – Acts is a continuation of the account of the life of Christ in the book of Luke. Except here, that life is lived out as Christ is at the right hand of the Father in heaven and the Holy Spirit empowers the believers in Christ to live the life of Christ here on earth.
- “do and teach” – Doing should always come before teaching. There will be no more power in our messages than there is power in our lives.

1:2 – “He was taken up” – Luke wrote “and was carried up into heaven” in Luke 24:51.

- “He through the Holy Spirit” – Jesus functioned under the power of the Holy Spirit.
- “had given commandments” – “Christ's choice is always attended with His charge” – Matthew Henry.

- 1:3 – “infallible proofs” – Lit. “plain indications.” For a period of 40 days Jesus visited them, being seen by up to 500 at one time. He was coming and going from different dimensions. And to the disciples, He could reappear at any time. (1 Cor. 15:5-8)
- Jesus is an historical, factual person.
 - “being seen” – (Greek “opthamalea”) Lit. “being eyeballed.” We get our English word “ophthalmology” from that Greek word.
 - “things pertaining to the kingdom of God” – Jesus is trying to help them understand what kingdom they will be working for.
- 1:4 – “but wait” – or “stay around.”
- Part of the ‘going’ of the Great Commission is ‘waiting.’ The ministry of the Spirit is not a luxury, but an absolute necessity.
 - This is as if God is communicating to us concerning the absolute failure of our natural resources. It is like God doesn’t even want us to tell other people that we are His until we are filled with the Holy Spirit. (Zech. 4:6; John 6:63)
- 1:5 – “baptized” – means “put under or placed into.”
- At this point they are believers, having received the Holy Spirit. (John 20:22; see also Acts 19:1-7)
 - One baptism, many fillings. (Acts 2:4; 4:8,31; 6:3; 7:55; 9:17; 13:9,52; Eph. 5:18)
 - It may be more useful to describe the baptism of the Holy Spirit as a condition than as an experience. We should perhaps ask, “Are you baptized in the Holy Spirit?” instead of asking, “Have you been baptized in the Holy Spirit?”
 - “Holy Spirit” – The third person of the Trinity. (Acts 1:8; 2:4,17; 4:8,31; 5:3; 6:3,5; 7:55; 8:16; 9:17,31; 10:44; 13:2,4; 15:28; 16:6; 19:2,6)
 - He is not a force or a mere power. He is a person with a will and emotion. (1 Cor. 12:11; Eph. 4:30)
 - The question is not “how much Holy Ghost do we have,” but “how much of us does the Holy Spirit have”? Increased surrender creates greater room for the Spirit to operate.
- 1:6 – “the kingdom to Israel” – The disciples change the subject focusing on the earthly kingdom.
- Jesus does not deny their concept of an earthly kingdom for the nation of Israel. He simply tells His disciples that they are wrong on the time and order of things.
 - The outpouring of the Spirit was a recognized sign of the Kingdom Age.
- 1:7 – “times and seasons” – 1 Thess. 5:1; Titus 1:2.
- 1:8 – “power” – (Greek “dynamous”) The word we get ‘dynamite’ from.
- The power you walk in corresponds to the throne you bow your knee to.
 - Those Christ calls and commands, He also equips.
 - Jesus is committed to doing great works through His Church. (Luke 12:49-50; John 14:12; 16:7)
 - “upon you” – (Greek “epi”) means “upon, over, or overflows.” The “epi” work of the Spirit is meant to empower God’s people for service.
 - Jesus had the Holy Spirit come upon Him at His baptism. (Luke 3:22)
 - One spirit, different ways. John 14:17 describe 2 of the 3 works of the Holy Spirit. “He will be with you (“para”)...in you (“en”)...”
 - It is ok to ask for the good gift of the Spirit. (Luke 11:11-13 – “good gifts”)
 - The Spirit is received into a life by faith.

- “be witnesses” – as salt and light; not “do witnessing.”
 - “The problem with the church today (concerning the Holy Spirit) is that so much is heard and so little is seen.” (A.W. Tozer)
- “witnesses” – (Greek “martyrs”) Lit. “martyr,” giving all of life to the cause of Christ.
- “witnesses to Me” – or “witnesses of Me.” The Spirit’s work is to reveal things of Christ. He will reveal Jesus Christ to us and through us. (John 14:26; 16:13,14)
 - When the Holy Spirit is most operational, He is nearly unrecognizable. Instead, Jesus is magnified and made real to people so that He is seen and known.
- “Jerusalem” – “The light that shines the furthest will shine the brightest at home” – Oswald J. Smith.

1:10 – “looked steadfastly” – means “straining.”

- “as he went up” – Greek tense implies “gradually.”
 - The only instructions Jesus gave them was to wait for the Spirit. The rest follows.
 - Jesus has been passing in and out of their midst, giving them a true sense of His presence. But now He wants them to know that He will not be reappearing.
- “two men” – Angels or Moses and Elijah. (Luke 24:4)
 - Angels play an important role in the ministry described in Acts 5:19-20; 8:26; 10:3-7; 12:7-10,23; 27:23.

1:11 – “This same Jesus” – The coming Messiah is a Jewish carpenter from Nazareth.

- He is the same yesterday, today, and forever.
- “in like manner” – Jesus is coming again. (Rev. 1:7; 19:11-16)

1:12 – “Olivet” – Luke 24:50 says “toward Bethany.” Bethany is on the south side of Olivet.

1:13 – “the upper room” – Located on or near the Temple Mount.

- “where they were staying” – The 11 disciples were all together.
- “Peter” – He is again named first in the listing of the disciples.

1:14 – “continued” – They continue in prayer about 10 days.

- Jesus ascended about 40 days after His resurrection. Pentecost comes 50 days after Passover.
- “one accord” – They are no longer arguing over who was the greatest.
 - The phrase “one accord” is used 7 times in the NT, and 6 of those are found in Acts. (Acts 1:14; 2:1,46; 4:24; 5:12; 15:25; see also Acts 2:33)
- “Mary” – She is praying with them, not serving as their mediator. She is a believer now.
- “His brothers” – The sons of Mary and half-brothers of Jesus. They are believers now. (John 7:5)

1:15 – “120” – Solomon’s Temple was dedicated in 2 Chronicles with 120 priests.

- “Peter stood up” – God will redeem Peter’s impetuous nature.
 - A new atmosphere will be generated by the same presences. Peter will be the same man, and yet absolutely changed...The change will not be that which denies the natural, but the change that baptizes it with the supernatural, until it becomes its fitting and magnificent instrument.

- 1:16 – “Scripture had to be fulfilled” – The Apostles believed that the Scriptures were inerrant and had to be fulfilled.
- “which the Holy Spirit spoke” – The Scriptures are inspired and given by the Holy Spirit.
 - “Judas” – He is lost forever. That is why they replace his office. (Psalm 109:8)
 - Jesus knew he was a devil and chose him anyway. (Ps. 41:9; John 6:12; 13:18)
- 1:18 – “bowels gushed out” – Either he hung himself and then fell from the tree, or he impaled himself (which is quite likely).
- “purchased” – The Sanhedrin uses Judas’ money to buy the field.
 - Matthew 27:3-10 gives us the details.
- 1:20 – “Let another take his office” – We know there are twelve apostles seated on twelve thrones to judge the nation of Israel (Luke 22:30) and 12 names written on the foundation stones of heaven (Rev. 21:14). But we don’t know if the twelfth name is Matthias or Paul (Gal. 1:11-24; 1 Cor. 15:5-11).
- Is Peter in the flesh or is God guiding Peter? (Is this obedience, disobedience or distraction.)
 - This decision has no effect either way on the life of the Spirit. The only qualification God gave was for them to “wait,” or lit. “to stay around.” (Psalms 25:3, 5, 21; 27:14; 37:7, 9, 34; 39:7; 52:9; 59:9; 62:5; 69:3; 104:27; 130:5)
 - The delay between God’s call and its fulfillment grows faith. (Habakkuk 2:3-4)
 - “office” – (Greek “episkopen”) Lit. “position of overseer.”
- 1:23 – “Joseph...Matthias” – Two guys never heard of before and never heard of again (except Joseph, once – Acts 15:22).
- Peter and John are the only apostles mentioned by name in the rest of Acts. Also, the apostles are called “the twelve” in Acts 2:14; 6:2.
 - God can raise up two to fill the space of every one lost.
 - “Christ’s cause shall never be lost for want of witnesses” – Matthew Henry.
- 1:24 – “who know the hearts” – This is one Greek word, “the knower-of-hearts.”
- 1:26 – “lots” – This is the last reference to casting lots in the Bible. From now on they go directly to the Spirit. (Prov. 16:33)
- The Shepherd speaks in a way the sheep understand...to the heart.

Chapter 2:

- 2:1 – “Pentecost” – 50 days after Passover beginning with the Feast of Firstfruits. The winter harvest festival. It was a celebration of God’s faithfulness in the harvest. The only feast that included leaven. (Lev. 23)
- The Feasts of Israel are all fulfilled in Jesus Christ.
 - “fully come” – 10 days after Christ’s ascension. It was a Sunday.
 - There are interesting parallels between Pentecost, where the Spirit is given, and Acts 20, where the Law is given.
- 2:2 – “as of a rushing wind” – Not wind, but a sound. (Ezek. 37:9,14; John 3:8)
- One translation “as of a mighty breathing.”
 - “sitting” – Not kneeling or writhing on the floor. God is looking at the heart.

2:3 – “as of fire” – Not fire, but like light from one source dividing on each of them.

- This manifestation comes before the Holy Spirit and isn’t repeated.

2:4 – “other tongues” – (Greek “glossa”) Lit. “utterance, languages they don’t understand.” (Acts 10:46; 19:6)

- The disciples had already been “baptized in the Spirit.” (John 20:22)
- They would be filled with the Holy Spirit in Acts 4, 8, and 11; not speaking in tongues at those times. (Eph. 5 – “be ye being filled.”)
 - 1 Cor. 14:2, 4, 12, 14, 22, 27-28, 32, 39. Description of tongues.
 - Primary Biblical proof-text against tongues – 1 Cor. 13:8-10.
- We should seek the means (gift of the Spirit), and not just the ends (gifts of the Spirit).
- If there is nothing happening in and around our lives that extends beyond our natural abilities and understanding, it is because we are not filled with the Holy Spirit. We should seek Him, and allow Him to make that whatever He desires to make it.
- “Spirit” – The word “spirit” is the same as “wind” in both the Hebrew and the Greek. (John 3:8)
- “gave them utterance” – Lit. “continued to give them utterance”

2:5 – “dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men” – There is a general expectation among the Jews that “the kingdom of God would immediately appear.” (Luke 19:11)

2:6 – “noised abroad” – The rushing wind or the speaking in tongues.

2:7 – “Galileans” – They were hicks, unschooled, ordinary men...(that had been w/Jesus.)

2:11 – “tongues” – (Greek “dialectos”) – Lit. “dialects.”

- The languages were spoken perfectly, with the proper accent and all.
- This is reversing what happened at the Tower of Babel.
- “wonderful works of God” – They are not sharing the Gospel and evangelizing. They are praising God. They are speaking to God and not to man. And it serves as a sign to man.
 - We are to test the spirits (1 John 4:1), whether they speak of or point to Jesus.
 - The crowd wasn’t there when this first started.
 - And these people were dwelling in Jerusalem; they could communicate in the modern Greek-Aramaic language. Tongues is not a translation tool.

2:12-13 – “amazed and perplexed...mocking” – If these impressions are not produced, it is because the Church is not Spirit-filled. Is the Church amazing the city, perplexing the city, and receiving the mocking of the city?

- It could be that the Church is too busy trying to attract the favor of the city.

2:12 – “all amazed” – Lit. “in ecstasy.”

2:13 – “mocking” – The natural always mocks the spiritual.

- Gen. 21:9; Gal. 4:22-31 – “cast out the bondwoman...”
- “new wine” – Lit. “sweet wine.”

- 2:14 – “Peter...raised his voice” – Apparently the speaking in tongues stopped when Peter began preaching, as the Holy Spirit will not interrupt Himself.
- The Spirit is giving Peter utterance. This is the same Peter denied Jesus 50 days ago.
 - “raised his voice” – Speaking loud and clearly enough for people to hear and respond to the message.
 - “with the eleven” – Matthias is included here among the twelve apostles.
 - “men of Judea” – Lit. “men that were Jews.” Peter is speaking to a Jewish audience.
 - “let this be known to you” – Peter begins his message by answering the question the people were asking regarding whether the disciples were speaking in tongues because they were drunk.
- 2:15 – “not drunk” – Compare this with Eph. 5:18. The one is a false and destructive method of attempting to realize life in its fullness. The other is the true and effective method.
- “only the third hour” – That is 9am, the time of the morning sacrifice. Jews wouldn’t break their fast until after the morning sacrifice on feast days.
- 2:16 – “this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel” – Peter has a Biblical basis for all that is happening. And everything here leads up to sharing Jesus and the Gospel.
- Peter has a ready, working knowledge of the Scriptures. He did not prepare this message ahead of time, but it is filled with Scripture references.
- 2:17 – “the last days” – The time period covering the coming of the Messiah to the setting up of His kingdom. (1 Thess. 5:2)
- The Pentecostal era extends from Pentecost to the present day. Note in the text: the sun turned to darkness (v. 20), shall be saved (v. 21), and all afar off (v. 39).
 - “on” – (Greek “epi”) Lit. “upon or over.”
 - “all flesh” – This promise is all inclusive.
 - Jewish religious leaders taught only the wealthy or powerful could be filled with the Spirit.
- 2:18 – “menservants and...maidservants” – God is no respecter of persons...He sees not as man sees, He looks at the heart.
- The Spirit is a gift, He cannot be earned.
- 2:20 – “sun shall be turned into darkness” – As it was during Christ’s crucifixion.
- “awesome” – (Greek “epiphane”) Lit. “glorious, illustrious.”
- 2:21 – “whoever” – The scope of the “age of grace” reaches to all people.
- “calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” – The last days is a time of salvation.
- 2:22 – “attested by God” – Lit. “proved to be of God.”
- 2:23 – “determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken” – God’s sovereignty and man’s free will working together.
- “lawless hands” – Speaking of the Jews turning Jesus over to the Romans.
- 2:24 – “God raised up” – In Rom. 12:8, it says Jesus raised Himself up.
- “loosed the pains of death” – Sin and death are so intertwined (Rom. 5:12). Jesus conquered both. (1 Cor. 15)
 - “pains” – Lit. “birth pains.” Resurrection is somewhat like a second delivery.

2:23-25 – The life (v. 23), death (v. 24), and resurrection (v. 25) of Jesus.

- The ministry of the Spirit is to lead us to the things of Jesus.

2:25 – “I foresaw the Lord” – David speaks prophetically of Jesus.

2:27,31 – “to see corruption” – Speaking of Jesus’ resurrection.

2:29 – “his tomb is with us to this day” – The traditional site of David’s sepulcher.

2:33 – “see and hear” – Both, live what you say and say what you live.

2:34-35 – “The Lord” – Jesus quoted this verse in Matt. 22:42-43.

- “right hand” – The right hand is the place of power and the place of peace.
- “make your enemies your footstool” – The ultimate triumph of Jesus over His enemies is an essential part of the message we are to share with the lost world.

2:36 – “whom you crucified” – Peter is speaking boldly and directly.

- Their guilt is that they killed God.
- “Jesus...Lord” – Jesus is God.

2:37 – “cut to the heart” – Lit. “pierced in the heart.”

- Peter’s directness does not offend a searching heart.
- Peter saw these people as having a need and he shares so their needs can be met. He doesn’t see them as customers who he needs to cater to so they can meet his needs.
- “what shall we do? – They are giving their own altar call.
- True conversion goes further than words. It changes a life.

2:38 – “repent” – (Greek “metanoia”) Lit. “make a U-turn.” (Acts 3:19)

- “baptized” – Baptism is their public acknowledgement that they have believed in Jesus.
- “for the remission of sins” – Also translated “because of” or “in accord with.”
- “remission” – Lit. “to send them away.”
- “in the name of Jesus Christ” – Lit. “into the name of Jesus Christ.”

2:39 – “to all who are afar off” – Jew and Gentile alike.

2:40 – “perverse” – Lit. “warped, twisted.”

2:41 – “three thousand souls” – This is a dramatic increase from 120. (Acts 1:15)

2:42 – “continued” – It wasn’t a one day deal. (“daily” – v. 46; see also Acts 6:1; 16:5; 17:11.)

- “continued steadfastly” – also means “to follow after earnestly.”

- 2 Tim. 4:3 – “endure sound doctrine (teaching).”

1. “apostles’ doctrine” – The Scriptures. (Seems Satan attacks this first!)

- Matt. 28:19-20 – “make disciples (“learners”)...teaching”

- Mark 6:34 – At feeding of 5,000 Jesus taught them first.

- John 21 – Jesus commissions Peter to feed and tend the flock.

- 1 Tim. 4:2 – Paul instructs Timothy to teach the Word.

- Acts 20: 27 – Paul himself taught the Word in its entirety.

- Eph. 4 – The work of pastors-teachers is to equip the saints.

- 2 Tim. 3:16-17 – Scriptures equip us to all good work.

- Heb. 4:12 – The Word of God is living and active...dividing in us.

• The Scriptures reveal Jesus. The Word of God reveals the God of the Word.

i. John 5:39 – Jesus said, ‘the Scriptures testify of Me.’

ii. Luke 24 – Jesus revealed Himself through the OT...”did not our heart burn...while He opened the Scriptures to us.”

iii. Rom. 15:4 – things written aforetime were written for our learning...hope.

2. “fellowship” – (Greek “koinonia”) Lit. “to hold in common, share.” It’s not just pot-lucks and picnics; it’s a devotion to the fellowship, the body. (Fellowship is deeper than relationship.)

- 1 John 1:3 tells us this fellowship is with Jesus first. True Christian fellowship is having Jesus in common.

- Ps. 133 – “how good it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.”

3. “breaking bread” – meals and communion. (Most say communion, but it is “breaking bread from house to house” in v. 46.)

- Communion is renewing fellowship with Jesus together as a group.

- Jesus asked us to remember Him and His work on the cross. There are a thousand different ways Jesus could have asked us to remember Him, but He chooses to keep the cross before His people.

4. “prayers” – Speaking to God individually and corporately. (Like worship songs.)

- The Church is Acts saw God move mightily through prayer.

2:43 – “wonders and signs” – Mark 16:20 speaks of “signs and wonders following the Word.”

- “through the apostles” – The Holy Spirit works the miraculous through His instruments.

2:44 – “all who believed” – They were teaching the apostles’ doctrine because faith comes by hearing, the Word of God. (Rom. 10:17)

- “all things in common” – (Greek “koinonia”) Speaks of fellowship.

2:45 – “as anyone had need” – Not communism, but supporting those with needs.

- Communism is where the government takes from the wealthy to redistribute to the poor. What is happening here is that those with additional resources are voluntarily sharing their goods with those who have less.

- Jewish individuals travelled long distances to visit Jerusalem during the Feast of Pentecost. Now they have heard the Gospel and been saved into the Fellowship of the Church, they want to stay a while long, but do not have the necessary resources.

- 2:46 – “simplicity” – “For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you.” (2 Cor. 1:12)
- 2:47 – “praising God” – Speaks of the prayers offered corporately in the Temple.
- “having favor with all the people” – There is a time before the persecution begins that the apostles enjoy the favor of the people.
 - “the Lord added” – No church growth program. Healthy sheep reproduce.
 - When the Church becomes what the Church was meant to be, the Lord can make it grow. We are not to look to the growth, but to bringing the Church into the order God has for it.
 - The Church doesn’t create or generate, but simply responds to what God is already doing. He is the initiator of all good things.

