

# Acts 1

## Outline

1. Introduction to the Book (v.1-3)
2. Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit to empower the church to be His witnesses (v.4-8).
3. Jesus ascends to heaven (v.9-11).
4. The original disciples are gathered in a room praying together in unity (v.12-14).
5. Matthias is chosen to replace Judas as one of the apostles (v.15-26).

## Overview

The book of Acts was written by Luke and is really the second volume of a two-part work with the first being the Gospel of Luke. It is often referred to as the Acts of the Apostles but is really the Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Church. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit and told the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for Him to come. They obediently waited by praying in unity and appointing Matthias to take the place of Judas as an apostle.

## Takeaways

1. The church is built on the resurrection of Jesus. This means that it is based on a person who was seen rather than a religious idea that was believed (v.1-3).
2. Jesus wants His Church to be founded on being His witnesses to the ends of the earth instead of trying to build earthly kingdoms (v.4-8).
3. The Holy Spirit is our power source, and He empowers us to be Jesus' witnesses (v.8).
4. The church was designed to be a missional movement instead of a religious institution. (v.8).
5. The church's victory and hope rests on the finished work of Jesus (as demonstrated by His ascension), the present ministry of the Holy Spirit, and the future return of Jesus (v.9-11).
6. The church developed out of unity and making prayer a priority (v.12-14).
7. The early church considered Scripture to be a true and authoritative guide in all things (v.15-16).
8. We receive direction from God through Scripture, prayer, wisdom from other believers, and the leading of the Holy Spirit (v.15-26).

## Acts 2

### Outline

1. God sends the Holy Spirit to indwell the church on the Day of Pentecost as evidenced outwardly by them speaking in a variety of languages they could not naturally speak (v.1-13).
2. Peter preaches a sermon and 3,000 people become Christians (v.14-39).
3. Luke's first summary statement of the growth and development of the church (v. 40-47).

### Overview

God fulfilled His promise by sending the Spirit to indwell believers, who are the church. Before this, the Spirit could come and go in the lives of believers, but now He is permanently in us. Different tribes of Christians have different convictions about the gift of tongues as they look at various scriptures, but on this occasion it was clearly a means of communicating and authenticating the gospel. Peter used this as an opportunity to proclaim the gospel to the gathered crowd. He preached Jesus to them, they were deeply convicted, responded in repentance and faith, and were baptized as a public witness to their faith. Luke concludes the chapter by summarizing the growth and activity of the church.

### Takeaways

1. The Spirit empowers us to proclaim Jesus.
2. Peter is a tremendous example of God's forgiveness and grace. He denied Jesus less than two months earlier, and now God is using him as an instrument in the conversion of 3,000 people. God is a God of second chances who will use us as we repent.
3. Apostolic preaching (which is to be the model for our preaching) was Spirit-empowered, Jesus-centered, gospel-focused, and boldly called for repentance.
4. Baptism, while it does not save us, is a really big deal as it publicly proclaims our faith in Jesus and is the first step of obedience for a new believer.
5. The church's activities should be focused on evangelism, teaching, discipling, fellowship, prayer, generosity, unity and worship.

## Acts 3

### Outline:

1. Jesus works through Peter and John to heal a man who had been lame from birth (v. 1-10).
2. Peter uses the miracle as an opportunity to preach the gospel to the assembled and amazed crowd (v.11-26).

### Overview

Jesus healed a lame man through Peter and John and it caused a crowd stir among the people. They quickly shifted the focus and credit from themselves to Jesus and used this miracle as an opportunity to proclaim the gospel in fulfillment of Mark 16:19-20.

### Takeaways

1. This man wanted money, but they gave him what he most needed, which was Jesus and His power (v.6).
2. The church's focus should be more on the ultimate, eternal, and internal solution rather than temporary and external solutions.
3. While we do not have the same power and authority as the apostles, God is still the same, and He is a healing, miracle-working God so healing is a part of the ministry of the church (see James 5:13-18).
4. Our response to the Lord graciously working on our behalf should always be praise and worship (v.7-10).
5. Miracles will offer opportunities to proclaim Jesus, which is really the ultimate point of a miracle (v.10-11).
6. We must be quick to give glory to God when He works through us (v.12).
7. It is never our power or godliness that accomplishes a miracle. It is the gracious power of God (v.12).
8. Even faith is a gift of God (v.16).
9. The gospel must be preached boldly and clearly with an emphasis on the death and resurrection of Jesus and our personal responsibility for sin and the need for personal repentance (v.13-26).
10. We personally need Jesus no matter what our spiritual lineage is (v.22-26).

