

LESSON NUMBER 14

THE GOSPEL IS PREACHED TO THE GENTILES

Acts 11:19-26; 13:1-3

INTRODUCTION

Considerable preparation had been made for carrying the gospel to the Gentile world. (a) We may look on the conversion of Saul of Tarsus as a part of this preparation for taking the gospel to the Gentile world. *“But when it was the good pleasure of God, who separated me, even from my mother’s womb, and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles; straightway I conferred not with flesh and blood.”* (Gal. 1:15,16) Again Paul says that the other apostles saw that he had been entrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision even as Peter was entrusted with the gospel of the circumcision. Then he puts in this statement, *“For He that wrought for Peter unto the apostleship of the circumcision wrought for me also unto the Gentiles.”* (Gal. 2:7,8.) From these passages we see that it was the purpose of God even from the birth of Paul that he should preach the gospel to the Gentiles. Hence, his conversion was a part of the preparation necessary for carrying out this program of evangelization. (b) The conversion of Cornelius is a part of this preparation. Though Peter had preached on Pentecost that salvation was for all them that are afar off, the Gentiles (Acts 2:39), yet neither Peter nor the rest of the apostles understood that as fully as they should. Hence, it was necessary for God to put His stamp of approval in a miraculous way upon the conversion of a Gentile. This was done in the vision which Peter saw before going to the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:9-16), and by the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius and his household in the presence of Peter and his Jewish brethren who went along as witnesses (Acts 10:44-48). Peter used this at the Jerusalem conference to prove that the Gentiles were acceptable to God on the same condition as the Jews. He concluded his argument by saying, *“We believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in like manner as they.”* (Acts 15:11.) And then James concluded the meeting by saying that Peter had told *“how first God visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name.”* (Acts 15:14.) From these passages we learn that Cornelius was the first Gentile to be converted and that God worked these miracles to put His stamp of approval upon the acceptance of an uncircumcised Gentile into the fellowship of the church. (c) The church at Jerusalem was scattered by persecution. This was seemingly necessary in order to get the church to leave Jerusalem and go into other parts of the world. They would necessarily and naturally preach the gospel as they went. (Acts 8:4.) Having been scattered into the various parts of the earth and having established themselves in their new communities, the disciples were ready to offer the gospel to the Gentiles when the event of the conversion of Cornelius and his house reached them.

I. KEY SCRIPTURE

“And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number that believed turned to the Lord.”
(Acts 11:21)

1. The hand of the Lord was with them. (a) In miracles. Often the term *“hand of the Lord”* means that God was with His people in a miraculous way. His presence was manifested by the miracles which people were enabled to work. The hand of the Lord was with His people in Egypt when the

plagues were brought upon the Egyptians. (Ex. 9:3.) And Luke tells us that the hand of the Lord was with John the Baptist in preparing him for his ministry. (Luke 1:66.) Again, Luke tells us that the disciples prayed that they might speak the word with all boldness while the Lord stretched forth His hand to heal and that signs and wonders might be done through the name of Jesus. (Acts 4:29,30.) And Paul told the sorcerer, Bar-Jesus, that the hand of the Lord was upon him, and he should be blind for a season. (Acts 13:11.) So when we read that the hand of the Lord was with the disciples in this work at Antioch, we need not be surprised that He enabled them to work miracles in order to confirm the word which they preached. In fact this was a promise which the Lord made to His apostles. (Mark 16:17,18.) And then in verse twenty of this same chapter we are told, *“And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word by the signs that followed.”* And the writer of Hebrews tells us that the great salvation was first spoken through the Lord, and then *“was confirmed unto us by them that heard God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will.”* (Heb. 2:3,4.) (b) In providence. Not only was the Lord with His people miraculously, but He was with them providentially. He promised to be with them in the preaching of the gospel even unto the end of the world. (Matt. 28:19,20.) Paul and Barnabas recognized the presence of God with them in their work when they returned from their first missionary journey and gave a report to the church at Antioch. *“And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all things that God had done with them, and that He had opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles.”* (Acts 14:27.) From this passage we see that the apostles considered the things which had been accomplished by them as things which God had done with them. God was with them in the preaching of the gospel and in filling their needs physically and spiritually. We should always remember that God is not far from each one of us, that He gives us life, breath, and all things, and that in Him we live, and move, and have our being. (Acts 17:25-28.) (c) We may tie the hands of the Lord. This is a bold expression. But since God has chosen to do certain things through us as earthen vessels, He has limited Himself to this means of accomplishing His purposes. He has placed the *“ministry of reconciliation”* in our hands. If we work diligently and faithfully, we will be the instruments through which God can accomplish great things. But if we are unfaithful and lacking in diligence, we in a measure tie God’s hands so far as the accomplishments of the evangelization of the world is concerned. Churches with little or no program of evangelization in the community are tying the hands of God in this respect. Individuals who have the power and the opportunity to preach the gospel to the lost, but who are interested in their material welfare so that they will not give time and effort to preaching the gospel to the lost, are tying the hands of God in this respect.

2. Believers turned to the Lord. (a) Not all believers turned. Our text says *“A great number that believed turned unto the Lord.”* The term *“great number”* simply indicates a majority. If a majority turned to the Lord, what of the minority that did not turn to the Lord? Since a great number of the believers turned to the Lord, the implication is that a small number of the believers did not turn to the Lord. This necessarily implies that a person may believe and never turn to the Lord. If one is saved the moment he believes, we would have some saved people who had never turned to the Lord. But the Bible teaches that salvation comes only to those who turn to the Lord. (Isa. 53:7; Acts 3:19.) Many of the Jews believed on Jesus, but refused to turn to the Lord, so were called children of the devil. (John 8:30, 41-44.) Agrippa believed but refused to turn to the Lord. (Acts 26:28.) No one would contend that these Jews were saved or that Agrippa was a Christian. Hence, we conclude that people may believe yet never turn to the Lord. (b) The order of belief and turning. The language of our text clearly implies that people believe before they turn to the Lord. Common sense tells us that people cannot turn to the Lord until they have believed on the Lord. Hence, the order of belief and turning

to the Lord is definitely established. People must first believe and then turn to the Lord; but if people are saved the moment that they believe, it follows that they are saved before they turn to the Lord. Hence, the doctrine of salvation by faith only, or at the point of faith, cannot possibly be true. (c) What is included in the act of turning? The expression “*turned unto the Lord*” may be used in a general sense to denote the conversion of people. Paul spoke of the Thessalonians turning unto God from idols. (1 Thess. 1:9.) Yet it may be used in a specific sense as in the language of Peter, “*Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out.*” (Acts 3:19.) In this verse the word turn cannot be taken to mean repentance, for they are told in the same verse to repent. Hence, the turning is something different from, and additional to, the repentance. In Acts 2:38 believers were told to repent and be baptized for remission of their sins. In Acts 3:19 believers were told to repent and turn again that their sins might be blotted out. These two verses are parallel. The word “*turn again*” in Acts 3:19 is in the place of “*be baptized*” in Acts 2:38, so we may conclude that when these believers at Antioch “*turned unto the Lord,*” they were simply being baptized into Christ. God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. (2 Cor. 5:19.) So when we are baptized into Christ, we turn to the Lord for remission of sins, which is enjoyed in Christ. (Rom. 6:3 4; Eph. 1:7.)

II. A COMMENTARY ON ACTS 11:19-26; 13:1-3

1. Gentile Church at Antioch (Acts 11:19-21)

They therefore that were scattered abroad. By a comparison of Acts 8:4 with this verse of our text, the reader will see that the preaching of Philip, the conversion of Saul of Tarsus and of Cornelius, and Peter’s report of the conversion of Cornelius fill in the gap between Acts 8:4 and Acts 11:19. Having related these events, the writer begins in the first verse of our text where he left off at Acts 8:4 to tell us about the work of those members of the church who were scattered from Jerusalem.

Travelled as far as Phoenicia, and Cyprus, and Antioch. While, Philip went only to Samaria, others pushed on northward through Galilee into Syria. Phoenicia was a very small province of Syria. The entire length of this province was only twenty-eight miles (its greatest length was never more than 120 miles), while its width was from one to five miles. Tyre and Sidon were the two principal cities of this province. Cyprus was the largest island in the Mediterranean Sea and was situated south of Cilicia, Paul’s native province. Antioch was founded three hundred years before Christ and was named for Antiochus, the father of the founder, Seleucus Nicanor. It was farther north than Phoenicia and not very far from the city of Tarsus. Antioch was a free city, and all of its citizens entitled to the privileges of Roman citizens. Hence, they had the right of worship without molestation. “It is probable that the Christians would be regarded merely as a sect of Jews, and would be here suffered to celebrate their worship without interruption. On this account it may have been that the early Christians regarded this city as of such particular importance, because here they could find a refuge from persecution, and be permitted to worship God without molestation. This city was honored as a Roman colony, a metropolis, and an asylum.” (Barnes.)

Some ... spoke unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus. We are told in verse nineteen that some of the disciples spoke the word to none save only to Jews. These who preached to Jews only were following the customs of the apostles from the day of Pentecost until the time of the conversion of Cornelius. Some of those who were scattered abroad, “*men of Cyprus and Cyrene,*” departed from that custom and preached the gospel to Greeks. We are not told whether they knew of the conversion of Cornelius or whether they took it on themselves, under the guidance of the Spirit, to preach the

gospel to the Greeks. There is also some difference of opinion as to the meaning of the word Greeks here. Some manuscripts use the same term which is used in Acts 6:1 and is translated Grecian Jews. However, the context here forbids that translation since in verse nineteen preaching to Jews only is mentioned, and in verse twenty an evident departure from that rule is implied. The men who were doing the preaching were Hellenists, which simply means they were Greek-speaking Jews. Having lived in Grecian territory and adopted the Grecian customs and language, they were well qualified to preach the gospel to Greeks.

Preaching the Lord Jesus. Here again we have the expression, as in Acts 8:35. Preaching Jesus is the equivalent of preaching the gospel concerning Jesus. But the use of this term gives us an idea of the content of the sermons preached by these early disciples. They preached Jesus. They did not so much preach about Jesus or expound theories concerning His philosophies of life as they simply preached Jesus. They told of His birth, His baptism, His work among the people, His teaching, His death for their sins, His resurrection and ascension into glory, and His exaltation at the right hand of the Father. Then in verse twenty-one, dealt with in our key scripture, we are told of the success of these preachers among the Greeks. Many people believed and turned to the Lord because of their preaching.

2. Jewish Brethren Aid the Gentiles (Acts 11:22-26)

They sent forth Barnabas as far as Antioch. When the news of the conversion of the Greeks at Antioch reached the brethren at Jerusalem, they sent Barnabas to give them encouragement and perhaps to bring back a report to Jerusalem. The report of the conversion of Cornelius by Peter to the brethren at Jerusalem prepared these Jewish brethren to accept these reports from Antioch. We may well conclude that the Jerusalem church would not have received this report from Antioch with this enthusiasm before they learned of the conversion of Cornelius.

And had seen the grace of God. Since grace means favor, it cannot be seen; but the effects can be seen, the evidence of that grace can be seen. In this case, the conversion of the Gentiles was the effect of the grace of God. So when Barnabas saw the grace of God manifested in the conversion of these Greeks, he was glad. The attitude of Barnabas was very different from that of the average orthodox Jew. The Jews generally were jealous of the Gentiles and resented their acceptance as members of the church on the same conditions as the Jews. Paul speaks of the Jews forbidding him to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved. (1 Thess. 2:14-16.)

He exhorted them all. Barnabas was especially qualified to exhort people. In fact the word Barnabas means “*son of exhortation.*” (Acts 4:36.) His exhortation to them was to the effect that they should continue to cleave unto the Lord. The word cleave is from a Greek word which means “to keep on remaining loyal” to the Lord. The reader should notice that this is done “*with purpose of heart.*” People do not cleave unto the Lord or remain loyal continually by accident. Such loyalty and faithfulness to the Lord are attained only through a purpose formed in the heart. It was this purpose of heart which enabled Daniel to attain unto that high state of perfection which characterized him. (Dan. 1:8.)

For he was a good man. Here we have a description of the character of Barnabas. The first thing said about him is that he was a good man. True goodness consists of two things. First, freedom from faults, freedom from impurities; second, a determination to do that which is good. Too many people have the idea that goodness consists in refraining from evil. That is a part of goodness, but only a part.

Those who refrain from evil, but do not have a definite program of goodness, cannot qualify as good people. To be full of the Holy Spirit simply meant to be completely dominated by the Holy Spirit, controlled and directed in his life by the Holy Spirit. Barnabas was also full of faith. He believed in God and in Jesus as the Son of God. He accepted the gospel as the word of God and trusted in God for his salvation through Christ in obedience to the commandments of the gospel. Like the ancient worthies mentioned in Hebrews 11, Barnabas was characterized by his faith in God and in Jesus Christ.

He went forth to Tarsus to seek for Saul. Sometime after his conversion Saul of Tarsus spent time in Arabia. (Gal. 1:17,18) When Paul came back from Arabia, he went to Jerusalem, but the brethren were slow to receive him. It was there that Barnabas brought him to the apostles and told them of his conversion and led the brethren to receive him. (Acts 9:26-30.) Knowing that the Jews would not listen to Paul, the Lord appeared to him and told him to leave Jerusalem quickly, for He would send him unto the Gentiles. (Acts 22:17-21.) When he left Jerusalem, he went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia. (Gal. 1:21) Tarsus was Paul's home town in the province of Cilicia, and it was there that Barnabas found him.

For a whole year they were gathered together with the church. These two great preachers spent a year teaching the church at Antioch. Within a very few months after their establishment, elders were appointed in the churches of Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Pisidia. (Acts 14:21-23.) Surely no one can doubt that there were elders in this church at Antioch when Paul and Barnabas were teaching the church. Yet there are some among us who affirm that it is sinful for a church to maintain men who spend all their time teaching the church, after elders have been selected and appointed for that church. Elders need teaching if they are to grow in the knowledge of the gospel, and Paul and Barnabas would spend some of their time developing these elders as well as other members of the church. There were elders in the church at Ephesus and Paul worked with them for the space of three years night and day. (Acts 20:31)

Disciples were called Christians first in Antioch. There has been much discussion as to the origin of the name Christian. The statement that it was given in derision has no foundation. The Greek word translated were called usually means to be "divinely commanded, admonished, instructed," and is usually translated by the English "warned of God." (Matt. 2:13,22; Acts 10:22; Heb. 8:5; 11:7) Perhaps the word in our text means "called of God," and implies that these inspired teachers gave the name to the disciples. However, Thayer gives a third meaning, "to assume or take to oneself a name from one's public business, to receive a name or title, be called," and then gives Acts 11:26, Rom. 7:3 as instances of its use where it has this meaning. But Paul gave the name divine sanction when he said he would be glad to make Agrippa a Christian. (Acts 26:28,29.) And Peter gave the name divine sanction when he said, "If a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name." (1 Pet. 4:16.)

3. Gentile Church Engages in Missions (Acts 13:1-3)

In the church that was there, prophets and teachers. A prophet was one who spoke exhortation, edification, and consolation as the Spirit moved him. (1 Cor. 14:3.) This was one of the nine gifts of the Spirit given through the laying on of apostles' hands. (1 Cor. 12:7-11.) Just how the teachers differed from the prophets we do not know; however, we do know that teachers were set in the church by divine authority as well as the prophets. (1 Cor. 12:28,29.) We also know that the work of teachers

was for the perfecting of the saints. (Eph. 4:11-16.) Of the prophets and teachers named we know but very little, except Barnabas and Saul.

They ministered to the Lord, and fasted. These men were prophets and teachers. The word for minister here comes from a Greek word which means “to do a service, perform a work.” Thayer says it is used of “Christians serving Christ, whether by prayer, or by instructing others concerning the way of salvation, or in some other way.” He then cites our text here as an example of that meaning. Hence, one who instructs others concerning the way of salvation is a minister of the Lord. It is easy to drift into denominational customs and refer to the man who preaches the gospel as “the minister of the church.” But since the man who instructs others concerning the way of salvation ministers to the Lord, it is not unscriptural to refer to him as a minister of the church.

Separate Me Barnabas and Saul. Barnabas and Saul were to be separated or set apart from the rest of the prophets and teachers of the church to do a special work for which they had been called.

When they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them. Jesus did not forbid fasting, but gave His disciples instructions as to how they were to conduct themselves when they fasted. (Matt. 6:16-18.) There is no indication that we have here a hard and fast rule for appointment of preachers to preach the gospel in certain places, or for the appointment of elders to their work. The laying on of hands in the case was not to impart spiritual gifts, for the church at Antioch could not impart anything to Paul the apostle. Hence, we take it to mean simply a way of designating those who were being appointed to the service under consideration.

III. SOME APPLICATIONS

1. The persecution of the church in Jerusalem seemed a terrible thing; but when many churches began to spring up in various sections of the world as a result of that persecution, we may even be thankful for it.
2. Barnabas was a man totally devoid of selfishness and jealousy. He recognized in Paul of Tarsus a man of ability, qualified to do a work which he found needed to be done at Antioch. Hence, he called him to assist in that work.
3. It is significant that the first Gentile church of which we have record was the first great missionary church. This church was so thankful for its blessings that it wished to share them with others.

QUESTION SHEET NUMBER 14

THE GOSPEL IS PREACHED TO THE GENTILES

1. Can you show how the hand of the Lord was with His people in a miraculous way? _____

2. How may we tie the hands of the Lord? _____

3. Is there a difference between repentance and turning again? _____

4. By comparing Acts 2:38 and 3:19, what is the meaning of "turn again"? _____

5. To what in our text is reference made in the term "scattered abroad"? _____

6. What do you know of Phoenicia? _____

7. What do you know of Cyprus? _____

8. Why was Antioch a good place to establish a Gentile church? _____

9. Who began first to preach the gospel to Greeks? _____
10. What evidence do we have that these were Greeks and not Greek-speaking Jews? _____

11. What do you know of the content of this preaching? _____

12. Whom did the Jerusalem church send to help the church at Antioch? _____

13. How could Barnabas see the grace of God? _____

14. Why was Barnabas a good man to send on this mission? _____

15. For what type of work was Barnabas specially fitted? _____

16. What did Barnabas exhort the people to do? _____

17. What Old Testament character is a good example of purposing in the heart? _____

18. Of what does true goodness consist? _____

19. What is meant by being full of the Holy Spirit? _____

20. Whom did Barnabas seek to help in the work at Antioch? _____

21. How long did they teach the church before they went on their missionary journey? _____

22. What evidence do we have that the Antioch church had elders while Paul and Barnabas were there? _____

23. How do you think the name Christian was given to the disciples at Antioch? _____

24. What divine sanction does the name have in the New Testament? _____

25. What is the meaning of the word prophet as used in the New Testament? _____

26. What authority is there for the use of teachers and prophets? _____

27. What is the meaning of the word minister in our text? _____

28. How were Barnabas and Saul separated unto the work for which God called them? _____

29. May Christians fast as a religious exercise today? _____

30. What was the purpose of laying on of hands in this ceremony? _____

LESSON NUMBER 15

PAUL BEGINS HIS FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

Acts 13:4-14

INTRODUCTION

Since it is the duty of the church to carry the gospel into all the world, surely it is the duty of individual Christians to know something of the missionary activities throughout the world. Every Christian should have a general knowledge of what is being done by the various churches throughout the world, and certainly he should have a knowledge of what the particular congregation where he holds membership is doing. There are many members of the church who know absolutely nothing about missionary activities of other congregations and very little about missionary activities of their own congregation. Many of them can tell you the batting averages of the leading baseball players in the various leagues, or they can tell you the activities of their favorite cinema and television stars. There are others who can tell you how many races certain horses have won at the various race tracks over the country, but they cannot tell you who is preaching the gospel in Italy, Britain, or the Philippine Islands. If someone complains that he has no way of getting this information, he is reminded that there are brotherhood publications which carry all this information. They pay for their information in these other fields of activity why not subscribe for these publications which will keep them informed on the missionary activities of the brethren? (a) Interest in missionary work will lead us to keep ourselves informed. The trouble with many brethren is they have little or no interest in the missionary activities of the church. They have no interest in the welfare of the missionaries themselves, and they have little or no interest in the salvation of the lost in other nations. If they were interested deeply in these things, they would keep themselves informed. Interest in the growth and development of these new churches established by missionaries would lead us to keep ourselves informed as to their progress. John could write that he rejoiced greatly that he had found certain people walking in truth. (2 John 4.) And Paul could write that he was so anxious about the welfare of the church at Corinth that he had no relief until Titus came with word of the progress of the church and then he could say, *"I rejoice that in everything I am of good courage concerning you."* (2 Cor. 7:16.) (b) People need to know the facts concerning the missionary activities of the church that they may pray for missions as they are taught to do. Jesus said, *"Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He send forth laborers into His harvest."* (Matt. 9:38.) Many people cannot follow this instruction because they do not know for whom to pray. They do not know the missionaries; they do not know the fields where these missionaries are working. They know nothing of the conditions of those fields. They know nothing of the hardships the missionaries are meeting. They know nothing of the persecution the missionaries are enduring. Hence, they do not know how to pray either for the field where missionaries are, or for the relief and encouragement of missionaries on mission fields. (c) People need to know about the missionary activities of the world so they may give of their money intelligently. It is our duty to support missionary activities over the world, but just giving a little money occasionally is not enough. We ought to give with some degree of intelligence, knowing to whom the money is going and something about how the money is used. Knowing the needs of the field and being somewhat personally acquainted with the workers on the field will encourage us to give more liberally. All of us need encouragement to increase our liberality.

I. KEY SCRIPTURE

“Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” (Mk. 16:15b)

1. The field is the world. When our Lord explained the parable of the tares to His disciples, He told them that the field is the world. (Matt. 13:38.) Ever since that time there have been people who have had difficulty in grasping this idea of world evangelization in each generation. (a) Some have failed to grasp this idea simply because of a limited vision. There are people who have little knowledge of, or interest in, the things that are going on beyond the limits of their little community. They are interested only in those people whom they know, and they know a very few people. Hence, they cannot conceive of a missionary program that would reach out into every corner of the earth. Usually they ridicule people who wish to cross the ocean to preach the gospel. It has been said by some of these of limited vision that every time a man thinks of missionary work, he “gets seasick.” They mean by this that missionaries think they have to take a ship and sail somewhere in order to do mission work. It is significant in this instance to notice that, when Paul and Barnabas were set aside to do missionary work, they immediately *“went down to Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus.”* (b) Covetousness keeps some people from seeing the world as the field in which to preach the gospel. They love their money too much to use it in supporting the preaching of the gospel beyond their own community. And usually people of this sort use very little of their money to support the preaching of the gospel in their own community. (c) Lack of self-sacrifice keeps some people from seeing the field as the world in which to preach the gospel. These are so much in love with their homes, their families, and the environment in which they were reared that they cannot leave their homes and go into other communities to preach the gospel. Covetous people are unwilling to sacrifice their money, but this class of which we now speak is that class that refuses to sacrifice the pleasures and the comforts of home in order that they may preach the gospel to those in foreign lands. Men who preach the gospel in foreign lands are being supported better than at any time before in our history. But even now salaries of the missionaries do not compare very favorably with the salaries of preachers in the home land. Men who work in difficult fields in the United States are not as well paid as the preachers for large congregations in the southern cities. Of course, such discrimination is not right. But a love for lost souls and a desire to see them saved will inspire us to be willing to make the sacrifice. And if these things are not enough to move us to make that sacrifice, we should be moved by the commandment of our Lord which serves as our text today *“go into all the world, and preach the gospel to all creation.”* (d) A lack of love for lost souls keeps some people from seeing the field as the world. As the elder brother could enjoy the blessings and comforts of his home, completely unmindful of his brother’s pitiful condition in the swine pens, so there are people today who enjoy the blessings and privileges of church worship and fellowship and are totally unmindful of the lost, ruined, and undone condition of their fellow human beings in the swine pens of sin.

2. The seed is the gospel. When Jesus was explaining the parable of the sower to His disciples, He told them that the seed is the word of God. (Luke 8:11.) Without the sowing of seed there can be no harvest; so without the sowing or preaching of the gospel there can be no harvest of souls. The word of God, the gospel, was revealed by the Holy Spirit unto the apostles and prophets and they wrote it and preserved it in the book we call the Bible. It follows, therefore, that any principle which is not found revealed in the book we call the Bible is no part of the seed of the kingdom. Hence, preachers today have no need to preach anything which cannot be read from the Bible. Human traditions are not any part of the seed of the kingdom and will not produce children of the kingdom, yet more men and more money is pumped into false teaching which brings about false security and false hopes to the

recipients of these messages. To follow the imagery of the parable, human traditions will produce tares (Matt. 13:24-30), which will be burned at the end of the age. To establish and maintain a church of the Lord, only the word of God must be taught; but to establish and maintain a denomination, human traditions must be taught. Peter tells us the seed by which we are born again is the word which by the gospel is preached unto us. (1 Pet. 1:23-25.) So all we need to evangelize the world is the seed, the sower and the soil.

3. We are commanded to go. Many people act as if this commission applied only to the apostles, or to the church of their generation. But the church of this generation is expected to take the gospel to the whole creation just like the church of the first century was expected to take the gospel to the whole creation in its generation. If the apostles and early preachers of the gospel had stayed at home like many of us, they would never have taken the gospel to all the world, and the Lord would have been displeased. Do we have any right to think the Lord will be pleased with us if we stay at home to enjoy the comforts and pleasures of our homes instead of taking the gospel to the whole world that people in sin may learn the truth and be saved? Certainly the Lord does not expect all to go; for if all were to go, there would be none to do the sending. (Rom. 10:15.) But many who could and should go are salving their conscience by giving money to send others. Where we have dozens of missionaries, we should have hundreds. We could invest less in homes, furniture, cars, and vacations, and invest more in missions. Though we are doing more mission work today than ever before in our history, we are capable of doing very much more if each member would only practice a little self-denial. Let each member ask himself, or herself, What am I doing to take the gospel to the whole creation?

II. A COMMENTARY ON ACTS 13:4-14

1. Preaching the Gospel in Cyprus (Acts 13:4-7)

Being sent forth by the Holy Spirit. Anything which people are moved by the Holy Spirit to do is said to be done by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit convicts people of sin and converts them to the Lord. Yet men are used in the accomplishment of these things. (John 16:7-13.) So when the church at Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas on this mission tour, it is said that the Holy Spirit sent them forth because the Holy Spirit moved the church to do that work.

And when they were at Salamis. We are told that this was the principal city and seaport of the island of Cyprus. It is possible that several human considerations entered into the decision to go by Cyprus. First, Barnabas was a native of this island. (Acts 4:36.) Next, Paul's home at Tarsus was directly north of this island and only a short distance away. Next, from Acts 11:19,20 we learn that some work had already been done on this island. And since the island was on the sea route to Asia Minor, where they did the principal part of their work on this first journey, it was convenient for them to stop on the island for some time.

They proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues. Since there were synagogues in Cyprus, we know there was a considerable Jewish population. Being Jews, Paul and Barnabas would be readily received in the synagogues, and, according to their custom, these visitors would be invited to speak. This gave them opportunity to preach the gospel to people who already believed in God and to people who were looking forward to the Messiah. The dispersion of the Jews among all the nations of the earth was a part of the preparation which in the providence of God was made for the growth and the

spread of the church. In Acts 11:20 we learn that some “*spoke unto the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus,*” but here we are told that Paul and Barnabas “*proclaimed the word of God*” in the synagogues. So to preach Jesus and to proclaim the word must be the same thing.