Chapter 3:

- 3:1 – “Peter and John...together” – From the courtyard at Peter’s denial to the Temple.
- “ninth hour” – 3 pm. The time of the evening sacrifice and of Jesus’ death.
 - All believers at this point are Jewish. They are still going to Temple at the regular times of prayer (9am, 12noon, and 3pm). But they are now coming to God through Jesus Christ rather than the sacrifice presented by the priests.
- 3:2 – “gate...Beautiful” – (aka. Nicanor Gate) The eastern gate at the Court of Women.
- Acts 4:22 says he was over 40 years old. He may have seen Mary and Joseph bring Jesus to Simeon, Jesus teach rabbis at 12 years old, Jesus overturn the money tables in Court of Gentiles, Jesus confront Pharisees, & Jesus bearing the cross.
 - o Jesus passed that very gate numerous times w/o healing that man.
 - Religion made this guy a charity; it gave him food, but couldn’t change his life.
 - o How often do we serve people for our own benefit rather than theirs?
- 3:4 – “fixing his eyes on him” – What does Peter see? Peter looks this man in the eye.
- The first step is to simply love this man. He is not a charity; he is a man.
 - Peter is led by the Holy Spirit throughout this event. (Acts 2:43)
- 3:6 – “Silver and gold have I none” – Not health and wealth; but power!
- Pope Pius said to Thomas Aquinas as they were looking at the wealth of the Roman Catholic Church, “It is amazing the Church can’t say anymore, ‘Silver and gold have I none.’” To which Thomas replied “No, it is more amazing that we can no longer say, ‘In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.’”
 - “rise up and walk” – As Christians, our lives are no longer to be marked by our limitations. The normal Christian life is a supernatural life.
- 3:7 – “feet and ankle bones” – Luke notes this in medical terms.
- The terms describing his condition give up a picture of a man whose feet are completely out of socket and lying flat against the ankle. When he is healed, Luke describes the feet coming back into the socket and being straightened.
- 3:8 – “leaping up” – This guy jumps up, and he’s never walked before – no rehab, no limping...
- “entered the Temple” – This healing draws this man closer to God.
 - “praising God” – God’s work in this man’s life elicits joy from the man whose life has changed.

- 3:10 – “they knew that it was he” – The people were familiar with this man and his condition. He had been there lame and begging for years. (Isa. 35:6)
- This man was lame for the glory of God. (John 9:2-3)
 - “filled with wonder and amazement” – The people were ecstatic.
 - A changed life is the clearest evidence of a real God.
- 3:11 – “held on to Peter and John” – This man won’t let Peter and John go.
- “porch which is called Solomon’s” – A porch among the inner side of the wall enclosing the outer court, with rows of 27-foot-high stone columns and roof of cedar.
 - Jesus walked through Solomon’s Porch a few months earlier. (John 10:23)
- 3:12 – “the people” – This draws quite a crowd. 5,000 get saved on this day, but many more must have come.
- “why do you marvel” – They were Jews. They knew God to work miraculously through the Red Sea, Jericho, and many other events.
 - “why look so intently at us” – It’s the Spirit’s work; Peter and John don’t contain or wield it.
 - People often relate the work of God with the instrument He uses. (Acts 14:8-18)
 - “That no flesh should glory in his presence.” (1 Cor. 1:29)
- 3:13 – “God” – Peter is using this to talk about God.
- The Lord heals to bear witness and declare Himself. No person can take credit or glory for the miracles He Himself has done.
 - “Isaac” – Not Ishmael.
 - “His Servant Jesus” – Picking up on the Suffering Servant from Isa. 50, 52, and 53.
 - “you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate” – Peter again makes sure the guilt of their actions rests firmly on their shoulders. (Acts 2:36)
 - Peter is not speaking a word of condemnation, but of empathy. He too knows what it feels like to deny the Lord Jesus.
- 3:15 – “Prince of life” – Lit. “author or originator of life.” (Col. 1:16-17)
- It is an incredible contrast, they killed the author of life.
- 3:16 – “through faith in his name” – This is the only work God has called us to. (John 6:29)
- “name” – (Greek “onoma”) The name signifies all that Jesus is. (Acts 3:6,16; 4:7,10,12,17-18,30)
 - “the faith which comes through Him” – Even our faith in Jesus starts in Jesus. We do not trust Him because of virtue within ourselves, but because His virtue elicits faith from us.
- 3:17 – “ignorance” – Jesus had said, “Father forgive them; they know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34)
- 3:18 – “God foretold” – Peter points to the prophetic Scriptures.
- The Scriptures speak of Jesus. (John 5:39)
- 3:19 – “Repent” – (Greek “metanoia”) – Lit. “make a U-turn.”
- “sins...blotted out” – All sins past, present, and future.
 - “times of refreshing” – For all who come to Jesus in faith.
- 3:20 – “that He may send Jesus Christ” – For Israel, there was some hope that the nation would receive Jesus as a whole and then He could immediately come back to establish His kingdom through Israel.

- 3:21 – “the times of restoration of all things” – When Jesus takes His rightful place as King. (Rev. 5)
 - This cannot be used as a proof text for universalism. The Jewish context does not allow it.
- 3:22 – “a Prophet like me” – Moses spoke a Messianic prophecy in Deut. 18:18-19.
- 3:25 – “seed” – Singular, speaking of Jesus. (Gen. 15:18; Gal. 3:16)
- 3:26 – “To you first” – The first reach of the Gospel extends to the very people responsible for denying and delivering up Jesus to be crucified (v. 13). This is God’s mercy.
 - “iniquities” – Lit. “bent or twisted nature.”
 - Peter’s message produced two opposite results: 1. Some 2,000 (or 5,000) Jews received his message and were converted, and 2. The religious leaders of the nation rejected the message and tried to silence the apostles.

Chapter 4:

- 4:1 – “captain of the temple” – In the temple, he ranked next to the High Priest.
 - “Sadducees” – They are the religious ruling party.
- 4:2 – “disturbed they taught...resurrection” – The teaching on the resurrection, not the miracle, bugged them.
 - Sadducees didn’t believe in resurrection or angels and spirits. (Acts 23:8)
 - At no point in the trials before the Sanhedrin do they ever attempt to disprove the resurrection of Jesus.
- 4:3 – “put them in custody” – “God trains up His servants by degrees. Now they resist to bonds only, but afterwards to blood” – Matthew Henry.
 - “already evening” – The Temple practically shut down at 4pm.
- 4:4 – “However” – Despite the restrictions of the religious leaders.
 - “those who heard the word believed” – Faith comes by hearing...the word of God. (Rom. 10:17)
 - “five thousand” – Either an additional 5,000 are saved or the total number has come to 5,000.
- 4:7 – “set them in the midst” – Two fisherman, Peter and John, are seated in the middle of 70+ high religious leaders. This is pretty imposing.
 - “By what name?” – This is a legitimate question. Religious leaders should ask this. (Deut. 13:1-2)
- 4:8 – “filled with the Holy Ghost” – Lit. “having been filled with the Holy Spirit.” This is a refill!
 - The last time Peter was around these guys he denied and cursed himself. (John 18:15-27)
 - Jesus warned of persecution from the religious. (Mark 13:11; Luke 12:11; John 15:18-16:1)
- 4:9 – “the good deed” – Peter is being sarcastic. They’re on trial for healing this man.
 - “made well” – This is the same Greek word as is translated “saved” in v. 12. The healing of this man’s physical body is a metaphor for what God does in us spiritually when we come to faith in Jesus.
- 4:10 – “you” – Plural. Peter points right at them.
 - “whom you crucified” – He brings this up again. (Acts 2:36; 3:15)

4:11 – “cornerstone” – Peter is picking up from Jesus’ teaching. (Matt. 21:42)

4:12 – “none other name...must be saved” – The Greek is emphatic. (John 14:6)

- It is not remarkable that there aren’t more ways to be saved, it is remarkable that there is any way at all. Only God coming down to us could make salvation possible.
- The Gospel is not narrow in its durability nor in its availability. It has been around 2,000 years and has been preached to all the world. The Gospel is only narrow in its target. It is aimed at sin alone and it doesn’t miss the mark.

4:13 – “untrained” – (Greek “idiotai”) Lit. “idiots.”

- “realized” – Is there enough evidence in my life for others to know that I have been with Jesus?
- “had been with Jesus” – Jesus is the deciding factor. And He is still with them as the Holy Spirit.
 - They took note of Jesus’ authority. (Mark 1:22; John 7:15)
- “boldness” – (Greek “parresia”) Lit. “freedom of speech, all-spokenness.”
 - Boldness is not loudness (Mt. 12:19) and it is not arrogance (Mt. 11:29).

4:14 – “seeing the man who had been healed” – This man has just been healed. Now he is thoroughly examined.

- “What the Church needs today is more lame men standing whole in its midst. That is the kind of evidence that cannot be denied” – Chuck Smith.
- Some will see the man made whole and still refuse to believe in Jesus.

4:15-17 – “out of the council” – Peter and John are put out of the meeting, but we get their conversation. It seems that Paul was there and he recounts the dialog to Luke later.

4:19 – “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you” – They are standing up against threats. They are not breaking any of the civil laws.

4:20 – “which we have seen and heard” – They are speaking from their personal experience.

4:21 – “glorified God” – Peter isn’t taking the glory to himself. (Matt. 5:16)

- “further threatened” – They are defending their position rather than seeking the truth.

4:24 – “raised their voice to God” – They turn their eyes from the horizontal to the vertical.

- “Lord” – Not the typical Greek word for Lord. This could be translated “despot.”
- “You are God” – They are getting this all back into perspective. They just stood before the most powerful men in the land, but now they are before One more powerful than they.

4:26 – “Against the Lord and against His Christ” – They are opposing God and Jesus. They are not primarily opposed to Peter and John.

4:28 – “Your purpose” – Proper perspective puts our struggles/suffering in the correct light.

- God doesn’t merely oversee; He is actively involved.

4:29 – “grant...boldness” – Interesting request. They are not asking to escape the difficulty.

- God’s active involvement and predetermined will should never lead us to apathy, but to greater faithfulness and responsibility.
- “Do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger men and women. Do not pray for tasks equal to your power. Pray for powers equal to your tasks” – Phillips Brooks.

4:30 – “Servant” – The word signifies both a Son and a Servant. (Acts 3:13,26)

4:31 – “filled with the Holy Spirit” – Again, a fresh filling.

- “boldness” – The same word from v. 13. Lit. “freedom of speech, all-spokenness.”
- The same power that shakes the building also fills them to speak the Word.

4:32 – “all things in common” – (Greek “koinonia”) Lit. “fellowship.”

- Material possessions are the least significant, and yet oftentimes the most difficult, things to share.
- These believers were so taken up with the hopes of an inheritance in the other world that this was as nothing to them.

4:33 – “witness to the resurrection” – Their witness of Jesus was central to all they did.

- “great grace” – This is interesting in light of the scene that happens next in chapter 5.

4:35 – “as anyone had need” – No compulsion, no regulation, and no fundraising, just people prompted by the Holy Spirit to meet needs of fellow believers whom they loved and cared for.

4:36 – “Barnabas” – means “son of prophecy, consolation and exhortation.”

- “a Levite” – Most Levites were opposing Jesus and persecuting His followers.

4:37 – “having land” – Most Levites didn’t own land, but that OT regulation may have been done away with by this time.

Chapter 5:

5:1 – “But” – In contrast to Barnabas and his actions.

- Hypocrisy is creeping into the Church. The tares are coming up right next to the wheat.
- Hypocrisy is not the failure to reach our ideals, but making others think that we reach them when in fact we do not.
- Often, when a new work of God begins, there is a judgment to signify the importance and necessary purity required for that work. (Lev. 10; Josh. 7; and 2 Sam. 6)
- “Ananias” means “God is merciful.”
- “Sapphira” means “beautiful.”

5:3,4 – “Holy Spirit...God” – Proof text for the Holy Spirit actually being God.

5:3 – “lie to the Holy Spirit” – Attempting to deceive God is a sign of pride. (Matt. 5:16; 6:1,5,18)

- “the Holy Spirit” – These actions are distracting from the primary operation of the early Church. Ananias and Sapphira were not to receive the attention. And neither was Peter. The Holy Spirit is to be the dominant personality of the Church as He points people to Jesus.

- 5:4 – “your own” – The Bible supports the right to private ownership. This is not communism or an organized church welfare system.
- He has apparently given the Church less than the full sale price of the land, but he has told the Church that the money he gave them was in fact the full price. Some would call this an innocent or white lie.
 - They wanted the image of great generosity without actually being remarkably generous.
- “heart” – Where God is looking.
- Externally, it was a great and sacrificial offering. But even hypocrites can make great sacrifices in the hopes of getting some recognition and affirmation from other people.
 - Matt. 23 is to help reveal the hearts of the religious.
- 5:5 – “breathed his last” – Peter was the man who lifted the lame man to his feet. But he is also a man who saw a dead man fall at his feet. The hands that heal, also hurt...depending on the heart of the hearer. (1 Cor. 11:30)
- Jesus gathers with His people and has a right for the time of gathering to be pleasing to Him.
- 5:6 – “the young men” – Apparently, there are a group of able and willing young men ready to serve at the direction of the apostles for the care of the Church.
- “wrapped him up” – These are the Jewish grave-clothes.
- 5:7 – “three hours later” – They buried Ananias and his wife wasn’t notified.
- There was no gossip or whispering in this matter.
- 5:8 – “for so much?” – Peter gives her the opportunity to tell the truth.
- She should’ve kept the money. It would’ve benefited them more to not give it.
 - Drop the mask or get dropped.
- 5:11 – “great fear...as many as heard” – 2,000 years later we have heard...but do we fear?
- We have moved from “great power” and “great grace” (Acts 4:33) to “great fear.” All of these out to be present in the Church.
 - “church” – (Greek “ecclesia”) Lit. “called out ones.” This is the first use of that word in the NT.
- 5:13 – “join himself” – There is no insincere allegiance, which might have been a strong temptation as everyone is sharing their materials possessions.
- Sometimes there is blessed subtraction for increased ministry.
- 5:14 – “believers were increasingly added” – Purity and sincerity draw sincere seekers to Jesus. Hypocrisy turns away those who are sincerely seeking an answer to eternal questions.
- 5:15 – “the shadow of Peter” – Neither Peter nor his shadow healed anyone. It was God who healed through Peter. But the shadow is a faith-in-action point, much like the hem of Jesus’ garment in Matt. 9:21.
- In that culture, some believed that the shadow of an evil man could curse on found in it.

- 5:16 – “all healed” – Power accompanies purity.
- “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” (Matt. 5:8)
 - The filling of the Spirit is not just more of His power, but more of His heart, His love, and His perception.
 - In this Chapter, you have Ananias and Sapphira killed while the rest of the Church grows and does great miracles. It is the same Holy Spirit in both situations. The difference is the heart of those He is dealing with and working through.
- 5:17 – “indignation” – could also be translated “envy.”
- 5:18 – “laid hands on the apostles” – They are arrested publicly, probably while they are all ministering at the Temple.
- 5:19 – “an angel” – Sadducees didn’t believe in angels. (Acts 23:8; but see also Acts 7:30-38; 8:26; 12:7-10; 12:23)
- 5:21 – “early in the morning” – They immediately go back to where they were arrested.
- “the council” – The 71 members of the Sanhedrin.
- 5:23 – “found no one inside” – Everything else was left intact, but the disciples were removed.
- It seems likely that Saul would give these accounts to Luke at a later time.
- 5:26 – “without violence” – The apostles went peaceably.
- In public, the religious leaders made it look like they were treating the disciples properly. But in private, it was a different story. (v. 40)
- 5:28 – “command you not to teach” – But Peter told them that he would obey God instead. (Acts 4:18-20)
- “filled Jerusalem with your doctrine” – This is what they were told to do. (Acts 1:8)
 - “this Man’s blood upon us” – They are feeling guilty. They had called down judgement “on us and our children” for killing their Messiah. (Matt. 27:25)
 - “this name...this Man’s” – As if they don’t even want to say the name of Jesus.
- 5:29 – “ought” – Lit. “must.”
- Obey the angel. He is bigger!
- 5:30 – “raised up Jesus” – The Sadducees would not like that statement.
- 5:32 – “witnesses” – (Greek “martus”) Lit. “martyrs.”
- “given to them that obey him” – Holy Spirit leads us to obey.
 - “obey” – The word translated “obey” is a rare one in the NT occurring not more than 4 times altogether. It stands exclusively for obedience; it does not suggest anything except actual, absolute, unquestioning submission.
- 5:34 – “Gamaliel” – Paul’s teacher (Acts 22:3), possibly also Barnabas’ and Stephen’s. Tradition says he was the grandson of Hillel and the son of Simeon who saw Jesus in the Temple. (Luke 2:25)
- The Jews said that “when Rabben Gamaliel died, the glory of the Law ceased and purity and abstinence died.”
- 5:35 – “take heed” – The idea is “be careful.”

- 5:38 – “come to nothing” – What is begun by man will eventually end, but maybe much later.
- Gamaliel at least leaves it as a possibility that these men might be of God.
- 5:39 – “fight against God” – They who contend against the people of God actually contend against God Himself.
- “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” (Acts 9:4)
- 5:40 – “beaten them” – Lit. “skinned.” (40 stripes minus one?)
- Peter claimed to be witnesses – or martyrs. They would test that claim.
- 5:41 – “rejoicing” – Implies that they were rejoicing as they were leaving.
- “rejoicing that they were counted worthy” – They were not rejoicing in the beating, but in the fact that they are being treated as Jesus was treated. (John 15:18)
 - “worthy to suffer shame” – Lit. “that they were honored to be dishonored for Christ.”
- 5:42 – “teach” – Lit. “instruct.”
- “preach” – Lit. “evangelize.”
 - A healthy church needs both teaching and preaching.

Chapter 6:

- 6:1 – “complaint” – The apostles just had their backs beaten...and the church is arguing over who is being better cared for.
- Problems in the life of a church are often hidden opportunities to organize and prepare for a greater work of God in that or an associated area.
 - “Hellenists” – Jews that adopted the Greek culture; names, dress, language, etc.
 - Greek Jews were looked down on for being less Jewish/Godly.
 - “multiplied” – Growth brings strife and issues to deal with, even in the early church.
 - “widows” – The early church took care of widows in deed. (James 1:27; 1 Tim. 5:3-16)
 - “daily distribution” – Acts 6 gives us a glimpse of how the early church administrated the work.
- 6:2 – “desirable” – Lit. “fitting.” One type of neglect shouldn’t lead to another neglect.
- The apostles are choosing to forego temporal, tangible ministry for the eternal.
 - When the pastor-teacher fails to focus on the word and prayer, the church will soon become an aid organization or social club. (This “pleased the people.” v. 5)
 - “the word of God” – The primary support for any true work of God.
 - “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” (2 Tim. 4:2)
 - “serve” – (Greek “diaconi”) – The word we get “deacon” from. (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8-13)
 - The service of the widows is not inferior, but complementary. Both are Spirit-led.
- 6:3 – “seek out” – This is more organic than mechanical.
- “brethren...among you” – Individuals they know.
 - “reputation” – From the same root word as “witness.” Living a Godly lifestyle.
 - Leaders of the Church must be the same out of church as they are in the church.
 - “full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom” – Spirit-led with sanctified common sense. They are spiritually and practically keen.

6:4 – “prayer” – Personal fellowship and intercession keep the study and teaching of God’s word from being a merely intellectual exercise.

- “ministry” – (Greek “diaconi”) – Lit. “service.” Same word as in v. 2.

6:5 – “they chose” – All seven have Greek names...to serve the Greek widows.

- They are freeing up indigenous people to service.
- They must have to take this task away from other people who were already involved in the distribution (v.1), and it is likely that those previously doing this task were more Hebrew in background. This could easily turn into a culture war if these believers identify with their ethnic background more than their Christian identity.
- “Stephen” – means “a crown.” We have his story in Acts 7.
- “Philip” – We get more of his story in Acts 8.
- “Antioch” – This will soon be the outpost of the Church’s ministry arm to the world. (Acts 13:1)

6:6 – “laid hands on them” – “Do not lay hands on anyone hastily.” (1 Tim. 5:22)

6:7 – “great number of the priests” – There were 20,000 priests at this time.

- How many of these priests were there when the Temple veil was torn in half?

6:8 – “faith and power” – They go together.

- “wonders and signs” – Stephen healed and did miracles. This is some waiter!
 - The principle of being faithful in the small things is demonstrated in Stephen’s life. “For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.” (2 Tim. 3:13)
 - “I’d rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.” (Ps. 84:10)
 - He will be the first martyr of the Church. True martyrs die every day.