## Acts 4

### Outline:

1. Peter and John are arrested for preaching Jesus (v.1-4).
2. Peter and John appear before the religious leaders who forbid them from preaching in the name of Jesus (v.5-22).
3. They are released and the church gathers and prays for boldness (v.23-31).
4. Luke's second summary statement of the growth and progress of the church (v. 32-37).

### Overview

This is the first recorded instance of the church being persecuted. The persecution came from the religious. The religious leaders persecuted those who were proclaiming Jesus because of their rejection of Him. However, Peter and John did not back down but continued to boldly proclaim the name of Jesus after their release. They gathered together with the rest of the church and prayed for boldness and were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the Word of God with boldness.

### Takeaways

1. Religious people will get upset when the name of Jesus is proclaimed (v.2).
2. Genuine followers of Jesus will be persecuted. He predicted it and it has definitely come true. (25-26).
3. When Jesus is proclaimed some people will be saved (v.4).
4. We are to boldly proclaim Jesus even in the face of opposition and persecution (v. 8-12).
5. Jesus is the only means of salvation (v.12).
6. Being with Jesus gives us boldness (v.13)
7. People can see it when we have been with Jesus (v.13)
8. While education and training can be a good thing, being with Jesus is much more important and life-changing (v.13).
9. Even skeptics have a hard time speaking against obvious miracles (v.16).
10. We will sometimes have to choose between obeying God and obeying people and hopefully we will choose obedience to God (v.19).
11. What is really in us cannot help but come out of us (v.20).
12. Prayer was a first response and not a last resort for them (v. 23-31).
13. They prayed for boldness instead of protection, and God answered their prayer by filling them with the Holy Spirit (v.29-31).
14. They were united and generous. They sacrificed to meet each other's needs (v. 32-37).

# Acts 5

## Outline

1. God kills Ananias and Sapphira for their lie and hypocrisy (v.1-11).
2. Luke's third summary statement of the growth and power of the church (v.12-16).
3. The apostles are imprisoned and freed by an angel (v.17-21).
4. The apostles are summoned before the Sanhedrin again and boldly proclaim Jesus to them.
5. Gamaliel advises the Sanhedrin that if the work is not of God that it will come to nothing but if it is they can't stop it.(v.33-39).
6. The apostles are beaten but rejoice that they are counted worthy to suffer for Jesus' name and continue proclaiming Him (v.40-42).

## Overview

The chapter begins with the problem of the lie and hypocrisy of Ananias and Sapphira, but God deals with it by killing them. Luke then records the supernatural growth and power of the church as evidenced by multitudes being saved and many being healed. The apostles experience persecution through being imprisoned and beaten but stay strong and continue to boldly proclaim Jesus.

## Takeaways

1. Problems are to be expected in churches because the church is people, and people sin (v.1-11). God did awesome things through the early church as recorded in the book of Acts, but they had issues too.
2. God deals with sin. (v.71). His church is now called to deal with unrepentant sin through church discipline (1 Corinthians 5, Matthew 18:15-18).
3. God saved multitudes of people and healed many people (v.12-16). People who have a problem with churches growing, miracles happening, people being saved, people being healed, and churches being large have a big problem with the book of Acts, which was inspired by the Holy Spirit so they really have a problem with God.
4. God can protect us from or through persecution or he can allow us to be persecuted. (v.17-42).
5. We must obey God instead of people. Often, we cannot do both and must pick one or the other (v.29).
6. They rejoiced over suffering for Jesus. Do we expect and embrace suffering for Him or run from it (v.40-41)?
7. They kept proclaiming Jesus in the temple and in houses (v.42). In part, this is where our philosophy of ministry of large group worship services and small group meetings in homes comes from.

# Acts 6

## Outline

1. The early church encounters and solves the problem of the Greek-speaking Jewish widows being neglected in the distribution of food (v.1-6).
2. Luke gives another summary statement of the church's growth and progress as God's Word is spread after they solved this problem. Many were saved including a lot of the priests (v.7).
3. Stephen is persecuted by the religious for his powerful ministry (v.8-15).