They had also John as their attendant. The word here translated attendant is used of kings’ officers both civil and military. It is also used of the attendant in the synagogue. (Luke 4:20) The word is used once with reference to Paul and is translated minister. (Acts 26:16.) This John Mark was the son of Mary, in whose house the disciples gathered for prayer in Jerusalem. (Acts 12:12)

A certain sorcerer, a false prophet. This man is also called Bar-Jesus, which simply means son of Jesus. Jesus was a common name among the Jews. It is the Greek form of the Hebrew, Joshua. Our text says he was a sorcerer. But this word is the translation of a Greek word which means magician. Since he is called a false prophet, we conclude that he posed as a prophet of God and depended upon his magician’s tricks to convince people that he was a true prophet.

Who was with the proconsul, Sergius Pualus. The Roman Empire had two names for the men who governed its provinces. If a province needed soldiers to maintain order, the emperor sent the ruler, and he was called procurator. If the province could be maintained orderly without soldiers, the Senate named and sent the governor, and he was called proconsul. So this man Sergius Paulus was appointed and sent by the Senate to govern Cyprus. We are told that he was a man of understanding and that he was interested in the gospel and sent for Paul that he might hear the word of God.

Seeking to turn aside the proconsul from the faith. This is said of Elymas, or Bar-Jesus. The word Elymas is an Arabic word for “a wise man.” Elymas realized that if the proconsul accepted the faith, he would lose his position and power and also lose his influence over the people generally. Hence, for personal reasons he sought to keep a man from learning the truth and being saved.

2. Meeting Opposition in Cyprus (Acts 13:8-12)

O full of all guile and all villainy. This is the language of Paul to Elymas. In his fiery denunciation of Elymas, Paul used four very strong terms. (a) The first term is guile, which means deceit, cunning; craft and treachery. (b) Villainy is the next term. Webster says that this word means a villainous act, a deed of deep depravity, a crime. (c) Paul called this man the son of the devil. This simply means that he was the servant of Satan. He was engaged in the work of the devil for his own selfish purposes. Hence, he was the son of the devil. (d) Paul called him the enemy of all righteousness. Any person described correctly by the preceding words would be the enemy of all that is right. This man was not satisfied to be unrighteous himself, but he was opposed to others becoming righteous. Some preachers today use this incident to justify their use of strong abusive language in the pulpit. They should remember first that they are not inspired as was Paul, and so cannot be positively sure of the correctness of their judgment of men. In the next place, they should remember that Paul used this language concerning an individual and addressed it to the man personally and individually, while they are using such strong language publicly, where there are many listening to whom such language could not possibly apply. It is never wise and good to use any language in the pulpit that one would not have the courage to use when speaking to an individual personally. And since it takes more courage to say things to a man personally than it does to say them in the pulpit, many preachers resort to the latter.

Cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord. Paul’s language here implies that Elymas had been giving

considerable time and effort to the job of turning the proconsul from the faith. The word translated pervert means to distort or corrupt or turn aside from a path.

You shall be blind ... for a season. This is the punishment which Paul, by the power of the Holy Spirit, brought upon Elymas for his wickedness. This blindness was proof that the hand of the Lord was upon Elymas. In Acts 11:21 we found the expression that the hand of the Lord was with certain people for good. Here we find that the hand of the Lord is on one for punishment. So the Lord may be with people either for good or for their punishment. And this punishment could have been for one or both of two purposes. (a) It could have been a punishment for his wickedness. (b) It could have been intended to bring him to repentance that he might be saved. Stopping his opposition would lead to the salvation of the proconsul, and bring him to realize that a power sufficient to strike him blind might lead him to see his own wickedness and turn from his evil.

Then the proconsul ... believed. Miracles were for the confirmation of the word preached. This miracle so confirmed the teaching of Paul that the proconsul was convinced of the truth of his teaching. “Believed” is Luke’s way of saying that he became a Christian, he repented and was baptized. (See Mk. 16:15,16; Acts 2:38).

3. Preaching the Gospel in Asia Minor (Acts 13:13, 14)

Paul and his company ... came to Perga. The reader should notice that in this verse the missionary group is spoken of as “Paul and his company.” Heretofore, Barnabas has been mentioned first, and Paul has been called Saul. In the ninth verse of our text the change was made from Saul to Paul

John departed from them. We do not know why Mark went back home, but we do know that Paul thought he was not justified in doing so. When they would start on their second missionary journey, Barnabas desired to take Mark again, but Paul was so opposed to Mark going with them that he parted company with Barnabas rather than take Mark. (Acts 15:36-41.) However, we learn from Paul himself that Mark actually made a successful comeback and proved himself worthy of confidence. (2 Tim. 4:11.) We are told that Perga was the metropolis of Pamphylia. It was not on the seacoast, but on the river Cestus, which was some distance from the Mediterranean seacoast. It was situated in a wild, mountainous country, and some have thought that this contributed to Mark’s fear, which caused him to go home.

Came to Antioch of Pisidia. This Antioch was a Roman colony directly north about a hundred miles from Perga. Luke speaks of this city as “Antioch of Pisidia,” but modern scholars tell us that the city was within the limits of Phrygia. Some have thought that Luke made a mistake, and that this would throw some doubt on his inspiration. But Barnes tells us that, though Antioch was within the limits of Phrygia, it was a free city and belonged to Pisidia and quotes Pliny and Strabo as his authority.

Went into the synagogue on the sabbath day. Again we find the early preachers going into the Jewish synagogue, because here they would find people who already believed in God, people who were looking for the Messiah, and they would find an opportunity to speak, for visitors were always given the opportunity to speak in the synagogue meetings. In verse fifteen, following our text, we learn something of the order of these synagogue meetings. It is said that the law and the prophets were read, and then the rulers of the synagogue sent unto Paul and Barnabas saying, “Brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on.” Being Jews, Paul and Barnabas would readily be

accepted into the fellowship of the synagogue meeting, and since the rulers of the synagogue did not know their mission or business in town, they would not know that they had anything new to bring to the people. Hence, there was no prejudice against them, and they would be offered the opportunity to speak.

III. SOME APPLICATIONS

1. We have no way of knowing how much support Paul and Barnabas had from the church at Antioch. In fact we have no way to determine whether they had any financial support at all. We cannot but admire their courage and their willingness to sacrifice that they might go out where the gospel had never been preached that souls might hear for the first time the gospel of salvation.

2. There were men in Paul's day who put selfish interest and personal ambition above the salvation of souls. Such a man was Elymas. And there are people today who would gladly hinder the progress of the gospel in order to satisfy their selfish ambitions. The punishment of Elymas was light compared to the punishment that will be meted out to such characters in the judgment.

3. John Mark was young and wavering in his courage and steadfastness. He allowed his personal interests and selfish desires to get the upper hand of him temporarily. But he is a good example of one who stumbles and then comes back to make good. We should rejoice, not that he stumbled, but that he made good and serves as an encouragement to those of us today who have stumbled, but who still have a desire to make good.

QUESTION SHEET NUMBER 15

PAUL BEGINS HIS FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY

1. Do you know of any men and their families serving the Lord in other countries, and where abouts in that country they are serving? _____

2. Do you know what it takes financially to preach in a foreign country? _____

3. Where is the church of this generation obligated to preach the gospel? _____

4. How may limited vision keep churches from carrying out the great commission? _____

5. What effect does covetousness have on the great commission? _____

6. How does the love of ease, comfort, and pleasure affect the great commission? _____

7. How should the salary of the missionary compare with that of the home preacher? _____

8. How does love for lost souls affect our missionary programs? _____

9. What is the seed to be sown in the field? _____

10. Contrast the seed of the kingdom with that which produces tares. _____

11. Is every member of the church obligated to go into all the world? _____

12. How could we invest more money in missions without an increase in income? _____

13. In what sense were Paul and Barnabas sent forth by the Holy Spirit? _____

14. Do you know some reasons why these men would go first to Cyprus? _____

15. Where did they find their first audiences on this island? _____

16. Whom did they take along as their attendant? _____

17. What is a proconsul? _____

18. Who held that office in Cyprus? _____

19. What do you know of the man who tried to turn the proconsul from the faith? _____

20. Name and discuss the four terms Paul used in denouncing the sorcerer. _____

21. Does this incident justify preachers today in the use of such terms publicly? _____

22. What are the "ways of the Lord"? _____

23. What was Elymas attempting to do to them? _____

24. What punishment was brought upon the sorcerer for his sin? _____

25. What were the probable purposes of this punishment? _____

26. Did the sorcerer succeed in turning the proconsul from the faith? _____

27. What change is made at this point in speaking of the personnel of the company? _____

28. How was the number of the personnel decreased at this time? _____

29. What evidence do we have that Mark made good later in life? _____

30. What do you know of Antioch of Pisidia? _____

31. What custom of the synagogue gave Paul reason to think he would be invited to speak? _____

LESSON NUMBER 16

THE JERUSALEM CONFERENCE

Acts 15:6-21

INTRODUCTION

The Jerusalem conference was made necessary because there were members of the church who believed that the Gentiles had to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses in order to be saved. (Acts 15:1.) Considerable preaching was being done, and Gentiles were being accepted into the membership of the church without circumcision as we have seen in our preceding lessons. Paul was the leader of that group which contended for the liberty of the Gentiles. It is impossible to determine who were the leaders of the group which contended for the circumcision of the Gentiles. Peter wavered on the question when he was at Antioch. (Gal. 2:11,13.) In this passage it is also said that, when certain men came from James, Peter refused to eat with the uncircumcised. This would indicate that some viewed James as being inclined to take that position. Hence, the purpose of the conference was not that Paul might learn the truth on the matter, but that the truth might be brought out into the open, where both sides would know the truth and know that it came not from some man, but from God. Since Paul was careful to assert that he did not get his gospel from any man, but that he received it by revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:11,12), we may well conclude that Paul did not go to Jerusalem for a conference simply on the invitation of these Judaizing brethren. It took more than an invitation from them, so we learn that he says, *“I went up by revelation; and I laid before them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles.”* (Gal. 2:2.) And Paul took Titus, who was a Greek, along with him to that conference as a test case. We read, *“But not even Titus who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.”* (Gal. 2:3.) So, ever afterward, Paul could tell those who opposed him that he took Titus to this conference, and the apostles and elders at Jerusalem did not compel Titus to be circumcised. This was visible and positive proof that the apostles and elders at Jerusalem did not compel the Gentiles to accept circumcision and keep the law of Moses.

I. KEY SCRIPTURE

“For freedom did Christ set us free.” (Gal. 5:1a)

1. Notice the person who freed us. Jesus said, *“If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed.”* (John 8:36.) From these verses we learn that it is Christ, the Son of God, who makes us free. In the days of slavery, people with money often bought slaves and set them free. A slave would feel honored if a king or some other important person should buy him and give him his liberty. We should feel honored that Christ, the Son of God, should buy our liberty and set us free. We are told that He created all things. (John 1:3.) We are told that He preserves and upholds all things. (Heb. 1:2,3.) Since He is the creator and preserver of all things, He is not dependent upon our freedom or welfare for His happiness. Hence, we know that He set us free, not for the sake of His own happiness, but for our happiness and our welfare. Paul tells us, *“Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.”* (2 Cor. 8:9.) In this we see demonstrated the love, pity, and goodness of our Lord. We ought therefore to rejoice in the fact that we have been made free by Christ, the Son of God. In this connection we should notice also the price

which He paid for our freedom. Paul tells us, *“You are not your own, for you were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body.”* (1 Cor. 6:19,20.) From Peter we learn that this price which Jesus paid for our freedom was His own life. *“Knowing that you were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ.”* (1 Pet. 1:18,19.) And again John speaks of Jesus in these words, *“Worthy are You to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for You were slain, and did purchase unto God with Your blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and made them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth.”* (Rev. 5:9,10.) Since the life is in the blood and our freedom was purchased by the blood of Christ, we conclude that He gave His life that we might be free.

2. That from which Christ sets us free. (a) Christ sets us free from the bondage of sin. Paul represents us as being carnal and sold under sin. (Rom. 7:14.) Being sold under sin, we were the servants of sin. But again in the language of Paul, *“The sting of death is sin; and the power of sin is the law: but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (1 Cor. 15:56,57.) To those who are in Christ, Paul says, *“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey the lusts thereof: neither present your members unto sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under law, but under grace.”* (Rom. 6:12-14.) So in Christ Jesus and through the freedom He has given us, we are no longer the bondservants of sin. Though we still are subject to temptation, and on account of our ignorance and weakness we occasionally do wrong, yet we are not the slaves of sin, having been made free from that relationship by the power of the blood of Christ. (b) Christ makes us free from the guilt of sin. Sin is a crime against God, and guilt attaches to crime. No one can commit sin without being guilty before God. Only the forgiveness of God can remove that guilt, which is not removed except through the shedding of the blood of Christ, for, *“apart from shedding of blood there is no remission.”* (Heb. 9:22.) Paul said that animal sacrifices could not make perfect them that offered them, for if those sacrifices had been sufficient, there would not have been any more a consciousness of sins. (Heb. 10:1-5.) He then presents the blood of Christ as far more efficacious than the blood of animals and says that *“by one offering He has perfected forever them that are sanctified.... Then says He, And their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.”* (Heb. 10:14-18.) (c) Christ makes us free from the pollution of sin. Sin is a defiling, polluting thing. No one can engage in sin without being made impure and unholy. Again, Paul contrasts the blood of the old covenant with the blood of Christ in the new covenant, showing that the blood of animals only sanctified to the cleanness of the flesh, but the blood of Christ is able to cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. (Heb. 9:11-14.) (d) Christ sets us free from the bonds of human tradition. Paul reminded the Galatians of the time when they were in bondage to them that by nature are no gods. He also warns them that their attitude and actions at the time of his writing indicated that they wished to go back into that bondage from which they had been set free. And he says, *“You observe days, and months, and seasons, and years.”* (Gal. 4:10.) The observance of these human ordinances and traditions caused Paul to think they were going back into bondage again. To the church at Corinth Paul said, *“You were bought with a price; become not bondservants of men.”* (1 Cor. 7:23.) Since we have been bought with a price, we should not become the bondservants or the slaves of men by obeying the teaching and traditions of men. To the Colossian church Paul wrote that, since they had died with Christ, they should not subject themselves to the ordinances, the precepts, and doctrines of men. He said that these practices, bound upon them by the doctrines of men, had indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship

and humility, but that they were of no value at all against the indulgence of the flesh. (Col. 2:20-23.)

3. The purpose of freedom given by Christ. (a) Paul tells us in our text that Christ set us free in order that we might have freedom. Hence, he would first have us to realize our freedom. One may be a Christian and yet not realize all that Christianity means to him, so Paul would have us to study and acquaint ourselves with this freedom in order that we may realize to the fullest extent what this freedom means. (b) Paul would have us to enjoy this freedom. There is little need of people being in possession of a great prize without enjoying the possession of that prize. Many people in our nation possess a political freedom, the value of which they little realize, and the use and practice of which they rarely enjoy. (c) Paul would have us to protect that freedom which is ours to enjoy. Paul follows our text by saying, “*Stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage.*” In these words Paul urges them to stand fast in the defence of their freedom that they not allow others to steal away this liberty of theirs and bring them into bondage to human traditions again. People who do not realize, enjoy, and protect their political freedom will not long have that freedom to enjoy, so with our religious or spiritual freedom. If we do not realize, enjoy, and protect it, we are liable to lose it to those who would take it from us. (d) Though our text does not suggest this, yet it is a scriptural point, and we should realize that one purpose of our freedom is that we may make others free, so that they too may enjoy this liberty with us. This is but a natural expression of our attitude for the freedom from sin which we enjoy. We may safely conclude that an individual who does not wish to share this freedom with others does not appreciate his own freedom.

II. A COMMENTARY ON ACTS 15:6-21

1. Peter’s Speech in the Conference (Acts 15:6-11)

The apostles and the elders were gathered together. This conference was not a meeting of a select few. In verse four, we learn that the church was convened with the apostles and elders. Then in verse twenty-two, we learn that the apostles and elders “*with the whole church*” concurred in the decision of the conference and agreed to send reports of the findings of the conference to the brethren.

When there had been much questioning. The Greek word for our word questioning means mutual questioning or disputation. Both sides had ample time to put their positions before the brethren. Church troubles and differences are not settled by steam-roller tactics. Both sides must be heard fairly and freely.

Peter rose up, and said. Peter reminded the brethren that God chose him to preach the gospel at first to the Gentiles. He also reminded them that it had been a good while ago, perhaps ten years or more, since he had preached to Cornelius. From Peter’s statement we also learn how faith comes. The Gentiles were to hear the word of the gospel from Peter’s mouth and believe. Paul said faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. (Rom. 10:17.) Since God is the giver of all good things, we may look upon Him as giving us faith. But God chooses to give faith through the hearing of the preached word or the reading of the written word. (John 20:30,31.) Again, since the angel told Cornelius that Peter would speak words whereby he and his house should be saved (Acts 11:14), and since Cornelius was to hear these same words that he might believe, we know that the faith which brings salvation is the faith which comes from hearing the word preached.

God, who knows the heart. The Gentiles had been denied religious freedom and equality with the Jews so long that God knew they would need some evidence of their acceptance, so God bore witness of the genuineness of their faith and of their acceptance with Him by giving them the Holy Spirit as He did to the apostles on Pentecost. Peter made a similar statement to the elders at Jerusalem shortly after the conversion of Cornelius when he said, “*If then God gave unto them the like gift as He did also unto us, when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I, that I could withstand God?*” (Acts 11:17.) Here the argument seems to be that God accepted the Gentiles and as evidence of it gave them the Holy Spirit as He gave to the Jews on Pentecost. Hence, the Gentiles should be accepted by the church, since they were accepted by the Lord.

Giving them the Holy Spirit, even as He did unto us. To the elders at Jerusalem Peter said, “*The Holy Spirit fell on them, even as on us at the beginning.*” (Acts 11:15.) Hence, the time to which Peter refers is the day of Pentecost, when the apostles were baptized in the Holy Spirit; and for proof that this was called the baptism of the Holy Spirit we read, “*But you shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit, not many days hence.*” (Acts 1:5.) This promise was fulfilled on Pentecost. (Acts 2:1-4.) The idea is now quite acceptable among some brethren that Cornelius did not receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit because they think Cornelius did not have all the powers which the apostles had. But it is entirely possible that the apostles had these extra powers because of their apostolic commission and not because of their baptism in the Holy Spirit.

Cleansing their hearts by faith. This is Peter’s proof that God made no distinction between Jews and Gentiles. The hearts of the Gentiles were cleansed, or purified, by faith in exactly the same way that the Jews were purified. Peter tells us that our hearts are purified in our obedience to the truth which is preached to us in the gospel of Jesus Christ. (1 Pet. 1:22.) We therefore conclude that the whole teaching of scripture on the matter is that our hearts are purified by a faith which obeys the truth. Faith which does not obey the truth, such as the faith of Agrippa, does not purify the soul.

Why make trial of God? God had showed His willingness to accept the Gentiles and had demonstrated that by giving them the Holy Spirit. Now for the church to reject the Gentiles would be to make trial of God, or to take issue with God and declare that God had made a mistake.

Put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples. Peter speaks of circumcision and the keeping of the law as a yoke about the necks of people which neither their fathers nor they themselves had been able to bear. Brother Boles sums up Peter’s speech as follows: “Peter has made four points that stand out distinctly: (1) he was directed by God to receive the Gentiles, as in the case of Cornelius; (2) God endorsed the reception of the Gentiles by giving them the Holy Spirit; (3) faith produced exactly the same effect in both Jew and Gentile; (4) the Jews have no right to put on the Gentiles a yoke which God had not put on them.” (Commentary on Acts.)

Saved through the grace ... in like manner. Peter affirms that both Jews and Gentiles are saved by the grace of the Lord in like manner. People who are saved by grace are saved in some manner. It is not enough to say that we are saved by grace. This says that we are saved by grace in a manner. And it affirms that the manner in which Jews are saved by grace is the same manner in which Gentiles are saved by grace. (See Rom. 3:29,30) This simply means that they obeyed the same gospel. They obeyed the same commandments of that gospel in order to be saved. Those commandments were to believe in the Lord with all their heart, to repent of their sins, to confess Jesus before the world, and to be baptized into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit for the remission

of their sins. This is the manner in which both Jew and Gentile are saved by grace. If one today is either Jew or Gentile, this is the manner in which he must be saved by grace.

2. James' Speech in the Conference (Acts 15:12-18)

They hearkened unto Barnabas and Paul. After there had been much debating, Peter made the first speech, then followed the speeches of Barnabas and Paul, which are not recorded, and then came the speech of James. Paul and Barnabas seem not to have argued the doctrinal points, but rather rehearsed “*what signs and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles through them.*” Peter told of the beginning of the work among the Gentiles, while Barnabas told of the continuance of that work, how that God who accepted them in the beginning with Peter had continued to endorse the acceptance of the Gentiles through His blessing on Paul and Barnabas.

Brethren, hearken unto me. This is the language of James. Albert Barnes says this James was an apostle and the son of Alphaeus, but Meyer says, “When these had finished speaking, James, not the son of Alphaeus, but the brother of the Lord, a strict legalist, and highly esteemed in Jerusalem as chief leader of the church, delivered his address having reference to these matters.” In agreement with this is Clarke, Boles, and others of equal reputation. By this time the apostle James was dead, “*he (Herod) killed James the brother of John with the sword.*” (Acts 12:1-2)

How first God visited the Gentiles. James says that Symeon, referring to Peter, had told how God first visited the Gentiles. This referred to Peter's work at the house of Cornelius. By this statement we know that Peter was the first to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. The purpose of that visit was “*to take out of them a people for His name.*” To take a people from the Gentiles for His name means simply that He won people out from among the Gentiles who were worthy to wear His name. Hence, James agrees with Peter that God had endorsed his work among the Gentiles in that the Gentiles were accepted as worthy to wear the name of the Lord.

To this agree the words of the prophets. James made a reference to prophets, plural, but quoted from only one. He might have quoted Isa. 2:2-4; 49:6; Mic. 4:1-4 as instances of other prophecies concerning the acceptance of Gentiles.

I will build again the tabernacle of David. Under the picture of a tabernacle, tent, Amos pictured the fall and desolation, the rebuilding and glory of the family of David. After the fall and desolation of that tabernacle, it was finally to be rebuilt. And when that tabernacle was rebuilt, the Gentiles would have the privileges and blessings to be enjoyed in that tabernacle. Obviously, James considered Jesus, the Son of David, as the one to rebuild the tabernacle of David. The tabernacle of David could not be rebuilt without the rule or throne of David being restored. Hence, James must have considered Jesus as being on the throne of David in the restored tabernacle of David. Since the Gentiles were to have a part in this, James sees the fulfilment of the prophecies in the work of Peter at the house of Cornelius and the work of Barnabas and Paul among the Gentiles.

That the residue of men may seek after the Lord. It will be noticed from this statement that the tabernacle of David had to be rebuilt in order for the residue of men, the Gentiles, to seek after the Lord. We have now sufficient proof by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit that the residue of men, or Gentiles, were permitted to seek after the Lord. Hence, the conclusion is that the tabernacle of David has been restored. If the tabernacle of David has not been restored, and if Jesus is not reigning on the

throne of David, the Gentiles have no right to seek after the Lord, nor to wear the name of the Lord. But the Jerusalem conference settled the matter as to whether the Gentiles had the right to seek after the Lord and to wear the name of the Lord. That fact being settled, we are forced to conclude that the tabernacle of David has been rebuilt and the throne or reign of David over the people of God has been restored in Jesus Christ on the throne at the right hand of God.

3. Conclusions of the Conference (Acts 15:19-21)

Wherefore my judgment is. It seems obvious that James presided at this meeting. It was James, not Peter, that summed up the arguments and announced the conclusion reached by the conference. If Peter had been the Pope, it seems that he should have been given the honor both of presiding at the conference and of announcing the conclusions of the conference.

But that we write unto them. James said it was his judgment that they should not trouble the Gentiles, who were turning to God, with the many ceremonies of the law of Moses, but that they should be told to abstain from certain things.

Abstain from the pollutions of idols. This is a caution against any form of idolatry. Very likely this included the eating of meats in idol's temples. "To partake of that food might not be morally wrong (1 Cor. 8: 4), but it would give occasion for scandal and offense; and, therefore, as a matter of expediency, it was advised that they should abstain from it." (Barnes.)

From fornication. Fornication was included as a part of the forms of heathen worship. Hence, the Gentiles would be especially susceptible to that sin. They, therefore, would need special warning against the sin of fornication.

From what is strangled. From this we learn that any animal or fowl which is to be used for food is to be well drained of its blood. Some people have the practice of breaking the necks of fowls and eating the meat without the blood being drained from the body. This passage clearly teaches us that such practice is wrong.

And from blood. God has never allowed His people to eat blood. (Lev. 17:13.) The reason given for this prohibition is that the life is in the blood. Whether we understand the importance of this or not, it is still plain and positive teaching of God and must be restricted. And this is the reason why we are to refrain from eating things strangled.

Moses being read in the synagogues every Sabbath. The connection between this statement and the preceding is rather difficult to see. The letter was to be written to the Gentiles. The Jews had this instruction already in the writings of Moses, and they were familiar with these prohibitions. James is saying that these four things are the only things in connection with the law of Moses that the Gentiles need to be commanded to respect. And these four were not to be respected because they were a part of the law of Moses, but because they were the will of God in this dispensation. However, since the Jews were acquainted with the teaching of Moses and respected that teaching, there was no need to write this letter to them.

III. SOME APPLICATIONS

1. Free, full, open discussion of all matters of difference is an effective means of obtaining the truth and of securing peace and harmony among brethren.
2. Gentiles should be grateful evermore to the apostle Paul for leading and winning the fight to keep Jewish ceremonialism from being a yoke upon their necks. He suffered persecution unequalled by that of any other man of his time and finally was brought to his death in order that we might enjoy this freedom.
3. This conference did not produce a new doctrine to take care of an emergency in the church and thus set an example for the church in all ages to produce doctrines for new emergencies. The decision of this conference was that of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 15:28.) Hence, this cannot be used as proof that the church is at liberty to produce doctrines which may seem necessary to meet emergencies in changing conditions of the world.