6:9 – “Synagogue” – The Talmud says there were 480 synagogues in Jerusalem alone.

- “Freedmen” – Those who returned to Palestine from Roman bondage and exile.
- “Cilicia” – This may have been Saul’s synagogue. (Acts 21:39)
 - Stephen isn’t around long and doesn’t make many converts, but he does impact Saul.

6:10 – “the wisdom and the spirit” – Not due to a college education, but God’s Spirit. (Luke 21:15)

6:12 – “came upon him” – This escalates rapidly.

6:14 – “Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place” – They are still twisting Jesus’ words. (John 2:19-21; Matt. 26:61)

6:15 – “as the face of an angel” – The last great witness to the religious leaders. The Sadducees didn’t believe in angels.

- In the face of these lies and threats, Stephen is at peace.
- If you take care of your character, God will take care of your reputation.
- Moses face also glowed when in the presence of God. (Exod. 34:29-30)

Chapter 7:

7:1 – “the high priest” – This is likely Caiaphas.

- “Are these things so?” – Stephen will not spend one sentence of chap. 7 on defending himself.
- Stephen gives an impromptu Bible study.

7:2 – “Mesopotamia” – Abram was an idolatrous Gentile; a Babylonian. (Josh. 24:2)

- God’s presence and power is not restricted to a single place or country.

7:4 – “in Haran” – Abraham had to be told twice before he made it all the way to Canaan. (Gen. 12:1)

- Within God’s plan, there is also a pattern...Stephen is pointing out what they’ve missed.

7:5 – “no inheritance” – Abraham never physically possessed the promised-land. He was always only a stranger. (Heb. 11:8)

- “no child” – A reminder of the miraculous birth of Isaac.

7:9 – The main point here is Israel’s inability to recognize their Messiah.

- “becoming envious” – The motivation of the religious leaders for killing Jesus.
- “God was with him” – Not that Joseph was with God, but God remained with him.
- Jesus came as Emmanuel – God with us. (Yet they missed Him the first time.)

7:10 – “troubles” – The nation’s deliverer suffered before being exalted.

- “They hurt his feet with fetters, he was laid in irons. Until the time that his word came to pass, the word of the Lord tested him.” (Ps. 105:18-19)

7:11 – “our fathers” – Stephen is identifying himself and connecting the current nation of Israel to the fathers that rejected their deliverer.

- It is our tendency to think we are like the heroes of our stories, when we are more often like the hesitant and rebellious opposition of the heroes in those stories.

7:13 – “the second time” – Pointing to the two comings of the Messiah; He was rejected the first time, but will be recognized the second.

- Israel was preserved by Joseph, the one they rejected.

7:14 – “seventy-five people” – Stephen is quoting from the Septuagint, which has this number at 75.

- Israel grew while in bondage.

7:19 – “expose their babies, so that they might not live” – The killing of their infant seed seemed a very likely way to crush an infant nation...that [the religious leaders] might consider that what they were not doing against the Christian church in its infancy was as impious and unjust.

7:20 – “Moses” – He was another deliverer who was rejected in his first coming.

- “well pleasing to God” – Moses was a beautiful child. (Heb. 11:23)
- At Jesus’ baptism - “This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.” (Matt. 3:17)
- God’s pleasure is the one that is important.

7:22 – “mighty in words and deeds” – Moses was skilled. He was educated in Egypt, served as a commander in the army, and was raised in the palace of a king.

- 7:23 – “it came into his heart” – Some conviction or promise welled up within him.
 - Heb. 11:24 says it was in faith that he left the pleasures of Egypt.
- 7:25 – “he supposed...brethren...understood” – Moses knew he was to be the deliverer.
 - But he was working in the flesh, not in the Spirit.
- 7:29 – “Moses fled” – Moses fled not fearing the king’s edict. (Heb. 11:27)
 - “two sons” – Moses took a Gentile bride and had children while being rejected.
 - “Midian” – God was with Abraham in Mesopotamia and Israel in Egypt and here Moses in Midian (all outside the promised land).
- 7:34 – “I have surely seen” – The first time, “Moses looked at their burdens...he saw an Egyptian beating an Israelite...and he looked this way and that.” This time God sees.
 - “I have surely seen...I have heard...I will send” – Any true deliverance must begin with God.
- 7:35 – “This Moses whom they refused” – Stephen’s digging. Their ‘fathers’ missed it.
 - “God sent” – Moses comes to the people of God in Egypt a second time.
- 7:37 – “Prophet like me” – Even Moses was pointing to One to come. (Deut. 18:15)
- 7:38 – “living oracles” – The Law.
 - They turned from God immediately after hearing Him speak from Sinai. (Ex. 32)
 - “They made a calf...forgot God who had done great things.” (Ps. 106:19-21)
- 7:39 – “our fathers would not obey” – They are saying that Stephen is not obeying the writings of Moses. Stephen is showing them that their fathers almost never obeyed the first time.
- 7:40 – “make us gods” – “They made a calf in Horeb...They forgot God their Savior, who had done great things in Egypt.” (Ps. 106:13,21)
- 7:43 – “Moloch” – The god of fertility and prosperity which was served by sacrificing their newborn infants on the statues and then placing the baby’s remains in a corner of their house.
 - They would religiously worship Yahweh in the morning and then Moloch in the afternoon. Their sacrifices weren’t touching their hearts.
- 7:44 – “according to the pattern” – The earthly representation of the heavenly.
 - The nation felt as if they improved on the tabernacle with their glorious Temple.
 - God never asked for a Temple. It didn’t improve His presentation to the people.
 - The mobile character of the tabernacle was a type of God’s never-ceasing, never-halting appointments for His people’s salvation.
- 7:48 – “Most High does not dwell in temples” – It was a gathering place for the people, not a living space for God.
 - Even Solomon recognized that when they were building it. (1 Kings 8:27; 2 Chron. 2:6)
- 7:49 – “Heaven is My throne” – No place on earth possesses an innate sanctity of its own.
 - Stephen is showing them that the ‘house’ God wants is not a building. (Isa. 66:1-2)
 - There is an error in seeing any manmade structure as “The House of God.” (Acts 17:24)

7:51 – “always resist the Holy Spirit” – The application of Stephen’s sermon. His face is glowing as he says this!

- “as your fathers did” – Stephen draws the proper parallel from Scripture to their life.
 - The Parable of Tenants. (Matt. 21:45)

7:53 – “received the law...have not kept it” – They weren’t being honest with themselves.

- “angels” – The Sadducees didn’t believe in angels.

7:54 – “cut to the heart” – Lit. “sawn asunder.” (Acts 5:33; Heb. 11:37)

7:55 – “looked up into heaven” – Looking from the present reality to the eternal reality.

- “Jesus standing” – Jesus is usually sitting. Here He is standing to look in. (Ps. 110:1; Heb. 12:2)
 - Jesus is more real to Stephen than this angry mob!

7:56 – “I see the heavens opened” – They are standing right there and cannot see heaven.

- “Son of Man” – Daniel 7:13-14. (The last use of this phrase by a human in the Bible.)

7:57 – “stopped their ears, and ran upon him” – Formality goes out the window.

7:58 – “Saul” – This sermon pricked Saul. (Acts 9:5)

7:59 – “receive my spirit” – Stephen went home willingly.

7:60 – “do not charge them” – Stephen gives his life in love, without bitterness.

- “fell asleep” – NT term for the death of the believer. (No soul sleep – 2 Cor. 5:8)
 - Jim Eliot – “I seek not a long life, but a full one, like you, Lord Jesus.”

Chapter 8:

8:1 – “scattered” – (Greek “diaspora”) – Lit. “to cast seed.”

- God used persecution to spread the message. It was like pouring water onto a grease fire. (Acts 1:8; 11:19-21)
- “consenting” – Lit. “to consent with delight.” This seems to imply that Saul has voting rights as a member of the Sanhedrin.

8:2 – “devout men” – These may be Jewish men who had a respect for Stephen. (Acts 10:2)

8:3 – “Saul” – He is still holding to his Jewish religious traditions (Phil. 3:7-11) and, in his zeal, persecuting Christians to death. (Acts 21:4; 22:19-20; 26:9-11)

- “made havoc of the church” – This verb describes a wild animal mangling its prey.

8:4 – “preaching” – (Greek “evangelize”) Lit. “sharing the gospel.”

8:5 – “Philip” – He was one of the first seven deacons. (Acts 6:5)

- “Samaria” – They were considered to be half-breeds, a mixture of Israel and Assyria. James and John had wanted to call down fire on a city of the Samaritans. But Jesus met the woman at the well in Sychar of Samaria (John 4). Philip is reaping some of what Jesus sowed.
- “preached” – (Greek “kerusso”) Lit. “declared.”

8:6 – “hearing and seeing” – Both are important when witnessing of Jesus Christ.

- 8:7 – “unclean spirits” – The Bible treats demonic oppression as completely real.
- 8:9 – “claiming that he was something great” – He is making himself to look like something great.
- Simon is very concerned with appearances and his influence over other people.
 - Philip promoted Jesus. Simon promoted himself.
 - “Simon” – Tradition says Simon Magus was an arch-heretic of the church and leader of Gnostics.
- 8:10 – “the great power of God” – Whether Simon had any real power or not is inconsequential. If anyone does miracles apart from Jesus as Lord and the Scriptures, they are to be rejected.
- 8:12,13 – “they believed...Simon himself believed” – This is the same “believe” as in John 3:16. But “Even the demons believe – and tremble!” (James 2:19)
- 8:14 – “Peter and John” – Jerusalem sends an official delegation.
- This is the last time we see John in the book of Acts.
 - John was originally called a “Son of Thunder” because of his dealings with Samaritans. (Luke 9:51-56)
- 8:16 – “fallen upon” – They were saved and had the Spirit ‘in’ them, but not ‘upon’ them.
- “The moment we systematize the moment of the Spirit, we exclude a score of His operations.” G. Campbell Morgan
 - To maintain consistency and continuity, it seems important for the church leaders at Jerusalem to confirm the work now begin among the Samaritans.
- 8:18 – “Simon saw” – There must have been some visible evidence that they were being empowered by the Holy Spirit.
- “offered them money” – Simony, indulgences, or college degrees for good standing.
 - In the 10th century, the Roman Catholic Church gave to Pope to the highest bidder.
- 8:19 – “Give me this power” – He desires the power, but not the person, of the Holy Spirit.
- “on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit” – Simon wants the outward display of power and authority.
- 8:20 – “gift of God” – God’s gifts cannot be purchased with money, self-discipline, education, or piety. They can only be received by faith.
- “money” – Some “suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.” (1 Tim. 6:5)
- 8:21 – “neither part nor portion” – The same rebuke Jesus gave to Peter at the Last Supper. (Matt. 26:23; John 13:8)
- 8:22 – “thought” – Lit. “to plot or scheme” in a bad sense.
- Peter wasn’t afraid to call it like it is – wickedness.
- 8:23 – “bitterness” – This is because he has lost the attention and acclaim of the people.
- 8:24 – “pray to the Lord for me” – Is this genuine repentance?

- 8:26 – “an angel” – God clearly makes His will known to Philip.
- Philip leaves at a time of success to go to the desert. We follow God one step at a time.
 - “Jerusalem to Gaza” – This is not the road from Samaria. That was a different road.
- 8:27 – “Candace” – This is the title of the queen mother, who handled the secular functions of royalty.
- “man of Ethiopia” – Minister of the Treasury, wealthy and powerful. He traveled 600 miles to a rival nation and bought an expensive scroll looking for something.
 - Dismembered Gentiles weren’t even allowed in the Temple precincts.
 - This powerful man is humble and hungry.
 - “Ethiopia” – Religious Jews in Ethiopian trace their faith back to the Queen of Sheba.
- 8:29 – “the Spirit said” – The Holy Spirit is pulling all of this together.
- “Go near” – God wants Philip to eavesdrop on the Samaritan’s Scripture reading.
- 8:31 – “guides” – A technical term speaking of authoritative teaching.
- Every hungry and seeking soul will be given the necessary guidance.
- 8:32 – “the Scripture” – The trip to Jerusalem didn’t give him any answers, but it did lead him to the right questions in the Scripture. (Isa. 53:7-8)
- 8:33 – “taken” – Lit. “cut off.” (See also Isa. 56:3-5)
- 8:34 – “I ask you” – This is an open door.
- 8:35 – “preached” – (Greek “evangelizo”) He shares the Gospel.
- “preached Jesus” – Not church or creeds, but Christ alone saves souls.
- 8:36 – “some water” – They found a pool of water in the desert. (v. 26)
- 8:39 – “caught away” – Same phrase as being raptured. (2 Cor. 12:2; 1 Thess. 4:17)
- Philip’s leaving doesn’t deter him. He now as a teacher to lead him; the Holy Spirit Himself.
 - “rejoicing” – Philip brought joy wherever he ministered. (v. 8; see also Isa. 55:8-13)
 - History and tradition seem to agree that a great work of God took place after this man returned home to Ethiopia.
- 8:40 – “Azotus” – Located about 20 miles away. It was formerly known as Ashdod of the Philistines.
- “in all the cities” – Joppa and Lydda would be cities along the way. (Acts 9:32-43)
 - “Caesarea” – 20 years later, Philip will still be ministering there. (Acts 21:1-16)

Chapter 9:

Acts 9 comes about 5 years after Jesus’ resurrection. Saul’s conversion was in 35 AD.

- 9:1 – “Saul” – It was a Hebrew name that means “desired.”
- “Paul” is a Greek name that means “little.”
 - “murder” – Paul later notes those he caused to be put to death for faith in Jesus.
- 9:2 – “letters” – Saul gets official permission to track down the Christians in Damascus.
- “Damascus” – Located about 130 miles northeast of Jerusalem. This would be a 4-day journey.
 - Damascus had a large Jewish population even to the time of Nero.

- 9:3 – “suddenly” – Christ’s revelations of Himself are often sudden and surprising.
- “light” – It was brighter than the noon-day sun.
- 9:4 – “fell to the ground” – The strongest, proudest, toughest, meanest person falls before the appearance of the glory of God.
- “heard a voice” – Only Saul heard the voice, the rest of the men only hear the sound. (Acts 22:9)
 - The voice spoke to Saul in Hebrew.
 - “Me” – Jesus equates the Church as Himself, His body.
 - A proper view of the body of Christ sees beyond denominational/societal lines.
 - Jesus takes it personally if someone attacks His body and bride.
 - If Jesus is speaking to Saul from heaven, then obviously He has resurrected from the dead.
- 9:5 – “Lord” – Saul is willing to submit to the voice now speaking to him.
- “Jesus” – The Jewish carpenter that the Sanhedrin had delivered to the Romans to die on a cross.
 - “goads” – Sticks with sharp points that were used to jab oxen in the hind quarters to make them move.
 - Stephen’s speech is goading Saul. The agitation is actually causing him to rage. (Acts 7:58-8:3)
- 9:6 – “trembling and astonished” – Saul’s life and zeal for God is being shaken with the understanding that he has been persecuting the God he desired to serve by attacking these Christians.
- “Lord, what do you want me to do” – We have a convert here.
 - Acts 26:15-18 give a fuller version of Paul’s call. (See Acts 22:1-21; 26:2-29)
- 9:8 – “saw no one” – He was blind.
- “into Damascus” – This is not the entrance into the city he was expecting to make.
- 9:9 – “three days” – Saul spends three days dead to the world. (Gal. 2:20)
- God can get us to a sanctified loneliness to prepare us for service.
- 9:10 – “Ananias” – means “God is gracious.”
- “disciple” – An ordinary and obscure disciple lays hands on Saul to receive the Spirit.
 - Saul’s conversion saved Ananias’ life. Ananias now extends this grace to Saul.
 - There is no need to maintain apostolic succession for the passing of calling and empowerment to the next generation.
- 9:11 – “he is praying” – Saul is now communing with God Himself.
- 9:12 – “a vision” – In prayer, God is showing Saul things he needs to know.
- 9:13 – “harm he has done to your saints” – Ananias is informing God is the dangers of this man.
- But God knows that Saul will no longer bring harm to His people.

- 9:15 – “Go” – The Lord is asking Ananias to simply obey what he does not understand.
- “chosen vessel” – Saul is called to a unique and important ministry. (Acts 26:15-18)
 - For a man to reach Gentiles, but effectively work with the Jews, he had to have an understanding of the Grecian culture, which he would have had from being raised in Tarsus. But he also needed a keen understanding of the Hebrew culture, which he would have received at the feet of Gamaliel. He was a Jew with a full Roman citizenship. Saul was prepared to be Paul, an instrument of God to the early Church.
- 9:16 – “suffer” – Saul must consider the cost. (2 Cor. 11:16-30)
- 9:17 – “Lord Jesus” – Ananias makes it clear who the Lord is. (v. 5)
- “brother Saul” – Ananias treats Saul as a believer.
 - “be filled with the Holy Spirit” – This is when Saul was baptized in the Spirit.
- 9:19 – “spent some days with the disciples” – Saul spends time in fellowship with the very people he came to kill. This was a remarkable day!
- 9:20 – “preached the Christ” – Jesus Christ alone changed Saul’s life. This becomes the mark of his ministry. (1 Cor. 2:1-5)
- The Jewish leaders would be glad to have such a Jewish zealot speak in their synagogues. But his teaching that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah would totally shock them.
 - “synagogues” – Plural. There was a large Jewish population in Damascus at that time.
- 9:22 – “Saul increased all the more in strength” – Saul is being equipped for his future service.
- “proving” – Lit. “affirming it and confirming it.” He is teaching with persuasion.
- 9:23 – “many days” – This is after 3 years in Arabia. (Gal. 1:14-20)
- Paul was not trained in Bible college, seminary, or by conferring with apostles, but by the Word and the Holy Spirit.
 - “Jews plotted to kill him” – Those Saul once worked with to kill Christians are now coming after him.
- 9:25 – “in a large basket” – This would be very humbling to a proud Pharisee. (2 Cor. 11:32-33)
- Saul neither came into nor left Damascus the way he intended.
- 9:26 – “tried” – Lit. “kept trying.”
- “afraid” – The great leaders of the early church are afraid.
 - They have endured significant persecution at the hands of people like Saul. (Acts 8:1-3)
- 9:27 – “brought him to the apostles” – Saul stayed with him for 15 days. (Gal. 1:18)
- 9:29 – “the Hellenists” – The Greek-speaking Jews.
- This is the main group that Stephen disputed with in Acts 6:9-10.
- 9:30 – “Tarsus” – Saul spends 8-10 years in his home-city of Tarsus. He lives those years in obscurity.
- God always works in the servant before He works through the servant.
 - Tarsus was a free Roman city known as one of the three leading centers for learning in the world at that time.

- 9:31 – “rest...multiplied” – Not all of God’s work happens in areas of persecution.
- Historically, this is a time in the Roman Empire where the Jews were being heavily persecuted. This seems to have helped alleviate some of the pressure on the Christians.
- 9:32 – “Lydda” – Lydda is about 23 miles from Jerusalem. The city was likely evangelized by Philip on his way from Azotus to Caesarea. (Acts 8:40)
- 9:33 – “Aeneas” – He is one of the saints Saul is visiting. (v. 32)
- “paralyzed” – What happened 8 years ago to put him in this condition?
- 9:34 – “Jesus Christ makes thee whole” – Lit. “Jesus is now in the process of healing you.”
- Peter recognizes something of the work of Jesus in this man’s life.
- 9:35 – “all...turned to the Lord” – This miracle leads many to believe in Jesus for salvation.
- 9:36 – “Dorcas” – means “gazelle, or graceful.”
- “which she did” – She was a practical servant who helped make the lives of the others around her better.
- 9:38 – “Joppa” – This is modern-day Tel Aviv. Joppa is 10-12 miles from Peter in Lydda.
- Jonah had a significant experience in Joppa. (Jonah 1:3)
- 9:39 – “Peter arose and went with them” – Peter is free and flexible to respond to opportunities that require him to travel and take time away.
- “showing the tunics and the garments” – The text implies that they were wearing them as they were showing them to Peter.
- 9:40 – “Tabitha, arise” – This is very similar to Jesus’ healing of Jairus’ daughter. (Mark 5:41)
- The body must’ve been dead for over 24 hours. It would have been starting to deteriorate.
- 9:42 – “believed on the Lord” – Again this miracle leads people to trust in Jesus for salvation.
- 9:43 – “tanner” – Tanners were permanently unclean because of their constant work with dead animals.
- Homes of tanners were not allowed within the city limits because of the smell and the unclean nature of their work.
 - Peter is being prepared to take the Gospel to the unclean Gentiles. (Acts 10-11)

Chapter 10:

Acts 10 occurs about 10 years after the Pentecost of Acts 2.