## Overview

The church encountered another problem, but they solved it by adding godly leaders to address the problem while the apostles stayed focused on their priority of prayer and the ministry of the Word. Stephen was one of those leaders. He had a powerful ministry, but he was being falsely accused and summoned to appear before the religious leaders.

## Takeaways

1. Problems are to be expected in church (v.1). Growth produces problems.
2. Solving problems can lead to growth (v.7).
3. Leaders must lead and their leadership be followed (v.2-3).
4. Unity must be maintained.
5. Leaders have to deal with problems without being sidetracked from the primary mission of the church (v.2-5).
6. Adding new leaders is key to solving problems, meeting needs, and the church growing (v.2-7).
7. Pastors must focus on the ministry of prayer and the Word of God (v.7).
8. For pastors to keep that focus, others must share the load of the ministry of the church.
9. Meeting practical needs is a part of the church's ministry.
10. Godly character is always the key to spiritual leadership (v.3, 5, 8).
11. People who can't refute our words and lives will often lie about us (v.8-15).

# Acts 7

## Outline

1. Stephen addresses the religious leaders by walking through Israel's history and then confronting them regarding their rejection and murder of their Messiah (v.1-53).
2. The religious leaders murder Stephen because of his stand for Jesus (v. 54-60).

## Overview

Stephen appears before the religious leaders to answer their false accusations. More than defending himself, he basically walks them through the Old Testament and uses it an opportunity to confront them regarding their rejection of the Messiah. Because of his boldness and their hard-heartedness, they murder him, and he becomes the church's first martyr. Stephen was able to look into heaven and see the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of the Father. He forgave them and asked God not to charge them with this sin before he died.

## Takeaways

1. God was with Joseph even during all of his troubles, and He is always with us as well. (v.9-10).
2. God prepared Moses to be a deliverer of his people, and He is a foreshadowing of Jesus, who came to deliver His people from sin. (v.17-36).
3. One of the things we can learn from Stephen's example is that a mighty man or woman of God will be filled with the knowledge of God's Word.
4. He obviously put Jesus before Himself because he did not try to appease them and save his life, but he gave his life by boldly confronting them.
5. Many people would rather kill the messenger (sometimes literally and sometimes figuratively) than heed the message.
6. We don't know how much of an impact, but I have to assume that Stephen's actions were a powerful witness to Saul.
7. When Stephen saw Jesus "standing" at the Father's right hand, it was indicative of Jesus being his advocate and intercessor (v.55-56).
8. Stephen was able to do this because he was filled with the Holy Spirit (v.55).
9. Stephen followed the example of Jesus and forgave his murderers (v.60). This was a supernatural action possible through the Holy Spirit. (v.55).

# Acts 8

## Outline

1. A great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem which scattered much of the church, but they proclaimed the gospel wherever they went (v.1-4).
2. Phillip went to the city of Samaria where he preached Jesus and did miracles. Many trusted Jesus, and there was great joy in the city (v.5-8).
3. Simon the Sorcerer professes faith in Christ and is baptized along with many other people (v.9-13).
4. Peter and John came down, prayed and laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit (v.14-17).
5. Simon tries to buy the power to impart the Spirit and is rebuked (v.19-25).
6. The Lord sent Phillip into the desert to share the gospel with the Ethiopian treasurer, and he believed and was baptized. (v.26-40).

## Overview

God used persecution to spread the gospel. The gospel is for all nations. The theme verse in Acts (1:8) says, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." God used the persecution to move the gospel from Jerusalem to Samaria where Philip went and ministered and saw the gospel make a great impact in people's lives and in the city. God then sent Philip from Samaria to the desert to witness to an Ethiopian, who was saved and certainly took the gospel back to his country.

There are a couple of sections in this passage that are difficult to interpret. One question regards whether or not Simon the sorcerer was genuinely converted or not. I believe he was not and is an example of a false convert. The other question is, "Why did Peter and John have to come down to minister to them in order for them to receive the Holy Spirit?" This is a debatable point, but I believe the answer is that it was somewhat of a repetition of the Day of Pentecost that corresponds with the gospel spreading to a different area according to Acts 1:8. God waited to indwell them with the Spirit until later to show that the Samaritans had received the gospel as well. The Jews and Samaritans had a history of hatred so the early Christians with their Jewish background probably had to be convinced they had received the same Holy Spirit and were part of the same Church as the Samaritans. Today, every Christian receives the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation according to several verses, including 1 Corinthians 12:13, which says, "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit."