QUESTION SHEET NUMBER 16

THE JERUSALEM CONFERENCE

1. Why did Paul take Titus with him to the conference? _____

2. Why should we feel honored that Christ should set us free? _____

3. What is the price of our freedom? _____

4. What is meant by the bondage of sin, and how are we freed from it? _____

5. What is the guilt of sin, and how are we freed from it? _____

6. What is the importance of realizing our freedom from sin? _____

7. Who met in conference to consider this question of circumcision? _____

8. What can you say of the manner in which the conference was conducted? _____

9. What did Peter say about the way faith came to the Gentiles? _____

10. Can you show that the faith which comes by hearing is the faith that saves? _____

11. Why did God send the Holy Spirit upon Cornelius and his family? _____

12. What evidence do we have that Cornelius was baptized in the Holy Spirit?_____

13. How are our hearts cleansed from sin? _____

14. What is meant by making trial of God?_____

15. What do you know of the manner in which both Jews and Gentiles are saved by grace?_____

16. Can you give a summary of Peter's speech?_____

17. What part did Paul and Barnabas take in the conference? _____

18. Can you identify this James who spoke in the conference?_____

19. What evidence do we have that Peter was the first to convert a Gentile? _____

20. What did James say about the conversion of Gentiles being fulfilment of prophecy?_____

21. What prophet did he quote? _____

22. What others might he have quoted? _____

23. What is meant by the tabernacle of David? _____

24. How is the throne of David related to it? _____

25. What evidence do we have in this lesson that Jesus is reigning on the throne of David? _____

26. Who presided over the conference? _____

27. Who announced the conclusions? _____

28. Name and discuss four things the conference decided Gentiles were to refrain from. _____

29. Why was not a similar letter written to the Jews? _____

30. Are these four things bound upon Gentiles as a part of the old covenant? _____

LESSON NUMBER 17

THE GOSPEL CARRIED INTO EUROPE

Acts 16:6-15

INTRODUCTION

There are three things we should notice by way of introduction. First, the decision of the Jerusalem conference was put into the hands of Judas and Silas, two brethren of Jerusalem, to be delivered unto the Gentile churches. These men were said to be prophets and chief men among the brethren. (Acts 15:22,32.) They not only took the letter, which the apostles and elders wrote, but they “*exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them.*” The church at Antioch had been torn with strife and dissension on account of the doctrine of the Judaizers that the Gentiles should be circumcised and keep the law of Moses, and when they heard this decision read, it is said, “*they rejoiced for the consolation.*” (Acts 15:31.) The second thing of interest is the separation of Paul and Barnabas. After Judas and Silas had delivered the decrees of the conference, it is said that Paul and Barnabas tarried at Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord. How long they tarried there we have no way of knowing, but after some time had passed, Barnabas suggested that they return and visit the brethren in every city where they had preached the gospel on their first journey. Paul was willing to do so and quickly agreed to go on a second journey. However, Barnabas wished to take John Mark with them again. Paul thought it was not good to take him, because he had turned back on the first journey. But Barnabas contended that he should be given another chance and even went so far as to imply that, if Paul did not allow Mark to go, he would not go with Paul. But Paul refused to give in, and it is said, “*There arose a sharp contention, so that they parted asunder one from the other, and Barnabas took Mark with him, and sailed away unto Cyprus: but Paul chose Silas, and went forth, being commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord.*” (Acts 15:38-40.) And the next thing of interest is that Timothy was added to the group of workers in Paul’s company. Paul and Silas left Antioch and went first to Derbe. This is the city on the first missionary journey which was nearest Antioch. They visited Lystra also, and there they found Timothy, who joined their party and went with them on to Troas, and into Macedonia. Timothy was a favorite with Paul, and he assisted him much of the time from this time until the death of Paul. He was perhaps a greater source of joy and comfort to the apostle Paul than any other of his fellow laborers.

I. KEY SCRIPTURE

“*There was a man of Macedonia standing, beseeching him, and saying, come over to Macedonia, and help us.*” (Acts 16:9)

1. Who is calling? Luke tells us that Paul saw in a vision a man of Macedonia calling for help. This man was calling for spiritual help. The religion he had known from his youth was not sufficient. It was not giving him the satisfaction which his soul desired. There are literally millions of people in the world today who are in that same condition. Let us classify these according to their religious conditions in order that we may be the more impressed by the need of answering that call. (a) Those in polytheistic idolatry. By the term polytheistic idolatry we mean those who have no knowledge of the true God, and who are worshipping many gods through the images which they have made. Paul

tells us of people who “*changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible men, and of birds, and of four-footed beasts, and creeping things.*” (Rom. 1:23.) And again, Paul speaks of some who “*exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever.*” (Rom. 1:25.) Since man partakes of the likeness of that which he worships, the people who worship birds and beasts and creeping things will be debased and degraded in their nature. Those who worship a holy God tend to become holy like God, while those who worship birds, beasts, and creeping things tend to take upon themselves the nature of these beasts and fowls which they worship. Not having access to the revelation of God in the Bible, they have been left to the revelation of God in nature and they have made the mistake of worshipping the creature which they see in nature rather than the Creator of all nature. Could we but translate the yearning of their hearts, we would hear the message, Come over into Iran, India, and many other idolatrous nations and help us find a deeper satisfaction of soul here and a brighter hope for eternal life in the world to come. (b) Those in monotheistic idolatry. Those included in the term monotheistic idolatry are those who have learned that there is but one true God, but they have not advanced sufficiently that they can worship without material objects as likenesses of that which they worship. The entire Catholic world falls within this classification. The fact that they claim that they do not worship the images which they make, but they worship God as represented by these images, does not mean that they are not idolaters. The use of images and idols in worship is idolatry. This is all they have been taught, and of course, they are sincere in this type of worship. These people know not the satisfaction of true spiritual worship, and could we but translate the yearnings of their hearts they would say to us, Come over and help us to become free of these human traditions and to know the joy and satisfaction of pure religion. (c) Those in denominationalism. In this class there are multiplied millions of people who know the one true God and Jesus the Son of God, but they have not been taught how to obey the gospel of Jesus Christ. They have been taught to be satisfied with faith only; a faith that does not obey God. They have not been taught how to worship God in spirit and in truth. Hence, they are doing just about whatever their imagination and desires prompt them to do as worship to God. They are taught to believe that, so long as they are honest and sincere in the things they do, God will be pleased. Many of them are little more than refined social clubs, which cannot minister to the soul’s welfare, and could their longings be translated into a language we could understand, we could hear them saying, Come and help us out of this worldliness which passes under the name of religion. (d) Those who are depending upon good moral behavior. There are many millions of people who have become discouraged by the divided condition of those who profess to believe in Christ. They know not which way to turn, and they have come to think that so long as they are honest and upright in their dealings with their fellow men and live good clean moral lives, they will go to heaven when they die. But good deeds have not the power to atone for sins, and so they are condemned in the sight of God. Could we understand the longings of their hearts, they would say, Come over and help us.

2. Who should answer these calls? (a) Faithful preachers should answer these calls. One does not have to cross oceans nor even State lines in order to answer many of these calls. Churches should support faithful preachers who answer these calls, but, support or no support, preachers should answer the calls as their ability will permit. (b) Teachers should answer these calls. There are many men and women in large congregations in the Bible belt of America who never have an opportunity to teach a class. If they would move into sections of the country where churches are small and weak, their opportunities for service would be greatly multiplied. (c) Elders should answer these calls. There are men who serve as elders in large congregations in the Bible belt who, if they would move into the northeast or west part of the country, could bring a wealth of information and experience to these

small, weak, struggling congregations. (d) Helpers of every class should answer these calls. There are young men and young women just getting out of college and looking for a place to settle and build a home. If they would go into these sections of the United States where the church is small and in cities where there are no congregations and settle there and build their homes, and work to build a strong church in the community, they would spend their lives to much better advantage than they could possibly do by settling in some community where there is already a large congregation. Others will need to cross the ocean and help those who have never known the one true God and who have no opportunity to learn of Him unless we take the message to them.

3. Why answer these calls? There are some who say that these people are satisfied with the religion they have, so why bother them with something else? The fact that people can be satisfied with something that is displeasing to God and is unable to bring them the greatest happiness here and eternal life after a while is sufficient reason why we should tell them the story of Christ. (a) These people are lost in sin. Only the truth of God can make them free. (John 8:32.) All these people who know not the truth are lost in sin. They are not lost because they have refused to obey the gospel. The gospel has never been offered to them; hence, they cannot refuse to obey when it has never been offered to them. But they are lost because they have sinned. They have not lived up to the best light which they have. Hence, they are guilty of sin. Paul tells us that all men have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. (Rom. 3:23.) Since the penalty for sin is death, and all men have sinned, all are condemned to death. (b) Only the gospel of Jesus Christ can save men from sin. Paul tells us that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. (Rom. 1:16.) He told the church at Corinth that they had been saved by the gospel. (1 Cor. 15:1-4) Paul tells us that those who know not God and obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of His power. (2 Thess. 1:8-10.) (c) We have the gospel of Christ and the ability to answer these calls. People used to excuse themselves by saying that we are poor and few in number, but that is true no longer. We are not poor in this world's goods nor are we few in number. There are many of us and we have sufficient means, financially and mentally, to take the gospel to the whole world in our generation. Multiplied millions of people are lost in sin. Only the gospel which we know and the knowledge of which we enjoy can save these people from their sins. If we love lost souls more than we love pleasures and comforts of life, we will either take the gospel to them ourselves or we will make the money available to send someone else to preach the gospel to them.

II. A COMMENTARY ON ACTS 16:6-15

1. Europe Calls for the Gospel (Acts 16:6-9)

They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia. We are told that Phrygia was the largest province in Asia Minor. This province lay north of Pisidia and west of Galatia. The province of Galatia is of very uncertain boundaries. There are two theories with reference to the extent of the province of Galatia. One group of scholars holds that Galatia was a small province extending from about the middle to the northern edge of Asia Minor. Another group holds that the province of Galatia was a rather narrow strip of land extending practically all the way across Asia Minor from north to south. According to this theory, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe would be in Galatia, and the preaching which Paul did in Galatia was done there, and the letter addressed to the Galatians would include these churches. This province was settled by a hearty war-like people from France or Gaul. These Gauls came into Asia Minor in the third century B.C. Galatia became a Roman province in A.D. 26.

Forbidden of the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. The word Asia here refers to the province of Asia of which Ephesus was the capital. It does not refer to the whole of this territory called Asia Minor. That portion of country called Asia Minor in the New Testament is the country now called Turkey. The providence of God can be seen in the guidance of Paul and his company. The Holy Spirit would not allow them to go directly west of Antioch of Pisidia which would have brought them into Asia.

When they were come over against Mysia. The term Asia included three small districts called Caria, Lydia, and Mysia. Mysia was the northern most section of Asia.

They assayed to go into Bithynia. Bithynia was a province lying to the north and east of Mysia. It bordered Asia on the south and the Black Sea on the north. Not being allowed to go southward into Asia, Paul would have turned northward into Bithynia, for he did not care to go farther west and would not turn back.

The Spirit of Jesus suffered them not. Here we have a new term for the Holy Spirit. In verse eight we are told that the Holy Spirit was guiding Paul and his company. Here it is said that the “*Spirit of Jesus*” was guiding them. In 1 Pet. 1:11 we read of the “*Spirit of Christ*” being in the prophets, enabling them to foretell the sufferings of Christ and the glories that should follow. In 2 Pet. 1:21 we are told that the Holy Spirit moved the prophets to speak the will of God. Comparing these two passages, we learn that the Spirit of Christ is the Holy Spirit; and here in our text we have the terms Holy Spirit and Spirit of Jesus used interchangeably. Hence, the Spirit of Jesus or the Spirit of Christ is the Holy Spirit.

They came down to Troas. Paul was not allowed to go either to the left hand nor to the right. He was not a man to turn back, so he went forward to Troas. Troas was a seacoast town on the Hellespont. It is called Troy in Greek literature.

A vision appeared to Paul in the night. A vision was something different from a dream. In a vision one was enabled to see events pass in review before they actually transpired. In this vision Paul saw a man standing in Macedonia, beseeching him to come over into Macedonia to help him. This vision was sufficient to explain to Paul why he was not allowed to turn to the left into Asia nor to the right to preach the gospel in Bithynia.

2. Paul Answers the Call of Europe (Acts 16:10-12)

We sought to go forth into Macedonia. Paul neither hesitated nor delayed to answer the call to go into Macedonia. If Christians were as willing to answer calls for help today as Paul and his company were, we would soon take the gospel to the whole world. It should be noticed here that this is the first time that Luke, the writer, uses the word “*we*” to describe the missionary company. We therefore conclude that Luke joined Paul’s party at Troas. We may well suppose that Luke had an average income from his practice of medicine in the city of Troas. All of this he left in order to go with Paul to preach the gospel and to care for Paul’s physical welfare. We need more men today with that spirit of self-sacrifice.

God had called us to preach the gospel. Luke says that they concluded from the vision that God had called them to preach the gospel in Macedonia.

We made a straight course to Samothrace. Samothrace was an island in the Aegean Sea. It was about sixty miles from Troas. It was a small island, only about twenty miles in circumference. It is said to have been an asylum for fugitives and criminals. Their next stop was Neapolis, which word means “new city.” It was about ten or twelve miles from Philippi. It was a seaport. Philippi was an inland city.

The first of the district, a Roman colony. This is Luke’s description of Philippi. Whether the word “first” in our text means that Philippi was the first city of the district where Paul preached or that it was the principal city of the district is difficult to determine. Luke tells us that the city of Philippi was a Roman colony. “The word denotes a city or province which was planted or occupied by Roman citizens. It is a strong confirmation of the fact, here stated by Luke, that Philippi had the rank and dignity of a Roman colony, as coins are still extant, in which Philippi is distinctly referred to as a colony. Such coins exist from the reign of Augustus to the reign of Caracalla.” (Barnes.)

3. Paul’s First Convert in Europe (Acts 16:13-15)

We went forth without the gate by a river side. Luke tells us that it was on the Sabbath day when they went outside the city to find a place of prayer. This suggests that there was no synagogue in the city. And this in turn implies that there were very few Jews in the city. Usually, where there were as many as ten families of Jews there was a synagogue. These places of prayer were sometimes simple enclosures made of stones in a grove of trees, where there would be a convenient place to retire for worship. They were usually placed near the river so there would be sufficient water for the Jewish ceremonial cleansings. Luke says that they “supposed” that this was a place of prayer. This implies that Paul and his party had seen this place before, and they supposed it was being used as a place of prayer. So on the Sabbath day they went to confirm their supposition. The fact that they found only a small group of women is a further indication of the fact that Philippi had few Jewish citizens.

Lydia, a seller of purple. The word purple has two uses in the Bible. (a) It was a dye made from a gland secretion of a very small shellfish taken from the Mediterranean Sea. At the base of the head, where it joins the body, a small gland afforded but a very few drops of secretion from which this dye was made. Hence, it was very expensive, and none but the rich, and kings, and the high priests could afford to wear it. (b) There was a cloth called purple. We are told that the rich man, at whose gate Lazarus was placed, clothed himself in purple and fine linen. (Luke 16:19.) This woman named Lydia was a merchant woman selling purple. Whether she sold the dye or the cloth called purple, or both, we have no way of knowing. Her hometown was Thyatira, a city of Asia Minor. John addressed one of his seven letters to the church at Thyatira. (Rev. 2:18,29.)

One that worshipped God. Lydia was a worshipper of God. She was a Jewess and, of course, worshipped according to the law of Moses. She kept the Sabbath holy, and so spent the day in retirement and in prayer and study of the law. While we are not commanded to keep any day holy in the sense the Jews were required to do, yet we would grow more spiritually if we would use the Lord’s day in prayer and meditation and study of the word of God.

Whose heart the Lord opened. Many suppose that God miraculously opened this woman’s heart so that she might receive the truth. They therefore conclude that there must be a work of the Holy Spirit on every human heart before that heart is in condition to receive the truth. But from the parable of the sower (Matt. 13), we learn that the honest and good heart is in condition to receive the word of God.

The opening of this woman's heart was by the preaching of the gospel. Her heart was so opened and enlightened that she gave heed to the things or obeyed the teaching of the apostle Paul.

And when she was baptized. Verse fourteen tells us that she gave heed to the things spoken by Paul. Verse fifteen tells us that she was baptized. Consequently, Paul taught her to be baptized. But we know that Paul preached the gospel to her; hence, we conclude that in preaching the gospel the preacher should tell the hearers to be baptized. From other scriptures we learn that we are baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) we are baptized to get into Christ (Rom. 6:3,4; Gal. 3:27); and we are baptized that we may enter the one body, which is the church, the family of God (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:22; 1 Tim. 3:15).

And her household. The word household usually means family; hence, some think they have proof here for the baptism of infants. (a) There is no specific mention of children in this passage. (b) Jesus said, "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved," so we conclude that it is the believer who is to be baptized. Infants not capable of belief are not subjects of baptism. (c) When the Ethiopian asked if he might be baptized, Philip required him to confess with his mouth that he believed Jesus Christ to be the Son of God. (Acts 8:36-38.) So we learn that not only must one have faith, but he must be able to confess that faith in order to be baptized. (d) When people on Pentecost asked Peter what to do to be saved, he required them to repent and be baptized. From this passage we learn that subjects for baptism are penitent people. Infants are not capable of penitence, hence, are not subjects of baptism. Again, in this same passage we learn that baptism is for the remission of sins. Infants have no sin to be forgiven, hence, again, we say they are not subjects of baptism. (e) When the people of the city of Samaria believed the preaching of Philip concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized. No one would deny that the city of Samaria had children in it, but they were unable to believe the preaching of Philip and so were not candidates for baptism and were not baptized.

Come into my house. This is the invitation of Lydia to Paul and his company. They were on expense in the city. Lydia had quarters sufficient to take care of them. Hence, she invited them into her home that she might have fellowship with them in the work. When Paul wrote a letter to the church at Corinth, he gave thanks for their fellowship in the furtherance of the gospel from the first day. (Phil. 1:5.) Through this act of hospitality Lydia had fellowship with Paul in the gospel.

III. SOME APPLICATIONS

1. God in His providence guided Paul to take the gospel to Europe. Who can doubt that God in His providence has led our brethren to Japan, Italy, India, and other nations of our generation?
2. Lydia considered it a privilege to have fellowship in the great work Paul was doing. We should eagerly seek the privilege of having fellowship with our evangelists at home and abroad, instead of forcing them to beg us to help them.
3. Lydia stopped her work on the Sabbath and spent the day in worship. In this world of materialism and commercialism we need to spend one day in seven in worship and service to God that our inward man may be in good health.

QUESTION SHEET NUMBER 17

THE GOSPEL CARRIED INTO EUROPE

1. Can you tell how the decision of the Jerusalem conference was published to the churches?_____

2. What do you know of the separation of Paul and Barnabas? _____

3. What young man was added to Paul's group at Lystra? _____

4. Can you describe the condition of people in polytheistic idolatry?_____

5. What is monotheistic idolatry?_____

6. What of their condition?_____

7. Why do those in denominationalism need help?_____

8. What help does the good moral man need? _____

9. How can preachers and teachers answer these calls? _____

10. What can elders and other helpers do to answer these calls?_____

11. Give and discuss three reasons why we should answer these calls._____

12. Can you locate Phrygia and Galatia on the map? _____

13. What do you know of the people of Galatia? _____

14. To what territory is reference made by the word Asia in our text? _____

15. Can you locate Mysia and Bithynia on the map? _____

16. Relate how Paul was guided through this territory to Troas. _____

17. What does the expression "Spirit of Jesus" mean? _____

18. What vision did Paul have at Troas? _____

19. Who joined Paul's company at Troas? _____

20. What was Luke's interpretation of the vision Paul saw? _____

21. What do you know of Samothrace mentioned in our lesson? _____

22. What does Luke tell us about Philippi? _____

23. What evidence do we have that there were but few Jews in Philippi? _____

24. What do you know of Lydia and her occupation? _____

25. What do you know of the meaning of the word "purple" in our lesson? _____

26. How did the Lord open Lydia's heart? _____

27. Why was Lydia baptized? _____

28. What evidence can you give that the baptism of Lydia's household does not authorize the baptism of infants? _____

29. How did the church at Philippi have fellowship in the gospel with Paul from the first day? _____

LESSON NUMBER 18

PAUL IN ATHENS

Acts 17:22-34

INTRODUCTION

At the close of our last lesson we left the apostle Paul in the home of Lydia. While making his home there, he was teaching in the city; and because he freed a young girl of a spirit of divination, her masters had Paul and Silas put in prison. They charged Paul and Silas of being exceedingly troublesome in the city and of setting forth customs which it was not lawful for Romans to receive or to observe. The magistrates took off their garments and beat Paul and Silas with rods. They put them in the inner prison and made their feet fast in the stocks. But Paul and Silas prayed and sang hymns of praise unto God until the midnight hour, when an earthquake opened the doors of the prison and loosed the bands of the prisoners. The jailer would have killed himself, but Paul intervened and preached the gospel to him and baptized him the same hour of the night. Thus, another family was added to the little church in Philippi. The next day Paul and Silas were released, and they left Philippi for Thessalonica. There they found a synagogue and preached the gospel there until the Jews, moved with jealousy, took certain vile fellows of the rabble and set the city on an uproar. Thinking it best for their safety, Paul and Silas left there and went to Berea. Again they preached the gospel in the synagogue, and these in Berea were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether the things Paul preached were so. (Acts 17:11) This examination led many of them to believe, but the jealous Jews of Thessalonica followed Paul and Silas to Berea and stirred up the multitude there against them; and Paul, leaving Silas and Timothy to stay there with the infant church, went on to Athens. In Athens Paul preached both in the synagogue and in the marketplace every day. Epicurean and Stoic philosophers became interested in what Paul had to say. They called him a babbler, and “*a setter forth of strange gods.*” So they took him to the Areopagus, Mar’s Hill, that they might know what this strange doctrine was. Luke says that these Athenians spent their time in doing nothing else “*but either to tell or to hear some new thing.*”

I. KEY SCRIPTURE

“What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I set unto you.” (Acts 17:23b)

1. Worshipers who know not God. All people worship something. Man has been described as “a worshiping animal.” We have no intention of exhausting the field of study, but wish to suggest a few classes of worshipers who do not know God. (a) The heathen people where the Bible has not gone. Christianity is a revealed religion. It is one which must be taught, so where the Bible has not gone, men are in ignorance of God and the way to worship Him. Men do not by nature, philosophy, or chance, worship God acceptably. Nature worshipers usually change the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and of four footed beasts, and creeping things. (Rom. 1:23.) (b) Those who prefer to worship nature. Many people are lovers of nature. They go to nature for their happiness, for their consolation, for their inspiration. The English poet, Wordsworth, was a worshiper of nature. He said, “For nature then ... to me was all in all ... an

appetite; a feeling and a love, that had no need of a remoter charm.” By this he meant to say that nature was all he needed to calm and comfort his soul. There are lovers of the fine arts today who make such things their god. (c) Those who prefer philosophy. In this classification might be included all the forms of higher learning. Many of the great educators of our day feel no need of God. They claim to find satisfaction in their quest for higher and greater knowledge. The only salvation they expect and for which they work is that which will come to the human race through avenues of higher learning. They do not believe in personal salvation from sin by a personal Savior who died for them and rose again. They refuse to accept the Bible as from God. They refuse even to accept the Bible as a standard of morality. They contend that what was an acceptable standard of morality in Paul’s day is not and cannot be an acceptable standard in our day. They further contend that a standard which is acceptable in our day may not be an acceptable standard a hundred years hence. So with these devotees of higher learning there is no such things as an unchangeable standard of right and wrong. Refusing to accept God and His word as the standard of authority in religion and morals, they are at sea and have no idea where they will cast anchor. (d) Those who love pomp and ceremony. In this class are to be found many religious people who profess to believe the Bible to be God’s book. However, their love for pomp and ceremony leads them to disregard the teaching of the Bible as the way to worship God. They build great religious temples, go to extremes to entertain the public, and put on a great show of piety and reverence, not because of their love of God, but simply because of their love of ceremony. Many of the great denominations of our day are to be found in this class. Nor should we think we are totally exempt simply because we have the name “church of Christ” over the doorway of our church buildings. There are some among us who look wistfully at these great religious temples with their pompous ceremonies, but through fear of the consequences of disobedience settle for membership in the congregation that has the most expensive building, and those members dress most nearly in keeping with the latest fashions.

2. True worship is based on revelation. (a) Man is unable to devise a way of worship. The prophet said it is not in man that walks to direct his steps. (Jer. 10:23.) God said His ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts; but as the heavens are higher than the earth, so His ways are higher than our ways. (Isa. 55:8,9.) This has always been humiliating to man, but it is the truth, and we must accept it if we would please God. It is for this reason that the devotees of higher learning refuse to worship as God would have them do. (b) Jesus taught us the lesson that worship must not only be in spirit, but that it must be in truth. (John 4:24.) To worship in truth simply means that we shall be guided by revealed truth in our worship. We will not only do the things which God commands us to do in worship, but we will do those things in the manner in which He has directed. (c) Paul tells us that we are to do all that we do in the name of Christ. (Col. 3:17.) To do a thing in the name of Christ is to do it by the authority of Jesus Christ. The only way Jesus authorizes anybody to do anything is through His word revealed by the apostles and New Testament prophets. Hence, that which cannot be read from the New Testament is not by the authority of Jesus Christ (d) John tells us that whosoever goes onward and abides not in the teaching of Christ has not God. (2 John 9.) The teaching of Christ is contained in the book we call the New Testament. Anything, therefore, which we may do as an act of worship which cannot be read from the New Testament is no part of the teaching of Christ. Since one who goes beyond the teaching of Christ has not God, it follows that when people do things in their worship which cannot be read from the New Testament, they have not God. God refuses to fellowship or recognize those who go beyond the teaching of Christ in their work and worship. (e) Paul says we walk by faith, not by sight. (2 Cor.5:7.) Faith comes by hearing the word of God. (Rom. 10:17.) So, if we walk by faith, and faith comes by hearing the word of God, we walk by the teaching of the word of God. John tells us, if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have

fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:7.) To walk in the light is to walk in harmony with the teaching of His word, therefore, equal to walking by faith. So if we walk by faith, which comes from the teaching of Christ, the blood of Jesus cleanses us but if we go beyond the teaching of Christ and do not walk in the light of His word, we place ourselves beyond the cleansing power of the blood of Christ.

3. The object of true worship. In our text, Paul says he sets forth that Being whom they worshiped in ignorance. (a) Paul taught the nature of this true God, the object of man's worship. He taught that this God is one, therefore, the unity of God in verse twenty-four. He taught that God is a Spirit, not a material being, in verse twenty-nine. He taught that God is independent of His creatures in verse twenty-five. In verses twenty-four and twenty-seven he taught the omnipresence of God. While in verses twenty-four and twenty-six he taught the sovereignty of God, that He is Lord of heaven and earth. (b) Paul taught the Athenians the relation of God to mankind. In verse twenty-four Paul taught that the true God is our maker. In verse twenty-five he taught that God is the source of all life. In verse twenty-eight he taught that in God we live the highest life. In verse twenty-nine he taught that God is the Father of our spirits. In verse twenty-seven Paul taught that God desires to be the object of our search and our worship. In verse thirty-one Paul taught that God is the judge of all men through Jesus Christ. In verse thirty Paul taught that God no longer overlooks sin but commands that all men should everywhere repent.

II. A COMMENTARY ON ACTS 17:22-34

1. Paul Makes Known the Unknown God (Acts 17:22-28)

I perceive that you are very religious. The Greek word translated religious in this text may also be translated superstitious, and is so translated in our common version. It is not likely that Paul would needlessly offend his hearers in the very first sentence of his sermon, so it is most probable that he commended them for being very religious. One writer gives the sense as follows, "I perceive that you are greatly devoted to reverence for religion; that it is a characteristic of the people to honor the gods, to read altars to them, and to recognize the divine agency in times of trial." (Barnes.)