- 10:1 – “Caesarea” – A Gentile town along the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. It served as a Roman capital and headquarters of the Judean region.
- “centurion” – He served over 100 men in the Roman military. Centurions were known to be tough and have tremendous character.
 - In a battle that resulted in a loss, centurions were expected to remain with the very last man of his division, even if it resulted in his death.
 - “Italian Regiment” – These are special forces; the guards of the governor in Caesarea.

- 10:2 – “one who feared God” – Cornelius was religious, did all this stuff, and yet was still not saved. (Jer. 29:13)
- Cornelius was walking in the light he had, so God would give him more.
- 10:3 – “the ninth hour” – The 3pm hour of prayer observed by the Jews.
- “an angel of God...‘Cornelius!’” – God has been hearing. Now He sends an angel in response. And the angel makes it clear that God knows his name.
- 10:5 – “Joppa” – Located about 30 miles from Caesarea.
- “send for Simon” – God will work on both ends of this, Cornelius and Peter.
 - Philip is in Caesarea the whole time, but God sends for Peter. (Acts 8:40; 21:8)
- 10:6 – “what you must do” – That is “believe in Him.” (v. 43)
- 10:8 – “sent them” – These servants trusted Cornelius.
- 10:9 – “on the housetop” – It would be cooler, quieter, and less smelly on the housetop.
- 10:10 – “became very hungry” – He is trying to pray around lunchtime, so he recognizes his hunger.
- God will use this natural need for food to speak to Peter about sharing the gospel with the Gentiles.
 - “trance” – (Greek “ecstasies”) This is an ecstasy of being in God’s presence.
- 10:11 – “great sheet” – The Greek word is also used for “sails.”
- 10:12 – “all kinds” – Clean and unclean according to Jewish tradition. (Lev. 11)
- This vision is to breakdown Peter’s prejudice toward Gentiles.
- 10:14 – “Not so, Lord” – Peter is refusing God. There is an inconsistency in saying “no” to the Lord.
- Peter is so concerned about his supposed, religious piety that he won’t obey.
 - This will take some time for Peter to fully understand. (Mark 7:14-19; Gal. 2:11-13; see also Matt. 15:11 and 1 Tim. 4::3-5)
- 10:16 – “three times” – Peter must make the connection with his denial and restoration. (Matt. 26:75; John 21:15-17)
- 10:17 – “Peter wondered within himself” – These men arrive as the answer to Peter’s prayer.
- “stood before the gate” – That is all the further they could come according to Jewish customs.
- 10:19 – “three men” – Again God works in Peter’s life in threes. (v. 16)
- 10:20 – “doubting nothing” – Lit. “making no distinctions.” Peter was no longer to make distinctions between Jew and Gentile.
- 10:21 – “Peter went down to the men” – God’s voice lines up with an open door.
- 10:23 – “certain brethren” – These are Christian Jews (v. 45), and there are six of them (Acts 11:12).
- God uses Peter to open the door to the Gentiles because of his authority among the Jews. Peter was considered a minister to the circumcision. (Gal. 2:7)

- 10:24 – “the following day” – It must have been too late in the day to start a journey the day before.
- “relatives and close friends” – Cornelius gathers people to hear God’s word from Peter.
- 10:25 – “worshipped” – Centurions were to bow before Caesar, who claimed to be deity.
- 10:26 – “a man” – Peter doesn’t accept undue adulation as a guise to share the gospel. You cannot use a lie to tell the truth.
- The statue of St. Peter in St. Peter’s Basilica needed the toe replaced from kissing.
- 10:28 – “unlawful” – Lit. “an abomination.”
- “Jewish” – Here we see Peter’s lingering prejudice/racism.
 - Jews considered Gentiles “fuel for the fires of hell.” A prayer of the Talmud thanked God for not making them Gentiles, slaves, or women.” (Gal. 3:28)
 - Satan is the accuser (or categorizer) of the brethren. (Rev. 12:10)
 - “But God” – It is clear to Peter that God Himself wants to reach these Gentiles.
- 10:30 – “bright” – or “dazzling.”
- The angel can speak with Cornelius and go to fetch Peter, but he will not share the gospel with Cornelius when there is someone else who can do it.
- 10:31 – “your prayer has been heard” – God draws all and is found by those who seek Him.
- God claims to hear the prayers of this unsaved Gentile.
- 10:34 – “no partiality” – Lit. “not look in the face.” God does not take people at face value. He looks to something deeper within. (John 7:24)
- God does not evaluate us based on our ethnic backgrounds.
- 10:35 – “in every nation” – Rome included.
- 10:37 – “that word you know” – They were not ignorant of God’s plan given in His word.
- 10:39 – “we” – Speaking of Peter and the apostles.
- 10:40 – “raised up on the third day” – The resurrection is essential to the gospel.
- 10:42 – “Judge of the living and the dead” – The same Jesus who saves will also one day judge.
- 10:43 – “all the prophets” – Speaking of the Word of God.
- “whoever” – That includes Cornelius.
 - “believes” – The only qualification.
 - “in Him” – We believe in the person of Jesus Christ, not in the Christian religion.
 - This is a very simple and straight-forward presentation of the gospel.
- 10:44 – “while Peter was still speaking” – The Spirit interrupts Peter’s message.
- No baptism, no circumcision, no Jewish religion, salvation is a work of God.
 - The indwelling and coming upon of the Spirit happen together this time.

10:45 – “those of the circumcision” – The Jewish believers Peter brought along. (Acts 11:12)

- “astonished” – The work of God among the Gentiles is evident to all that are there.
- The “wall of separation” has fallen. (Eph. 2:14)

10:47 – “received” – Past tense. They are saved already, but now they will make a public declaration.

Chapter 11:

11:1 – “brethren who were in Judea heard” – This news is novel enough to travel that distance.

- The divide between Jew and Christian greatly extends over the acceptance of the Gentile into the company of believers. (Acts 12:3)

11:2 – “contended with him” – Lit. “to make a distinction.” (Acts 10:20; 11:12)

- They even give the apostle Peter a hard time for doing this.

11:3 – “eat with them” – Their focus is not the gospel, salvation, or the Holy Spirit, but on eating.

- The traditional and cultural attitude of the Jews toward Gentiles has carried over into the Church.
- Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners. (Matt. 9:10-13; Luke 5:30-32; 7:34; 15:1-2)
- Eating a meal with someone in that culture was to identify with them. Peter has not been sharing with Cornelius while standing apart from him.

11:4 – “rehearsed the matter” – This is the third time we hear the story. God reaching the unclean!

11:9 – “common” – The concept implies “unclean.”

11:18 – “became silent” – Peter’s testimony causes the contention to cease.

11:19 – “scattered after the persecution” – Those that fled from persecution did not flee from their work; though for a time they declined suffering, yet they did not decline service.

- “preaching the word” – Lit. “speaking to others about Jesus.” Not preaching per say. (v. 20)
- “Antioch” – It was the capital of Syria. Located 300 miles north of Jerusalem. It was the 3rd largest Roman city of the day with about ½ million people. It was nicknamed “Antioch the Golden, Queen of the East,” but it was 2nd only to Corinth for temple shrines/prostitutes (serving Daphne, Apollo’s desired lover).
- Antioch becomes the headquarters for outreach into the Gentile world. (Acts 13:1-3)

11:21 – “hand of the Lord was with them” – These were not apostles, but ordinary ministers, yet they had the hand of the Lord with them, and did wonders.

- “great number believed” – Even in this wicked, idolatrous city.
- As long as there is human interaction personal evangelism is possible.

11:22 – “Barnabas” – He was a Levite from Cyprus. He was sent from the church in Jerusalem to evaluate the authenticity of the work in Antioch. (Acts 4:36-37; 9:26-28)

- 11:23 – “grace of God” – This is what Barnabas saw. He looked beyond race or religion.
- “encouraged” – (Greek “parakalei”) Lit. “to come alongside to help.” It is the same word from which Barnabas gets his nickname, Son of Encouragement. Here he is acting according to his nature.
 - “purpose” – Lit. “setting out the showbread.” Keeping Jesus in view.
 - “continue” – Lit. “tarry with.” (Col. 2:6)
- 11:24 – “a good man” – This is God’s estimation of Barnabas.
- 11:25 – “seek” – Lit. “to search diligently.”
- “Saul” – He is a special man prepared to do a special work. He is one who has been liberalized by the Holy Spirit, one who understands Grecian culture, and yet one who is strong in the Word.
 - Saul has been living in obscurity for 8-10 years. (Acts 9:30)
- 11:26 – “Christians” – Lit. “to follow the party of Christ, or partake in the nature of Christ.” (Acts 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16)
- 11:19-26 – v. 19 – preaching, v. 20 – preaching, v. 23 – encouraged, v. 26 – taught.
- If the church is ever going to be strong and effective, it must be taught.
- 11:27 – “prophets” – An important ministry in establishing the Church in any given area. (Eph. 4:11; 1 Cor. 12:29)
- 11:28 – “Agabus” – Acts 21:10.
- “famine” – Jews becoming followers of Christ would oftentimes be cut off from family and community. This would make a famine especially hard on them.
 - This famine came in the reign of Claudius. (41-54 AD)
- 11:29 – “relief” – The Gentiles are sending financial assistance to the Jews.
- In the face of an impending famine, the believers look to the welfare of others rather than storing rice and beans, stockpiling money and weapons, and escaping to the mountains.
 - It is rare that the missionary outreach supports the home church.

Chapter 12:

- 12:1 – “Herod” – Herod Agrippa I. Grandson of Herod the Great, son of Aristobulus and Berenice, a Hasmonean princess and a Jew. Agrippa I was a practicing Jew.
- 12:2 – “killed” – Lit. “beheaded.”
- This is the first time persecution is coming to the church from the Roman political power.
 - When politics combines with religion, the result becomes oppressive. (v. 3)
 - “James the brother of John” – He is the first martyred disciple. (Matt. 20:23)
 - His brother, John, will be the only disciple to die without being martyred.
- 12:3 – “it pleased the Jews” – Those make themselves an easy prey to Satan who make it their business to please men.

- 12:4 – “prison” – Probably the tower of Antonia, located at the northeast corner of the Temple. This is where Paul was later held. (Acts 21:34)
- “four squads of soldiers” – Four sets of four soldiers. Four soldiers would be on duty guarding Peter at all time.
 - “to keep him” – The last time Peter was arrested, an angel set him and John free. (Acts 5:19)
 - “Passover” – Jesus died on the Passover too.
 - It seems that Herod Agrippa I was planning to make Peter’s execution a public spectacle. God will ruin his party.
- 12:5 – “but prayer” – The theme and turning point of this scene. (John 14:14; James 4:2)
- They prayed for James too, no doubt. Why free Peter and not James?
 - “constant” – Lit. “fervent, earnest, to stretch out.” Same word as Jesus praying “more earnestly” in his agony in Gethsemane. (Luke 22:44)
 - “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” (James 5:16)
- 12:6 – “Peter was sleeping” – Peter knew that he was going to die by being persecuted. If Herod is threatening him with beheading, Peter knows it will not happen. (John 21:18-19)
- We see Peter sleeping three times in the Bible: at the Transfiguration, in Gethsemane, and in the prison. At the transfiguration, Peter saw Christ’s glory but heard nothing of His “exodus” because he had fallen asleep. Therefore, he missed the significance of Gethsemane.
 - Peter is sleeping, but the church is praying for him. (Exod. 33:14)
- 12:7 – “struck” – The Greek word implies “gently.”
- 12:8 – “Gird yourself” – The angel is dressing Peter as a mother would do for her young child.
- 12:9 – “thought he was seeing a vision” – Peter saunters out in a dream state. (Ps. 126:1)
- 12:11 – “delivered” – Lit. “plucked.” This is the same word Stephen used when he spoke about the Jewish exodus in Acts 7:34.
- God is in charge in this scene.
- 12:12 – “Mary” – The sister of Barnabas (Col. 4:10). Apparently her home served as a gathering place of the early church. It may have been the location of the Upper Room where the Last Supper was held (Mark 14:13-15; Acts 1:13) and the place of prayer in Acts 4:31.
- 12:13 – “Rhoda” – means “rose.”
- 12:14 – “because of her gladness she did not open the gate” – She gets so excited, she forgets to let Peter in.
- The prison gate swung wide to let Peter out, but the gate at the house of his friends remained closed due to unbelief.
- 12:15 – “beside yourself” – Lit. “out of your mind.”
- “his angel” – Jewish tradition said that your guardian angel could take your form and voice. (Matt. 18:10; Heb. 1:14)
 - An angel appears and they don’t want to go see it?

- 12:16 – “they” – The entire group goes to check on this together.
- Their prayer is not answered due to their faith. It’s simply in line with God’s will.
- 12:17 – “James” – Jesus’ half-brother, presiding over the church in Jerusalem. (1 Cor. 15:7)
- “he departed” – Apart from Acts 15:17, this is the last time we see Peter in the book of Acts.
- 12:19 – “put to death” – The sentence of the escaped prisoner would be transferred to those on duty when he escaped.
- Herod, despite seeing this great miracle, still will not turn to Christ.
- 12:20 – “supplied by food from the king’s country” – Tyre and Sidon was suffering from a drought at this time.
- 12:21 – “a set day” – According to Josephus, a festival Herod was celebrating in honor of Claudius Caesar.
- “royal robes” – Josephus describes a silver robe, dazzling bright while shimmering in the sun, that he wore that day.
- 12:23 – “struck” – Compare with v. 7.
- “gave not God the glory” – He would not reject the accolades given to him.
 - “eaten by worms” – Historically, others who have greatly persecuted God’s people have suffered a similar fate like Antiochus Epiphanes, Herod the Great, Judas Iscariot, Alexander the Imposter, Galerius, Thiratima the queen of Sirene, and the uncle of Julian the apostate.
 - Jesus spoke of Hell as being a place where “their worm dies not...fire is not quenched.” (Mark 9:44-48)
- 12:24 – “the word of God grew and multiplied” – Despite persecution and opposition.
- The Gospel is now being spread through the Roman Empire.
- 12:25 – “Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem” – They are returning to Antioch after taking the offering to the brethren in Jerusalem. (Acts 11:29-30)
- “John whose surname was Mark” – He was Barnabas’ nephew. (Col. 4:10)

Chapter 13:

This is 20 years after Pentecost.

- 13:1 – “the church that was at Antioch” – The first largely Gentile church mentioned in Acts. (Acts 11:20-26)
- “prophets” – 1 Cor. 14:3 says prophecy is for edification, exhortation, and comfort. This is the ministry of God to guide the Church.
 - “teachers” – This is the ministry of God to ground the Church in the Word.
 - “Barnabas” – He was a converted Levite from Cyprus who became an integral part of the early Church in Jerusalem. (Acts 4:36; 9:26-27)
 - “Simon called Niger” – Likely a black man who possibly carried the cross for Jesus. (Mark 15:21)
 - “Lucius” – Maybe the author of the gospel, Luke. (Rom. 16:21)
 - “Manean” – He was a Greek; the step-brother of Herod Antipas who killed John the Baptist.
 - “Saul” – The great persecutor of the Church. (Acts 9)

- 13:2 – “ministered to the Lord” – We must minister to God to truly minister to people.
- They weren’t looking to do anything for God. They were simply blessing God by offering themselves to Him and His will.
 - “The only responsibility we have for the ministry is to staying in constant living touch with God Himself” – Oswald Chambers.
 - “ministered” – We get “liturgy” from this word. The idea is to “order through worship.”
 - “Holy Spirit said” – Without a planning session or a mission board, the Spirit simply communicates to the group of them.
 - They are “submitting to one another in the fear of God.” (Eph. 5:21)
 - “separate to Me” – Our primary calling is to God. The work is secondary.
 - “to the Lord...the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me’” – The Holy Spirit is God.
 - “the work to which I have called them” – Paul received God’s call to ministry in a very specific way over 14 years ago. (Acts 9:15; 26:17-18) Now he is being sent to do it.
 - “the work” – Ministry is work.
 - “called” – God’s calling is God’s empowering. They go together.
- 13:3 – “fasted and prayed” – The church is taking time in prayer to confirm what the leadership has heard from the Spirit.
- “sent” – Lit “released.” The church let them go.
 - As God directs a person to move out into another work, He will oftentimes confirm His will to that person through the present church fellowship and leadership.
- 13:4 – “being sent by the Holy Spirit” – They do not raise support before heading out.
- They already have the prayer support and backing from the church at Antioch. There is no further need for partnership development.
 - If the Holy Spirit is doing the sending, then they have the guarantee of His enabling the work.
 - “sent” – Lit. “to send out.” This is a different word from “sent” in v. 3.
 - “to Seleucia” – Located 15 miles from Antioch.
 - “Cyprus” – It was 90% Gentile and known for worshipping Venus/Aphrodite immorally, obligating women to offer themselves at least once as a temple prostitute. Venereal disease rampant.
 - Barnabas was from Cyprus. (Acts 4:36)
 - Individuals from Cyprus had started the church at Antioch. (Acts 11:20)
- 13:5 – “Salamis” – A center for the worship of Venus.
- “John as their assistant” – That is John Mark. (Acts 12:12)
 - It is likely that John was converted by Peter.
- 13:6 – “Paphos” – The capital of the island of Cyprus.
- “Bar-Jesus” – means “son of Jesus.”
- 13:8 – “Elymas” – means “enlightened one.”
- “withstood them” – Elymas is directly confronting Barnabas and Paul in an effort to keep Sergius Paulus from faith in Jesus Christ.
- 13:7 – “Sergius Paulus” – He is an intelligent man who takes advice from a sorcerer.
- Jean Dixon claimed to have advised numerous presidents.