## Takeaways

1. God used persecution to spread the gospel (v.1-4).
2. The key is to proclaim the gospel wherever we are (v.4).
3. The gospel transforms people and can even transform cities (v.4-8).



4. A person can profess faith in Jesus and be baptized but not be genuinely saved. Simon is an example of this. We must genuinely repent (v.9-25, see also Matthew 7:21-23).
5. Obedience is the key (v. 26-27). It did not make sense for Philip to leave Samaria and go to the desert, but he listened, trusted, and obeyed.
6. If God is guiding us somewhere, He has a purpose for us there. We need to stop arguing with Him and just do what He says.
7. Many people are religious like this Ethiopian, but need to be introduced to Jesus.
8. Belief must precede baptism (v.36-38).

## Acts 9

### Outline

1. The risen Christ appears to Saul on the Damascus Road as he was going to persecute Christians (v.1-9).
2. The Lord sends Ananias to minister to Saul. His eyesight was restored, and he was baptized (v.10-19).
3. Saul begins to preach Jesus in the synagogues (v. 20-22).
4. The Jews plot to kill Saul, but the disciples help him escape at night (v. 23-25).
5. Barnabas helps the disciples in Jerusalem overcome their reluctance to trust Saul (v. 26-30).
6. Luke's next summary statement of the health, growth, and progress of the church (v. 31).
7. Jesus heals a paralyzed man through Peter and many are saved as a result (v. 32-35).
8. Peter raises Dorcas from the dead (v.36-43).

### Overview

Jesus saves Saul the persecutor and turns him into Paul the Christian missionary. That miracle makes this one of the key chapters in the New Testament.

### Takeaways

1. Paul is prime evidence that Jesus loves everybody and can save and transform anybody.
2. Jesus found and saved Paul. Paul did not find Jesus. This is a picture of how salvation works for everybody.
3. Persecuting the church is the same as persecuting Jesus. That is how much He identifies with the church (v.4-5).
4. Ananias demonstrated faith, courage, and obedience in going to Paul (v.10-14).
5. New Christians need mature believers to come alongside them and help them in their spiritual growth. Ananias and Barnabas did this for Paul. He is better known, but he would not have accomplished what he did without their help and influence. We don't know what can result from investing in a young Christian.
6. When we talk about Jesus, some people are going to trust Him, and some people are going to hate Him (and us).
7. Biblical church growth is edification and multiplication. Edification means to build up. This means a healthy church is growing spiritually and numerically (v.31).
8. God does the impossible so the church should expect the supernatural.

# Acts 10

## Outline

1. God tells Cornelius to send for Peter to speak to him (v. 1-8).
2. God speaks to Peter and shows him that it is wrong to be prejudiced (v. 9-16).
3. After the vision, Cornelius's delegation comes to where Peter is staying, invites Peter to his house, and Peter goes with them (v. 17-23).
4. Peter and Cornelius meet and converse (v. 24-33).
5. Peter preaches the gospel to the group assembled at the home of Cornelius and the whole group is saved and baptized (v. 34-48).

## Overview

This is a very important chapter in Acts as the gospel spreads to the Gentiles. The Lord delivered Peter from his prejudice and sent him to the home of Cornelius to proclaim the gospel to this man and his friends and relatives. Peter proclaimed Jesus, and the whole group got saved and baptized. God poured out His Spirit on them as evidenced by them speaking in tongues in order to demonstrate to the Jews that Gentiles were being saved.

## Takeaways

1. Someone can be religious but can still only come to God through Jesus. However, if someone is seeking God, I believe Scripture teaches that God will get the gospel to that person. Cornelius exemplifies this truth.
2. God is working very specifically in different people's lives in order for people to hear the gospel.
3. Prejudice is sin. God loves everybody without partiality (v. 9-15, 34).
4. The gospel is the perfect life, atoning death, and bodily resurrection of Jesus that brings us forgiveness when we trust Jesus (v. 34-44).
5. This was another extension of the Great Commission and another expression of Pentecost as their speaking in tongues shows they received the Holy Spirit which demonstrates that they got saved (v. 44-48). This outward sign is not needed now because we have the entirety of Scripture and know that God saves Gentiles, but they needed an outward demonstration to prove to them that God was bestowing His grace upon the Gentiles.