Observed the objects of your worship. Paul saw the objects of their worship; he saw the things which they worshiped, yet it is obvious that he saw only the altars and the idols which they had erected. The proof that they thought of something back of and beyond the altars and idols which they erected is found in the statement "to an unknown god." They had erected an altar to an unknown god. Paul could see the altar, but he could not see the unknown god; yet he said he could see the objects of their worship. Hence, those who say that the idols which they have are not objects of worship, but simply aids in worshiping God, are in this statement convicted of having these images as objects of their worship. It is impossible to distinguish between an image and a being which it represents so as to say you worship the being but not the image.

The God that made the world. Paul begins here to make known to these people the unknown God. (a) In this verse Paul sets forth the unity of God. The heathen world looks upon the universe as being made by many gods. There is a god of the sun, a god of the moon, and gods of every other part of the universe; but with Paul there is but one God, the God that made the world. (b) He in this verse sets forth God as the Lord of heaven and earth. This is the sovereignty of God. (c) Paul sets forth his God as our Creator, for He made the world and all things therein. (d) Paul sets forth this unknown god as

a spirit being, for He dwells not in temples made with hands. The student should study verse twenty-nine in this connection.

Neither is He served by men's hands. In this verse Paul sets forth God as independent of His creatures. Heathen worshipers often took food and placed it by the idol, thinking that they had to feed God. Paul exalts Jehovah above these dependent gods. God said, "If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof." (Psalm 50:12.) Not only is God independent of man, but Paul sets God forth as one who is necessary to man; for he says that God Himself "gives to all life, and breath, and all things." This was a direct thrust at both the Epicureans and the Stoics. The Epicureans admitted that there are gods, but believed them to be absolutely uninterested in the things that are done on earth. The Stoic's feeling of self-righteousness and independence led him to deny the need of a supreme being.

Made of one every nation of men. In this statement Paul affirms that God made all men and that He rules over all men. He also affirms that all men came from one, therefore, the unity of humanity. There are people in the world today who claim to believe the Bible who deny that all men came from Adam. It is interesting to notice the unities of this sermon. (a) The unity of God; (b) the unity of humanity; (c) the unity of religion.

That they should seek God. In this verse Paul teaches that man's highest aim and greatest good is to seek God. This was a direct thrust at the philosophy of the Epicureans. There are many in the world today who think pleasure, education, and wealth are to be sought in preference to God.

He is not far from each one of us. In this verse Paul teaches the omnipresence of God. This is an encouragement for man to seek after God; since He is not very far from us, He is not difficult to find.

In Him we live. This statement is directed at the fatalism of the Stoics. This verse sets forth our need of God as a reason why we should seek after Him. We need Him because our life is dependant upon Him. Our ability to move about and to accomplish anything is dependent upon Him; and our being in this world is dependent on Him and His goodness towards us.

2. Man's Duty to the True God (Acts 17:29-31)

Being then the offspring of God. From a song written in honor of Jupiter, Paul quoted a line from a Greek poet which stated that we are God's offspring. He concludes that, since we are the offspring of God; we are duty bound to think of God not as something material or something made by art and device of man. A materialist of our day could learn a lesson here. We are not God's offspring physically. If we are the offspring of God at all, we are His offspring in the Spirit. The Hebrew writer calls God the Father of our spirits. (Heb. 12:9)

Times of ignorance therefore God overlooked. By "times of ignorance" Paul refers to the time before the heathen world received a revelation of God. By the term "overlooked" Paul does not mean to say that God was pleased with idolatry, but rather a lack of their revelation from God was a mitigating circumstance. "The sense is, He passed over those times without punishing them, as if he did not see them. For wise purposes He suffered them to walk in ignorance, that there might be a fair experiment to show what men would do, and how much necessity there was for a revelation to instruct them in the true knowledge of God. We are not to suppose that God regarded idolatry as innocent, or the

crimes and vices to which idolatry led as of no importance; but their ignorance was a mitigating circumstance, and He suffered the nations to live without coming forth in direct judgment against them.” (Barnes.)

He commands men that they should all everywhere repent. Paul gives his hearers to understand that God will no longer overlook sin. He commands that people shall turn from sin and seek after God. On this point we should observe (a) that, since God commands all men to repent, we must conclude that all men are capable of repentance. The idea that man is incapable of repentance until God sends a mysterious and direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon him is not true. (b) If man does not repent and seek after God, he is lost and lost eternally. (c) We should hasten to take the gospel to every creature on earth that he may learn of his duty to repent and seek after God.

He has appointed a day. Paul says that God has appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness. There is to be a judgment day. That day is appointed, but only God knows that day. Since we do not know the day, the only thing for us is to be ready whenever it may come. In this sermon Paul urged them to repent and seek after God that they might be ready for that day. Righteousness will be the standard of judgment in that day, and those who have worked righteousness while here on earth will be saved in that day; and those who have worked unrighteousness will be lost. (Rom. 2:5-9.)

By the Man whom He has ordained. Notice that our judge is to be man. Let us not think that Jesus lost His humanity when He ascended to the Father. According to Paul, not only is a man to be our judge, but we have a man for a mediator. (1 Tim. 2:5.)

He has given assurance unto all men. Paul says that God has given assurance of this judgment in righteousness by the man whom He ordained, and that assurance is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Just as sure as God raised Jesus from the dead, we will be judged by the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. The Response of the Athenians (Acts 17:32-34)

Some mocked. Paul had three classes of hearers who responded in three different ways. When he spoke of the resurrection of the dead, some of his hearers mocked. Neither the Epicureans nor the Stoics believed in the resurrection or a life at all after death. Denial of life after the death of the body is very common among educators today. It is also coming to be rather common among denominational preachers.

We will hear you ... again. This is the second class of hearers in Athens. They were sufficiently impressed with Paul’s sermon that they desired to hear more. Whether this desire was because of their insatiable thirst to hear something new or whether they were impressed with the reasonableness of Paul’s sermon, we have no way of knowing; but the willingness to listen to further evidence is commendable. When people close their ears to any further teaching, there is no hope of saving them.

Certain men clave unto him, and believed. There was a certain woman named Damaris among those who believed. Dionysius the Areopagite was among those who believed. The word Areopagite simply means one connected with the court of Areopagus, but how he was connected we do not know. Some think that he was a member of the Athenian council or court. At any rate, he was a man of

prominence. Here again we have an instance of people believing the gospel as preached, but no mention is made of their being baptized. We do not know whether Paul established a church in Athens. Paul did not have the success in this city of learning that he had in other places. This might suggest that higher learning and the study of human philosophy tend to turn men away from God rather than to lead them to God.

III. SOME APPLICATIONS

1. People who know not God are entitled to an opportunity to know of Him. Paul was willing to make great sacrifices to take the knowledge of God to those who knew Him not.
2. The fate of those who know not God will be terrible in the day of judgment. But will their fate be any worse than those who know God but refuse to share that knowledge with those who know Him not?
3. Do you know the essential characteristics of God as revealed in this sermon? The greater our knowledge of God, the greater our love for Him. The more we love God, the more faithfully and diligently will we serve Him.

QUESTION SHEET NUMBER 18

PAUL IN ATHENS

1. Why must the ways of God be revealed to man? _____

2. What did Jesus mean when He said we must worship God in truth? _____

3. What is meant by doing things in the name of Christ? _____

4. What is the consequence of going beyond the teaching of Christ in our worship? _____

5. What is meant by walking by faith in our worship? _____

6. What did Paul teach about the nature of God? _____

7. What did he teach about the relation of God to mankind? _____

8. With what statement did Paul open his sermon in Athens? _____

9. What evidence do we have that idolatry includes the worship images as well as the beings back of and represented by the images? _____

10. How did Paul teach the unity of God? _____

11. What did Paul say of the sovereignty of God? _____

12. What did Paul say of the spiritual nature of God? _____

13. How did Paul teach that God is independent of His creation? _____

14. How did Paul teach the dependence of creation upon God? _____

15. What did Paul teach about the unity of humanity? _____

16. What did Paul teach is man's highest aim and greatest good? _____

17. How did Paul teach the omnipresence of God? _____

18. What did Paul teach about man's relation to God? _____

19. To what time does Paul refer by the statement "times of ignorance"? _____

20. What was God's attitude toward idolatry during the "times of ignorance"? _____

21. What is God's attitude now toward sin? _____

22. What three observations in our lesson are based upon the fact that God commands all men everywhere to repent? _____

23. What does Paul teach in this lesson about the judgment? _____

24. What does Paul teach about the nature of our Judge? _____

25. What assurance has God given us of the judgment? _____

26. What caused some of Paul's hearers to mock? _____

27. What did the second class of Paul's hearers say? _____

28. Can you give the names of some of Paul's hearers who believed? _____

29. Do we have any evidence that Paul established a church in Athens? _____

30. What does Paul's work in Athens suggest with reference to establishing the church in seats of higher learning? _____

LESSON NUMBER 19

PAUL IN CORINTH

Acts 18:1-11

INTRODUCTION

“The city of Corinth is alike remarkable for its distinctive geographical position, its eminence in Greek and Roman history, and its close connection with the early spread of Christianity.” (Smith’s Bible Dictionary.) Corinth was situated on the narrow neck of land between Achaia and Greece. Corinth was taken over by the Macedonians in 338 B.C. Then it was occupied by the Romans in 197 B.C. Finally, in 146 B.C., the old city was completely destroyed, and all its treasures of art were carried to Rome. Just one hundred years later Julius Caesar rebuilt the city, so the city was really only one hundred years old when Paul visited there. But in this period of time, Corinth had won back its place of leadership in the Grecian world. On account of its situation with reference to travel and commerce, Corinth had a cosmopolitan population. This in turn tended to produce a low state of morals. The worship of Venus flourished there and was attended with shameful licentiousness. The standard of morals was so low that to "Corinthianize" a person was to make him sensual and immoral.

I. KEY SCRIPTURE

“Be not afraid, but speak and hold not your peace.” (Acts 18:9b)

1. What our text tells us about Paul. (a) Our text suggests that Paul was suffering unusual hardships in Corinth. Paul was accustomed to suffering hardships. Everywhere he went he was persecuted, but not everywhere did the Lord make a special appearance to him for his encouragement; hence, we conclude that he was under special and prolonged hardships at Corinth. (b) Our text suggests that Paul was discouraged under this continued persecution. We must not think of Paul as being something more than human. He was a human being and subject to all the frailties of a human being, and these continued persecutions would tend to discourage him. He writes about persecutions which seemed beyond his power to endure so that he despaired even of life. (2 Cor. 1:8,9.) He speaks of his afflictions in Macedonia and says there were fightings without and fears within until comforted by the coming of Titus. (2 Cor. 7:5-7.) The accumulative force of continued persecution would tend to wear down his resistance and sap his courage until he would need just such an experience as was afforded him at this time. (c) Paul was afraid. The very fact that the Lord told Paul to be not afraid is an indication of the fears which were haunting Paul. We do not belittle Paul by saying that he became discouraged and afraid under certain circumstances and in certain conditions of life. As cited above, he indicates that when there were fightings without, there were fears within his own heart. (2 Cor. 7:5.) (d) Paul was uncertain as to the course he should pursue. Sometimes it was the will of the Lord that Paul should leave when persecution was unusually heavy. When he first returned to Jerusalem after his conversion, the Lord told him to leave Jerusalem quickly, for the people would not receive his testimony. (Acts 22:17-21.) And as we have seen recently, he left both Philippi and Thessalonica on account of the intense persecution which he was suffering. Sometimes he had an indication from the Lord whether he should stay or leave, but at Philippi and Thessalonica there seems to have been no such indication. He was left to make up his own mind whether he should stay

or leave, and undoubtedly Paul was giving some consideration to the matter of leaving Corinth at the time the Lord appeared. But the Lord had other work for him, so He commanded him to stay in Corinth.

2. What our text tells us of the Lord's care of His servants. (a) Our text teaches us that the Lord knows each one of His servants and knows the difficulties under which they labor and the persecutions which they suffer. The Lord is all-wise, omniscient. We are told that He notes the fall of the sparrow, that He knows even the number of hairs on our heads. Such knowledge of so great a universe is beyond our power to conceive. If God knows about the sparrows, surely He knows about each one of His servants. The fact that Paul was an apostle does not mean that the Lord would be more attentive to him and be more sympathetic with him in his sorrows and troubles than he is with each one of us; hence, we should derive a lot of courage from the fact that the Lord knows each one of us. (b) That the Lord is a merciful and faithful high priest. The writer of Hebrews tells us that the Lord was made like unto His brethren. That is, He partook of our nature in order that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest, and that He might make satisfaction for the sins of His people. Furthermore, we are told that because He suffered in the flesh He is able to succour them that are tempted. (Heb. 2:17,18.) And again, we are assured that *"we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that has been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."* (Heb. 4:15.) Since Jesus had suffered persecutions in the flesh, He knew how Paul was feeling under the continued sufferings he was undergoing for the sake of the gospel. (c) That the Lord protects us from trials too hard to bear. The Lord allowed Paul to suffer many persecutions, but never did one come which Paul was not able to bear. *"There has no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it."* (1 Cor. 19.13.) Many times our trials, sorrows, and persecutions are too hard for us to bear alone, so God gives us strength and courage sufficient to bear these trials. Paul had a thorn in the flesh, which he thought was too much for him to bear, so he prayed to the Lord three times to take the thorn out of his flesh; but the Lord said, *"My grace is sufficient for you: for my power is made perfect in weakness."* (2 Cor. 12:9.) And again, *"But He gives more grace. Wherefore the scripture says, God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Be subject therefore unto God; but resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you."* (James 4: 6, 7.)

3. What our text tells us about the gospel. (a) That the gospel must be preached. Though Paul was discouraged because of the sufferings of the past and afraid of what the future might hold for him, the Lord said the gospel must be preached in Corinth. Being the seed of the kingdom, there can be no children of the kingdom unless the seed is planted in the hearts of people. Hence, the gospel must be preached if the kingdom is to spread. (b) The gospel must be preached even to people who persecute the preacher. Usually we are prone to say that, if people do not wish to hear the gospel, we certainly will not force it on them; but very likely this is only an indication of the fact that we are unwilling to suffer for the privilege of preaching the gospel, unwilling to suffer in order that we may save those who are lost. When Paul was rescued from the mob in Jerusalem who would have torn him to pieces, he asked the chief captain for the liberty to speak unto them. (Acts 21:37-40.) (c) The offensive principles of the gospel must be preached. In Paul's day salvation through the blood of the crucified Galilean peasant was a very offensive thing to preach, yet Paul had no choice of what he preached. Again, Paul preached that Gentiles need not be circumcised and keep the law of Moses. To the Jews this was as offensive as any principle could possibly be; but Paul was not at liberty to revise the gospel and make it acceptable to his hearers. That is man's trouble today. We are too prone to

leave off those principles which are offensive to our hearers. We are afraid that, if we offend them, they will not return to hear us preach. Some justify their actions by saying that, unless you can get people to come to hear you, you have no chance at all of saving them. That sounds plausible, but it is also true that, unless you preach to them the thing that is offensive and lead them to believe and accept that, they cannot be saved.

II. A COMMENTARY ON ACTS 18:1-11

1. Paul Works and Preaches (Acts 18:1-4)

He departed from Athens, and came to Corinth. Corinth is about forty-five miles almost due west of Athens. Another statement of moral conditions will not be out of place. "Lasciviousness here was not only practiced and allowed, but was consecrated by the worship of Venus; and no small part of the wealth and splendor of the city arose from the offerings made by licentious passion in the very temples of this goddess. No city of ancient times was more profligate. It was the Paris of antiquity; the seat of splendor, and show, and corruption. Yet even here, notwithstanding all the disadvantages of splendor, gaiety and dissoluteness, Paul entered on the work of rearing a church; and here he was eminently successful." (Barnes.)

He found a certain Jew named Aquila. Being alone, Paul would look for some companionship. The statement that "*he found*" shows that he took the initiative in forming this acquaintance with Aquila. There has been considerable discussion as to whether Aquila and his wife were Christians when Paul met them. The inference is that they were not Christians. Our text tells us that Paul found a certain Jew. If Aquila had been a Christian, he would have been called a disciple. Even those who had received the baptism of John at Ephesus, though not actually Christians, were referred to as disciples. (Acts 19:1,2.)

Lately come from Italy. Though Aquila is said to be a man of Pontus by race, yet he came to Corinth from Italy. We conclude therefore that, though reared in Pontus, which was northeast of Galatia and bordered the Black Sea, Aquila had left his home and had gone to Rome. Peter addressed his letters to the Jews dispersed in Pontus and surrounding provinces (1 Pet. 1:1), which suggests to us that there was considerable Jewish population in this section of Asia Minor. Aquila's wife, Priscilla, is also mentioned in connection with Paul's coming to Corinth. "She was a prominent woman and stood high in social positions, so that her name is sometimes placed before that of her husband. (Verse 18; Rom. 16:3; 2 Tim. 4:19.)" (Boles.)

Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome. Claudius reigned in Rome A.D. 41 to A.D. 54. A Roman historian mentions this expulsion of the Jews, and says that it was because they were constantly exciting tumults under their leader, Chrestus. "Who this Chrestus was is not known. It might have been a foreign Jew, who raised tumults on some occasion of which we have no knowledge, as the Jews in all heathen cities were greatly prone to excitements and insurrections. Or it may be that Suetonius, little acquainted with Jewish affairs, mistook this for the name Christ, and supposed that he was the leader of the Jews. This explanation has much plausibility; for, (1) Suetonius could scarcely be supposed to be intimately acquainted with the affairs of the Jews. (2) There is every reason to believe that, before this, the Christian religion was preached at Rome. (3) It would produce there, as everywhere else, great tumult and contention among the Jews. (4) Claudius, the emperor, might suppose that such tumults endangered the peace of the city, and resolved to remove the cause

at once by the dispersion of the Jews.” (Barnes.)

By their trade they were tentmakers. We are told that Paul attached himself to these people because they were tentmakers by trade. Undoubtedly Paul made his acquaintance with these people at the synagogue, so to begin with they had two things in common. (a) They were Jews; (b) they were tentmakers, and soon they had the third point in common, that they were Christians. Paul’s home province, Cilicia, was noted for its unusually fine goat hair for making tent cloth. The best cloth which could be procured in that time for making tents was called “cilicium” because it was produced in Cilicia. All Jews were taught a trade by which they could earn a living. Even those who were educated in the arts and sciences were taught to work with their hands “lest they should be dependent on the charity of others.” Paul, though an apostle of Jesus Christ, was not ashamed to work with his hands. Sometimes preachers with a string of letters following their names indicating degrees which they have earned in college and university think that they should not be expected to do any manual labor. But there come times when the preacher, along with other members of the church, need to lay their coats aside and do a few hours or days of real manual labor. The preacher who refuses to carry his part of the load will lose the respect of his brethren, and thus will lose his influence with them.

And persuaded Jews and Greeks. Paul went every Sabbath to the synagogue as was his custom, and we are told that he both reasoned and persuaded. The word reasoned suggests that Paul discussed, argued, and taught the word of God, and the word persuade suggests that he pleaded with them to receive the teaching which he had given them. Brethren are long on the former, but short on the latter, method of saving souls. We need to do more persuading. Paul says “*Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.*” (2 Cor. 5:11)

2. Paul Is Driven from the Synagogue (Acts 18:5-7)

Silas and Timothy came down. These workers had been left in Macedonia when Paul went to Athens. They now rejoin him in Corinth. (Acts 17:14.)

Paul was constrained by the word. “It indicates an intense divine impulse, urging to a work which would not be delayed or hindered by anything.... The meaning seems to be that he was engrossed by the word, or engrossed by the preaching of the gospel. He had been relieved of anxiety and toil by the arrival of Silas and Timothy with the gifts from Macedonia, and was now giving all of his time to preaching the word.” (Boles.)

Testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. The word testify comes from a Greek word which means “to testify, religiously to charge; to confirm a thing (by the interposition of) testimony, cause it to be believed.” (Thayer.) This word has the force of unusual solemnity and earnestness. This word suggests the use of evidence to prove a proposition, and Paul was proving to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

They opposed themselves and blasphemed. To oppose themselves means to act contrary to their own best interests. The word blaspheme means to speak evil of someone, so these people were acting contrary to their best interests, because they opposed the preaching of the gospel and spoke blasphemously of the Christ whom Paul preached.

Your blood be upon your own heads. It is said that Paul shook out his raiment when he said this. To shake out the raiment is about the same as shaking off the dust of one's feet. (Matt. 10:14; Acts 13:51.) And to tell a person that his blood is upon his own head is about the same as saying that he takes his life in his own hands. It is a declaration of assuming no further responsibility for one's welfare. Having given these Jews their first opportunity as the Lord instructed the apostles, and they had rejected the Christ, Paul was now free to speak to the Gentiles.

Went into the house of a certain man named Titus Justus. This man Titus Justus seems to have been an open-minded Jew. His name suggests that he was a Greek, but since he was in the synagogue and is said to have been a worshiper of God, we conclude that he was a proselyte to the Jewish religion. But since he is not spoken of as a disciple at this time it is likely that he had not accepted Christ. His house being next door to the synagogue would give Paul an opportunity to continue to reach such Jews or proselytes as were open-minded.

3. Paul is Encouraged to Stay in Corinth (Acts 18:8-11)

Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed. Paul's work in the synagogue was not a failure, for he took with him the ruler of the synagogue. Paul baptized Crispus with his own hands. (1 Cor. 1:14)

Hearing believed, and were baptized. This is said of many of the Corinthians. This gives us some idea of the success of Paul's work in Corinth. Though he had a slow and difficult beginning, his work was richly rewarded in that many of the Corinthians obeyed the gospel. Incidentally, we learn from this that belief comes as a result of hearing. (Rom. 10:13-17.) Joining this statement with Paul's salutation to the church at Corinth, we learn that those who hear, believe, and are baptized constitute the "church of God which is at Corinth, even them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints." (1 Cor. 1:2.) If that is the way people became members of the church of God at Corinth, it is the way people must become members of God's church today.

Faith only advocates, use 1 Cor 1:14 to prove that Paul did not baptize, nor is baptism essential for salvation, but Paul personally baptized Crispus, Gaius and the household of Stephanus. Why would he do that if it was not required for salvation? Further, Luke tells us that "many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized." Why were all of the disciples in the church at Corinth baptized, if it was not necessary for salvation? Obviously, Paul preached baptism as a prerequisite for "remission of sins" as did Peter on the day of Pentecost. (Acts 2:38) If Paul did not baptize most of the disciples at Corinth, then someone else, obviously did, and it is probable that it was Silas, Timothy, Crispus or others. The whole point of Paul's argument is that no one can accuse him of causing division [which existed in the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 1:10-13)] through Christians saying that they were baptized in the name of Paul.

The Lord said unto Paul in the night by a vision. At what time in Paul's stay in Corinth this vision came to him, we do not know. However, we may be sure that it came to him before the many of verse eight believed and were baptized. It came at a time when he was discouraged and afraid, and it came before the "much people" of verse ten had heard, believed, and were baptized.

No man shall set on you to harm you. This was the encouragement which Paul needed in his efforts to stay in Corinth. However, we are forced to conclude that the minor injuries of ordinary persecution were not included in this statement. The Lord simply assured Paul that the persecution would not be

too difficult for him to bear, so he was to remain in the city so that the many people of that city who would obey the gospel could have the opportunity to hear it and be saved.

He dwelt there a year and six months. Here we have another example of a preacher of the gospel laboring with a church through an extended period of time. Those who contend that a preacher of the gospel cannot stay regularly after elders have been selected and appointed have to prove that there were no elders in the church at Corinth for the first eighteen months. Since elders were appointed within a very few months after the establishment of the churches in Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe (Acts 14:21-23), we may safely conclude that elders had been appointed in the church at Corinth for some time before Paul left.

III. SOME APPLICATIONS

1. Paul worked with his own hands to support himself and to contribute to the support of others while they preached in difficult fields. Many preachers should be encouraged by his example to go into fields where the church is weak, or where there are no churches, and spend their lives building the church of the Lord.
2. The blood of the Corinthians was not upon Paul's hands because he had given them ample opportunity to accept the gospel of Christ. Until we have given the people of our generation an opportunity to accept Christ, their blood is upon our hands.
3. The Lord has "*much people*" in many cities and countries of the world. If the gospel were taken to them, they would accept it. But if you and I do not take the gospel to them, they will be lost. What are you as an individual and your congregation where you worship doing to take the gospel to these people?

QUESTION SHEET NUMBER 19

PAUL IN CORINTH

1. What do you know of the location of the city of Corinth? _____

2. What do you know of the history of the city of Corinth? _____

3. What are told about the morals of the city? _____

4. What Greek goddess contributed to the low standard of morals? _____

5. What four things does our text tell us about Paul when he was in Corinth? _____

6. Do we detract from Paul's greatness to suggest that he was afraid and uncertain? _____

7. Name and discuss three things our text tells us about the Lord's care for His servants. _____

8. Cite an example of God giving grace to bear trials rather than removing them. _____

9. What does our text tell us about the necessity of preaching the gospel? _____

10. What does our text teach us about the necessity of preaching all the gospel? _____

11. What use did the worship of Venus make of lasciviousness? _____

12. Whom did Paul find for companionship in Corinth? _____

13. Do you think Aquila was a Christian when Paul found him? _____

14. Why had Aquila and his wife left Rome? _____

15. What reasons can you give that Claudius may have banished the Jews from Rome as a persecution of the church? _____

16. What things did Paul and Aquila have in common? _____

17. What did Paul teach us about the dignity of manual labor? _____

18. What do you know of Paul's method of getting the gospel to the people? _____

19. What fellow workers joined Paul in Corinth? _____

20. What effect did their coming have on Paul's preaching? _____

21. How did the people of Corinth react to Paul's preaching? _____

22. What did Paul do when the people opposed themselves? _____

23. Who received Paul into his house? and what do you know of him? _____

24. What man in Corinth did Paul baptize with his own hands? _____

25. What is said of Paul's success in Corinth? _____

26. In what way did the Lord encourage Paul to stay in Corinth? _____

27. What did the Lord mean when He said Paul should suffer no harm? _____

28. How long did Paul labor in Corinth? _____

29. What do you think of the probability that elders were appointed long before Paul left? _____

LESSON NUMBER 20

PAUL IN EPHESUS

Acts 19:29-41

INTRODUCTION

In our last lesson Paul was at Corinth. When he left Corinth, he went to Ephesus. As was his custom, he went into the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews of Ephesus. They were interested and requested him to stay longer than he was willing to stay, but he did make them a promise that, if God willed, he would come again and preach the gospel to them. (Acts 18:18-21.) With that short stay in Ephesus, Paul closed his second missionary journey, and with his return to Ephesus he began his third missionary journey. The incidents of this lesson transpired during his third missionary journey. Another incident of interest between the lessons is the coming of Apollos. When Paul went from Corinth to Ephesus, Aquila and Priscilla accompanied him to Ephesus. Paul left them there while he went on to Jerusalem. Apollos came to Ephesus about this time and began preaching what he knew of the gospel, but he knew only the teaching and the baptism of John the Baptist. So Priscilla and Aquila took him unto themselves and “*expounded unto him the way of God more accurately.*” (Acts 18:26.) We are told that Apollos was an eloquent man, that he was mighty in the scriptures, that he helped them much that had believed through grace and powerfully confuted the Jews publicly. After learning the truth from Priscilla and Aquila, Apollos went to Corinth. We hear of him there as one after whom a division was named. (1 Cor. 1:10-14.) We should notice also that the church of Ephesus had its beginning in the conversion of twelve men, who, like Apollos, knew only the baptism of John. (Acts 19:1-7) When Paul found these men, he asked of them if they received the Holy Spirit when they believed. They said they had not so much as heard whether the Spirit was given. Paul then knew that something was wrong with their baptism. They told him they had received John’s baptism. Immediately Paul understood why they knew nothing about the Holy Spirit. So Paul commanded them to be baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. These men had received the baptism of John after Pentecost. Before the day of Pentecost, John’s baptism was valid and accepted by the Lord as obedience. But after Pentecost the baptism was not valid, was not accepted as obedience, and those who received such baptism were in relation to God as if they had not been baptized at all. This shows us that not every immersion in water is baptism into Christ. There are many people today who are immersed in water in order to join the denomination of their choice. This is no more Christian baptism than was that which the twelve men at Ephesus prior to meeting with Paul.