- 13:8 – “sorcerer” – (Greek “magos”) We get our word “magician” from that Greek word.
- 13:9 – “Saul” means “requested or desired.”
- “Paul” means “little.”
 - “looked intently at him” – Paul does not back down from this confrontation.
- 13:10 – “full of all deceit” – Bar-Jesus is using the name of Jesus for his own personal benefit. And through that, he is misrepresenting Jesus and preventing others from coming to Him.
- Jesus saved his greatest rebukes for those who kept people from Him. (Matt. 18:6)
- 13:11 – “blind” – Paul is not asking God to do anything to Elymas that He hadn’t done to him. (Acts 9:8,18)
- “None are so blind as those who will not see.”
- 13:12 – “believed” – Salvation is an eternal miracle.
- “astonished at the teaching” – Sergius Paulus gets saved through the teaching, not through the miracle of Elymas’ blindness.
- 13:13 – “Paul and his party” – Paul seems to step forward as the leader now.
- “Pamphylia” – Modern-day Turkey.
 - “John, departing from them” – Lack of faithfulness is a great hindrance to service. (1 Cor. 4:2; 2 Tim. 2:2)
 - This decision will divide Paul and Barnabas before their next missionary journey. (Acts 15:36-41)
 - God will use Barnabas to restore Mark to ministry and to Paul. (Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11)
- 13:14 – “Antioch in Pisidia” – The region of Galatians.
- This was a very treacherous journey. It was 100 miles to the north, with a 3600 ft. rise in elevation, and filled with thieves and malaria.
 - “went into the synagogue” – Paul starts ministry in a new community where conversations about God and the seeking of God is already taking place.
 - “sat down” – They wait to be invited to speak.
- 13:16 – “Men of Israel and you who fear God” – Jews and Greek proselytes.
- When in the synagogue, Paul starts from the Scriptures and their knowledge of God.
- 13:17 – “chose our fathers” – Despite the continual rejection of God by their Jewish ancestors, God remained faithful to them as a people because of His promise made to the forefathers.
- 13:18 – “put up with” – Two definitions: 1. bear up under difficulty, 2. mother nursing a baby.
- 13:22 – “man after my own heart” – Not that his heart was perfect, but David sought God’s heart. (1 Sam. 13:14)
- 13:23 – “the promise” – The Jews were given the promises of the Messiah in the prophetic Scriptures.
- 13:25 – “John” – John the Baptist. (John 1:27)

- 13:27 – “the voices of the prophets” – The Scriptures are fulfilled in Jesus.
 - Jesus said, the “Scriptures...testify of me.” (John 5:39)
- 13:30 – “But God” – The miraculous power and grace of God to raise Jesus from the dead.
 - The resurrection is an essential part of the Gospel message.
- 13:31 – “seen by many” – Paul said “up to 500 at one time” saw Jesus. (1 Cor. 15:6)
- 13:33 – “begotten” – It might be more of a reference to resurrection than to physical birth.
- 13:36 – “after he had served his own generation” – God’s servants have their work assigned them; and, when they have accomplished as a hireling their day, then, and not till then, they are called to rest.
 - “saw corruption” – David was not speaking about himself.
- 13:38 – “forgiveness of sins” – This is the purpose of Jesus’ coming and the message of the Gospel. (Matt. 1:21)
- 13:39 – “believes is justified” – “Believes” is in the present tense and “justified” is in the past tense.
 - Present belief secures an eternal work.
 - “justified from all things” – That is past, present, and future.
- 13:41 – “a work which you will by no means believe” – It seems too good to be true.
 - The context of Habakkuk is God turning from Israel to use the Babylonians. Paul doesn’t want the Jews of his day to reject the work of God as Jews had done in previous generations.
- 13:42 – “begged” – The Gentiles beg to hear what the Jews have rejected.
- 13:43 – “continue in the grace” – These are the Galatians.
 - They would soon fall from grace. (Gal. 3:1-3)
 - “As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.” (Col. 2:6)
- 13:45 – “envy” – This is the same reason the Jews killed Jesus.
 - The religious are concerned about their authority.
 - It is not a problem with theology or intellect, but the sin of jealousy.
- 13:46 – “necessary” – God’s sovereignty.
 - “judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life” – Those who have not accepted Christ, have rejected Him and condemned themselves.
 - God doesn’t sent anyone to hell; they go there willfully rejecting the means to avoid hell.
 - “turn to the Gentiles” – The Gospel was to go “to the Jew first, then to the Gentile.” (Rom. 1:16)
- 13:48 – “appointed” – Lit. “enrolled, put in line.” (Luke 10:20; Phil. 4:3)
 - Predestination and free-will work together in bringing us to salvation.
- 13:51 – “shook off the dust” – As the Jews would do when leaving Gentile territory.
 - Paul would rather anger those he talked to than appease them and leave them unoffended.

- 13:52 – “disciples...joy” – Those left behind in Pisidian Antioch are joyful despite the persecution.
- “The more we relish the comforts and encouragements we meet with in the power of godliness, and the fuller are hearts are of them, the better prepared we are to face the difficulties we meet with in the profession of godliness.” (Matthew Henry)

Chapter 14:

- 14:1 – “Iconium” – Located about 50 miles east of Pisidian Antioch.
- “so spoke” – Paul described his speaking method to bring others to Christ in 1 Cor. 2:1-5.
- 14:2 – “poisoned their minds” – Lit. “molested their minds.”
- They attack the messengers when they dislike the message.
- 14:3 – “Therefore they stay there a long time” – The Jewish opposition seems to motivate Paul to stay in Iconium a little longer.
- “bearing witness...granting signs” – Signs and wonders follow the speaking of the Word to confirm the message spoken.
 - Moderns mix the order, wanting signs to draw people to the message.
 - The religious Jews always stumble at the grace of God. (1 Cor. 1:23)
- 14:4 – “apostles” – Lit. “sent out ones.”
- This is the first time Paul and Barnabas are called apostles.
- 14:5 – “to abuse and stone them” – When things turn violent, Paul and Barnabas then leave.
- 14:6 – “Lystra” – Located about 40 miles southeast of Iconium.
- 14:7 – “they were preaching the gospel there” – They led with a declaration of the gospel.
- 14:8 – “from his mother’s womb” – This was a defect from birth.
- 14:9 – “speaking” – This word means “ordinary conversation.” Paul is not preaching here.
- “seeing that he had faith” – Paul’s actions are based on an unseen reality.
- 14:10 – “leaped and walked” – Immediate obedience is rewarded with complete healing.
- 14:11 – “what Paul had done” – The people are confusing the conduit for the source. God did this miracle through Paul. It is not Paul’s doing.
- “the gods have come down to us” – Some faith profession teachers actually say that we can become little gods.
 - Paul and Barnabas do not use this misconception to their advantage.
 - You cannot support the truth with a lie.
 - Only Jesus is the true incarnation of God in human form.
- 14:12 – “Zeus...Hermes” – Ovid has a story of Zeus and Hermes actually visiting this region and going unrecognized except by an elderly couple (who were made trees to guard the Temple of Zeus in Lystra).
- Zeus/Jupiter was the patron god of Lystra.

- 14:14 – “tore their clothes” – Jewish sign of blasphemy. (Mark 14:63)
- The people are speaking Lycaonian. Paul and Barnabas don’t understand immediately, therefore they do not react right away.
- 14:15 – “we are also men” - Paul and Barnabas don’t accept undue accolades as a platform.
- God struck Herod Agrippa for failing to deflect people’s opinion that he was a god. (Acts 12:22-23)
 - “turn from” – The message of the gospel is to move people from “vanities” to reality.
 - Foreign missions has always suffered where there has been a compromise and a comingling of pagan philosophy with Christian doctrine. For complete and genuine transformation, a repudiation of false thought and practice must occur.
 - “God, who made the heaven, the earth” – They are moving into entirely Gentile territory. When Paul communicates the gospel to non-Jews, he starts with creation to speak to the reality of God Himself. (Rom. 1:19)
 - Apparently, there was no synagogue in Lystra. This meant there were fewer than 10 Jewish men in the city.
 - Lystra was the corn-raising center of that region.
- 14:18 – “restrain the multitudes from sacrificing” – They had to forcibly prevent this.
- 14:19 – “Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there” – The apostles are being chased from city to city by these zealous Jewish persecutors.
- Sometimes being in the middle of God’s will means being chased and harassed by those who oppose God.
 - “they stoned Paul” – Their opinion of Paul changes so quickly. People are fickle. (2 Cor. 11:25)
 - Paul was there when Stephen was stoned. Now he is on the other end. (Acts 7:58-59)
 - “supposing” – They have good reason to think he is dead.
 - Paul speaks of seeing a revelation of the third heaven. (2 Cor. 12:2-4)
- 14:20 – “the disciples were gathered around him” – Were they praying or mourning?
- It is likely that Timothy was there to see this. (Acts 16:1; 2 Tim. 3:10-11)
 - “he rose up” – God’s servants are indestructible until they have finished their work.
 - “to Derbe” – Another 20 miles journey.
 - Paul’s friend and ministry partner, Gaius, was from Derbe.
- 14:22 – “strengthening” – Those that are converted need to be confirmed; those that are planted need to be rooted. To retain is sometimes as difficult as to acquire.
- “exhorting them” – Paul is cheering them on in the faith.
 - “faith” – We as believers are to walk by faith and not by sight.
 - “we must” – It is a must for all of us. (The example of Chinese believers.)
 - Paul chooses to share this with them to strengthen them as believers! (Matt. 5:11)
 - In other countries, the struggle is one of persecution. In America, the struggle is one of devotion.
- 14:23 – “appointed” – Lit. “to elect by a show of hands.”
- “elders” – Seems to be a church office equivalent with “bishop” and fulfilled by a “pastor” (although a pastor may have additional responsibilities). (Titus 1:5,7)
 - “commended” – Lit. “to put alongside of.”

14:26 – “to Antioch” – After being gone for 1-2 years.

- “completed” – Faithfulness is required to see a work to completion.

14:27 – “opened the door” – Paul relied on open doors. (1 Cor. 16:9; 2 Cor. 2:12; Col. 4:3)

- Open doors are often accompanied by many adversaries.
- “all that God had done” – They recount their missionary experience to the church in a way that glorifies God and exalts what God has done.

14:28 – “stayed there a long time” – Paul and Barnabas remain in Antioch about 1 year.

Chapter 15:

15:1 – “according to the custom of Moses” – Their background in Judaism makes is a reasonable expectation to them. But to Gentiles, this would be completely foreign.

- “circumcised” – Circumcision was meant to be a picture of the weakness and sinfulness of the flesh that needs to be cut off the heart. It was never to be an act that produced self-righteousness. (Rom. 2:29; 4:10)
- “you cannot be saved” – This is a question of doctrine on the subject of salvation. This is not a discussion merely on preferences or Christian liberties. They are deciding the belief and behavior necessary for salvation.
 - You can’t add anything of value to the sacrifice of Jesus for salvation. He either accomplishes all or He accomplishes nothing! Whenever it is Jesus and...it is the ‘and’ we are actually trusting.
 - Many Jews were not disbelievers, but misbelievers. They just cannot come to grips with the complete work of Christ; still trusting themselves with rules and law. (1 Cor. 15:1-8; Heb. 10:1-19; Gal. 2:1-10, 21)

15:2 – “no small dissension and dispute” – Paul had given his life, quite literally, to sharing the good news of Jesus and the sufficiency of the cross. This has cost him too much to simply hand over to the legalists of Judea.

15:4 – “they had come to Jerusalem” – Paul is going back to the Church leadership. (Gal. 2:1-10)

15:5 – “Pharisees who believed” – The misbelievers. They are Christians, but have not yet cast off all of their previous emphasis in doctrine and mindset in relating to God.

- Paul was a Pharisee too. (Phil. 3:1-13)
- “necessary” – They are not discussion preferences, but necessities.

15:7 – “Peter rose up” – Peter did not assume leadership in this discussion. He waited until there had been “much dispute.”

- “good while ago” – That is over 10 years ago now. (Acts 10)
- “by my mouth the Gentiles should hear” – Peter was drafted into that service.

15:8 – “who knows the heart” – We are not judged based on external appearance. (1 Sam. 16:7; Jer. 17:9)

15:9 – “making no distinction” – Lit. “not looking on the face.” (Acts 10:20; 11:12)

- “purifying their hearts by faith” – People are not purified before coming to Jesus.
- “by faith” – We cannot improve on salvation by grace through faith by turning to the works of the law.

- 15:10 – “why do you test God?” – Jesus refused to tempt God. (Matt. 4:7; quoted from Deut. 6:16)
- “a yoke” – This isn’t salvation by faith; this is salvation by fear.
 - Jesus asked us to take His yoke upon us instead. (Mt. 11:28,29)
 - A mean dog with a muzzle isn’t a better dog. It’s still mean.
 - Law reveals sin (Rom. 3:20, 4:15, 5:13) and leads to Christ (Gal. 3:24).
 - “were able to bear” – The Law didn’t save or fix the apostles. It would not be able to do that for anyone else either.
- 15:11 – “we shall be saved...as they” – Peter says Jews are saved just like Gentiles.
- His word order is very interesting, as he actually places the Gentiles before the Jews.
- 15:12 – “miracles and wonders” – God backed up the gospel of grace with miracles.
- 15:13 – “James” – He was Jesus’ half-brother, nicknamed “Old Camel Knees.” James is serving as a key leader in the early church at Jerusalem. (Acts 21:18)
- 15:14 – “Simon” – James uses Peter’s Hebrew name as this was a Jewish issue.
- “God at the first” – God did the work. He started it!
- 15:15 – “agree” – All the Scriptures teach salvation by faith – Adam, Abraham, Moses.
- James finds Biblical support for this position. (Amos 9:11-12; Deut. 32:21, as quoted in Rom. 10:19)
- 15:16 – “after this” – God will return to work with Israel. (Rom. 9-11)
- 15:17 – “Gentiles who are called by My name” – God has always desired to save Gentiles.
- 15:19 – “I judge” – Lit. “I give it as my opinion.”
- “trouble not” – We are never to place a burden on new believers that God Himself has not asked them to carry.
- 15:20 – “abstain from things” – Idolatry and immorality.
- Our salvation by Christ and freedom in Christ are not license for us to sin. The moral law is still in effect. These are still wrong.
 - Think about all the things that are not included.
- 15:21 – “Moses...being read in the synagogues” – While the Church will not allow a heavy burden to be placed upon new Gentile believers regarding their salvation, they do ask these Gentiles to be sensitive to the scruples of the Jewish people and not flaunt their dietary freedoms before those that would be hurt by it.
- 15:22 – “Judas who was also named Barsabas” – He may or may not be related to Joseph Barsabas from Acts 1:23.
- 15:23-29 – “they wrote this letter” – The Jewish believers here allow God to work freely in the Gentile Church without trying to stay in control of or at the center of the action.
- The leading of the Spirit is far stricter than any human rules. (James 1:25)
 - The issue is settled. The council of Jerusalem has decided the debate.

- 15:24 – “must be circumcised” – Those that urge hypocritical religious practice do so to avoid persecution and boast about themselves. (Gal. 6:12-13)
- Be requiring circumcision, they make the cross of Christ of no effect. (Gal. 2:21)
- 15:25 – “beloved Barnabas and Paul” – They are endorsing the life and ministry of Barnabas and Paul.
- 15:26 – “risked their lives” – Lit. “laid down their lives.” Paul had actually been stoned and left for dead in Lystra. (Acts 14:19)
- 15:28 – “seemed good” – The apostles didn’t regularly get more revelation than we get.
- “the Holy Spirit” – They are checking for the peace of the Spirit before moving ahead.
- 15:31 – “they rejoiced” – They are certainly rejoicing that they do not need to be circumcised. But more than that, they are rejoicing because they are being accepted as believers by the Church leadership in Jerusalem.
- 15:32 – “exhorted” – Lit. “encouraged.”
- 15:34 – “seemed good to Silas to remain there” – Silas remains in Antioch when Judas returns to Jerusalem.
- 15:37 – “Barnabas was determined” – Just because Barnabas was an encourager doesn’t mean that he didn’t have great resolve and determination.
- Barnabas seems called to work with those who are “getting it.” His call was to restore people to the Lord and to the Church, as he had done for Paul in Acts 9:27. But that kind of ministry doesn’t often get a lot of work done. And maybe that is why we never hear of what Barnabas and John Mark accomplished. But Paul’s ministry was to the work. And he needed co-laborers who “got it,” not one who still needed a lot of work and maturity. Paul needed faithful and hearty men and women who were ready to give their lives away. And the rest of Acts shows us what God can do through people like that.
- 15:39 – “contention” – This is a strong argument between believers in the ministry.
- Both guys may be right. God gets two teams of two to do twice the work. Barnabas’ work is one of encouragement and gets John Mark back in the ministry. Paul’s work is as an apostle and is successful in taking the Gospel to new parts of the world.
 - Ideally, though, it would be good to separate without the contention. Better to pray and both determine together that a change in course and approach needs to take place. Then they can separate amicably.
 - Paul later accepts Mark back. (2 Tim. 4:11, Col. 4:10, Philemon 1:24)
- 15:39,41 – “Cyprus...Cilicia” – Both, Paul and Barnabas, return to their homeland. (Acts 4:36; 21:39)
- 15:41 – “strengthening the churches” – Paul is carrying the letter from Jerusalem granting Gentile converts the freedom to avoid circumcision.

Chapter 16:

- 16:1 – “Lystra” – This comes about five years after Paul’s first trip to Lystra. (Acts 14:19)

- “Timothy” – Likely a teenager at this time. He was raised in the Church; his grandmother Lois was a believer as well as his mother, Eunice. (2 Tim. 1:5)
 - Timothy was well taught from the Scriptures. (2 Tim. 3:15)
- 16:3 – “circumcised” – This was to reach the unbelieving Jew, not for salvation. Timothy would be kept out of the synagogues and Temple if he hadn’t been circumcised.
- “I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.” (1 Cor. 9:22)
 - He wasn’t circumcised to appease religious professors. (See Titus in Gal. 2:3.)
- 16:5 – “strengthened in faith, and increased in number daily” – The church is growing in faith and in size.
- 16:6-7 – “forbidden by the Holy Ghost...Spirit did not permit” – Missions work must be directed by the Holy Spirit.
- No one is perfect. If you do not receive a hindrance from the Holy Spirit in ministry efforts, you either are not trying or you are not listening.
 - “The important thing, however, is that the man whom the Spirit will guide is the man who is in the attitude in which it is possible for the Spirit to guide” – G. Campbell Morgan.
- 16:8 – “Mysia” – A proverbial mean and contemptible country.
- “Troas” – Paul will return to Troas in Acts 20:7-12.
- 16:9 – “a vision” – This is not a dream.
- “come over to Macedonia” – Before the door opens to Greece, Paul ran into two other shut doors that prevented him from going to Turkey and Asia Minor.
- 16:10 – “we” – Luke is now included in this party. (Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 27:1-28:16)
- Luke, a physician, may have joined the team to help care for Paul’s sicknesses.
 - “Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them” – The Gospel now enters Europe.
- 16:11 – “sailing” – They are on the Aegean Sea.
- “a straight course” – The wind was at their backs.
 - This same distance takes five days to travel on their return journey. (Acts 20:6)
- 16:12 – “Philippi” – A very prestigious Roman colony; it had same status as Rome itself.
- Philippi was famous for the battle in 42 BC which resulted in the victory of Anthony and Octavian (the future emperor Augustus) over Brutus and Cassius, the assassins of Julius Caesar,
 - There was no synagogue in Philippi which meant there were less than 10 Jewish men in the city. The Jews were probably kicked out of Philippi when Rome kicked them out in 45 AD.
- 16:14 – “Lydia” – She was the first convert of Europe. She must’ve been a special, gifted woman.
- Jewish rabbis: “It’s better for the Law to be burned than to be given to women.”
 - “Thyatira” – Thyatira was known for the finest purple dye in the world.
 - Thyatira was in Asia. God got the gospel there through her (instead of Paul).
- 16:15 – “baptized” – They publically acknowledge their faith in Christ.
- “she persuaded us” – Lydia out argues an apostle, a prophet, a doctor, and Timothy.

- 16:16 – “divination” – Lit. “Python.” The superstition of that region taught that Apollo killed Python but then used his spirit to deliver the oracles of Delphos. This is the demon she has appealed to.
- “fortune-telling” – She could prophecy.
 - Apparently the demon could not see that this fuss would lead to being exorcised.
- 16:18 – “many days” – Paul does not immediately respond to this.
- “greatly annoyed” – Paul didn’t need Satan’s advertisement.
 - “annoyed” – Lit. “troubled, grieved.”
 - Jesus would not accept the testimony of demons. (Mark 1:25; Luke 8:28)
 - Truth shared without love can desensitize people to Jesus.
- 16:19 – “their hope of profit” – These slave owners would prefer the girl to be demon possessed so they can continue to make money off of her. (Matt. 8:32)
- There are two riots mentioned in Acts; both started when Paul affected someone’s money. (Acts 19:23)
 - “seized Paul and Silas” – This is a sudden and drastic response.
 - Paul and Silas are no longer allowed to preach the Gospel openly in Philippi.
 - Apparently Luke and Timothy escape the beating and imprisonment.
- 16:20 – “magistrates” – (Greek “strategos”) The retired military officers sent to Roman outposts to keep the peace. (v. 35)
- “being Jews” – Jews were not in favor in Philippi.
 - This is an excuse. The only reason they opposed Paul and Silas is because they lost their money making machine.
- 16:23 – “many stripes” – Their skin was likely flayed from being beaten with rods.
- The Jews were limited to forty stripes minus one. But the Romans could strike an indefinite number of times.
- 16:24 – “inner prison” – This was death row located in the third and lowest part of the prison. It had a dirt floor, no light, dirty water and excrement.
- “feet in the stocks” – They would have been spread-eagled in stocks.
 - These stocks had more than two holes so the prisoners legs could be spread as far apart as possible to increase cramping and pain.
- 16:25 – “singing hymns to God” – They were given songs in the night. (Job 35:10)
- “listening” – Lit. “listening intently.”
 - Paul and Silas were not signing for the other prisoners, but they overheard anyway.
- 16:26 – “great earthquake” – The earthquake sets them free without bringing the prison down on them.
- 16:28 – “no harm” – Jailor would have to take the prisoners sentence.
- Suicide is demonic. It is especially terrifying for an unbeliever,
- 16:30 – “what must I do to be saved?” – He needs to know the way to cover his most pressing need.

16:31 – “believe on the Lord” – This is so simple.

- “believe” – (Greek “pistis”) Lit. “depend upon, trust, faith.”
- “you and your household” – The way of salvation is the same for both the prison keeper and his household.

16:32 – “spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in the house” – Paul is sharing the gospel with their entire household as he and Silas are getting tended to.

16:33 – “washed their stripes” – A true mark of salvation is sacrificial service.

- “baptized” – The jailor and his household make their faith public immediately.

16:35 – “officers” – Lit. “those that held the rods.” These are the lictors who would perform the beatings.

- The lictors would always carry with them a bundle of rods for beatings and an ax for capital punishment.
- “Let those men go” – Is this because of the earthquake or did they hear Paul was a Roman citizen?

16:37 – “come themselves and get us out” – Paul is setting a standard of respect for the Church he is leaving behind.

- Paul uses the full extent of his rights for the sake of others and the gospel.

16:38 – “fear” – lit. “terror.” Colonies could lose their Roman status for beating Roman citizens.

16:40 – “they” – Apparently Luke stays in Philippi for a time.

- “encouraged them” – The theme of Paul’s epistle to the Philippians was joy in the midst of suffering and persecution.

Chapter 17:

17:1 – “Thessalonica” – Located about 100 miles from Philippi.

- Paul by-passes two other cities to come to Thessalonica. He is led past and to cities.

17:2 – “reasoned with them” – He is discussing with them. He is not just telling them what to do.

- “‘Come now, and let us reason together,’ says the Lord, ‘though your sins as like scarlet, they shall be white as snow.’” (Isa. 1:18)

17:3 – “explaining” – Lit. “making plain, expounding, giving an exposition.” This word is also used of Jesus opening the Scriptures to the disciples on the Emmaus road. (Luke 24:27)

- “demonstrating” – Lit. “setting out in order and displaying.”
 - Whereas explaining was more of an expository teaching, demonstrating might be more of a topical nature.
- “Christ had to suffer” – From passages like Genesis 3, Psalm 22, and Isaiah 53.
- “this Jesus...is the Christ” – The opening of the Scriptures directly relates to the person of Christ.

17:5 – “envious” – They are motivated to oppose Paul, not because he taught heresy or was deceptive, but simply because they were jealous. This is much like the Pharisees’ opposition of Jesus.

- “took some of the evil men” – Envy can create strange bed-fellows.
- “the house of Jason” – He must have been hosting Paul and Silas. (Rom. 16:21)

- 17:6 – “turned the world upside down” – They make this claim and the church has yet to establish a mission board, program, or even a strategic plan. But they were surrendered to the leading of the Holy Spirit and therefore got to see His power work through them.
- Could this ever be said of us?
- 17:7 – “another king” – A claim of insurrection against Caesar was the worst accusation for a Roman.
- Historians claim that over 6 million early Christians were killed in less than 3 centuries in Rome for not calling Caesar “lord.”
- 17:9 – “security” – Money, like bail or bond, to ensure that Paul didn’t return.
- The threat against Jason and the legal agreement of posting bail must be what prevented Paul from returning to Thessalonica. (1 Thess. 2:18 – “Satan hindered us.”)
- 17:10 – “Berea” – Located 45-50 miles away. Berea was a small, rural town compared to Thessalonica.
- 17:11 – “more fair-minded” – (Greek “engenesteroi”) Lit. “better bred.”
- “with all readiness” – They come to church ready and willing to learn and grow.
 - “searched the Scriptures daily” – The Bereans stand on the Word of God.
 - “whether these things were so” – Paul isn’t offended at their double-checking him in the Scriptures.
 - Never elevate the authority of a teacher above the Word of God.
- 17:12 – “Therefore” – Because they were searching the Scriptures.
- 17:16 – “Paul waited for them” – Paul is left alone in Athens.
- “at Athens” – It is over 200 miles by land from Berea to Athens.
 - “provoked” – Paul seems to intend to sightsee the city while waiting for Silas and Timothy to arrive. But as he travels the city he is stirred to speak on what he sees.
 - “given over to idols” – There were over 3,000 altars and shrines in Athens and one just in case they missed a god. (v. 23)
 - Athens was an intellectual center, but it didn’t really offer help to the people.
- 17:17 – “reasoned in the synagogue” – Just like at Thessalonica. (v. 2)
- Paul does not seek public or political reform. He simply moves to share of Jesus.
- 17:18 – “Epicureans...Stoics” – Both believed in the finality of life, refuting the reality of a personal god and denying the possibility of a spiritual life or life after death. But they drew opposite conclusions: Epicureans gave themselves to pleasure, Stoics fell into hopelessness.
- Their problem with Paul centers on the doctrine of the resurrection, because it directly confronts their belief that there was not life after death.
 - “babbler” – Lit. “seed-picker.” They were claiming that Paul was just collecting ideas from others without really understanding them for himself.
- 17:19 – “Aeropagus” – Mars’ Hill, where Greek mythology taught Mars stood trial before Neptune. This was the Supreme Court of Greece.

- 17:21 – “tell of to hear some new thing” – This is their hub of contemporary thought, much as ours would be TV or radio.
- Many Christians choose the latest fads and newest things, heaping up for themselves those who speak what their itching ears want to hear. (2 Tim. 4:3)
 - Karl Marx believed that if you controlled the poets and musicians of country that you could control the entire country.
- 17:22 – “religious” – The Greek pantheon had many gods.
- Paul was, at one point in his life, very religious. But he had exchanged that for Christ.
- 17:23 – “your worship” – or “devotions.” They may have been sincere, but they are sincerely wrong.
- Paul doesn’t ridicule or humiliate them. He commends them for their sincere effort. But he will now direct that effort to the truth.
 - “the unknown God” – They didn’t want to miss one.
 - He announced that since they acknowledged their ignorance of the divine nature, he would tell them the truth about it.
- 17:24-28 – Paul doesn’t go back to the OT, he goes all the way back to Creation.
- Paul notes God’s creation (v. 24), sustaining (v. 25), restraining (v. 26), and provision (v. 28).
- 17:24 – “does not dwell in temples” – Solomon recognized the same with the Temple. (1 Kings 8:27)
- Church buildings are not “the house of God,” churches are. And a church is a collection of saved people. (1 Cor. 6:19)
- 17:25 – “men’s hands” – or “men’s handiwork.” Our minds, hands, material possessions, and creations are not what God is looking for. He is looking for a relationship with us.
- If God needs something from me, that makes me His god.
 - The ministry should not be emphasizing what you can do for God, but what God has done for us. Our service to God is only in response to what He has already done for us.
 - “breath” – Belshazzar was told that his very breath was in the hands of God. (Dan. 5:23)
- 17:26 – “one blood” – We all have the same grandfather, Noah.
- Racism makes no sense when viewed in this light.
 - “determined the pre-appointed times” – God knows all of our beginnings and endings.
- 17:27 – “He is not far from each one of us” – God is omnipresent. But even more, He manifests His presence to us by His Son and His Spirit. (Matt. 28:20; John 1:18)
- God is not a localized deity, as many of the Greeks would have believed.
- 17:28 – “your own poets” – Eratus and Cleanthes.
- Paul must have continued to read the influential writings of the day.
 - “His offspring” – He has given each of us life.
 - But for a fallen and sinful humanity, we are prodigal children.
 - We are God’s fallen children, not a higher evolution of ape. We find out who we are by looking to God, not by looking at nature and creation.
- 17:29 – “man’s devising” – We become like the gods we worship. (Ps. 115)

17:30 – “ignorance” – Lit. “not knowing, lacking knowledge.”

- “God overlooked” – Many mistake the patience of God with impotence or approval.
- “repent” – (Greek “metanoia”) Lit. “make a U-turn.” He is asking for life-change, not just getting knowledge. (see v.21)

17:31 – “raising Him from the dead” – The reality of Christianity hinges on the resurrection.

17:32 – “some mocked” – The natural intellect mocks the spiritual.

- “God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise.” (1 Cor. 1:27)
- “hear you again” – Some procrastinate in eternal things.

17:34 – “Dionysius the Areopagite” – Dionysius was likely one of the 12 judges of Mars Hill.

- Church history notes that a church came to be established in Athens at a later time and Dionysius served as its first bishop.

Chapter 18:

18:1 – “Corinth” – A city with 200,000 people. It was located 50 miles from Athens, and served as an intellectual and commercial center. It was highly immoral with over 1,000 free temple prostitutes.

- Paul’s resolve upon entering Corinth was to know nothing but Christ. (1 Cor. 2:1-5)

18:2 – “Aquila...Priscilla” – We are not told if they were believers before meeting Paul. (Rom. 16:3; 1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Tim. 4:19)

- “Claudius” – The order was given in 49 AD due to disturbances Jews had involving Christ.

18:3 – “stayed” – Paul ends up staying there about 18 months (v. 11).

- This is the second longest stay in one city next to Ephesus. (Acts 19:10)
- “occupation” – Apart from your family, your workplace is your first mission field.
- “tentmakers” – Paul supported himself rather than require it from the people he was serving. (2 Cor. 11:7; 2 Thess. 3:8-9)
- Jewish saying, “If you don’t teach your child a trade, then you teach him to steal.”

18:5 – “compelled” – God stirs Paul with a spiritual pressure.

- Silas and Timothy bring encouragement of God’s work in Macedonia and money from the Philippians. (Phil. 4:17)

18:6 – “opposed him” – Lit. “set themselves in battle array, entrenched.”

- “I am clean” – We are not responsible for the receiving, but the sharing of the Word. (Ezek. 33:4; 2 Thess. 3:8-9)
- We do not share the gospel to alleviate our guilt or responsibility, but out of love for others and obedience to God.

18:7 – “next door to the synagogue” – Paul is hosted next door to speak to the Gentiles.

18:8 – “Crispus” – He was one of the few Paul had personally baptized. (1 Cor. 1:14)

18:9 – “afraid” – After Crispus gets saved, Paul turns to the Gentiles. It’s typical that when Paul goes to the Gentiles and they start responding, then Jews to turn on him.

- “do not keep silent” – The gospel is meant to be spoken and shared.

- 18:10 – “with you” – God’s presence is the answer to all fear in the Bible. Fear has to do with a sense of loss, but God’s presence is never lost. (Matt. 28:20)
- “many people” – Even in the very immoral Corinth.
- 18:11 – “teaching the word” – Paul knew what to teach.
- 18:12 – “Gallio” – He was bother to Seneca, an advisor of Caesar Nero.
- Seneca called Gallio a very kind and gentle man.
 - Gallio served in 51/52 AD.
 - “the judgment seat” – The ruins of this judgment seat still exist to this day.
- 18:14 – “Paul was about to open his mouth” – Paul will not need to defend himself in this matter.
- 18:15 – “I do not want to be a judge in such matters” – Gallio refuses to allow Rome to exert power over free religion.
- 18:17 – “Sosthenes” – He took over after Crispus got saved. He later gets saved as well. (1 Cor. 1:1)
- “beat him” – This mob scene gets carried away in driving the Jews from Gallio’s court.
- 18:18 – “vow” – Likely the Nazirite vow which went 30 days without meat or wine, and was marked by shaving the head to begin and end. The vow concluded in Jerusalem.
- 18:19 – “Ephesus” – A city of 300,000 people. Ephesus was a religious center with the Temple to Diana, one of the Seven Wonders of the World. It also served as a commercial center with seaport-banking done in the temple courts.
- 18:20 – “stay a longer time” – Paul had to leave to fulfill his vow, so Priscilla and Aquila stayed.
- The letter to the Ephesians entered the heights of God’s work. They desired to learn.
 - Ephesus was one of the few cities that wanted Paul to stay longer.
- 18:21 – “God willing” – A statement of humility. (James 4:13-15)
- 18:23 – “he departed” – This will be the last time Paul will be in Antioch.
- Luke writes this in terse statements to carry the sense of haste in Paul’s journey.
- 18:24 – “Alexandria” – The second most influential city in the Roman Empire at the time.
- Alexandria was known for a library that contained 700,000 books.
- 18:25 – “fervent” – Lit. “boiling.”
- “accurately” – Lit. “diligently, exactly.”
 - “accurately...knew only” – His teaching was accurate, but incomplete.
 - Apollos was faithful to share what he did know, so God gave him more to share.
- 18:26 – “took him” – They take him aside privately so as not to embarrass him.
- Aquila and Priscilla can mentor Apollos in the truth, but they leave the teaching to Apollos.
 - “more accurately” – Apollos has the humility to learn from these lowly tentmakers.

18:27 – “greatly helped those who had believed” – Apollos becomes a powerful teacher as an educated man given to the grace of God. (1 Cor. 1:12; 3:5-6)

18:28 – “that Jesus is the Christ” – Bringing people to Jesus is the goal of our ministries.

Chapter 19:

19:1 – “came to Ephesus” – After fulfilling his obligations in Jerusalem, Paul returns to Ephesus as he intended to do. (Acts 18:21)

- “disciples” – In Acts, this is always the word speaking of believers. (Eph. 1:12-13)
 - Like Apollos in Ephesus, they have a limited understanding of the work of Jesus on the cross and in the resurrection. (Acts 18:25)
 - Spirit will come “upon” them in v. 6. (Eph. 5:18)

19:2 – “when you believed” – or “since you believed.” The grammar seems to support both interpretations.

- Paul must see some lack in the Ephesian believers that he was accustomed to see in believers he has disciplined.
- Paul expected them to know when they were filled with the Spirit.

19:3 – “John’s baptism” – A baptism unto repentance.

19:5 – “baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” – They are clearly believers in Jesus at this point.

19:6 – “upon” – (Greek “epi”) Lit. “overflow.” This is the supernatural empowering to live the life of Christ and properly communicate the truth of the gospel.

- “they spoke with tongues” – This is the last instance of speaking in tongues in Acts.

19:8 – “spoke” – (Greek “dialeghomenos”) Lit. “dialogued.” He put questions to them and received their answers.

- “reasoning and persuading” – Paul appeals to their mind and teaches for a change in their will.

19:9 – “the Way” – Referring to Christians. (John 14:6)

- “withdrew the disciples” – Paul could see the conflict coming and gets the believers out of the way.
- “Tyrannus” – Paul rented his building during siesta time (2-4 pm) for 2 years.
 - After those 2 years, Paul could testify to the Ephesian believers that he had “not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.” (Acts 20:27)

19:10 – “all who dwelt in Asia” – Effective teaching.

- 1Cor. 16:8-9 – “great and effectual door...and many adversaries.”
- The churches of Revelation 2-3 spin off from the church at Ephesus.
- Paul stayed in Ephesus a total of 3 years.

19:11 – “God worked unusual miracles” – The power is not Paul’s to wield; Paul is God’s to wield.

- “unusual” – lit. “notable.”

19:12 – “handkerchiefs” – lit. “sweatbands,” Paul’s work clothes.

- This happens to be their faith-in-action point this time, like the hem of Jesus’ robe for the woman with the flow of blood. (Matt. 9:20)

- 19:13 – “exorcists” – Josephus said they used Solomon’s name in incantations.
- There is a lot of superstition and spiritualism in Ephesus.
- 19:14 – “Jewish chief priest” – Satan is not intimidated by religion. Satan will spend eternity with a lot of religious people.
- 19:15 – “Jesus I know” – (Greek “gnosco”) lit. “to know from experience.”
- “Paul I know” – lit. “to be heard of, to be familiar with.”
 - Jesus is not a formula or magic code, as some use “in the name of Jesus.”
 - Nobody can work under another’s power, authority, or anointing. The quickest way to ministry failure is to imitate another’s ministry or anointing.
- 19:17 – “fear” – or “terror.” The reality of the spiritual realm is revealed to them.
- “Jesus was magnified” – He has His ways; using naked, bitten, and beaten exorcists.
- 19:19 – “magic” – Lit. “impertinent things.” Translated “busy bodies” in 2 Thess. 3:11 and 1 Tim. 5:13.
- “burned them” – They are burning bridges to their life before Christ.
 - “50,000 pieces of silver” – 50,000 days’ wages, wages of 150 men for one year.
 - Repentance looks like something.
- 19:20 – “the word of the Lord grew mightily” – As the things that inhibit God’s word are removed, God’s word then finds freer course to run and prevails.
- “mightily” – Lit. “with resistless and overpowering strength.”
- 19:22 – “Erastus” – Corinth’s treasurer. He is sent to gather the contribution for the believers in Jerusalem.
- 19:24 – “silver shrines” – Tourist items. (Demand dried up. This is not a supply problem.)
- “Diana” – or Artemis. It was an ugly meteor that looked like a 30 breasted woman.
 - “no small profit” – The riot in Philippi was financially motivated as well. (Acts 16:19)
- 19:25 – “prosperity” – This is more than just livelihood. They are wealthy individuals.
- 19:26 – “almost all Asia” – Good testimony of the reach of the Gospel.
- “not gods which are made with hands” – That statement seems to be self-evident.
- 19:27 – “temple of Diana” – 425 ft. long, 220 ft. wide, with 127 marble columns measuring 62 ft. high and spaced less than 4 ft. apart.
- 19:28 – “Great is Diana” – One lie multiplied by 25,000 voices never becomes a truth.
- 19:29 – “theater” – Amphitheatre seated 25,000 people.
- They may intend to have Paul fight with beasts in the theater.
 - “Gaius” – He is a convert and host of Paul in Corinth.
- 19:30 – “Paul wanted to go in” – He wanted to take the pressure off of Gaius and Aristarchus. (v. 29)

- 19:31 – “officials of Asia” – Roman members of the council elected to promote the worship of the emperor. Paul had friends in this high circle.
- 19:32 – “did not know why they had come together” – They are simply chasing the mob.
- 19:33 – “putting him forward” – They want to disassociate from Paul so the Jews wouldn’t be blamed for the uproar.
- “Alexander” – Is it the same with the Alexander in 1 Tim. 1:19-20 and/or 2 Tim.4:14?
- 19:35 – “city clerk” – He is the highest Roman official at Ephesus. He served as a scribe between Ephesus and Rome.
- “fell down from heaven” – They thought Zeus threw Diana from the sky.
- 19:37 – “neither robbers of your temples nor blasphemers of your goddess” – Paul didn’t put anyone down. He only came to lift up Christ.
- We separate to God to be separated from the world.
- 19:40 – “called in question” – Their status as a Roman city could be revoked because of this uproar. Romans cities were not allowed to threaten the peace of Rome.

Chapter 20:

- 20:1 – “Paul called the disciples to himself” – Paul has spent nearly three years with these believers.
- 20:2 – “to Greece” – Paul writes the letters of 2 Corinthians and Romans while in Greece.
- Paul is visiting the surrounding churches to encourage the believers and take up a collection for the Christians in Jerusalem.
- 20:3 – “three months” – This was likely at Corinth, where Paul spent the winter months.
- “decided to return through Macedonia” – Paul takes a longer route overland to avoid the Jews who are plotting to kill him.
- 20:4 – “accompanied him” – The churches are sending representatives with Paul as he carries the monetary gift from the Gentile churches back to Jerusalem. They would help keep Paul safe with the money on the journey. They would also keep Paul accountable with those resources. But most of all, they would show unity with the Jewish believers in Jerusalem as they delivered the money to them with Paul.
- 20:6 – “we sailed” – Luke is back in the picture.
- “five days” – This trip only took 2 days in the other direction. (Acts 16:11)
 - “Troas” – At Troas, Paul expected to meet up with Titus, who was returning with a report from the church at Corinth.
- 20:7 – “first day of the week” – Sunday. (Col. 2:16-17)
- The Sabbath is the 7th day of the week.
 - “to break bread” – They are receiving Communion together.
 - They would often receive Communion as a part of their Agape Feasts. (1 Cor. 11)
 - “until midnight” – Paul knows that he won’t see them again, so he speaks a long time.