I. KEY SCRIPTURE

“So mightily grew the word of the Lord and prevailed.” (Acts 19:20)

1. The growth of the word of the Lord. (a) In our text the word of the Lord is represented as something alive and able to extend itself, to spread. Such expressions are used in connection with unusual events connected with the gospel. When the apostles organized the church to take care of the needs of the Grecian widows, that the apostles might give themselves wholly to prayer and to the ministry of the word, we read, “*And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem exceedingly and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.*”

(Acts 8:7.) And again when James was murdered by Herod, and Peter was imprisoned but released by an angel, and not long afterwards Herod died because he gave not God the rightful glory, we read, *“But the word of God grew and multiplied.”* (Acts 12:24.) Our text says that the word of God grew mightily. This word mightily suggests the idea of overpowering force and strength which nothing could resist. We are told also that this word *“grew”* applies to the extension of the gospel externally, the new territory gained rather than the inward growth in the hearts of disciples. (b) This growth of the word of the Lord came about through preaching. We read that Paul *“entered into the synagogue, and spoke boldly for the space of three months, reasoning and persuading as to the things concerning the kingdom of God.”* (Acts 19:8.) Then again we read, *“Reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this continued for the space of two years so that all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.”* (Acts 19:9,10.) Preaching is indispensable to the growth of the word of the Lord. The church that neglects or limits its program of preaching and teaching of the word of God will soon cease to grow and prosper. (c) The word of God also grows through the lives of believers. One thing which contributed to the growth of the work in Ephesus was the fact that some who had practiced magical arts brought their books together in the streets of the city and burned them in the sight of all. Such a demonstration of sincerity on the part of members of the church will go a long way toward impressing the world with the power of the word of God. There are some people who will not listen to the word as it is preached by public proclaimers of the gospel, but they will pay attention to the changed life and the devoted self-sacrifice of those who profess to be Christians.

2. The prevailing power of the word. (a) To change the lives of men. This word *“prevail”* applies to the effect of the word in the lives of people. We suggested that the word *“grow”* in our text suggests the external extension of the word, but this word prevail suggests the power over the minds and hearts of people as expressed in their daily lives. The gospel has the power to change the lives of people. Paul says that some of the Corinthians were fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexuals, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners, but the gospel was preached to them, and in obedience to that gospel they were washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 6:9-11.) The gospel has the power to lift one out of the mire and filth of sin, to cleanse him, to transform his life into a holy, useful life in the service of God here and fit him for heaven after this life is over. (b) The word of the Lord has power to inspire unselfishness and self-sacrifice in the lives of people. *“There is no way by which we can so powerfully affect the judgment and win the sympathy of men as by sacrificing for Christ’s sake that which all men prize and strive for. When the world sees all who profess and call themselves Christians not only engaging in devotion, and endeavoring to make converts, but also denying themselves pleasures they would otherwise enjoy, spending on others, the money they would else have spent on themselves, foregoing worldly advantages which they cannot conscientiously appropriate, then it will be convinced by arguments which now are without any cogency and will be won by persuasions which now are urged in vain.”* (Pulpit Commentary.) (c) The word of the Lord has power to change our beliefs concerning both God and man. There is power in the word of the Lord to change the atheist and the agnostic into believers in the existence and the power and the goodness of God. There is power in the word to convince the infidel that the Bible is God’s message to man. There is power in the word of God to convince us that the traditions of men are weak and false and unable to give us happiness here and eternal life in the world to come. Before the gospel was preached in Ephesus, many people believed in the magical arts of the sorcerers, but when Paul preached the gospel there, they saw the falsity and inadequacy of the teaching of the sorcerers, so they accepted the word of God and burned the books of their teachers of magic.

3. Growing and prevailing in spite of opposition. (a) Humanity is so depraved that the word of the Lord always has opposition. Paul had not been in Ephesus more than three months when some were hardened and disobedient and began to speak evil of the Way before the multitude. (Acts 19:8,9.) The Jews who loved their exclusiveness and Jewish ceremonialism would oppose the gospel. The sorcerers who profited by their magic and the sale of their books of magic would oppose the gospel, and the silversmiths, led by Demetrius, opposed the gospel because it hurt their business. (b) The gospel grew in spite of counterfeit works. There was one Sceva, a chief priest, who had seven sons, who attempted to perform miracles in the name of Jesus whom Paul preached. The evil spirit which they attempted to drive out leaped upon them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them so that they fled out of the house naked and wounded. (Acts 19:14-16.) The word of the Lord is still growing and prevailing in spite of counterfeit religions. (c) The word of the Lord grows and prevails in spite of human philosophies. The teachers of magic had their instructions so systematized that they published them in books, but the word of the Lord prevailed over these teachings and caused the people to repudiate these teachers and their books and to burn the books in the city streets.

II. A COMMENTARY ON ACTS 19:29-41

1. Paul's Life Endangered by a Riot (Acts 19:29-32)

The city was filled with the confusion. Beginning with verse twenty-three of this chapter, we have the record of a riot caused by the silversmiths of Ephesus. Demetrius was the leader of this riot. Paul's work in Ephesus had been so successful that the silversmiths were feeling the effect of his work. So many people had been converted from idolatry that these silversmiths were not selling as many of their shrines and images as they ordinarily did. These shrines were silver models of the famous temple of Diana, which was located at Ephesus, and we are told that they were carried as charms on journeys or placed in people's houses to insure them the protection of the goddess. The shrine was a likeness of the temple with the goddess seated inside. Demetrius made an inflammatory speech and threw the craftsmen into an uproar, and they rushed into the theater, where they questioned some of Paul's companions.

Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia. This is probably the same Gaius whom Paul baptized with his own hands at Corinth. (1 Cor. 1:14; Rom. 16:23.) Aristarchus was one of Paul's companions on this third missionary journey, and he was also a fellow prisoner with Paul in Rome. (Col. 4:10.)

Paul was minded to enter in. Paul seems to have had little fear of the danger encountered by going into the theater. His friends and fellow workers were there, and he wished to come to their defence. The gospel which he preached had been a cause of the uproar, so he wished to defend the gospel. He was willing to endanger, even to sacrifice, his own life that he might defend the gospel which he preached, and that he might be true and loyal to his fellow workers in the gospel.

Certain also of the Asiarchs. "The Asiarchs, ten in number, were officers annually chosen from all the cities of proconsular Asia, to preside over all sacred rights, and to provide at their own expense the public gains in honor of the gods and of the deity of the emperor. This necessitated their being men of high rank and great wealth." (Pulpit Commentary.) The fact that some of these Asiarchs were friends of Paul shows how powerful the gospel was and how Paul cultivated the acquaintance and friendship, not solely of the poor and outcast, but of those who were powerful in the circles of society and government. These men, joined by the disciples of Ephesus, restrained Paul and kept him from

venturing himself into the theater where he might have lost his life.

Some therefore cried one thing, and some another. In this verse we have a good description of mob tactics and practices. We are told that the majority of the people did not know why they were in that theater nor did they know why they were crying at the top of their voice.

2. Jews Attempt to Defend Themselves (Acts 19:33,34)

They brought Alexander out of the multitude. Paul mentions a coppersmith by the name of Alexander as having done him much evil (2 Tim. 4:14,15), but we do not have positive proof that he is the same man mentioned in our text. Since he was a coppersmith, he is probably the same one. Again Paul mentions Alexander with Hymenaeus (1 Tim. 1:20), whom Paul said he had delivered unto Satan that he might learn not to blaspheme.

Would have made a defence unto the people. We are told that the Jews put Alexander forth to make a defence. Since the Jews were opposed to idolatry, and this riot was caused by Paul's teaching against idolatry, these Jews feared that they might be connected with Paul, since he too was a Jew. The Jews wished the people of Ephesus to know that they had no connection with Paul and his company, and that they were not responsible for the decline in the business of the silversmiths.

When they perceived that he was a Jew. The people could tell by his voice and his general appearance that he was a Jew, and when they determined that he was a Jew, they refused to allow him to speak. They shouted for the space of two hours, "*Great is Diana of the Ephesians.*" This goddess, Diana, was called Artemis by the Greeks. She was one of the twelve superior deities. She was sometimes represented with a crescent on her head, a bow in her hand, and dressed in a hunting habit, while at other times she was represented with a triple face and with instruments of torture. By some she was regarded as the goddess of hunting. She was also represented with a great number of breasts to denote her being the fountain of blessings or as distributing her benefits to each in their proper station. She was worshipped in Egypt, Athens, and Cilicia and among some other heathen nations. But the most celebrated place of her worship was Ephesus." (Barnes.)

3. Uproar Quieted by the Town Clerk (Acts 19:35-41)

When the town clerk had quieted the multitude. "The functions of this officer, in some respects, correspond to those filled by the recorder of modern times; among his duties were the guardianship and tabulation of the state papers, the archives of the city, and in drawing up the public records." (Boles.)

City of the Ephesians is temple keeper of the great Diana. This town clerk began his speech by reminding the people that Ephesus was the home of the great goddess Diana. He also reminds them of the tradition among them that the image of Diana fell down from Jupiter. This was a tradition connected with the temple worship of this particular goddess. Where the tradition got its start no one seems to know. The town clerk spoke of these things as matters which everybody knew and which could not be disputed, and because of this he said, "*You ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rash.*"

You have bought here these men. The town clerk reminded the mob that they had brought innocent men into the theater, and he reminds the people that these men were neither robbers of temples nor

blasphemers of their goddess. “This statement shows how Paul had preached against error; he seems to have preached positive truths rather than making a direct attack on their error. He had hurt no religious prejudices by rude invectives; he was no blasphemer of the gods of Greece and Rome, but led men to the knowledge of truth by positive and kind representation of it. Paul had not shunned to preach the truth to them; this truth opposed all of the error to which they were wedded; but he had preached the truth in such a way that they could not take offense at him, if we take the statement of the town clerk at face value.” (Boles.)

The courts are open, and there are proconsuls. This is the advice of the town clerk to Demetrius and his craftsmen. He reminds them that the courts are open, and there are judges presiding in these courts. He recommends that Demetrius and the craftsmen make their accusations against Paul and his fellow workers before the judges of these courts, and let the matters be settled in the regular assembly.

We are in danger to be accused concerning this day's riot. The town clerk was anxious to get the matter settled, because he did not wish to have to make a report of the riot to the Roman authorities. He knew there was no reason for the riot, and consequently he said, “*As touching it we shall not be able to give account of this concourse.*” And having said these words he dismissed the assembly and sent them away.

III. SOME APPLICATIONS

1. It is easier to stir up a riot against a gospel preacher than it is to answer his scriptural arguments. Many people have resorted to the same unprincipled tactics that Demetrius resorted to in his opposition to Paul.
2. Alexander, the spokesman for the Jews, was willing to compromise his position on idolatry in order to hold the favor of the people of Ephesus. Though these Jews did not themselves practice idolatry, they were not militant in trying to rescue others from idolatry as were Paul and his co-workers in the gospel.
3. The town clerk was a man of courage to champion right when held by a small insignificant group of people, and to oppose wrong which was championed by the powerful guild of silversmiths. He set a good example for officeholders of all times to come.

QUESTION SHEET NUMBER 20

PAUL IN EPHESUS

1. Can you trace Paul's steps from the time he left Ephesus at the close of his second journey to his arrival there on his third missionary journey? _____

2. Who converted Apollos? _____

3. What do you know of his work? _____

4. What religious group did Paul find on his arrival in Ephesus? _____

5. Why was their first baptism not acceptable to Paul? _____

6. What does this teach us about many baptisms of the present day? _____

7. What is said of the extent of the growth of the word in Ephesus? _____

8. What two things caused the word to grow in Ephesus? _____

9. How could the growth of the word be increased in our community? _____

10. Can you illustrate how the word has power to change the lives of men? _____

11. What is said of the power of godly living to change the lives of others? _____

12. What is said of the power of the word to overcome human traditions? _____

13. What three things are mentioned in our lesson as opposing the growth of the gospel in Ephesus?

14. What opposition does the gospel have in our community? _____

15. What are we doing to overcome this opposition? _____

16. What was the cause of the riot which endangered Paul's life? _____

17. Can you name some of Paul's companions who were drawn into this riot? _____

18. Why was Paul not involved personally in the incident? _____

19. With what important people in Ephesus did Paul make friends? _____

20. How did these men show their interest in Paul's safety? _____

21. What description do we have in this lesson of mob tactics and practices? _____

22. Whom did the Jews of Ephesus put forth to represent them? _____

23. Why did the Jews wish to make a defence? _____

24. How did the Ephesians respond to this defence of the Jews? _____

25. What do you know about the goddess Diana? _____

26. What do you know of the duties of the town clerk at Ephesus? _____

27. What did this town clerk say about the origin of the image of Diana? _____

28. What did the town clerk say in defence of Paul's companions? _____

29. What light does the statement of the town clerk throw on the preaching of Paul? _____

30. What advice did the town clerk give the silversmiths? _____

31. Why was the town clerk so anxious to quiet the mob? _____

LESSON NUMBER 21

PAUL IN MILETUS

Acts 20:17-27; 36-38

INTRODUCTION

After the riot of the silversmiths, Paul left Ephesus and went northwestward into Macedonia. How long he stayed in Macedonia we are not told, but he turned southward again and went into Greece, where he spent three months. When he learned of a plot by the Jews to take his life, he returned through Macedonia, instead of sailing for Syria. His fellow workers in the gospel were waiting for him at Troas, so he sailed from Philippi for Troas, and there tarried seven days until he could meet with the brethren on the first day of the week to break bread. It was there that he preached until midnight and raised from the dead the young man who went to sleep during the sermon and fell from a third story window. Leaving Troas, Paul sailed southward down the coast to Miletus. Not having time to go to Ephesus for a visit, he requested the elders of the church at Ephesus to meet him at Miletus.

I. KEY SCRIPTURE

“So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified.” (Acts 20:32)

1. Paul commends us to God. (a) Paul commends us to God because God saved us. Paul writes to Timothy that God *“saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times eternal.”* (2 Tim. 1:8-9.) And he writes in like manner to Titus. *“But when the kindness of God our Savior, and His love toward man, appeared, not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.”* (Tit. 3:4-5.) If God loved us enough to give His Son to die for us while we were His enemies, surely now, since we are His children, He will care for us. (Rom. 5:8-11.) Hence, Paul could commend people unto God with the assurance of placing them in safe hands. (b) Paul commends us to God because He supplies our spiritual needs. We are told that God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. (Eph. 1:3.) Again, Paul assures us that *“my God shall supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”* (Phil. 4:19.) And he assures us that God is *“able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.”* (Eph. 3:20.) And Paul teaches us that God is so interested in the salvation of souls that He *“will deliver me from every evil work, and will save me unto His heavenly kingdom.”* (2 Tim. 4:18.) And Peter writes with like assurance that we are guarded by the power of God through our faith *“unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”* (1 Pet. 1:4-5.) And Jesus gives us assurance of the interest of heaven in our spiritual welfare and in our final victory over sin when He said of His sheep, *“And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My father, who has given them unto Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.”* (John 10:28-29.) (c) God guards His people from temptation. Jesus taught His disciples to pray, *“Bring us not into*

temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” (Matt. 6:13), and Paul assures us that *“the Lord is faithful, who shall establish you, and guard you from the evil one.”* (2 Thess. 3:3.) And Paul assures us that as surely as God is faithful He *“will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.”* (1 Cor. 10:13.) (d) God will supply our material needs. In the sermon on the mount, Jesus taught His disciples not to lay up treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal, but to lay up treasures for themselves in heaven, where neither moth nor rust can consume, and where thieves cannot break through and steal; and as encouragement for them to lay up their treasures in heaven, He taught them that God takes care of His people. In proof of God's care of His people, Jesus pointed to the lilies of the field arrayed in more glory than even Solomon, yet they toil not, neither do they spin. Then He concludes His argument in these words. *“But if God so clothed the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?”* (Matt. 6:19-34.) Since God does all these things for His people, there is no wonder why Paul commended these elders of the church at Ephesus unto God.

2. Paul commends us to the word of God. Paul speaks of this word as *“the word of His grace,”* which may be also translated *“His gracious word.”* The word of God is gracious, it favors, or blesses, us in many ways. (a) We grow by His word. Paul prayed that the love of the church at Philippi might abound more and more in knowledge and discernment. Hence, our love grows in proportion to the knowledge of His word which we have. And Peter said, *“Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; seeing that His divine power has granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that called us by His own glory and virtue.”* (2 Pet. 1:2-3.) From these passages we learn that not only grace and peace are supplied through a knowledge of God's word, but that all things that pertain to life and godliness are granted us through a knowledge of God and of His Son, Jesus Christ. Hence our spiritual growth is dependent upon the knowledge of the word. Again, Peter tells us that we are to put away all kinds of sins, and that as a new born babe longs for its food, so we are to have a commanding appetite for the spiritual milk, which is without guile, that we may grow thereby unto salvation. (1 Pet. 2:1-2.) This spiritual milk is the milk of the word of God. Hence, we grow unto salvation by feeding upon the word of God. (b) God will establish us through His word. Paul prayed for the church at Thessalonica, that God might establish their hearts unblamable in holiness. (1 Thess. 3:13.) Then in his letter to the church at Rome he tells us how God establishes people. *“Now to Him that is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept in silence through times eternal.”* (Rom. 16:25.) From this we see that it is God who establishes our hearts, but that He does it through the gospel preached by Paul. (c) The word of God comforts us. Paul prayed that Jesus Christ and God the Father who gives *“us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.”* (2 Thess. 2:16-17.) But in 1 Thess. 4:18 Paul says, *“Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”* Hence, we see that, though God gives us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, this manifestation of grace is in the word which is the instrument of comfort. (d) Our text tells us that the word of God is able to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified, and Peter describes this inheritance to us as *“incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fades not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”* (1 Pet. 1:4-5.)

3. Paul commends us to God because of the faithfulness of God. The faithfulness of God to His people is taught in such passages as 1 Cor. 1:9; 1 Thess. 5:23-24; 1 Cor. 1:8-9; and 1 John 1:9. (a)

The faithfulness of God is manifested in keeping His covenants with His people. (Heb. 10:23,36,37.) (b) His faithfulness to His people is shown in His defending and delivering them in time of trial. (1 Pet. 4:19; 2 Tim. 4:16-18.) (c) God's faithfulness is shown in keeping His people out of temptations which they are unable to bear. (1 Cor. 10:13) (d) His faithfulness is shown to His children in forgiving them of their sins. (1 John 1:9)

II. A COMMENTARY ON ACTS 20:17-27; 36-38

1. Paul Reminds Them of the Past (Acts 20:17-21)

From Miletus he sent to Ephesus. Miletus was about twenty or thirty miles from Ephesus. Long before Paul's day it was a city of considerable importance, but it lost its importance as a seaport by the fact that the coast line was rising. The ruins of the town are now more than ten miles from the seacoast. (Smith's Bible Dictionary.)

Called to him the elders of the church. In verse twenty-eight these same men are called bishops. Hence, we conclude that the terms elder and bishop refer to the same men, though the words do not have the same meaning. Primarily the word elder means older, but it also has an official meaning, for we read, "*When they had appointed for them elders in every church.*" (Acts 14:23.) From this we learn that men were made elders by appointment. Hence, it cannot here mean simply an older person. There is no authority for saying that all bishops are elders, but not all elders are bishops. Some contend that all the old men in the church were elders, and from among these elders certain men with qualifications, listed in 1 Tim. 3 and Tit. 1, were appointed as bishops. Nor is there any authority for the denominational practice of having several men to serve as elders and one man to serve as bishop over a congregation.

After what manner I was with you. Paul reminds these elders of his first visit in Asia and of the manner in which he served the church while he lived in Ephesus. He was not ashamed of his conduct among them, nor was he afraid to mention the manner of his life and service among them. It is a commendable thing when a preacher can go back to a place where he served for a long time and freely remind the brethren of his conduct and teaching among them.

With all lowliness of mind. Paul was a humble preacher of the gospel and taught others to follow his example in this. (Col. 3:12-14.) Not only was Paul humble, but his sincerity stands out prominently, being manifested by his tears which he shed for these people. In verse thirty-one of this chapter he reminds them that "*by the space of three years I cease not to admonish every one night and day with tears.*" See also 2 Cor. 2:4; Phil. 3:18.

I shrank not from declaring. Persecution was so severe at Ephesus that Paul speaks of it as fighting with wild beasts. (1 Cor. 15:32.) Yet in spite of this persecution he shrank not from declaring the whole counsel of God. Men need to know all the gospel in order that they may become Christians and serve and worship God acceptably. The preacher who shrinks from preaching the whole truth does his audience an injury and proves himself to be a coward.

Teaching you publicly, and from house to house. Paul was not ashamed nor too busy to go from house to house teaching people the gospel. There are many people who will not attend a public service until their interest has been sufficiently aroused by personal visitation and teaching to attend the public

services of the church. Every church should have a house-to-house visitation program, and young men who intend to be preachers should be taught the art of visiting and teaching from house-to-house. Not only those who intend to be preachers, but both men and women who can teach the word of God, should be taught the art of going from person to person, teaching the word of God.

Testifying both to Jews and to Greeks. Since God is no respecter of persons, preachers of the gospel cannot afford to show respect for races. Hence, Paul preached both to Jews and Greeks.

Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. The order of mention here does not establish the order of occurrence. In Rom. 10:9 we have, “*If you shall confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and shall believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved.*” In this verse the order of mention is obviously impossible. People cannot confess Jesus as Lord before they believe in their heart, so with this verse in our text the order of mention is impossible. People cannot repent before they believe. Some have explained this order of the words by saying that Jews had to repent toward God before they could believe in Christ, but that explanation breaks down because Paul said he testified both to Jews and to Greeks repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Paul Looks to the Future (Acts 20:22-27)

I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem. To be bound in spirit means to have a strong conviction as to one’s duty. Paul had collected considerable money from churches of Asia and Macedonia for the relief of the poor in Judea. He had promised the brethren that he would see that the money reached Jerusalem safely. He felt bound by his conscience to fulfill his promises. (Acts 24:17.)

The Holy Spirit testified unto me. Paul said he did not know what things would befall him in Jerusalem. The only thing he knew was that the Holy Spirit was telling him in every city that bonds and afflictions were awaiting him. He did not know whether the afflictions would be stoning or beating, nor did he know whether the bonds would be in Jerusalem or elsewhere.

I hold not my life of any account. Life was not so dear to Paul as some other things. He could have quit preaching the gospel and lived long time, but fulfilling his duty to God and to his fellow man was dearer to Paul than life. He could have left out the offensive principles of the gospel and not only lived a long time, but enjoyed the praises of men. But life was not dear enough to Paul to pay him for losing the approval of God. We must not allow life in this world with its pleasures, honors, comforts, and material rewards to become so dear to us that we will compromise the truth or neglect our duty to worship and serve God as we are directed.

To testify the gospel of the grace of God. That was Paul’s mission in life. It was the ministry which he received of the Lord Jesus; and he would not allow this life with its pleasures and rewards to become so dear to him that it would interfere with his business of preaching the gospel of the grace of God.

Shall see my face no more. Paul did not expect to see these men again in this life. There were several reasons which helped Paul to form this opinion. First, the Holy Spirit testified that bonds and afflictions were awaiting him in Jerusalem. He could not know the outcome of these things. Next, he had a long-time desire to go to Rome and on into Spain. Such a journey would take a long time and

would be fraught with many dangers. He did not know whether he would live to return to Asia, but many scholars are of the settled opinion that Paul was released from imprisonment in Rome, and that he went into Spain, came back through the Mediterranean Sea, left Titus at Crete and Timothy at Ephesus while he went on into Macedonia for another visit. (1 Tim. 1:3; Tit. 1:5.) We have no record in Acts where Paul could possibly have left Timothy at Ephesus while he was going into Macedonia. Hence, this release from the first imprisonment and another trip into Macedonia sounds very probable.

I am pure from the blood of all men. Paul was pure or clean from the blood of others because, in the first place, he had preached the whole gospel unto them; in the next place, he had persuaded them to believe that gospel; and third, Paul had lived the gospel before them, setting for them an example how they ought to live by the gospel which he had taught them.

3. Paul Departs in Sorrow (Acts 20:36-38)

He kneeled down and prayed with them all. While kneeling is not the only acceptable posture for prayer, it was the general posture used by godly people. It shows reverence and humility. (Acts 7:60; Luke 22:41.) These men were on the seashore, where men were coming and going to and from the ship. They were not ashamed to be seen kneeling on the shore in prayer.

They all wept sore. Eastern people are much more expressive of their emotions than the people of the west. They not only showed their emotions by weeping, but also by kissing Paul. The word translated kiss is a rather significant word. In the first place it has a prefix which denotes the fervency with which they kissed. In the next place, it is in the imperfect tense in Greek, which denotes repetition, so they fervently kissed him again and again. Luke tells us that their sorrow was increased by the fact that he said he did not expect ever to see them again.

III. SOME APPLICATIONS

1. We should so live and preach the gospel to the people among whom we reside that at death we can say we are pure from the blood of all men.
2. We should be careful to set our affections on things above and not on things of this earth, so that life on this earth will not become so dear to us that our love of life will interfere with accomplishing our mission for the Lord in this life.
3. In this lesson we have authority for a program of teaching the gospel, not only publicly, but from house to house. The congregation which does not have a program of house-to-house teaching is not discharging its duty to the people of the community, nor is that church measuring up to the expectation of the Lord. Jesus said we are to teach every creature. Since every creature in the community does not attend our public services, we must take the gospel to them.

QUESTION SHEET NUMBER 21

PAUL IN MILETUS

1. What caused Paul to leave Ephesus? _____

2. How long did Paul stay in Greece? _____

3. Why did he return through Macedonia instead of sailing for Syria? _____

4. How long did Paul stay in Troas? _____

5. Where did Paul ask the elders of Ephesus to meet him? _____

6. Name and discuss four reasons why it is good to commend people to God. _____

7. With what assurance did Paul and Peter write of God's care for our spiritual welfare? _____

8. What proof did Jesus give that God will care for our material needs? _____

9. Name and discuss four reasons for commending people to the word of God. _____

10. After studying this lesson, have you been impressed with the need of more Bible study?_____

11. How can the word give us an inheritance among them that are sanctified?_____

12. Name and discuss four ways in which the faithfulness of God is manifested_____

13. What do you know of the city of Miletus?_____

14. What is the meaning of the words elder and bishops?_____

15. Can you cite some unscriptural practices with reference to elders and bishops?_____

16. What did Paul say about his manner of life among the Ephesians?_____

17. What did Paul say about his teaching and preaching among them?_____

18. What of the necessity and effectiveness of house-to-house teaching?_____

19. What is taught in our lesson about the order of faith and repentance in the plan of salvation?_____

20. What did Paul mean by being bound in the spirit to go to Jerusalem?_____

21. How did the Holy Spirit testify to Paul? _____

22. How did Paul value his life as compared with his duty to preach the gospel?_____

23. Are there other things which are of more value to you than life? _____

24. What was the greatest source of Paul's sorrow on this occasion? _____

25. Why did Paul think he would never see these people again?_____

26. Is it possible that Paul visited Asia again?_____

27. What is meant by being pure from the blood of all men?_____

28. Does our present program of teaching others give us reasonable assurance that we are pure from the blood of all men? _____

29. What is said in our lesson about the posture of prayer? _____

30. What evidence do we have that these men were not ashamed to be seen worshipping God?_____

31. What proof do we have of the love these elders had for Paul? _____

LESSON NUMBER 22

PAUL'S JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

Acts 21:2-12

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of Paul's journey to Jerusalem at this time has been mentioned, but it is worthy of more study. As has been suggested, Paul took a collection of money from among the churches of Asia Minor and Macedonia to feed and clothe the poor saints in Judea. (1 Cor. 16:1,2.) The company of men along with Paul on this journey consisted largely of men who had been appointed by the churches to go along with Paul to see that the money reached its destination safely. (1 Cor. 16:3,4; 2 Cor. 8:18-21.) In the last reference given it seems that a number of churches had agreed on the appointment of one man whose name is not given to travel with Paul in the matter of collecting and disbursing this money. While it was the purpose of Paul in going to Jerusalem to take this collection to the poor saints, there is a deeper and greater reason for taking the collection from among these Gentile churches to be used and enjoyed by the Jewish brethren. *"But now, I say, I go unto Jerusalem, ministering unto the saints. For it has been the good pleasure of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints that are at Jerusalem. Yes, it has been their good pleasure; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, they owe it to them also to minister unto them in carnal things."* (Rom. 15:25-27.) From this we see that the Gentiles were making a contribution to the Jews. Next, Paul says the Gentiles are debtors to the Jews because the Gentiles were made partakers of the spiritual things which came from and through the Jews. And next, since the Gentiles partook of the blessings made possible by the Jews, the Gentiles owe it to the Jews to minister unto the Jews of their carnal things. Jesus was a Jew and came of Jewish stock; hence, the gospel of salvation through the death of Christ came through the Jews. Not only was it made possible through Jesus, who was a Jew, but the first churches of Christ were composed of Jews, and these Jewish churches preached the gospel to the Gentiles. Hence, Paul says that the Gentiles were obligated to make a contribution of the material wealth to the relief and comfort of the Jews. The Jewish churches in Judea had found it almost impossible to accept the Gentiles without circumcision. Paul thought that, if he could get the Gentile churches to make a great contribution of money for the relief of the poor in Judea, this would prove to these Jewish churches that the Gentiles were sincere, and that they were doing the work of God. Hence, Paul hoped by collecting this money and disbursing it among the Jews to remove that spirit of envy and jealousy which lingered in the hearts of the Jewish brethren. Paul was so earnest about this matter that he wrote the brethren at Rome and asked them to strive together with him in their prayers to God that *"my ministration which I have for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints."* (Rom. 15:31)

I. KEY SCRIPTURE

"The will of the Lord be done." (Acts 21:14b)

1. Our text teaches us a lesson of respect. (a) First we are taught to respect God. We should always remember that we are mere creatures, and that God is the Creator. We should also remember that we are unable to preserve our lives without the provident care of God continually about us, and we

should remember that we are wholly and absolutely unable to save ourselves from our sins. Such realizations as these will help us to respect God as our Creator, Preserver, and Savior. (b) Our text teaches us to respect the will of God. It is good for children to respect the will and wishes of their parents. Those who refuse to do so bring sorrow to their parents and disgrace and injury to themselves. We are God's children, and so are in such relationship to Him that we need to respect His will and wishes with reference to the affairs of our life. (c) The Bible is the revelation of God's will to us. Since we are to have a deep and abiding respect for the will of God, and since the Bible reveals and contains the will of God, we should have that same deep and abiding respect for the Bible and its teachings. We are taught that the Bible is a complete expression of the will of God, "*that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.*" (2 Tim. 3:17.) Since the Bible is the complete revelation of the will of God, it follows that the doing of anything or the teaching of any principle which is not revealed in the Bible is contrary to the will of God; so it is as necessary for us to respect the silence of the word of God as it is for us to respect the expression of His will. (d) We should respect God's will as it is revealed in His providential care. God regulates our activities by the teaching of principles. Not all the details of life are expressed in the Bible. Where we shall live or what we shall do to make a living is not a matter of revelation. Yet God in His providential care seeks to direct us into those paths where we can accomplish the most good. We should desire to know and to do His will in these matters. James tells us that, if we lack wisdom, we can ask of God, and He will give it. (James 1:5.) James also rebukes people who make their plans to go to this or that city and spend a year there and trade and get gain. He says they should say, "*If the Lord will, we shall both live, and do this or that.*" (James 4:13-15.) This shows us that God does have a will concerning where we live, where we trade, and other things of that sort. And it does suggest that we can through prayer determine the will of the Lord in these matters.

2. Our text teaches us subordination of self to God. (a) We should subordinate self in spite of well-wishing friends. When the friends of Paul learned that bonds and afflictions awaited him in Jerusalem, they begged him not to go to Jerusalem. Paul considered it the will of the Lord that he go to Jerusalem at this time. Hence, he had to do the will of God in spite of his well-wishing friends. Our family and friends often advise us against making great sacrifices, or exposing ourselves to dangers in order that we may do that which we believe to be the will of God. Though they mean well, yet they in a sense and to some degree are standing in the way of the accomplishment of the will of God. (b) We must do the will of God in spite of physical dangers. If Paul had avoided physical dangers, he would have stayed out of Jerusalem, because he was warned that physical dangers awaited him there; but his sense of love for God and loyalty to his brethren and to his mission in the behalf of his brethren forced him to face those dangers. (c) We are to subordinate self in spite of the loss of friends and material wealth. Lot moved into the well-watered valley around Sodom and Gomorrah to increase his material wealth. Obviously, this was contrary to the will of God concerning Lot. People often make the mistake today of subjecting themselves and their families to hurtful environments in order that they may increase their material wealth. Through study of conditions and situations and continued prayer that the Lord may direct us to do His will, such hurtful mistakes can be avoided. The trouble with many people is that they do not realize that God exercises care and concern for our welfare in such details of life. Others do not seem to believe that God's will in such matters can be determined through prayer. While there are still others who are not as much concerned about pleasing God in these matters as they are about pleasing themselves.

3. The example of Jesus in doing the will of God. (a) Jesus said that it was His meet to do the will of Him that sent Him to accomplish His work. (John 4:34.) Jesus never undertook any great work

without first praying to His Father about it. Before He appointed His twelve apostles, He spent the whole night in prayer. (Luke 6:12.) (b) Jesus suffered according to the will of God. “*Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow His steps.*” (1 Pet. 2:21.) Then again we read, “*For it is better, if the will of God should so will, that you suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing. Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God.*” (1 Pet. 3:17,18.) In these passages we learn that Christ suffered and that it was the will of God that He should suffer. We also learn that His suffering is an example for us, that we should suffer according to the will of God. “*Forasmuch then as Christ suffered in the flesh, arm you yourselves also with the same mind: for he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.*” (1 Pet. 4:1.) Since Jesus, the sinless Son of God, respected the will of God and subordinated His own desires to the will of God, and since inspiration tells us that He did this to set us an example, we see how necessary it is for us that we respect the will of God, and that we subordinate our own wills to His will. All of us should be willing and ready to say with the apostle Paul, “*The will of the Lord be done.*”

II. A COMMENTARY ON ACTS 21:2-12

1. Paul Visits Brethren Along the Way (Acts 21:2-7)

And finding a ship sailing over unto Phoenicia. Having found a ship, it is probable that Paul had sailed down the western coast of Asia Minor in a small ship, one which was not capable of sailing the rough Mediterranean. Patara is the last seaport before launching out into the sea, so Paul changed vessels there, finding one that was sailing to Phoenicia. The Phoenicians have been known from antiquity for their seamanship. Phoenicia was a very small country and could not depend upon internal activities for its livelihood, so its people in their early existence turned to the sea for a livelihood.

We had come in sight of Cyprus. It will be remembered that Cyprus was the place where Paul and Barnabas first went on their first missionary journey, but Paul and his company hurrying on to Jerusalem left Cyprus on the left and sailed on to Syria, landing at Tyre. It will be remembered that Tyre was the home of King Hiram, who assisted Solomon in the building of the temple about 1000 B.C. (1 Kings 15:18.) The only visit which Jesus made outside of the land of the Jews was in the vicinity of Tyre. (Matt. 15:21; Mark 7:24.)

And having found the disciples. Paul tarried seven days in Tyre, visiting with disciples. Paul had preached the gospel in the regions of Syria and Cilicia. (Gal. 1:11.) Of course, we cannot say that he had preached in Tyre, but there is the possibility that he had done so since he had preached in the region of Syria. Paul loved his brethren and enjoyed their fellowship and association. Whenever it was possible, he took time out to visit with them.

He should not set foot in Jerusalem. This is a rather difficult statement. On first reading, it seems that the brethren told Paul, through the Spirit, that he should not go to Jerusalem. But since Paul was determined to do nothing except the will of God, we cannot conceive of his disobeying a direct command of the Holy Spirit to stay out of Jerusalem. In Acts 20:23 we read that the Holy Spirit testified unto Paul in every city, saying that bond and afflictions awaited him there. Hence, it seems best to conclude here that the Spirit revealed to these disciples at Tyre that persecution and hardships awaited Paul in Jerusalem, and that it was their conclusion that Paul should not go to Jerusalem. And

since this is exactly what happened at Caesarea, as we shall later learn in this same lesson, we conclude that this is a reasonable explanation of this verse.

Brought us on our way. Again, we see the disciples escorting Paul to the seashore in order to bid him an affectionate farewell; and here again as at Miletus we see the group kneeling down on the beach, praying and bidding one another farewell.

We arrived at Ptolemais. This city is about thirty miles south of Tyre. It had in Paul's day recently been made a Roman colony by Emperor Claudius. It was also a very important commercial center. In the Old Testament we learn that it was situated in the territory of the tribe of Asher (Judges 1:31), and was originally called Accho. However, its name was changed to Ptolemais in honor of one of the Ptolemies of Egypt. Here again Paul spent some time visiting with the brethren.

2. Paul in the Home of Philip the Evangelist (Acts 21:8-12)

Entering into the house of Philip the evangelist. We are told that this man Philip was "one of the seven." This takes us back to the time when the Grecian widows in Jerusalem were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. The apostles said that it was not good that they should forsake the word of God and serve tables, so the brethren selected, and the apostles appointed, seven men to take care of the distribution of food among these widows. Philip was one of that number. (Acts 6:1-6.)

Four virgin daughters, who prophesied. We are told that Philip the evangelist had four virgin daughters, and that these daughters were prophetesses. Joel the prophet said that in the last days God would pour forth His Spirit on sons and daughters, and they would prophesy. (Acts 2:17,18.) To prophesy means to speak edification, exhortation, and consolation. (1 Cor. 14:3.) Hence, these young women spoke edification, exhortation, and consolation. But no one could prophesy unless they had apostles' hands laid on them to impart to them the gift of prophecy. (Acts 8:14-18; 1 Cor. 12:10.) Hence, some apostle had laid hands on these four virgin daughters of Philip and had imparted to them the gift of prophecy, thus enabling them to speak edification, exhortation, and consolation. And we may be sure that these young women did not restrict their prophesying to their own home. They had no children, for they were virgin daughters. Their father was an inspired preacher and did not need to be instructed by them. Hence, these young women taught somewhere outside of the home relationship.

So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owns this girdle. As Paul and his company tarried in Caesarea, enjoying the fellowship and association with Philip the evangelist and other brethren of that city, there came down from Judea a certain prophet named Agabus. It was Agabus who took Paul's girdle and bound his own feet and told Paul that the Jews in Jerusalem would bind Paul and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. The only other mention we have of this prophet Agabus is in Acts 11:28, where it is said that he went to Antioch and predicted a great drought throughout all the world; and Luke says that the prophecy was fulfilled in the days of Claudius Caesar.

Besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. In this instance the Spirit only foretold trials, sufferings, persecutions which Paul would be called upon to undergo, if he went to Jerusalem. It was the conclusion of the brethren that he should not go to Jerusalem. They wished to spare him that suffering. They did not see the necessity of his going to Jerusalem. They felt that the other brethren who had been appointed by the churches to deliver this collection to the poor saints could do that

work without Paul being there, and so would save him that suffering. It was a reasonable and sensible view to take of the matter. But it was contrary to Paul's intentions and to a conviction which he had and by which he felt himself bound. He had said to the Ephesian elders, "*And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there.*" (Acts 20:22.) But the brethren put considerable pressure on Paul to stay out of Jerusalem. Finally Paul said, "*What do you, weeping and breaking my heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.*" (Verse 13.) From this we see that Paul's conviction that he should go to Jerusalem was so strong that he was willing to sacrifice his life in order to go. Then Luke said, "*When he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.*" (Verse 14)

III. SOME APPLICATIONS

1. Association with Christian brethren is not only a very delightful thing, but it is a very helpful thing. As a single coal of fire soon loses its warmth and brightness, so a Christian who is denied association and fellowship with other Christians will soon lose his fervor and faithfulness.
2. Philip's four virgin daughters had a place for work in the New Testament church. We have brethren among us today who could not use these four unmarried young women. They have no place in their church program for such workers. We should be careful that our church program is large enough to include any and all which were included in the program of work and worship in the New Testament churches.
3. We should have deep convictions with reference to our duty to God. We should not allow anything, even persecution and suffering unto death, to keep us from doing that which it is our conviction we should do.

QUESTION SHEET NUMBER 22

PAUL'S JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM

1. Why did Paul take a collection from among the churches of Asia and Macedonia?_____

2. Why did Paul think the Gentiles were obligated to help the poor Jews?_____

3. By whom was this money taken and delivered to the churches in Judea?_____

4. What was the main thing Paul hoped to accomplish by gathering this contribution?_____

5. In what way did Paul ask the church at Rome to assist him in this matter?_____

6. Why are we obligated to respect God? _____

7. Why should we respect the will of God?_____

8. What reasons do we have for respecting the Bible?_____

9. What do you know of God's will with reference to the everyday affairs of life?_____

10. How did Paul subordinate self to God in spite of his friends?_____

11. How did he subordinate self with reference to physical dangers?_____

12. How may we fail to subordinate self to God with reference to material wealth? _____

13. Why do some fail to subordinate self to God? _____

14. What did Jesus say about subordinating self to His Father? _____

15. What is our relation to the sufferings of Christ? _____

16. For what were the Phoenicians well known? _____

17. What two well-known places did Paul pass in his journey to Jerusalem? _____

18. At which of these places did he stay seven days to visit brethren? _____

19. What was said at Tyre about his going to Jerusalem? _____

20. What do you know about Ptolemais? _____

21. How is this Philip identified to us in our lesson? _____

22. What do you know about Philip's family? _____

23. For what were his daughters distinguished? _____

24. Could these young women exercise their gifts in your congregation? _____

25. What prophet brought Paul a message, and what was the message? _____

26. How did Paul's friends react to this message? _____

27. What was Paul's reaction? _____

28. Did Paul's friends have a reasonable view of this matter? _____

29. What was Paul ready to do in Jerusalem? _____

30. What does this reveal about Paul's sense of duty to God and his fellow man? _____

LESSON NUMBER 23

PAUL A PRISONER AT JERUSALEM

Acts 21:30-40

INTRODUCTION

In our last lesson we left Paul at Caesarea, visiting in the home of Philip the evangelist. From Caesarea he went on to Jerusalem. In Acts 21:17, we read, *“And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.”* Since Paul’s primary mission in Jerusalem at this time was to deliver the contribution which the Gentile churches were sending to the poor saints of Judea, and since Luke says that the brethren in Jerusalem received Paul gladly, we conclude that the purpose of his mission in Jerusalem was acceptable to the saints. This we take as an indication of the answer to his prayer which he asked the Romans to join with him in praying, *“That my ministration which I have for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints.”* (Rom. 15:31.) On this occasion Paul visited with James, the Lord’s brother, and with the elders of the church. He told them what God had wrought among the Gentiles through his ministry, and the brethren were glad and glorified God on account of it. However, they reminded Paul that his teaching had stirred up considerable strife between the Jewish and Gentile elements of the church, and that many of the Jews had misunderstood and exaggerated some of the things which Paul had taught. They therefore advised Paul to purify himself with certain men who had a vow, and that he was to take part with them in the ceremonies of purification in order that he might prove that these Jewish enemies were extreme in the statements they made, and that he, Paul, still respected the law of Moses. These elders at Jerusalem reconfirmed their decision reached at the Jerusalem conference, with reference to the Gentiles, but insisted that Paul make a demonstration of his belief that it was permissible for the Jews to continue certain ceremonies of their law. There has been, and will continue to be, much argument as to whether Paul did wisely or unwisely to follow the suggestions of these Jewish brethren. Surely all will agree that Paul would not have gone into the temple to observe these Jewish ceremonies without the pressure of the brethren, which was brought upon him at this time. Paul acceded to their wishes only because those brethren insisted that Paul’s taking part in these ceremonies would go a long way toward mending the breach between the Jewish and Gentile elements in the church. The ceremony of purification required seven days for completion. The record tells us, *“when the seven days were almost completed, the Jews from Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the multitude and laid hands on him.”* (Acts 21:27) Thus, Paul was not allowed to complete this ceremony of purification. The record tells us that these Jews had seen Trophimus, an Ephesian Greek, with Paul in the city, and when they saw Paul in the temple, they supposed that Paul had brought Trophimus into the temple with him, thus defiling their sacred place.

I. KEY SCRIPTURE

“For you shall be a witness for Him unto all men of what you have seen and heard.” (Acts 22:15)

1. Paul a witness for Christ. (a) Paul was a witness of what he had seen. If Paul ever saw Jesus in the flesh, we have no record or even an intimation of the fact. He was not privileged to see Jesus crucified, nor did he have the privilege of seeing the empty tomb three days after His crucifixion. It

was not his privilege to walk and talk and eat with the Lord during the forty days which Jesus spent with His disciples, as He gave them many infallible proofs of His identity. (Acts 1:3.) Nevertheless, Paul did see Jesus personally. When Paul argued his apostleship with the brethren at Corinth, he based it on the fact that he had seen Jesus our Lord. (1 Cor. 9:1.) Again, when he was enumerating the various appearances of Christ to the apostles and others, he said, *“And last of all, as to the child untimely born, He appeared to me also.”* (1 Cor. 15:8.) Since Paul saw Jesus after His death and resurrection, he could be an eyewitness to the fact that Jesus had been raised from the dead, had ascended into heaven and been exalted at the right hand of the Father. (b) Paul was to be a witness of what he had heard. Before his baptism, Ananias told Paul that *“the God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will, and to see the Righteous One, and to hear a voice from His mouth.”* (Acts 22:14.) In Acts 22:7 we are told that Paul heard Jesus speaking to him; and in Acts 26:14-18 we have a lengthy report of the conversation which Jesus had with Paul. Seeing and hearing Jesus after His resurrection was essential to qualify a person to be a witness of the resurrection of Christ. Hence it was necessary that Jesus appear to Paul, and Paul might see Him and hear Him in order that he might be an apostle and to witness to the fact of the resurrection and glorification of Christ. (c) Paul was to be a witness of the things in which Jesus would later appear unto him. During the conversation which Jesus had with Paul He said, *“But arise, and stand upon your feet: for to this end have I appeared unto you, to appoint you a minister and a witness both of the things wherein you have seen Me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto you.”* (Acts 26:16.) *“Of those further manifestations of my person, purposes, and will, which I will yet make to you. It is evident from this that the Lord Jesus promised to manifest Himself to Paul in his ministry, and to make to him still further displays of His will and glory. This was done by His rescuing him from destruction and danger; by inspiration; by the growing and expanding view which Paul was permitted to take of the character and the perfections of the Lord Jesus.”* (Barnes.) One instance of these further appearances may be learned in Acts 22:17,18, and Paul affirms that he did not get his gospel from men, but that it came to him directly by revelation from Jesus Christ. (Gal. 1:11-12; 1 Cor. 11:23)

2. Paul, a witness unto all men. (a) Paul’s chief mission was to the Gentiles, but it would have been unwise to make mention of his being a witness unto the Gentiles at this time, for he was speaking to an angry mob of Jews. Hence he simply says that he was a witness for Christ unto all men and this would include his special mission to the Gentiles. When Paul was talking before Agrippa and Festus, he made mention of his being sent especially to the Gentiles. (Acts 26:16,17.) (b) Since Paul was to be a witness unto all men, it behoved him to reach and influence as many as possible. The only limit to his work was time and his ability. To the Romans he said, *“I am debtor both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you also that are in Rome.”* (Rom. 1:14,15.) When speaking of his efforts to witness for Christ before as many people as possible, he said, *“For I will not dare to speak of any things save those which Christ wrought through me, for the obedience of the Gentiles, by word and deed, in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Holy Spirit; so that from Jerusalem, and round about even unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ; yea, making it my aim so to preach the gospel, not where Christ was already named, that I might not build upon another man’s foundation; but, as it is written, They shall see, to whom no tidings of Him came, and they who have not heard shall understand.”* (Rom. 15:17-21.) In order to evangelize the world in our generation, we must have more men who make it their aim to preach the gospel where Christ has not already been heard.

3. The purpose of Paul’s witnessing. The purpose of witnessing for Christ is well stated in the

Lord's own words. *"To open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Me."* (Acts 26:18.) (a) To open their eyes. Of course, this was not intended as a physical operation. He was to open the eyes of their understanding. Paul quoted a prophecy of Isaiah concerning some people who had closed their eyes lest they should see and understand the gospel. (Acts 28:27.) Again Paul prayed, *"Having the eyes of your heart enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe."* (Eph. 1:17-19.) So Paul was to witness for Christ that he might open the eyes of those who had hitherto refused to see and that he might bring enlightenment to the eyes of the heart so that people might know what is the hope of the calling. (b) Paul was to witness for Christ that he might turn people to God. People who close their eyes to the truth are walking in the opposite direction from God, so the operation that opens the eyes of their understanding will turn them back in the direction of God. (c) That people might receive remission of sins. People whose eyes are closed to the truth, who are walking away from God cannot receive remission of sins. Their eyes must be opened, they must be turned from darkness to light, from Satan unto God in order that they may receive remission of sins. (d) Purpose of Paul's witnessing was that people might have an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Christ. Sanctification is the process of conversion continued throughout life. It is that process by which the Holy Spirit through the use of the word of God transforms us into the likeness of Jesus Christ. Paul's witnessing for Christ would contribute, not only to the conversion of people, but to their sanctification that they might enjoy the eternal inheritance with all the saints.

II. A COMMENTARY ON ACTS 21:30-40

1. Paul Rescued from the Mob (Acts 21:30-32)

And all the city was moved. The news of this incident spread like wildfire through the city. It was only a short time until many were gathered together at the scene. The Jews were naturally excitable, and when they thought their holy temple was in danger of being polluted, they were capable of murder on short notice. They did not lead or escort Paul; they literally dragged him out of the temple, and shut the doors, lest the temple should be profaned.

They were seeking to kill him. No doubt their intention to kill Paul caused them both to drag him from the temple and to close the doors. Some suggest that the Jews closed the doors for fear Paul would run to the altar as a place of refuge. This may or may not be true, but it seems from Ex. 21:13,14 that the altar was a place of refuge only for those who were guilty of accidental murder.

Tidings came up to the chief captain. The Greek word for chief captain is chiliarch, and means commander of a thousand. The word band or cohort was a tenth part of a legion, but like our companies and divisions of present-day armies, the number of men in these divisions varied considerably. "He had his station in the castle of Antonia, which was on a rock or hill at the northwest angle of the temple area. The tower at the southeast corner of the castle was seventy cubits high, and overlooked the whole temple with its courts. The fortress communicated with the northern and western porticos of the temple area, and had flights of stairs descending into both; by which the garrison could at any time enter the court of the temple and prevent tumult." (Hackett.)

He took soldiers and centurions. The word centurion denotes a leader or captain over one hundred

men, and since the word centurions is in the plural, we know that the force sent to quiet this uprising consisted of at least a few hundred men. The chief captain knew the unruly disposition of the Jews, and knew that it would take a sizable force to stop such a disturbance. From this verse we learn that the Jews did not cease beating Paul until the arrival of the soldiers. Since it would not require much time for such a mob to beat a man to death, we conclude that the soldiers were on constant guard, and that they made their arrival immediately.

2. Paul in the Hands of the Chief Captain (Acts 21:33-36)

Commanded him to be bound with two chains. The Greeks had a special word for a manacle which was placed on the feet. The word used here is a general term for a manacle to place on any portion of the body. Hence, it is most likely that Paul's hands were chained to two soldiers, one on either side. Putting him thus in chains would do two things. (a) It would protect Paul from this angry mob. (b) It would suggest to the Jews that the chief captain intended to keep Paul safely, until he could be given a fair trial.

Some shouted one thing, some another. This was and still is characteristic of mobs. Under excitement people join in the activities of a mob without knowing the purpose of the gathering.

He commanded him to be brought into the castle. We are told that, because some shouted one thing and some another, the chief captain could not know with certainty the purpose of the gathering, so it was necessary that he take Paul inside the castle, where he could make an investigation.

He was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the crowd. Such was the frenzy and determination of these Jewish fanatics that it was necessary for the soldiers to put Paul on their shoulders and carry him up the steps of the castle. Jealousy and prejudice: are bad in any relationship of life, but they seem to go to their most; bitter and unreasonable extremes in the realm of religion.

Crying out, away with him. When these Jews could no longer get their hands on Paul to do physical violence, they tried to satisfy their thirst for blood by shouting directions to the chief captain to do away with Paul. This was their way of demanding the death penalty for Paul. Since they had been thwarted from their purpose of killing Paul with their own hands, they do the next best thing in demanding that the chief captain put him to death. If this sounds all too familiar, its probably because the Jews cried out the same to Pilate, whom the Lord was before, by crying out "*crucify Him!*"

3. Paul Identifies Himself. (Acts 21:37-40)

May I say something to you? This was Paul's statement to the chief captain as he was being carried up the stairs of the castle. Undoubtedly Paul had in mind to ask the permission of the chief captain to make just such a speech as he made a little later and as is recorded in the twenty-second chapter. When Paul addressed the chief captain, he used the Greek language. This caused the chief captain to ask if he knew how to speak Greek.