20:9 – “Eutychus” – name means “fortunate.”

- “taken up dead” – Dr. Luke pronounces him dead.

20:10 – “fell on him” – Like Elijah and Elisha in the OT. (1 Kings 17:21; 2 Kings 4:34)

- “trouble not yourselves” – They have likely already started the mourning and wailing.

20:12 – “young man in alive” – Eutychus is a living sermon on the resurrection of the dead.

20:16 – “he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem” – Paul knew that it would be hard to get away from the church at Ephesus quickly, so he avoided going there to get to Jerusalem on time.

- “Pentecost” – Paul intends to be in Jerusalem for a Feast.

20:17 – “Miletus” – Located 30 miles south of Ephesus.

- “called for the elders” – Paul meets the elders of Ephesus one last time.
 - The church at Ephesus has hard times coming. (Rev. 2:4-5)

20:18 – “what manner I always lived” – Paul walked what he talked. He was an example.

- Rom. 15:18 – “dare not speak...which Christ has not accomplished through me.”

20:19 – “serving” – (Greek “duelous”) Lit. “slaving.” He kept none of his rights.

- “serving the Lord” – His ministry served God first. The people were secondary.
- “humility” – The singular trait of anyone who has ever encountered the living God.
- “with many tears” – “Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy.” (Ps. 126:5)

20:21 – “repentance...and faith” – They go together. Relationship with God involves turning from and turning to.

20:22 – “bound in the spirit” – Paul had a duty to Christ born out of love for Christ.

- “For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge this: that if One died for all, then all died.” (2 Cor. 5:14)

20:23 – “chains and tribulations await me” – Paul knew that suffering and difficulty was ahead of him. (Acts 9:16)

20:24 – “none of these things move me” – If there’s anything that can be removed from our lives and keep us from finishing our course, we’re holding it more closely than our relationship with God.

- “finish my race with joy” – Paul is less concerned about his own well-being than with finishing his work.
 - If you don’t have anything worth dying for, don’t have anything worth living for.
 - To “finish my race” is to hear “Well done, good and faithful servant.” “No life can be considered a success that does not hear those words at the end” – Damian Kyle.
- “my race” – We all have a race and they are all different.
- “the ministry which I have received” – Real ministry is God-given and God-originating. We only want to do our appointed work. (Eph. 2:10)

20:25 – “see my face no more” – Paul must say this with a heavy heart.

20:26 – “innocent” – Because he simply taught the whole Word of God. (Ezek. 33:4)

- 20:27 – “shunned” – Paul would have had to shrug off that calling to do something else.
- “the whole counsel of God” – Simple teach the Word of God. Paul didn’t add to or take from the Scriptures.
 - It is natural to “by accident” overemphasize or de-emphasize some aspect of God.
 - If we are not careful, we will misrepresent Him. (Num. 20:12)
- 20:28 – “take heed to yourselves” – First priority. (“Stricter judgment” – James 3:1.)
- Private communion must come before public service. You cannot give what you do not have. You cannot lead where you have not been.
 - Acts 13:2 – “Separate to Me...for the work to which I have called.”
 - “overseers” – also called “shepherds” (or pastors) and “elders.”
 - “shepherd” – “feed” (KJV). Shepherding God’s flock means feeding and tending. (John 21:15-17)
 - “Shepherd the flock...serving as overseers.” (1 Pet. 5:2)
 - A shepherd is aware of the danger that sheep are in due to the ravaging wolves.
 - “purchased with His own blood” – The Church is God’s. He paid for it in the blood of Christ.
 - “purchased” – Lit. “to make around oneself, to make it one’s possession.”
- 20:29-31 – “not sparing the flock...draw away disciples” – Trouble from without (savage wolves) and from within (men will rise up).
- “savage wolves” – You can tell wolves by what they eat. (Mt. 7:1-6, 13-23; 2 Pet. 2:1-3)
 - “men will rise up” – Men with selfish ambition will seek opportunity to take power and position to themselves.
 - A pastor that feeds the sheep without warning the sheep is only fattening them up to be eaten of wolves.
 - Paul was willing to mention these guys by name. (1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 1:15; 4:14)
- 20:31 – “remember” – Ephesus will stumble.
- “return to your first love...” (Rev. 2:1-7)
- 20:32 – “I commend you to God” – Paul turns them over to God and His Word, which are enough to sustain them.
- “the word of His grace” – “Ministers, in preaching the word of grace, must aim at their own edification as well as at the edification of others” – Matthew Henry.
 - “It’s good that the heart be established by grace...” (Heb. 13:9)
 - “grow in the grace and knowledge of...Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18)
- 20:33 – “coveted no one’s silver” – Paul is taking ground from the false teachers. (Num. 16:15; 1 Sam. 12:3-5)
- Don’t steal Jesus’ blood money!
 - “Make it difficult to take anything from the body of Christ.” - Joe Focht
- 20:35 – “It is more blessed to give” – That means God has blessed you with more than mere survival.
- Chuck Smith considered this verse to be the basic philosophy of Calvary Chapel.

Chapter 21:

21:1 – “we” – Paul, Luke, and at least seven other men.

- “departed from them” – Lit. “torn away from them.”

21:2 – “finding a ship” – Paul finds a ship sailing directly to Phoenicia, located about 400 miles.

21:3 – “Tyre” – Southern Lebanon.

21:4 – “finding disciples” – Paul might not have known they were there. We have no record of his previous ministry in that city.

- “finding” – Lit. “sought out.” This is under Paul’s initiative,
- “They told Paul” – Lit. “They kept on telling Paul.”
- “through the Spirit” – Both instructions, to go to Jerusalem and not to go, are from the same Spirit. (Acts 20:22)
 - God seems to be preparing Paul for Jerusalem, not keeping him from it.

21:8 – “Philip the evangelist” – This is a title used only here and in Eph. 4:11 and 2 Tim. 4:5.

- “one of the seven” – Philip worked with Stephen, and now faces Saul/Paul.
 - The last time we saw Philip, he had baptized the Ethiopian eunuch. (Acts 8:40)

21:9 – “virgin daughters who prophesied” – They were morally pure and spiritually strong.

- Scholars believe they were less than 16 years old at this time, as most young women would be married by 16.

21:10 – “Agabus” – He has a proven track record in the prophetic ministry. (Acts 11:28)

21:11 – “bind the man who owns this belt” – Agabus’ prophecy serves to warn and prepare Paul, not dissuade him.

- Paul already knew persecutions were waiting. This is confirmation. (Acts 20:23; 21:4)

21:12 – “we” – Agabus, Luke, Paul’s travel companions, Philip, and his daughters. These are all spiritual individuals that Paul would trust.

- “pleaded with him not to go” – There is room in the Body of Christ to differ.
 - We are all expected to personally discern our course in the midst of a spiritual community.

21:13 – “I am ready...to die” – It’s easy to be a martyr when you’re already dead.

- “I am ready” – Lit. “I stand at a readiness.” This is as a soldier in an engagement.
- “breaking my heart” – Paul has great emotion in this.
- “breaking” – Lit. “weakening, or bending.”

21:14 – “we ceased” – They do not try to constrain Paul against his conscience.

21:15 – “to Jerusalem” – The 65 mile journey would take about 3 days.

- The population swells to 2-3 million during mandatory Feasts.

- 21:16 – “Cyprus” – Barnabas was from Cyprus (Acts 4:36) and Paul and Barnabas ministered at Cyprus on their first missionary journey (Acts 13:4).
- “an early disciple” – He may have come to the Lord at Pentecost. (Acts 2)
 - “with whom we were to lodge” – He must have been a disciple of some means to be able to accommodate Paul and a group of about 9 men traveling with him.
- 21:18 – “Paul went in with us to James” – They have come to present the offering from the Gentile churches to the believers in Jerusalem.
- 21:19 – “in detail” – Lit. “one by one.” This is a systematic missionary report.
- Paul’s missionary travels spanned 16 years and covered 12,000 miles.
- 21:20 – “they glorified the Lord” – The church leaders acknowledge the Lord in Paul’s report and the Gentile financial support.
- 21:21 – “but they” – Implies that what God was doing wasn’t enough.
- “to forsake Moses” – This claim is untrue. It’s a lie. Instead of the church leaders answering the accusation, they convince Paul to appease the crowd (and it doesn’t work).
 - This claim is based on hear-say and it’s untrue. Instead of the church leaders answering the accusation, they convince Paul to appease the crowd (and it doesn’t work).
 - Paul had previously taken a vow and fulfilled its obligations in Jerusalem. It is not that he had abandoned his Jewish heritage completely in following Jesus. (Acts 18:18,21)
 - The Church in Jerusalem seems to be weakening in its promotion of legalism. (Rom. 14)
- 21:23 – “do what we tell you” – There is no mention of prayer or obedience here.
- 21:24 – “pay their expenses” – They expect Paul to buy the 15 or more sacrifices to complete the vow.
- Paul concedes anything in attempt to share Christ. (1 Cor. 9:19-23)
 - Concessions can be made for unity in the Body of Christ as long as they do not oppose conviction to God and His Word.
- 21:25 – “concerning the Gentiles” – James makes it clear that they are not changing their position on what the Gentiles are required to do to be saved or come into fellowship with Jewish believers.
- 21:26 – “an offering should be made” – No doubt, these offerings were for thanksgiving and not for atonement.
- 21:27 – “the Jews from Asia” – These are the instigators of the conflict. In Asia, Jewish opposition pursued Paul in an attempt to make him cease his ministry.
- These are most likely unbelieving Jews.
- 21:28 – “brought Greeks into the Temple” – This is a crime punishable by death.
- 21:29 – “Trophimus the Ephesian” – Ephesus was one of the Asian cities where Paul had to leave off preaching in the Jewish synagogues to minister to the Gentiles. (Acts 19:9)
- 21:30 – “dragged him out of the temple” – They immediately start beating Paul. (v. 32)

- 21:31 – “seeking to kill him” – There is irony in religious Jews ready to murder.
 - “commander” – (Greek “chiliarch”) He led a regiment of 1,000 men.
- 21:32 – “stopped beating Paul” – Paul is saved by Roman soldiers? Where are the Church leaders now?
 - Acts 24:7 says Claudius Lysias “came with great violence.”
- 21:35 – “carried by the mob” – They are carrying him to keep him from the mob.
- 21:37 – “the barracks” – Located northwest of the Temple area, the Antonia Fortress was connected to the temple by 2 flights of stairs.
- 21:38 – “assassins” – (Greek “sacarii”) Lit. “dagger-men.” They were known to be able to kill individuals in large groups without being seen or caught.
- 21:39 – “permit me to speak to the people” – Paul still wants to share Christ with them. (Rom. 9:3)
- 21:40 – “great silence” – Paul gets one final stage to share with the Jews.
 - This calming work is of the Holy Spirit. A second ago this mob wanted to kill Paul.

Chapter 22:

- 22:1 – “Brethren and fathers” – Paul used the same words as Stephen had used many years before at the beginning of his defense. (Acts 7:2)
 - “defense” – (Greek “apologia”) We get our English word “apologetics” from this word.
 - Paul is simply sharing his testimony.
 - Paul has been waiting for this chance for some time. (Rom. 9:3; Acts 22:19)
- 22:2 – “Hebrew” – Possibly Aramaic. It surprised them that he spoke in the Jews’ language.
- 22:3 – “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus...brought up in this city” – Paul is identifying with all of the Jews, those from Jerusalem and those foreign-born.
- 22:4 – “I persecuted this Way to the death” – Paul is saying that he understands their reasons for trying to kill him as he had once done the same things.
- 22:5 – “high priest bears me witness” – Some in the audience can verify this story.
- 22:7 – “persecuting Me?” – Those who persecute the Church are directly persecuting Jesus.
- 22:8 – “Lord...Jesus of Nazareth” – The crowd doesn’t riot over the declaration that Jesus is the Lord.
- 22:9 – “voice” – Lit. “the words.” They heard sound, but couldn’t understand words. (Acts 9:7)
- 22:10 – “go into Damascus” – God gives Paul the plan one step at a time, as a shepherd leads sheep.
 - God tests Paul’s obedience by giving him a simple command.
- 22:12 – “a devout man according to the law” – Paul never mentions that Ananias was a Christian. (Acts 9:10)

- 22:14 – “the God of our fathers has chosen you” – Paul is chosen by God while on the road to Damascus to kill Christian.
- 22:15 – “His witness” – Lit. “martyr.” The big picture for Paul is to share Christ with all.
 - “all men” – To the Jew and Gentile alike.
- 22:16 – “wash away your sins” – Paul already called Christ Lord and received the Spirit. His baptism was his public stand.
- 22:17 – “when I returned to Jerusalem” – This is after two years in Arabia and after escaping the Jews in Damascus.
 - “trance” – (Greek “ecstasies”) We get our English word “ecstasy” from this word.
- 22:19 – “so I said, ‘Lord’” – Paul is arguing with the Lord, trying to tell God where he will be most effective.
 - Paul is eager to share the Gospel with the Jews in Jerusalem. God has not allowed him to do so until Acts 22.
- 22:21 – “Depart” – God doesn’t reason with Paul. He simply reiterates the command.
- 22:22 – “until this word” – Gentiles. They taught that God created Gentiles to burn in hell.
 - “not fit to live” – They renew their call to kill Paul. (Acts 21:31)
- 22:23 – “threw dust” – Rome removed all the stones out of the Temple courts to prevent stonings.
- 22:24 – “examined under scourging” – Rome would scourge prisoners to get a confession from them.
 - It probably looks like Paul is stirring up the crowd to riot against the Romans, as he has spoken to the people in the Hebrew language.
- 22:25 – “they bound him with thongs” – Merely to bind an uncondemned Roman citizen could elicit the death penalty. Scourging a Roman citizen could bring death to all involved.
 - “Is it lawful?” – There are times to use our legal rights in our dealings with the world.
- 22:27 – “are you a Roman” – One who lied about being a Roman citizen would be put to death immediately.
- 22:28 – “a large sum” – The commander purchased his citizenship from Rome.
- 22:30 – “why he was accused” – The commander must know the charges, since he bound Paul already.
 - “all their council” – This is the 5th time in Acts that the Sanhedrin hears the testimony of Jesus Christ.
 - God is very merciful. It’s about 10 years to 70 AD.

Chapter 23:

23:1 – “the council” – Paul was likely a member of the Sanhedrin at one time. How many of these men did Paul know personally?

- “Men and brethren” – He relates to them more as peers than as superiors.
- “conscience” – Lit. “to know with, to know together.” (Acts 24:16)
 - Conscience doesn’t set the standard; it only applies it.
 - “Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.” (Phil. 3:6)

23:2 – “Ananias” – High priest from 47-59 AD, he was known for cruelty and violence.

- This is not Annas, who served as high priest from 6-15 AD.
- “strike him on the mouth” – Jesus was struck in the presence of the high priest. (John 18:22)

23:3 – “God will strike you” – Paul’s flesh may be shining through here.

- Ananias will be murdered in just a few years by Jewish nationalists.
- “you whitewashed wall” – Ananias typifies the hypocrisy of religion here. (Mt. 23:27)

23:5 – “did not know” – Was this true because of Paul’s eyesight? Paul may have known Annas and Caiaphas, but was not familiar with Ananias? Paul may be responding sarcastically, pointing out the fact that Ananias was not acting like a high priest?

23:6 – “Paul perceived” – This was heavenly wisdom to bring this meeting to a close. He knew he wasn’t going to get a fair hearing, so he brings it to a close.

23:8 – “Sadducees say that there is no resurrection” – Sadducees were very liberal in their theology.

- Jesus confronted them on their theology in Matt. 22:23-32.

23:9 – “We find no evil in this man” – The Pharisees pronounce Paul innocent.

- “let us not fight against God” – Almost identical to Gamaliel’s instruction in Acts 5:38-39.

23:10 – “pulled to pieces” – The staunchest religious leaders turn into raving madmen here.

- Paul starts 3 riots in 1½ days.
- “the barracks” – Paul ends up back in prison.

23:11 – “Be of good cheer” – Lit. “be encouraged.” Paul must be very disappointed.

- “have testified” – This must be what Paul is discouraged about. (Rom. 9:3; 10:1)
 - God rewards based on obedience, not based on results.
 - Some of the greatest disappointments in ministry come from unmet expectations.
- “Rome” – Paul has no idea how he is going to get there: prisoner, shipwreck, snakebite, etc.
 - Paul’s faithfulness yields greater opportunity.

23:12 – “neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul” – They are arranging a duel to the death. Either they or Paul is going to die.

23:14 – “They came to the chief priests” – The religious leaders enter into the deception with these conspirators and murderers.

23:16 – “Paul’s sister’s son” – This is the only time we really hear of Paul’s family.

- “heard of their ambush” – God uses this young man to inform for Paul. God is using natural means to do His will. (v. 11)

23:19 – “the commander took him by the hand” – Claudius Lysias shows great sensitivity and respect towards Paul and his situation.

23:23 – “third hour” – 9 pm.

- Paul going to Caesarea with an armed escort of 470 soldiers, nearly half of Claudius’ troop.
- It is interesting that it is the orthodox religious leaders persecuting Paul and it is the corrupt Roman government protecting him.

23:24 – “mounts to set Paul on” – Paul even gets an animal to ride.

- “Felix the governor” – He was raised as a slave, but brought to power by Emperor Claudius who was friends with Felix’s brother, Pallos.
- Felix means “happy.”
- History says Felix had the “power of a tyrant with the mindset of a slave.” (Tacitus)

23:25 – “in the following manner” – We get a summation of the letter.

23:27 – “learned that he was a Roman” – Just prior to scourging him. (Acts 22:25)

- This letter conveniently paints Claudius Lysias in the best light.

23:31-33 – “brought him” – They are traveling 35 miles through the night and an additional 27 miles the next day.

23:33 – “Caesarea” – Would Philip or any of the other believers there visit Paul? (Acts 21:10-14)

23:35 – “Praetorium” – Paul is under house arrest. This is not a prison, but a palace.

- Paul will be here 2 years.

Chapter 24:

24:1 – “came down” – Ananias and the Jewish religious leaders travel 60 miles from Jerusalem to Caesarea to make their case against Paul.

- “orator” – They don’t have evidence, so they have to hire a good lawyer.
- This entire presentation is a sham. The Jews and Romans hated each other.

24:2 – “we enjoy great peace” – This is a lie. Felix was notorious for being brutal and lustful.

24:5 – “a plague” – This speaks of Paul as contagious and dangerous.

- “dissension” – This was a very important charge before the Romans, as the Jews often caused riots that had to be put down by force.
- “sect of the Nazarenes” – He is trying to disparage Paul and his work.
- “Nazarenes” – This is the only place in the NT where the term “Nazarene” is used of the followers of Jesus; elsewhere it is used of only Jesus Himself.

24:7 – “great violence” – He doesn’t add the reason why Lysias came with force. They were beating Paul to death.

- Tertullus is trying to earn sympathy for their cause by claiming police brutality.

24:8 – “things of which we accuse” – But they haven’t really brought a charge or evidence of a crime.

24:10 – “for many years” – Felix had served as governor for 6-7 years by this time.

24:11 – “you may ascertain that it was no more than twelve days” – Felix would be on alert during the Jewish feasts, as they would be times the Jews would tend to riot.

24:14 – “this I confess” – Paul is issuing a confession.

- “the Way” – Jesus said He was “the way.” (John 14:6) And because of the exclusivity of their faith, the popular culture attempts to marginalize the Truth and call it a sect.
- “believing all things which are written in the Law” – Paul actually holds to the truth of the Scriptures more fully than do the Jewish religious leaders.
 - Jesus said, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.” (Matt. 5:17)

24:15 – “there will be a resurrection” – Paul knows there is a bigger trial coming. And he has hope in that judgment.

- “both of the just and the unjust” – Most Jews accepted the doctrine of a common resurrection. But the NT delineate between a resurrection to life and a resurrection to death. (Acts 1:22)

24:16 – “This being so” – Paul’s belief in a resurrection motivated the way he lived his life.