Are you not then the Egyptian? During the time Felix was governor of Judea, an Egyptian, perhaps a Jew who lived in Egypt, gathered a few thousand men together and brought them to the Mount of Olives. Josephus says that the man gathered thirty thousand people, but Luke tells us that the chief captain put the number at four thousand. Luke is not responsible for the discrepancy between

Josephus and the chief captain. This Egyptian claimed that he was a prophet of God, that, if the people would go with him, he would cause the walls of Jerusalem to fall down at his command, and would lead the people in, taking the city. It was just another of the many efforts of the Jews to rebel against Roman rule. When the Egyptian and his followers reached the Mount of Olives, the troops sent by Felix fell upon them and destroyed about four thousand of them, according to Josephus. The fact that Paul could speak Greek was the first indication that the chief captain had that Paul was not this Egyptian. Hence, we conclude that it was common knowledge that the Egyptian who led this rebellion could not speak Greek.

Four thousand men of the Assassins. The Greek word translated Assassin here is a word which means one who carries a short sword. It was the practice of these men to disperse themselves among a crowd, and at a given signal to draw these short swords from under their cloaks and begin stabbing people without warning.

I am a Jew, of Tarsus in Cilicia. Paul identifies himself in this way to the chief captain. He tells the chief captain that he is of Cilicia and not of Egypt.

Give me leave to speak to the people. This was Paul's request of the centurion. He wished to speak to the people. Notice the calm, fearless attitude of the apostle Paul. He was so near death, and yet was not afraid. The bruises and lacerations which must have been inflicted on him during the beating by the mob would be painful which, added to the mental anguish of being despised and rejected by his own brethren, would have caused many strong hearted men to be unable to calm themselves and collect their thoughts sufficiently to speak intelligently to the people. But in spite of his physical bruises and his mental anguish, Paul preached a wonderful sermon to the people who were about to take his life.

III. SOME APPLICATIONS

1. From bitter experience Paul could say of the officer of the law, "*He is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do that which is evil, be afraid; for he bears not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that does evil.*" (Rom. 13:4.)
2. The suffering of Paul at this time is a part of that predicted by the Holy Spirit, as Paul journeyed toward Jerusalem, and which his friends begged him to avoid by staying out of Jerusalem. Paul preferred to suffer such persecution, that he might fulfill his obligations to the Lord and to his brethren.
3. We often excuse ourselves from preaching the gospel to people who wrongfully treat us on the ground that Jesus tells us not to cast our pearls before swine. Yet Paul begged for the privilege of preaching the gospel to this mob, who would have killed him. We are too quick to judge people to be swine.

QUESTION SHEET NUMBER 23

PAUL A PRISONER AT JERUSALEM

1. How was Paul received in Jerusalem by the brethren? _____

2. What was Paul's primary purpose for going to Jerusalem at this time? _____

3. What did the reception by the brethren indicate as to the success of his mission? _____

4. What did the brethren in Jerusalem advise Paul to do? _____

5. What motive did the brethren have in asking Paul to observe these Jewish customs? _____

6. What hindered Paul from completing the ceremonies in the temple? _____

7. What evidence do we have that Paul ever saw Jesus? _____

8. Why was it necessary that Paul see and hear Jesus? _____

9. Did Jesus promise to make any further appearances to Paul? _____

10. To whom was Paul chosen to be a witness for Christ? _____

11. By what was Paul limited in his work of witnessing for Christ? _____

12. What was Paul's aim in preaching the gospel?_____

13. Over what expanse of territory did Paul say he had fully preached the gospel? _____

14. Name and discuss four purposes Paul mentioned for witnessing._____

15. What is sanctification?_____

16. What is the inheritance of the sanctified?_____

17. How and why did the Jews put Paul out of the temple? _____

18. Do you know a reason why the Jews should close the doors of the temple? _____

19. What do you know of the duties and location of the chief captain? _____

20. What words indicate something as to the number of soldiers on duty at this time? _____

21. What intentions did the Jews have with reference to Paul?_____

22. How was Paul bound by the chief captain?_____

23. What was the captain's purpose in binding Paul?_____

24. Why did the captain take Paul into the castle?_____

25. What indicates the extent of the frenzy and determination of the Jews?_____

26. What demands did the Jews make of the chief captain?_____

27. In what language did Paul address the chief captain?_____

28. Paul's ability to speak Greek saved him from the suspicion of what crime?_____

29. What do you know of a rebellion started by an Egyptian? _____

30. What were the followers of this Egyptian called?_____

31. What hindrances would Paul have to overcome at this time to make a speech?_____

32. Would this seem to be an instance of casting pearls before swine?_____

LESSON NUMBER 24

PAUL RELATES HIS OWN CONVERSION

Acts 22:1-16

INTRODUCTION

Since we are studying Paul's record of his own conversion, it will be worth while for us to give some thought to the value of his conversion as evidence of the truth and genuineness of Christianity. George Lyttelton, a distinguished member of the English House of Commons, imbibed the principles of infidelity. He and his friend proposed to expose Christianity as a fraud. Lyttelton chose the conversion of Paul while his friend chose the resurrection of Christ as points in the Christian system to expose as error. In their study both were convinced of the truth of Christianity. Lyttelton wrote his findings in proof of the truth of Christianity. He summed them up in four points as follows. 1. Either Paul was an impostor who said what he knew to be false, with an intent to deceive; or, 2. He was an enthusiast who imposed on himself by the force of an overheated imagination; or, 3. He was deceived by the fraud of others; or, finally, 4. What he declared to be the cause of his conversion did all really happen; and, therefore, the Christian religion is a divine revelation. If Paul was an impostor intent to deceive people, what was his motive? Was it wealth, reputation, power, gratification of any other passion? The ordinary student of the Bible and of human nature would know that neither of these things so common as motives for the actions of men could possibly have motivated Paul to do what he did and live the life he lived. Next, was Paul an enthusiast who imposed on himself? If so, why did he thus impose on himself? Did he lose his discretion and power to reason? and did he fly into a rage and do the things he did and suffer the persecutions he suffered? Next, did he in a fit of melancholy decide to give up the Jewish religion and embrace Christianity? If so, why? He was at the height of his career and had the complete confidence of superiors and his associates. Did Paul leave Judaism and embrace Christianity because of ignorance, credulity, or vanity and self-conceit? One who knows only a little about human nature would know that such motives as this could not carry a man through such a long period of service and suffering as characterized Paul. Next, was Paul deceived by the fraud of other people? Did someone make Paul think that he saw a light on the Damascus road? Did someone throw his voice so as to make Paul think that the voice was coming from heaven? Who in Paul's crowd that day would have had a motive for doing such and, if any of these Jews are considered as probable, we still have to account for Paul's knowledge of Christianity. Paul says he got this knowledge by revelation from Jesus Christ. If we accept any of these theories as true, we must deny Paul's statement and account for his unusual knowledge coming to him in a way of which he was not conscious. But if none of these theories are true, we must conclude that Paul was sane, that he actually had the experience which he relates, that this experience was from heaven, that he got his gospel by revelation from Jesus Christ, and that, therefore, all he taught about Christ and the church is true. The conversion of Paul cannot be accounted for in a sensible way by infidels and atheists. It affords some of the strongest proof we have of the truth and genuineness of Christianity.

I. KEY SCRIPTURE

"Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." (Acts 26:19)

1. The heavenly vision. When Paul spoke of the heavenly vision, he referred to the time when he saw and heard Jesus on the road to Damascus at the time of his conversion. It was not a heavenly vision in the sense that it was so glorious, rapturous, so beautiful and inspiring. It was not a heavenly vision because it calmed and soothed an already troubled soul. It was a heavenly vision because it came from heaven. “The heavenly vision shall best justify its name often when it apprises one experimentally, not of the delicious sensations of angels, but of the fear and trembling and anguished amazement that pertain to sinful hearts and injured consciences.” (Pulpit Commentary.) Saul was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the saints. He was so determined to rid the world of the influence of Christ that he obtained letters of authority from the chief priests to go even unto Damascus, that if he found any there who confessed Christ, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. It seemed there was no force on earth sufficient to stop this man in his destruction of the church, so heaven itself intervened, and Jesus spoke to Paul the word necessary to stop him in his persecuting zeal, from further harassing the church of the Lord.

2. What Paul learned from the heavenly vision. (a) Paul learned that Judaism was no longer pleasing to God. Paul says that he advanced in the Jews’ religion beyond many of his own age among his countrymen. (Gal. 1:14.) He finished the synagogue schools and then sat at the feet of the great teacher Gamaliel that he might become a doctor of the law. He was exceedingly zealous for the law and for the traditions of the fathers. He was blameless in his application of the law in his own life. (Phil. 3:6.) But in a very few moments of time, Jesus convinced Paul that he was wrong about Judaism. Judaism had served its purpose in bringing the Messiah into the world and, having served its purpose, it was to pass away to give place to a new covenant dedicated by the blood of Jesus Christ, better blood than that which dedicated the law of Moses. (b) Paul learned that his pride in his Jewish connections and traditions was of no value. Paul once boasted of the fact that he was a Jew, *“circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; as touching zeal, persecuting the church; as touching the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless.”* (Phil. 3:5,6.) He was proud of the fact that he had studied under the greatest teacher of the age, Gamaliel, and he had no patience with the apostles who had gained their learning and their doctrines from an unknown peasant in Galilee. Jesus had never studied in the great schools of learning among the Jews and hence was looked upon as an ignorant and unlearned man. But when Paul saw and heard Jesus of Nazareth speaking to him from heaven, he realized that his Jewish ancestry and the traditions of his fathers meant nothing. (c) Paul learned that he was to preach, instead of persecute Christ. He had spent several years persecuting Christ and no doubt had dedicated his life to the persecution of the church until it was extinguished. But in this short visit with the Christ from heaven, Paul learned that he was no longer to persecute that church and Christ, but that he was to preach Jesus as the Christ and the head of the church. (d) Paul learned that he was to serve the Gentiles. During that short visit with Jesus, Paul was told that he was to be appointed as a minister and a witness of the things wherein he had seen the Lord and the things wherein the Lord would appear unto him; and further, that the Lord would deliver him from the people, *“and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send you.”* (Acts 26:17.) Like every zealous Jew of his day, Paul looked down upon the Gentiles as being so far beneath him that they were not entitled to religious privileges unless they should be circumcised and keep the law of Moses. Now, the Lord tells him that he is being appointed a minister to the Gentile race. This piece of information must have been both shocking and humiliating.

3. Paul’s response to the heavenly vision. (a) Paul’s response to this vision was immediate. In the vision Paul was told to go to Damascus and wait that he might be told what further to do. He did not take time out to go back to Jerusalem to put the proposition before the chief priests who had

authorized him to go on this journey. There is no intimation that he asked his associates for their advice and counsel on whether he should respond to this vision. He did immediately and exactly what he was told to do. This should be the response of each one of us to each and every commandment which the Lord gives us. (b) Paul's response to this vision was both determined and irrevocable. Paul never did just halfway make up his mind about anything. He never did enter upon any mission in a halfhearted way. He was a man of decision and determination. These are the characteristics which the Lord looks for in people who are to serve Him. No doubt, these characteristics in Paul had something to do with the Lord's choice of him for the work to which he was called. His response to this vision was irrevocable or unalterable in that, having once put his hands to the plow, he never one time looked back. (c) Paul's response to this heavenly vision was at a considerable price. Being the proud Pharisee that he was and able to move freely among the very leadership of Judaism, it was a humbling experience for Paul to be made a minister to the Gentiles and to be counted as a fool for the sake of Christ. He uses these very words in describing his condition and goes further to say, "*Being defamed, we entreat: we are made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things, even until now.*" (1 Cor. 4:10-13.) In the next place, Paul's response to this vision cost him a lot in physical suffering. If the reader will turn to 2 Cor. 11:22-29, he will find a short list of the things which Paul suffered in order to be an apostle of Christ. But another indication of the cost of Paul's response to this heavenly vision is seen in the lonely life which he lived. He had no family, no home, or certain abiding place. All of these things he gave up or chose to do without in order that he might be free to give his whole time and physical and mental vigor into the ministry to which the Lord called him. The reader should close the study of this text by a careful reading of Philipians 3:1-14.

II. A COMMENTARY ON ACTS 22:1-16

1. Paul's Life before Conversion (Acts 22:1-5)

Brethren and fathers. We are told that Paul addressed these Jews in the Hebrew language, and here we see he addresses them very courteously as brethren and fathers. Paul asked the privilege of making his defence before the people. The word defence here simply means to give reasons why he had lived and acted as he had. Luke tells us that when the Jews heard him speak in the Hebrew language they were the more quiet. By speaking in the Hebrew language, he identified himself as one of them and as one who had studied in the Jewish schools, and was therefore entitled to be heard by the people.

I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia. There is a tradition to the effect that Paul was born in Galilee, but according to Paul's statement this tradition is untrue. However, it does seem that there is some ground for thinking that his parents formerly lived in Galilee before going to Cilicia.

Brought up in this city, at the feet of Gamaliel. Though Tarsus was a city of learning and had a great university located there, Paul went to Jerusalem for his training. The fact that he had a sister living in Jerusalem may have had something to do with his coming there for his education. (Acts 23:16.) This celebrated teacher of the law is generally identified with the one who is known by the title of "the glory of the law" and was the first to whom the title "Rabban," which means "Our Master," was given. He was the son of a rabbi named Simeon and the grandson of the celebrated Hillel. We are told that he was president of the Sanhedrin under three Roman emperors, and that he died eighteen years before the destruction of Jerusalem. According to Jewish custom, Paul would leave home at the age of fifteen to go to the rabbinical college called "the house of interpretation." The course of study in this school was the entire Old Testament. They learned to interpret scripture, to define and apply the legal code, and the process of allegorical exegesis, which consisted of four operations: (a) to learn the

simple meaning; (b) the suggested or remote meaning; (c) to get the meaning evolved in investigation; and (d) to learn the mystic meaning.

I persecuted this Way unto the death. The word “Way” is another term for Christianity (John 14:6). In Phil. 3:6 Paul speaks of persecuting the church, so the word way here is the same as the church.

Binding and delivering into prisons. In Acts 26:11 Paul tells us something of his method of persecution. There he tells us that he strove to make Christians blaspheme. Since the penalty for blasphemy was death, he could secure their conviction and execution. Under severe and continued questioning, a person could very easily say something about the law or the temple or Moses that could be construed by a zealous Pharisee as blasphemy.

The high priest bears me witness. Paul was relating this during the lifetime of the very men who gave him authority to go on that journey to Damascus. He mentions not only the high priest, but “*all the estate of the elders*” from whom he had received his letters of authority. In this way Paul sought to establish a connecting link between himself and those Jews who were clamoring for his life. In effect he told them, I used to be one of you I felt then as you do now about Christianity, and I was as zealous to exterminate Christians then as you are this day.

2. Paul Meets Jesus on the Damascus Road (Acts 22:6-10)

About noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light. After telling the people that he had received letters of authority to go to Damascus and relating the fact that he had journeyed to a point near Damascus, he then describes how suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about him. He mentions the fact that it was at noon in order to impress them with the exceeding brightness of the light. Since it was noon, neither the moon, nor stars, nor any other heavenly body could produce a light which would exceed that of the sun. It follows, therefore, and Paul wished his audience to get this idea, that the light which exceeded the brightness of the noonday sun was of the Lord.

And heard a voice saying unto me. Paul’s conviction came not through only one of the physical senses, sight, but he also heard a voice. Neither was that voice an inarticulate sound, the interpretation of which had to be left to his imagination. The voice said in words which he could understand, “*Saul, Saul, why do you persecute Me?*” He was addressed by name, and the name was repeated, and the mission on which he was then engaged was specifically mentioned.

Who are You, Lord? The word Lord here does not necessarily mean deity. If Paul had recognized his visitor as the deity, he would not have asked the question he did. However, the term does indicate superiority, and so Paul was addressing a superior in an effort to identify him.

I am Jesus of Nazareth. The word Jesus was a common name among the Jews. The Hebrew form was Joshua. The word Jesus is a Greek term. The word Nazareth was added to identify the Jesus who was speaking. The term persecute was used to teach Paul that whatever he did to the disciples of Jesus was done to Jesus Himself. (Matt. 25:45.)

Beheld indeed the light, but they heard not the voice. In Acts 9:7 we are told that those who accompanied Paul heard the voice but beheld no man. In this verse we are told that they heard not the

voice that spoke to Paul. The harmony of the two statements is found in the fact that, when it is said they heard the voice, the sound waves reached their ears; but when it is said they heard not the voice, it is meant that they did not understand what was said. We often ask people to repeat a statement because we did not hear it. But the fact that we asked it be repeated is proof that we did hear the sound of the voice. The story of Paul's conversion was related during the life time of some of these men who accompanied him. The fact that the reality of his experience was never denied is in itself proof that it actually occurred.

What shall I do, Lord? Here we find an alien sinner asking the Lord what he should do. It is significant that the Lord did not tell Saul what to do to be saved, but rather, told him to go into Damascus, where he would be told by one of the Lord's servants what to do in order to be saved. The ministry of reconciliation has been given into the hands of men or earthen vessels. (2 Cor. 5:18-20.)

3. Paul Obeys the Gospel (Acts 22:11-16)

One Ananias, a devout man. Saul was led into the city, being blinded by the brightness of the light. Paul refers to Ananias here as "*a devout man according to the law,*" that he may secure the favor of his hearers. In Acts 9:10 he is referred to as a disciple.

The God of our fathers has appointed you. It was appointed for Paul to know three things. (a) It was appointed that he should know God's will. Paul needed to know God's will concerning his own salvation. Further, Paul needed to know the will of the Lord with reference to the life that he should live and the service he should render. (b) It was appointed of God that Paul should see the Righteous One. That term refers to Christ. In order for Paul to be an apostle, he must see Jesus after His resurrection. This would enable him to testify that Jesus arose from the dead. (c) It was appointed by the Lord for Paul to hear a voice from the mouth of the Lord. This too was a part of the qualification of one who would serve as an apostle and a witness of the resurrection of Christ. The fifteenth verse is given as a reason why Paul was to know the will of God, see the Righteous One, and hear a voice. The reason was, "*For you shall be a witness for Him unto all men of what you have seen and heard.*"

Arise, and be baptized. Since Ananias knew of the appearance of the Lord to Paul on the road, he did not feel it necessary to tell Paul to believe. He knew that Paul was already a believer in Jesus Christ. Next, since Paul had been there three days, neither eating nor drinking, Ananias knew that he was a penitent man, that he had repented of his sins. Hence, there was no need to tell him to repent. Since Paul had both believed and repented, there was nothing further to do but to tell him to be baptized and wash away his sins. From this we learn that, in order for people to be saved, they must believe the gospel, repent of their sins, and be baptized for the remission of those sins. The phrase, "*wash away your sins,*" simply means the forgiveness of sins.

III. SOME APPLICATIONS

1. From the apostle Paul we learn that a man can be sincere and yet be wrong; that he can be acting in harmony with his conscience and yet be wrong.

2. When Saul was convinced of his wrong, he turned immediately to that which is right. In this he set an example for all who find themselves believing and practicing things contrary to the will of God. If we wish to follow a good example we will change immediately upon being convinced that we are in the wrong.

3. Jesus appeared to Paul to make him an apostle and a witness and not to save him. Jesus sent Saul to Ananias, a gospel preacher, to learn what to do to be saved.

QUESTION SHEET NUMBER 24

PAUL RELATES HIS OWN CONVERSION

1. Can you show the value of Saul's conversion as evidence of the genuineness of Christianity?_____

2. Who did Paul speak of his experience on the Damascus road as a heavenly vision?_____

3. Contrast the mental attitude of Saul of Tarsus on leaving Jerusalem and entering Damascus._____

4. What did Paul learn from this vision about Judaism?_____

5. Of what was Saul of Tarsus most proud? _____

6. What did he learn about them from the vision?_____

7. What lesson did Saul learn about Jesus of Nazareth from this vision?_____

8. What did the proud Saul learn about his future field of labors?_____

9. What good example did Saul set for us in his response to this heavenly vision?_____

10. With what mental attitude did Saul obey this heavenly vision?_____

11. Discuss the price which Paul paid to obey this heavenly vision_____

12. What did Paul do in the beginning of this speech to gain the sympathy of his audience?_____

13. What did Paul say of his birth and early life?_____

14. Who was his teacher? _____

15. What do you know about him? _____

16. What do you know of the course of study Paul pursued under this teacher? _____

17. What do you know about Paul's method of persecution of the saints? _____

18. How did Paul seek to establish a connection between himself and his audience?_____

19. Why does Paul mention the fact that he saw the Lord at noon? _____

20. Through what physical senses did this experience appeal to Paul?_____

21. What is the meaning of the word Lord in Saul's question?_____

22. What do you know of the form and meaning of the word Jesus? _____

23. Did the men with Saul see the light and hear the voice? _____

24. What evidence do we have that the work of preaching the gospel has been left in the hands of men? _____

25. What gospel preacher did the Lord send to Saul of Tarsus? _____

26. Can you name three things for which God had appointed Paul? _____

27. Why was it necessary for Paul to see and hear Jesus? _____

28. What did Ananias tell Saul to do? _____

29. Why did he not tell him to believe and to repent? _____

30. From a study of Saul's conversion, what would you say is necessary for one to do in order to be saved from sin? _____

LESSON NUMBER 25

PAUL APPEALS TO CAESAR

Acts 25:1-12

INTRODUCTION

In our last lesson we left Paul standing on the steps of the castle preaching to the people who would have destroyed him. But when he mentioned his mission to the Gentiles, the Jews rioted with such fury that the chief captain carried him inside the castle that he might be examined. And there Paul perceived that the Jews who were clamoring for his death were divided between Pharisees and Sadducees. Hence, he announced that he was a Pharisee and so divided the counsel. When they failed to secure his conviction and condemnation, they formed a plot to destroy him. Forty men bound themselves under a great curse, saying that they would eat nothing until they had killed Paul. Paul's nephew learned of the plot and made it known to the chief captain, and immediately the chief captain gathered four hundred and seventy soldiers to escort Paul out of town and to Caesarea, where he might be kept with more safety. In about a week the Jews went to Caesarea to prosecute Paul. They said, *"We have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of insurrections among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes: who moreover assayed to profane the temple: on whom also we laid hold: from whom you will be able, by examining him yourself, to take knowledge of all these things whereof we accuse him."* (Acts 24:5-8.) But Felix was not to be deceived by these empty charges of the Jews, so he did not grant the wish of the Jewish leaders. Another thing of importance is the evil intentions of Felix. He learned that Paul had brought money from all over Asia Minor and portions of eastern Europe to relieve the poor in Judea. Knowing that he had access to enough money to relieve the suffering of that many people, Felix thought Paul would offer him a bribe for his release, and so he sent for Paul often to hear him concerning the faith in Christ Jesus. His primary purpose was not to learn of Jesus, but rather to get a bribe from Paul. But Paul was not interested in bribing Felix to release him. Rather, *"he reasoned of righteousness, and self-control, and the judgment to come."* And Paul preached with such power and conviction that Felix was terrified and answered, *"Go your way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call you unto me."* (Acts 24:25.) Felix kept Paul in prison for two years, and then he was removed that Porcius Festus might replace him, and Felix was willing to do the Jews a favor, so he left Paul in prison in Caesarea. Hence, Paul becomes the prisoner of Festus instead of Felix.

I. KEY SCRIPTURE

"Yes and before governors and kings shall you be brought for My sake, for a testimony to them and to the Gentiles." (Matt. 10:18)

1. Suffering for Christ's sake. (a) Following His example. Peter tells us that Christ suffered, leaving us an example that we should follow in His steps. (1 Pet. 2:21.) He also tells us that, when we are suffering for the sake of Christ, we become partakers of Christ's suffering. (1 Pet. 4:13.) Jesus reminded His apostles before His crucifixion that they would suffer for His sake. *"If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own: but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said unto you, a servant is not greater than his lord. If they*

persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for My name's sake, because they know not Him that sent Me." (John 15:18-20.) (b) Suffering for Christ's sake contributes to the growth of the church. When Paul was in prison at Rome, he wrote, *"Now I would have you know, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the progress of the gospel."* (Phil. 1:12.) No doubt many good brethren thought the cause would suffer because of Paul's imprisonment, but Paul gives them to understand that God can turn such experiences to the good of the church rather than to the hurt of the church. Persecution never did hurt the church of the Lord. When the church at Jerusalem was persecuted, it scattered, and churches sprang up all over the country. When the apostles were murdered for the sake of the Lord, other men sprang up to preach the gospel in their place. The fact that persecution assisted rather than hindered the growth of the church was so obvious that it is often said, *"The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church."* (c) Suffering for Christ's sake contributes to the growth of the sufferers. Whether we are made stronger and better by persecution depends upon how we take the persecution. If we become discouraged and rebellious, we will not be made stronger by it. James tells us that suffering manifold trials not only proves our faith, but the proving of that faith works patience, or steadfastness, in us. (James 1:2-4.) And Peter tells us that the suffering of manifold trials purifies us in somewhat the same way that the refining of the ore purifies the gold. (1 Pet. 1:6-9.) (d) Suffering for Christ's sake enriches the sufferer in eternity. Paul tells us that, if we suffer with Christ here, we shall also be glorified with Him. Then he says, *"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward."* (Rom. 8:17,18.) Again he says, *"For our light affliction, which is for the moment, works for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory."* (2 Cor. 4:17.) So when Christ foretold the sufferings of His apostles for His sake, He did not foretell some terrible events which would not be for anybody's good or happiness here and hereafter. He simply told them that they would go through certain experiences which would enrich their souls here and honor and glorify His name on earth, and which would contribute greatly to their eternal reward in heaven.

2. The spirit in which we should suffer for Christ. (a) We should consider it a blessing. Peter tells us that if we are *"reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you; because the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God rests upon you."* (1 Pet. 4:14.) Paul considered it a blessing and a privilege to suffer for the sake of Christ, because such experiences gave him the opportunity to suffer in his flesh for the sake of the body of Christ, which is the church. (Col. 1:24.) (b) We should rejoice in our sufferings for Christ. James tells us to rejoice when we fall into manifold trials. (James 1:2,12.) Peter rejoiced in trials to the extent that he could say, *"You rejoice greatly with joy unspeakable and full of glory."* (1 Pet. 1:6-9.) The apostles, when persecuted in Jerusalem, counted it a privilege and an honor to be counted worthy to suffer for the sake of Christ. (Acts 5:41.) (c) Suffering for Christ works for our good. Again we turn to Paul's imprisonment and we find him saying, *"For I know that this shall turn out to my salvation, through your supplication and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."* (Phil. 1:19) Since suffering for the sake of Christ does not work us any harm but works us much good, we should consider it a blessing and therefore rejoice that we have the opportunity to suffer for the name of Christ.