- “a conscience void of offense” – He did everything with the intent to please God. (Acts 23:1)
 - The key to living a godly life is deciding beforehand that you will be willing to do whatever is right in the given situation before weighing in how it will affect you.

24:17 – “bring alms and offerings” – The financial gift from the Gentile churches to the believers in Jerusalem.

24:19 – “ought to have been here” – Roman law required eyewitnesses.

- Paul should have the right to face his accusers.

24:22 – “more accurate knowledge of the Way” – Felix seems to be under conviction.

- Felix had a Jewish wife, Drusilla.
- “When Lysias the commander comes” – Felix wants to hear from Lysias before deciding the case.
 - Felix seems to have a habit of procrastinating.

24:23 – “keep Paul” – Paul will be in Roman custody in Caesarea for 2 years.

- Paul may have written Hebrews during that time.

- 24:24 – “Drusilla” – She was the daughter of Herod Agrippa I, sister of Agrippa II. (Acts 25:13)
- Felix seduced Drusilla from her first husband, Azizus, king of Emesa. She was his third wife.
 - Bruce says Drusilla was 16-19 years old at this time.
 - “concerning the faith in Christ” – They inquire of Paul regarding the Christian faith.
 - Rather than trying to win his release from prison, Paul talks with Felix about God and his need for salvation.
 - “Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.” (Luke 12:11-12)
- 24:25 – “righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come” – Paul doesn’t just tell Felix and Drusilla the easy words of the gospel. He brings them to their sin and their need for God first.
- Paul gets very specific and pointed. He must speak what the Holy Spirit prompts him to say.
 - “righteousness” – The righteous standard of God can only be met in Christ.
 - “self-control” – An obvious sin in Felix and Drusilla, but also a fruit of God’s Spirit. (Gal. 5:23)
 - “judgment to come” – We will all stand face-to-face before a Holy God someday.
 - “trembled” – Lit. “frightened or afraid.”
 - God expects Drusilla, at less than 20 years old, to make an informed decision about Him.
 - “convenient season” – It never comes.
 - “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” (2 Cor. 6:2)
 - Two years later, the Jews of Caesarea revolt against the Greeks. Felix puts down the revolt harshly then sacks the homes of the Jews, leading to his removal.
 - Drusilla leaves him, marries another, and dies before the age of 30 in Pompeii.
- 24:26 – “money would be given” – He’s looking for a bribe. (v. 17)
- “more often” – They had multiple conversations.
- 24:27 – “two years” – God has promised to get Paul to Rome, but obviously in God’s time.
- These two years would be comparatively comfortable and restful in light of what came before and what comes after for Paul.
 - “Festus succeeded Felix” – The Jews had rioted against the Romans at Caesarea. Felix brutally puts down the riot and then sacks the homes of the Jews and commanded that their women be raped. As a result, Rome removes him from power and Festus takes his place.
 - “wanting to do the Jews a favor” – He seems to hope that this will keep the Jews from pressing Rome for his removal.

Chapter 25:

- 25:1 – “after three days” – Festus wastes no time assessing the volatile situation of his jurisdiction.
- “to Jerusalem” – Festus knows very little about the Jewish religion.
 - Festus seems to be gracious, but relatively ignorant.
 - Festus was 70 years old when he came into office and will die just 2 years later.
- 25:2 – “high priest” – His name was Ishmael.
- Ishmael took over for Jonathon, whom Felix murdered. Jonathon followed Ananias after he was killed by the Jewish rebels.
 - “informed him against Paul” – After waiting two years under Felix’s oversight, the Jews immediately take opportunity to try to get Paul killed.

- 25:3 – “lay in ambush along to the road to kill him” – The plot to kill Paul two years earlier (Acts 23:12) was led by Jewish rebels. Now here the religious leaders are taking up the effort to kill Paul.
- 25:7 – “which they could not prove” – They are making claims without any evidence.
- 25:9 – “wanting to do the Jews a favor” – Festus knows the Jews were hard to control, so he is looking to do something that would earn him favor in their eyes. (v. 3)
- “Are you willing” – Roman law wouldn’t allow the transfer of a trial without the prisoner’s okay.
- 25:11 – “appeal to Caesar” – This was the right of every Roman not accused of 1st degree murder, rape, or kidnap.
- Paul did not trust Festus to administrate his case without being manipulated by the Jews. So he takes the case out of Festus’ hands and appeals directly to Caesar.
 - “Caesar” – The Caesar at this time was Nero.
 - Historically, the first five years of Nero’s reign were sound and peaceable. Nero was surrounded by excellent counsellors early in his reign and he had not yet come into conflict with the Christian “problem” in the empire.
- 25:12 – “conferred with the council” – Festus would have liked to keep Paul in Caesarea. This is making it look like he can’t do his job properly as he is sending Paul to Caesar without charges. (Acts 26:32)
- Later Festus will confer with Agrippa II to get some advice on how to present this to Caesar. (Acts 25:13-16)
 - “To Caesar you shall go” – Jesus promised Paul that he would get to Rome. (Acts 23:11) This is the step that makes that promise happen.
- 25:13 – “Agrippa” – This is Herod Agrippa II. He was the son of Herod Agrippa I (Acts 12) and half-brother of Drusilla (Acts 24:24). He was also the grandson of Herod the Great (Matt. 2).
- He was 17 years old at the death of his father in 44 AD. In 70 AD, when Jerusalem fell, he sided with the Romans. He died in 100 AD; the last of the Herods.
 - “Bernice” – She was the half-sister and (not-so) secret lover of Agrippa II. She was originally married to her uncle, Herod of Chalcis, but left him for Agrippa II. She later married Polemon, king of Cilicia, in an effort to silence rumors that she was living in incest with Agrippa II.
- 25:18 – “no accusation” – They had no evidence. (v. 7)
- 25:19 – “a certain Jesus” – Festus is unaware of what has happened between Jesus and the Jews.
- “whom Paul affirmed to be alive” – He is aware of Paul’s teaching of the resurrection of Jesus.
- 25:21 – “Augustus” – This is another title for Caesar.
- Historically, this title is only coming into use around this time as Caesars are coming to be recognized as a deity.
- 25:22 – “you shall hear him” – Paul had already appealed to Caesar. This hearing is only to “specify the charges.” (v. 27)
- 25:23 – “great pomp” – This is a remarkable display of Roman power and authority given the lack of understanding on this case.

25:24 – “all the men who are here present with us” – Paul will be given the chance to share before Governor Festus, King Agrippa II, Bernice, and many citizens of Caesarea.

25:25 – “committed nothing deserving of death” – Festus admits Paul’s innocence.

- This was also the testimony of Lysias (Acts 23:29), Felix (Acts 24:25), and Agrippa II (Acts 26:32).

Chapter 26:

26:2 – “today I shall answer for myself” – This is the longest recorded defense of Paul in the book of Acts. In it he says nothing about his innocence and unjust imprisonment. (Luke 12:11-12)

26:3 – “expert in all customs and questions” – Agrippa II had studied Judaism and the Scriptures.

- “hear me patiently” – Paul intends to give a full account and a long sermon.
- “patiently” – (Greek “makrothymos”) Lit. “long-suffering, or long to get hot.”

26:5 – “a Pharisee” – Agrippa II was very familiar with the Jewish religious leadership with its strictness and its corruption.

26:6 – “for the hope of the promise” – This hope is why Paul is standing here today.

- “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Col. 1:27)

26:7 – “twelve tribes” – The ten tribes were never lost to God.

26:8 – “thought incredible by you” – The resurrection was the stumbling block of Agrippa.

- Paul’s intention in this hearing is to win Agrippa II to Christ.
- “you” – Plural. Paul is speaking to the whole crowd.

26:10 – “the saints” – Lit. “sanctified, or set apart, ones.” All genuine believers are saints.

- “my vote” – It’s an official term of an official vote of the Sanhedrin.
- Paul’s persecution of the Church continues to hang on his conscience. (1 Tim. 1:12-15)

26:14 – “a voice speaking to me” – Paul elaborates on the account already given in Acts 9.

- “persecuting Me” – Paul notes this in every retelling of the account in Acts. (Acts 22:7)
- “goads” – The ox goad was used to clean the plow and prod on the ox.
- Paul was convicted long before he was converted.

26:15 – “Lord...Jesus” – Paul never knew Jesus as Savior apart from Him also being Lord.

26:16 – “minister” – Lit. “under-rower.” Those who row the boat from under the deck.

- “witness” – Lit. “martyr.” Witnessing is something you do with your life.
- Witnessing isn’t merely something you do, it is something you are.
- Being a servant and being a witness are closely connected.

26:18 – “open their eyes” – Christians do not walk by blind faith. Instead, they are the only ones who can really see.

- “darkness” – “Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.” (John 3:19)
- “to light” – This is contrasted with the god of this world who has blinded the eyes.
 - “If our gospel is veiled...minds the god of this age has blinded.” (2 Cor. 4:3-4)
- “by faith in Me” – All of these blessings are the result of simply and genuinely trusting Jesus.
 - “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith.’” (Rom. 1:17)
- “in Me” – Our faith is not in a doctrine, or a series of facts, or a church ceremony, or even a prayer we may have said; our faith is in a person, the Person of Jesus Christ.

26:20 – “repentance” – Lit. “to change one’s mind, to make a U-turn.”

- “works befitting repentance” – Repentance looks like something.

26:22 – “having obtained help from God” – This is the only thing that keeps Paul going.

- “saying no other things” – Paul just taught the Bible (the OT). He didn’t add to it.
- “the Prophets and Moses” – The OT testified of the Messiah, Jesus.

26:24 – “Festus said with a loud voice” – Festus interrupts Paul.

26:26 – “the king...knows these things” – Paul is convinced that Agrippa II knows what he has been saying is true.

26:27 – “Agrippa, do you believe” – Now Agrippa is on trial.

26:28 – “almost persuade me” – Agrippa gets close, but we are not sure he ever got saved.

- Bible commentators differ on the sincerity and seriousness of Agrippa II here.
- What is holding Agrippa back from making the decision to follow Jesus?
- Agrippa will be dead by 100 AD.

26:29 – “all who hear me today” – Paul hopes that they all would come to be saved.

26:30 – “the king stood up” – Agrippa ends this meeting.

26:31 – “nothing deserving of death” – This is the verdict again. (Acts 23:29; 24:25; 25:25)

26:32 – “might have been set free” – But this is how Jesus will get Paul to Rome. (Acts 23:11)

Chapter 27:

27:1 – “we” – Luke joins Paul in Caesarea and stays with him until the end. (2 Tim. 4:11)

- Luke was last seen with Paul in Jerusalem before the riots started. (Acts 21:18)
- “sail to Italy” – Paul leaves for Rome in August and arrives in March. This group spends seven months at sea.
- “Italy” – God had promised that Paul would have a witness at Rome. (Acts 19:21; 23:11)
- “other prisoners” – No doubt, some of them going to Rome to die in the Coliseum.
- “Augustan Regiment” – These are highly trained soldiers that fought with and for Caesar himself.

27:2 – “Aristarchus” – He will travel with Paul and Luke to Rome. (Acts 19:23; 20:4; Col. 4:10; Philemon 1:24)

- 27:3 – “the next day we landed at Sidon” – The travel 80 miles from Caesarea to Sidon in one day.
- “liberty” – Julius would lose his life if Paul escaped. He trusted Paul enough to give him some freedom.
- 27:6 – “Alexandrian ship” – This was a large grain ship carrying 276 people.
- A grain ship was sturdy, but it was unable to sail into the face of the wind.
- 27:9 – “Paul advised them” – Paul has already been in three ship wrecks. (2 Cor. 11:25)
- “the Fast” – Yom Kippur. The Day of Atonement was on October 5 in 59 AD.
 - “The dangerous season for sailing went from September 14 to November 11, after which all navigation on the open sea came to an end until winter was over.” (Bruce)
- 27:10 – “perceive” – Lit. “to perceive from experience.”
- “but also our lives” – No lives will be lost in this storm, but that is more God’s grace than a misspoken prophecy from Paul. (v. 22)
- 27:11 – “persuaded by the helmsman” – Julius listens to the sailor above the tentmaker.
- 27:12 – “not suitable” – Fair Havens was a boring wintering harbor.
- “Phoenix” – Only 40 miles away.
- 27:13 – “supposing that they had obtained their desire” – The enemy will be sure to provide us opportunity to obtain our desire if it would lead to our destruction.
- 27:14 – “tempestuous” – Word we get the English word “typhoon” from.
- “Euroclydon” – This is a nor’easter with the force of a hurricane.
 - This boat will be driven 500 miles across the Mediterranean Sea in about 14 days. (v. 27)
- 27:16 – “secured the skiff” – The skiff was typically pulled behind the larger boat. At this point it is likely filled with water.
- 27:17 – “cables to undergird the ship” – It is a process called “flapping.” They are basically tying the boat together.
- 27:21 – “should have listened to me” – Paul is rubbing it in with an ‘I told you so.’
- He is using this as a reason for why they should listen to him now.
- 27:22 – “but only of the ship” – They probably assumed the ship wasn’t going to make it anyway.
- 27:23 – “stood by me this night an angel of God” – They are in a storm for 2 weeks, driven out of control, and the sky is dark. They have long since lost their bearings, but God still gets to Paul.
- “an angel” – This is not Jesus this time, but a messenger from heaven.
- 27:24 – “God has granted you all those who sail with you” – Paul has been praying for them.
- 27:25 – “I believe God” – This is an amazing declaration of faith in the midst of the storm.
- “just as it was told me” – Paul is trusting the word of God.

- 27:26 – “on a certain island” – God has a plan for Malta in this storm and shipwreck.
- “If they missed Malta, there would have been nothing left but to hold on for 200 miles until they struck the Tunisian coast, and no one could have expected the ship to survive that long.” (Bruce)
- 27:27 – “Adriatic” – Lit. “Adrian.” This is the Ionian Sea.
- This is not a reference to the Adriatic Sea.
- 27:28 – “20 fathoms” – That is 120 ft.
- “15 fathoms” – That is 90 ft.
 - The sea is becoming more shallow. They are nearing land.
- 27:30 – “under pretense” – The sailors were pretending to let anchors from the bow, but in reality they were looking to get off the boat.
- Paul had told them that not a life will be lost (v. 22). They would apparently rather try to save themselves than to trust the word of God spoken through Paul.
 - These sailors will be needed to cut the anchors and hoist the sail.
- 27:31 – “Paul said to the centurion” – Paul has taken over as captain of this ship.
- 27:33 – “eaten nothing” – The conditions of the sea have made it impossible to prepare food or keep it down after it was eaten.
- 27:35 – “gave thanks to God” – Paul’s faith is on display.
- 27:38 – “lighten the ship” – Allowing them to ride higher and run aground closer to land.
- “threw out the wheat” – They are coming to the end. There is no need to keep food onboard.
- 27:41 – “ran the ship aground” – They don’t get as close to land as they would have liked.
- The prow of the boat gets stuck in the sandbar and the back of the boat takes a beating from the waves of the sea.
- 27:42 – “kill the prisoners” – If a prisoner escaped it would cost the soldier his life.
- 27:43 – “wanting to save Paul” – Julius puts his life on the line for Paul.
- “those who could swim” – Every Roman soldier was taught how to swim.
- 27:44 – “they all escaped” – Not a life was lost, as God had told Paul. (v. 22)

Chapter 28:

- 28:1 – “Malta” – means “refuge.” The island is 17 miles long by 9 miles wide.
- Paul and his travel companions have spent 2 weeks in a hurricane and were pushed 500 miles off course.
- 28:2 – “unusual kindness” – Paul is treated better by these natives than by most Jews he met in the Roman Empire.
- “cold” – They are wet, from sea and rain, and it is the beginning of November.

- 28:3 – “Paul had gathered” – Paul kept serving.
- “viper” – There are no vipers on Malta today.
 - “because of the heat” – The snake was likely hibernating. The heat of the fire would have shocked it awake.
- 28:4 – “justice does not allow” – Even the native guy-on-the-island has an awareness of divine justice.
- 28:6 – “they were expecting that he would swell up” – Everyone is watching Paul.
- “he was a god” – Peoples’ opinions are so whimsical and flippant.
 - Mark 16:18 – “they will take up serpents...no means hurt them.”
- 28:7 – “leading citizen” – This is the technical title of the Roman representative of that region.
- 28:8 – “fever” – Lit. “fevers.” Doctor Luke uses medical terms to describe the illness.
- “dysentery” – Lit. “bloody dysentery.” KJV uses “bloody flux.”
 - There is still a fever called “Malta fever” (transmitted in goat’s milk) like this today.
 - “healed” – Lit. “instantaneously healed.”
 - God goes to great lengths to reach this man.
 - Mark 16:18 – “...they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.”
- 28:9 – “healed” – This is a different word and means “received medical attention.” This may refer to Luke’s involvement as a doctor.
- 28:11 – “Twin Brothers” – Castor and Pollux were mythological sons of Zeus. They were worshipped as protectors of men on sea.
- 28:12 – “Syracuse” – The capital of the island of Sicily.
- 28:13 – “Puteoli” – Located on the southern tip of Italy’s boot, this city was the largest Roman port for Alexandrian grain ships.
- 28:14 – “brethren” – Paul lists friends he knows in Rome before he gets there. (Rom. 16)
- The church at Rome is fairly well established before Paul even gets there.
 - Paul wrote the epistle to the Romans 2-3 years earlier.
- 28:15 – “Appii Forum and Three Inns” – Located 43 and 33 miles from Rome on the Apian Way.
- “took courage” – No matter how far from home, when you find a group of fellow believers, you can be encouraged.
- 28:16 – “we came to Rome” – Paul arrives at Rome as Jesus had told him. (Acts 23:11)
- “the soldier who guarded him” – Julius hands Paul over to the Praetorian guard. (Phil. 1:13; 4:22)
- 28:17 – “Paul called the leaders of the Jews” – Paul continues his pattern of sharing with the Jews first.
- Rome may have had the third largest Jewish population of any city at that time (Jerusalem and Alexandria being larger). (Acts 18:2)
 - Caesar Nero married a “God-fearer” very sympathetic to the Jews named Poppaea Sabina.
 - “I have done nothing against our people” – Paul wanted the Jews at Rome to know that he wasn’t there to degrade the Jews at all.
 - “as a prisoner” – Paul is chained to a Roman guard as he says this to them.

- 28:20 – “for the hope of Israel I am bound” – This seems like a contradiction, but our hope is not for a release to a perfect life on earth but freedom before God.
- 28:21 – “We neither received letters” – Did the official letters from Jerusalem go down with the ship? Or were the Jews of Jerusalem simply trying to ignore Paul’s situation at this point?
- 28:22 – “concerning this sect” – Paul wrote to Rome of the Jewish rejection of the Messiah and their eventual return to favor with Messiah. (Rom. 9-11)
- 28:23 – “morning till evening” – That is a long Bible study from the OT.
 - “of the kingdom of God...concerning Jesus” – The kingdom is defined by the king.
- 28:24 – “some were persuaded...some disbelieved” – The only two categories of people.
- 28:25 – “Isaiah the prophet” – Paul will quote from Isa. 6:9-10.
 - This passage is quoted 6 times in the NT. (Matt. 13:13-15; Mark 4:12; Luke 8:10; John 12:39-40; Rom. 11:7-8)
- 28:27 – “dull” – Lit. “callous.” They are hard-hearted and it is the heart the God is looking at.
 - “Lest they should see” – This implies “against their will.”
- 28:30 – “two whole years” – Paul spends the last five years of the book of Acts either in prison or on a boat.
 - Paul wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon from Rome.
- 28:31 – “preaching” – (Greek “kerusso”) Lit. “proclaiming.”
 - “teaching” – (Greek “didasko”) Lit. “to instruct.”
 - “no one forbidding” – (Greek “akolutos”) Possibly better translated “unhindered.”
 - In the book of Acts, we have seen the gospel move from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.
 - Acts ends 63/64 AD. Paul would be set free by Nero after testifying to him; then, likely traveled to Spain. But caught by Roman soldiers and beheaded in 67/68 AD.
 - Luke stayed with Paul until the end. (2 Tim. 4:10-11)