3. The purpose of appearing before the rulers. (a) For a testimony to them. Since the gospel started among the poor class of people, rulers would not be expected to attend the religious gatherings in order to hear the gospel of Christ. About the only way kings and governors would hear the gospel of Christ would be for the preachers of that gospel to be brought before them for examination and trial. Hence, when Paul was before the governors of Judea, he did not appeal to them for his release from suffering, but rather took occasion to preach the gospel that he might save those rulers from sin. (b) To get the gospel before people in high places. Not only would the governors and kings hear the

gospel as preached by these apostles when on trial, but there would be many others in high places in the government who would be associated with these kings and governors. God would see to it that all men would have an opportunity to hear the gospel. (c) To demonstrate the power of God. Jesus told His apostles, “*But when they deliver you up, be not anxious how or what you shall speak: for it shall be given you in that hour what you shall speak. For it is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaks in you.*” (Matt. 10:19,20.) When ignorant and unlearned men stood before kings and governors and spoke with courage and with power not common to the ordinary man, these rulers were impressed with the fact that they had been with Jesus. They were also impressed with the fact that these men must be inspired from on high. Hence, when they stood before these kings and governors, the power of God to speak through these ignorant men was demonstrated. This tended to impress these rulers not only with the power of God, but with the goodness and mercy of God in His efforts to save them from sin.

II. A COMMENTARY ON ACTS 25:1-12

1. Jews Renew Their Persecution of Paul (Acts 25:1-5)

Festus therefore, having come into the province. Very little is known of Festus. He was sent by Emperor Nero to take the place of Felix, against whom the Jews had many complaints. Latin historians are curiously silent about Festus, and what little we know of him is gleaned from Josephus. Gleaning from all available sources, one writer says of him, “The new procurator had a straightforward honesty about him, which forms a strong contrast to the mean rascality of his predecessor. He certainly did not do all of the justice that he might have done; but allowing somewhat for the natural desire to ingratiate himself with the people of his government, his conduct, on the whole, was exemplary, and his firmness in resisting the unjust demands of the Jews cannot fail to elicit our admiration.” (Lewin.) Festus lost no time in entering upon his duties as the governor of the province, for on the third day after he landed in Judea, he went to Jerusalem and began his duties.

Jews informed him against Paul. Neither did the Jews lose any time in their efforts to put Paul to death. As soon as the new governor came to Jerusalem, the principal men of the Jews and the chief priests informed the governor against Paul.

Asking a favor against him. The favor which the Jews asked of Festus was that he would bring Paul back to Jerusalem for trial. The Jews planned to kill Paul on the way from Caesarea to Jerusalem.

Paul was kept in charge at Caesarea. It is hardly possible that Festus had time to learn of the enmity of the Jews for Paul and of their determination to kill him. It is difficult to keep from seeing the hand of God in His providence as He cared for the apostle. (a) The providence of God in favor of Paul is seen in that an honest and just governor was sent to replace a dishonest and unjust man. (b) God’s providential care of Paul is seen in that Festus is led to deny the request of these evil Jews.

Them ... that are of power among you go down with me. After firmly but kindly denying their request to bring Paul to Jerusalem, Festus suggested that those of power among them would go down to Caesarea with him that he might look into the merits of their case. Festus knew the proper procedure for such a case, and he was unwilling to grant these Jews any special privileges. It is always a mark of just and equitable dealings when those in power refuse to show favors toward the wealthy and prominent men, but when a ruler takes the part of one who is unknown socially and politically against the express desires of those who are of power socially and politically, we have evidence of a

determination to deal justly and to show no favoritism.

2. Paul Answers Their Charges Against Him (Acts 25:6-8)

When he had tarried among them. We are told that Festus stayed only eight or ten days in Jerusalem. There is every indication that Festus was not only a just and honorable man, but that he was a man of dispatch. He took his business seriously instead of playing the social butterfly carrying the favor of the leading Jews. His businesslike way of doing things is seen also in the fact that “on the morrow,” after he returned to Caesarea, he sat on the judgment seat and commanded Paul to be brought. He was not one to put off such a matter until he could learn what would be the most popular course to pursue.

Bringing against him many and grievous charges. This is said of the Jews who went down from Jerusalem to Caesarea to press their charges against the apostle. What the charges were at this time are not told. However, the charges at this time were likely a repetition of the charges which they made against Paul before Governor Felix. At that time, they charged him with being “*a pestilent fellow, and a mover of insurrections among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes: who moreover assayed to profane the temple: on whom also we laid hold: from whom you will be able, by examining him yourself, to take knowledge of all these things whereof we accuse him.*” (Acts 24:5-8.)

Paul said in his defence. From the things mentioned in this defence we can learn some of the charges which were brought against him. (a) Neither against the law of the Jews. Paul said that he had not sinned against or violated the law of the Jews. This perhaps refers to their accusation that he attempted to profane the temple. This was one of the accusations brought against Paul at the time the people tried to mob him. (Acts 21:28,29.) (b) Paul says he had not sinned against the temple. Of course, this refers to the time when they thought he had taken Trophimus, the Greek, into the temple, and thus had defiled it as suggested in the last reference. (c) Paul affirms that he had not sinned against Caesar. In their first trial before Felix, they accused him of being “*a mover of insurrections among all the Jews throughout the world.*” By this they meant that Paul was stirring up the Jews to rebel against Caesar. Paul denied that charge. They had no evidence to present, hence, their bare assertion would not be accepted in the court.

3. Paul’s Appeal Granted (Acts 25:9-12)

Festus, desiring to gain favor with the Jews. This is the first indication we have of the weakness of Festus. It was natural that Festus would desire the favor of the Jews. He was sent there to govern them, and if he could gain their good will, his task of governing them would be somewhat simplified; but if he intended to give Paul over to the Jews to win this satisfaction, it was little better than casting a human being to the lions. Whether Festus suggested that the trial be moved from Caesarea to Jerusalem with him as the presiding judge, or whether he suggested that Paul be turned over to the Sanhedrin for trial, is a matter difficult to decide.

I am standing before Caesar’s judgment-seat. This was Paul’s reply to Festus. He was standing; at the judgment seat of Caesar, where he had a right to be tried. The court of Festus was called Caesar’s judgment seat because Festus was an appointee and a representative of Caesar.

To the Jews have I done no wrong. Paul had so effectively answered the accusations of the Jews that he could say that Festus knew he had not wronged the Jews. This was equal to an accusation on the

part of Paul that Festus was willing to do the Jews a favor in spite of the fact that he knew Paul was innocent of their charges.

I refuse not to die. Paul says that, if he were a wrongdoer and had committed anything worthy of death, he did not refuse to die. To Paul, death was not a horrible experience. He even desired to depart and be with Christ. (Phil. 1:23,24.)

No man can give me up unto them. Paul said that he had done the Jews no wrong, and he did not intend to allow Festus to give him up unto the Jews. This intimates that Paul thought that Festus wished to transfer the case from Caesarea to Jerusalem in order to give the Jews the opportunity to carry out their plot to kill him. If this be true, the show of justice and equity which Festus made when he first arrived in Jerusalem was not a matter of deep conviction with him.

I appeal unto Caesar. To appeal to Caesar in order to get justice was the right of every Roman citizen. Being a Roman citizen, Paul had this right, and so exercised it at this time. This meant that Paul would have a free voyage to Rome. Being a prisoner of the emperor, he would be transported from the place where he made his appeal to Rome at the cost of the empire. Next, he would be given a safe journey. He was entitled to be placed in the custody of a Roman centurion with soldiers sufficient to guard him safely on the trip from the point where he made his appeal to the emperor. Paul had long had the desire to go to Rome. (Rom. 1:9-12.) So his appeal to Caesar would do two things for him. (a) It would give him a safe and free voyage to Rome, where he might have a fair trial. (b) It would satisfy his desire of long standing to see the church at Rome, and by them to be sent on into Spain, where he hoped to labor.

Unto Caesar shall you go. We are told that Festus conferred with the council before he rendered his decision on this appeal. It was the custom of these governors and proconsuls to appoint a number of men to be advisers to them on the laws and customs of the provinces in which they ruled. It was this group with which Festus conferred on the matter of Paul's appeal to Caesar. Usually such appeals were granted, but this council presided over by the governor did have the right in extreme cases to deny the Roman citizen the right of appeal to Caesar. "Writers on Roman law inform us that the provincial magistrates had a certain discretionary power in this respect. An appeal to the emperor was not granted in every case. It was necessary to consider the nature of the accusation, and also the amount of evidence which supported it. Some offenses were held to be; so enormous as to exclude the exercise of this right; and when the crime was not of this character, the evidence of guilt might be so perceived as to demand an immediate and final decision." (Hackett.)

III. SOME APPLICATIONS

1. Tenacity is a commendable trait in people only when it is exercised in the interest of that which is right. The Jews were tenacious in their prosecution of Paul. Had they been as tenacious for doing right, they could have accomplished great good.
2. Courage and hope are never seen to better advantage than in Paul while he dealt with these determined enemies. When we become discouraged and lose hope, we should study Paul's action under persecution.
3. Since government is of God, and those in power are God's servants to do us good, we have the right to appeal to the government to protect us from those who would do us harm.

QUESTION SHEET NUMBER 25

PAUL APPEALS TO CAESAR

1. Why did Felix wish to hear Paul often?_____

2. On what three points did Paul dwell when preaching to Felix?_____

3. How did Felix finally dispose of Paul?_____

4. What did Jesus predict with reference to the suffering of His disciples?_____

5. What evidence do we have that suffering contributes to the growth of the church? _____

6. In what way does suffering contribute to the growth of the sufferer? _____

7. What connection is there between suffering here and one's welfare in eternity?_____

8. What should be our attitude toward suffering for Christ? _____

9. Do we actually suffer for Christ or do we evade suffering by refusing and neglecting to do our duty?

10. What three purposes did the Lord have in allowing His apostles to appear before rulers? _____

11. How would the power of the Lord be demonstrated by their appearances before rulers? _____

12. Who took the place of Felix? _____

13. What do you know of him? _____

14. What shows the intensity of the hatred of the Jews for Paul? _____

15. What request did the Jews make of Festus? _____

16. What was his answer? _____

17. Is there any indication of God's providential care of Paul in these events? _____

18. What evidence do we have that Festus intended to be just and impartial? _____

19. What indication do we have that Festus was a man of dispatch? _____

20. What is said of the charges the Jews brought against Paul at this time? _____

21. From Paul's defence, what do we learn about the charges? _____

22. What charges did Paul deny? _____

23. What charge involved his citizenship and loyalty to his government? _____

24. What is the first indication we have of the weakness of Festus? _____

25. Why is the court of Festus called Caesar's judgment seat? _____

26. In what statement did Paul accuse Festus of being partial to the Jews? _____

27. What do you know of Paul's attitude toward death? _____

28. What did Paul's appeal to Caesar mean to him? _____

29. Did Festus have the right to deny this appeal? _____

30. Who determined whether this appeal would be granted? _____

LESSON NUMBER 26

PAUL AT ROME

Acts 28:16-31

INTRODUCTION

In our last lesson we left Paul in the hands of Festus, the newly appointed governor over Judea. Festus had, in order to secure the favor of the Jews, suggested to Paul that he go to Jerusalem for further trial. Paul refused to be turned over to the Jews and, hence, he made his appeal unto Caesar. The appeal was granted, and he was waiting for an opportunity to go to Rome. While he waited for this opportunity, Agrippa II, who was king over a very small portion of his father's territory and resided at Caesarea Philippi, came to visit with Festus. When Festus mentioned the fact that he had Paul as a prisoner, and that Paul had appealed to Caesar, Agrippa expressed the desire to hear Paul. Festus was glad for Agrippa to hear him, for Festus had difficulty in writing out the charges which were against Paul, and for which he was being sent to the emperor for trial. Festus thought that Agrippa could assist him in making out these accusations, so on the day appointed Agrippa and his sister Bernice, with chief captains and the principal men of the city, gathered at the command of Festus to hear what Paul had to say. In this we see Paul the prisoner talking to Agrippa the king, but from another point of view we may say that Paul the freed-man was talking to Agrippa the slave of sin. Paul did not so much seek to free himself of the accusations against him as he sought to free his hearers from the dominion of sin. At the close of his sermon, Agrippa was convinced that Paul might have been set free if he had not already appealed to Caesar. When a suitable means of transportation had been secured, Paul, in the keeping of the centurion along with other prisoners, was put on board a ship to go to Rome. Paul advised the owner of the ship to spend the winter in Fair Havens, but his advice was disregarded, and they set sail. They had not been out in the sea long when a storm overtook them, and they were driven furiously before the gale for many days. Finally their ship was caught between two seas, just off the island of Melita, and was torn to pieces. They all swam to the shore in safety. On the island Paul performed many cures and made friends with the natives. After three months they resumed their journey toward Rome. Brethren from Rome came to meet Paul as far out as The Market of Appius and The Three Taverns.

I. KEY SCRIPTURE

"But we desire to hear of you what you think." (Acts 28:22a)

1. Their desire to hear implies: (a) Open-mindedness. People should never close their minds to further study of any matter and especially that which has to do with their welfare, both here and in eternity. These Jews in Rome had heard only uncomplimentary things about the church. Yet they were willing to listen to Paul to see if he had added truth which was worthy of their consideration. Whenever we close our minds to further study of any question we must affirm, (1) that we know everything that is worth knowing about the subject; or, (2) that we are satisfied with the amount of knowledge we have and are willing to die without ever gaining any additional knowledge of the subject, and thus living by a decision that will influence our destiny in the next life, as is possible to one who has thus closed his mind. The wise man observed, *"he who answers a matter before he*

hears it, it is folly and shame to him.”(Prov 18:13) Peter commands us to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. (2 Pet. 3:18.) In order to obey that commandment, we must keep our eyes open and hearts receptive to further light and information on all matters that pertain to our spiritual welfare. (b) These people had a desire for information from an authoritative source. Being an apostle of Jesus Christ, the information which Paul would give to them would be information which they could rely upon. All of us should have a desire to go to an authoritative source for our information on our spiritual welfare. When men seek counsel and guidance in investing their money, they seek for authoritative information. They go to men who have experience and men who have official connections with the company or commodity in which investment is desired. So when we seek information on our spiritual welfare, we should go to a source that is dependable. Only the inspired apostles and prophets are thoroughly and completely dependable. To take the word of some uninspired man is dangerous and may lead to our eternal destruction. Peter speaks of some who, failing to understand the scriptures, pervert the same to their own destruction and the destruction of all who follow them. (2 Pet. 3:15,16.) (c) These people were willing to change their mind about a despised sect. They frankly told Paul that they had not heard anything good about the sect with which they believed him to be identified, but, in spite of the fact that they had heard nothing good about that sect, they were willing to hear what he had to say. This implies that, if he could present sufficient evidence to change their mind with reference to the standing of that group with which he was identified, they would become identified with it also.

2. What they thought of Paul. (a) They looked upon Paul as a representative of Christ. These Jews had heard of Jesus, and they knew that Jesus had many followers. They spoke of these followers as a “*sect*”, and they knew that “*sect*” was not very favorably known in Rome. They looked upon Paul as a follower of Christ and, no doubt, a representative capable of giving definite and dependable information concerning Christ and His church. (b) They looked upon Paul as an uninspired person. They said they desired to hear “*what you think.*” They did not say, we desire to hear what God has given you; they did not say, we are ready to hear you speak as the Spirit gives you utterance. When Peter went to the house of Cornelius, Cornelius told him, “*We are all here present in the sight of God, to hear all things that have been commanded you of the Lord.*” (Acts 10:33.) Cornelius regarded Peter as an inspired spokesman of God, but these people said they desired to hear what Paul thought, thus indicating that they did not look upon him as an inspired man speaking the things God had commanded him to speak. (c) They looked upon Paul as capable of informing them of the work and teaching of Jesus. Of course, they viewed Jesus as a man, and only a man, and they viewed the church as an institution started by a man. Whether they conceived Jesus to be honest, or whether they conceived Him to be an intentional impostor, we have no way of knowing. But Paul’s presence in Rome afforded them an unusual opportunity to hear of Jesus and the church which He founded, and they were willing to listen with an open mind to learn what he thought about it.

3. Their example suggests to us: (a) that Christianity is worth investigating. Christianity was not very old when these men visited Paul, neither had they an opportunity to observe Christianity at work; but in spite of the fact that Christianity was not very old and they had not long observed its workings, they thought it was worth investigating. Since Christianity is now more than nineteen hundred years old and since we have observed its workings, surely we have more reasons to consider it worth investigating than they had. One who closes his eyes against the evidences which are everywhere about us and claims that Christianity is not worth his time and effort to investigate must be very narrow-minded indeed. A system of moral and spiritual truths which has revolutionized the world and has delivered countless millions of souls from the oppression of sin and has pointed them to a purer,

more useful life and planted in their hearts a hope of eternal life after the death of the body, surely commands itself to each one of us as being imminently worthy of investigation. (b) Christianity bears minute investigation. Infidels, atheists, and agnostics have doubted the truth of the Bible and have sought for many centuries to disprove its historical statements as well as its spiritual principles. Time after time these men have been converted while doing their best to gather sufficient evidence to prove the Bible to be false. Metal is polished by continual rubbing, stones are made smooth and beautiful by continued rubbing, so the truths of God are made clearer and more beautiful by continued investigation. Error will not stand investigation, but truth thrives on study and investigation. (c) Paul is a dependable witness for Christ. As these people went to the apostle Paul to hear what he thought on the matter of Christianity, so we should go to the same authoritative source to learn definitely what we wish to know about Christianity. Too many people listen to the critics of Christianity. Some critics of Christianity have gone so far as to write books to disprove the genuineness of Christianity, and yet they confess that they have never made a careful systematic study of the Bible. When people depend on such critics as the sources of their information about Christianity, they are unfair both to themselves and to Christ. If one wishes to know about Mormonism, he would do well to go to an official representative of that system of religion. So if one wishes to know about Christianity, he should consult an official authoritative representative of Christianity. All the apostles and inspired prophets of Christianity are authority with reference to the principles of Christianity. These apostles and prophets have written their teaching, and those writings have been preserved in the book we call the New Testament. Hence, if we wish to know the principles of Christianity, we do not go to the critics of Christianity, but to the official authoritative source, the New Testament.

II. A COMMENTARY ON ACTS 28:16-31

1. Paul Visited by Representative Jews (Acts 28:16-22)

Paul was suffered to abide by himself. Paul had been in the custody of a centurion named Julius. (Acts 27:1.) This centurion had ample opportunity to be convinced that Paul was no ordinary prisoner. He had seen his predictions of disaster to the ship come true. He had stood by Paul, as Paul prayed to God. He had seen Paul shake a deadly viper off his hand into the fire and receive no harm. (Acts 28:1-6.) He had seen him cure the sick on the island of Melita. (Acts 28:7-10.) Seeing and experiencing these things on the voyage to Rome, this centurion undoubtedly gave a very fine report of Paul to the authorities in Rome. Hence, Paul was not subjected to the ordinary conditions of prison life, but was allowed to abide by himself. The only inconvenience attached was that a soldier was chained to him at all times.

He called together those that were the chief of the Jews. Paul took the initiative in calling for this meeting with the chief men among the Jews. He would have two purposes in this. (1) He would wish to put the gospel before them, for it was his business to preach the gospel to as many people as possible. (2) Paul did not wish to have the Jews of Rome for his enemies in his coming trial. He could hardly expect them to render any assistance, but it would be very encouraging to him if they did not openly accuse him before the emperor as their Jewish brethren had done in Judea.

I had done nothing against the people. Paul assures these Jewish brethren that he had done nothing against his people as a nation, nor had he repudiated the customs of the fathers. But, in spite of these things, Paul says he had been delivered a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. The courtesy and kindness of Paul toward his Jewish brethren who hated him are very obviously

demonstrated here. He simply said he had been delivered a prisoner to the Romans. He did not say who had delivered him into the hands of the Romans.

Desired to set me at liberty. Paul says that when the Romans had examined him, meaning the trials in Caesarea, they desired to set him at liberty. Though he calls no names, there is an implied contrast here. His Jewish brethren wished to put him to death, but the Romans, after sufficient examination, desired to set him at liberty. His Jewish brethren thought there was cause for death, but the Romans, after sufficient examination, saw no cause of death in Paul.

I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar. Paul says that, when the Jews spoke against his being set at liberty, he was constrained or compelled to appeal to Caesar. Though Paul openly charged that the Jews opposed his being set at liberty, he wishes his Jewish friends in Rome to know that he did not care to accuse his nation. If Paul should accuse his nation, it might bring further punishment or severe hardships on them at the hands of the Roman government. Hence, Paul assured his Jewish friends that he would not bring an accusation against his nation.

Because of the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain. This hope was twofold. (1) The hope of Messiah to redeem and deliver Israel. Paul speaks of it as “*the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers; unto which promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain.*” (Acts 26:6,7.) (2) This hope was for a resurrection from the dead. “*Having hope toward God, which these also themselves look for, that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust.*” (Acts 24:15.) Paul is anxious that these Jewish people in Rome would understand that he is a prisoner, not because of any misconduct on his part, but because of the hope of Israel.

We neither received letters from Judea concerning you. News travelled slowly in those days. Paul’s ship was the last one to get through before the stormy season set in, and no one had time to come from Judea to Rome since the stormy season had ended; hence, no word had come to Rome concerning Paul. Since they had heard nothing against Paul personally, they were willing to listen to him concerning Christ and the church. They make it plain, however, that they regard him as being connected with a group of people which is not in very good standing in Rome. This would suggest that the church was rather small in Rome at that time or that these Jews intentionally refrained from giving Paul any information about the church in Rome.

2. Paul Preaches to the Jews (Acts 28:23-28)

They came to him into his lodging in great number. Paul’s first meeting was with a representative number of the Jews in Rome. This second meeting was on a day appointed for the purpose, and these representatives who first met with him told others and brought a large group to hear Paul speak of Christ and the church. It is interesting to note that Luke says they came “*into his lodging.*” While in verse thirty he is spoken of as having “*his own hired dwelling.*” Greek scholars tell us that the word for lodging is a word which indicates that it was a place where he was entertained as a guest. That is, he was a guest in the home of some friend, while the word for hired dwelling indicates that it was a house of his own or for which he paid rent.

Testifying the kingdom of God. On this subject Paul would remind the Jews of the promise of a kingdom in their own prophecies. Then he would seek to prove that Jesus as the head of the church is the fulfilment of those prophecies of a kingdom. Hence, he would assure them that the kingdom

foretold in their prophecies, for which they had longed, had been established, and that it was now possible to be a citizen in that kingdom under the promised Messiah. (Col. 1:12-14.)

Both from the law of Moses and from the prophets. Paul used the Old Testament as a source for his sermons. His teaching was based on the word of God. He was not interested in philosophical speculations or in human traditions, but he was intensely interested in teaching them what the prophets had foretold and in convincing them that Jesus and the church were the fulfilment of their prophecies.

Some believed ...some disbelieved. The Jews of Rome were no different from the Jews of other lands, nor were these Jews any different from the people of all nations. When the gospel is preached, some believe and some disbelieve. Those who believe have the privilege of becoming children of God through obedience to the gospel of Christ. (John 1:12; Acts 2:38.) And those who disbelieve are condemned already because of their lack of faith in Jesus as the Son of God. (John 3:18,36.)

Well spoke the Holy Spirit through Isaiah. Paul picks a passage from the prophet Isaiah, which describes the condition of those who disbelieved. Isaiah described people as hearing and seeing but never understanding or perceiving, because their heart had waxed gross, their ears were dull of hearing, their eyes were closed. When people shut their eyes and close their ears to the truth of the gospel, there is no possibility of their being saved.

This salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles. Paul said that, since these Jews had refused the salvation offered by the Lord, he would now offer it to the Gentiles. It was his custom, as commanded by the Lord, to offer the gospel to the Jews first in each community and then to the Gentiles. Paul followed this custom even in Rome as a prisoner. The expression salvation of God does not mean a salvation which pertains to God, but a salvation which comes from God. From past experience Paul was sure that, when this salvation was offered to the Gentiles, many of them would accept it. Hence, with confidence he turns from the Jews to the Gentiles with the salvation which is from God.

3. Paul's Extended Stay in Rome (Acts 28:30,31)

He abode two whole years in his own hired dwelling. Luke's account ends rather abruptly. We do not know whether Paul had been put to death or had been set free at the time Luke wrote this. Some scholars contend that the grammatical construction forces us to conclude that Paul's condition at the time of the writing was changed from that during the two years in his own hired house. Others think that Luke wrote his record when Paul had spent two years in his hired house, and that he continued for some time after that in the same condition.

Received all that went in unto him. Paul was too well known to be long in Rome without friends coming to see him. We have a record of friends from Philippi, Colossae, and Ephesus visiting him. Paul was too much interested in the salvation and edification of souls to spend his time in idleness. He preached and taught the gospel of Christ to those who visited with him, and he wrote letters to various churches while he was there. The letters to the Ephesians, the Philippians, the Colossians, and Philemon were written during this imprisonment. And if he had only one imprisonment, the letters to Titus and Timothy were written there: but if he was set free for a while and then imprisoned a second time, Titus and First Timothy were written after his release and while he was in Macedonia; and Second Timothy was written during his second imprisonment.

III. SOME APPLICATIONS

1. Paul did not spend his time in prison complaining about his unhappy lot and the unfairness and injustice of his trials, but he made opportunities to preach the gospel to as many people as possible.
2. Paul was not discouraged when some who heard him preach the gospel disbelieved and blasphemed. He simply sought an audience elsewhere.
3. Though Paul preached the gospel by word of mouth to many people, he exerted far more influence on the world through his writings. Preachers and teachers should avail themselves of the opportunity of perpetuating their influence through writing the gospel so that others may read.

QUESTION SHEET NUMBER 26

PAUL AT ROME

1. What evidence do we have of the open-mindedness of the Jews who visited Paul?_____

2. What do we affirm by closing our mind to further study of a subject?_____

3. What should all consider as an authoritative source of information in religion?_____

4. What was the attitude of these people toward the church? _____

5. What did these Jews think about Paul?_____

6. What did they think of his ability to inform them of Jesus and the church?_____

7. Can you give solid reasons why Christianity is worth investigating?_____

8. Would you be afraid for Christianity to be subjected to the minutest investigation?_____

9. What centurion was Paul's guard? _____

10. What did he think of Paul?_____

11. Why do you think Paul was allowed to abide by himself while in prison?_____

12. What reasons can you give for Paul calling the Jews of Rome to visit him?_____

13. How did Paul seek to gain the good will and sympathy of these Jews? _____

14. How did Paul contrast the attitude of the Jews and rulers in Judea? _____

15. What assurance did Paul give these Roman Jews of his attitude toward their nation? _____

16. What is meant by the hope of Israel? _____

17. What did this have to do with Paul's imprisonment? _____

18. Why had not the Jews of Rome received letters concerning Paul? _____

19. What is suggested in our lesson with reference to Paul's first lodging in Rome? _____

20. What do you think Paul told these Jews of Rome about the kingdom of God? _____

21. What did Paul use as a source for sermon material? _____

22. What was the central theme of Paul's sermons to these Jews? _____

23. What is said of the length of time spent in preaching to them? _____

24. What was the response of these Jews to Paul's preaching? _____

25. What prophecy did Paul quote and apply to these Jews in Rome? _____

26. What did Paul propose to do when the Jews rejected the gospel? _____

27. How long did Paul stay in Rome? _____

28. What is said of the place where he was imprisoned? _____

29. From what places do we know of friends visiting him while in prison? _____

30. What letters in the New Testament did Paul write while in prison? _____

31. What do you know of the possibility of his release from prison, his further travels, and his second imprisonment? _____