# Acts 11

## Outline

1. Peter defends God's grace to the Gentiles and convinces some of the Jews that God was truly saving Gentiles (v.1-18).
2. A church is planted and developed at Antioch (v.14-26).
3. Agabus prophesied a coming famine and the disciples provide financial relief for the church in Judea (v.27-30).

## Overview

Jews had been taught to be separate from Gentiles for centuries but God was combining them together in the church. However, that was difficult for some of the Gentiles to accept so Peter had to demonstrate to them that God was graciously saving Gentiles and making no difference between the Jews and them. The middle part of the chapter recounts the planting and development of the church at Antioch, which is really a model church. The chapter concludes with the Gentile Christians of Antioch sending financial help to the Jewish Christians in Judea.

## Takeaways

1. A proper understanding of the gospel will deliver us from prejudice (v.1-18).
2. We are called to teach the truth to those who are in error (v.1-18, 2 Timothy 2:24-26).
3. God's hand symbolizes His acting on our behalf. It takes God's power for people to be saved (v.21).
4. The New Testament pattern is to preach the gospel, people get saved, the converts are discipled, leaders are developed (see 13:1), which produces a church.
5. Disciple and Christian are basically synonymous (v.26).
6. The Christians did not name themselves but were called this by others because of their likeness to Christ (v.26).
7. It is vitally important that new believers be taught the Word of God (v.26).
8. We are to help other believers financially (v.29-30).

# Acts 12

## Outline

1. Herod is persecuting the church, and he has James killed and Peter arrested (v. 1-4).
2. The Lord sends angels to rescue Peter from prison, and he shows up at a prayer meeting (v. 5-19).
3. God kills Herod for his pride (v. 20-24).
4. Luke gives an update on the travels and ministry of Barnabas and Paul (v.25).

## Overview

Herod was persecuting the church, and he had James, the brother of John, killed and Peter imprisoned. The church was praying for Peter's release but did not believe it when God answered their prayer. God killed Herod because of his pride and refusal to give glory God. By the way, the account of Herod's death is also in the history written by the Jewish historian, Josephus, and is the same other than Josephus' sharing more details.

## Takeaways

1. The Lord allowed James to be killed and caused Peter to be spared. They were both men of God. It shows us that there is a lot of mystery regarding God's will that we do not understand.
2. The church should deal with problems through continual prayer (v.5).
3. God intervened on Peter's behalf at the last minute ("when Herod was about to bring him out") (v.6). The Lord works on His timetable, not ours.
4. Peter was asleep, which means that he was at peace. Sometimes sleeping well during trials is an indicator of trusting God (v.6).
5. The church was praying for Peter when he showed up at the house and they did not believe he was there (v.13-16). They apparently were praying fervently but not with a lot of faith. Yet, God still answered their prayers because the key is the object of faith more than the amount of faith. This should encourage us when we are struggling to trust God. Keep talking to Him even if you are having trouble trusting Him.
6. God hates pride and will not share His glory with anyone (v.20-24).

# Acts 13

## Outline

1. The leaders of the church at Antioch send Paul and Barnabas out on a missionary journey under the leading of the Holy Spirit (v. 1-3).
2. They experienced opposition from a sorcerer as they began their missionary work, but Paul rebuked him and a proconsul was saved (v. 4-12).
3. Paul and his group preached the gospel at Antioch in Pisidia as they traveled on their missionary journey (v. 13-41).
4. The missionaries experienced opposition from the Jews and began to preach to the Gentiles, and they saw Jesus save some of the Gentiles (v. 42-52).

## Overview

This chapter chronicles what is often called the first missionary journey. The leadership of the church at Antioch were led by the Holy Spirit to send Paul and Barnabas out to proclaim Jesus. As they traveled to different places and preached the gospel, they encountered opposition and saw people respond to the message.

## Takeaways

1. There was a plurality of pastoral leadership in the church at Antioch (v. 1).
2. This leadership was a reflection of the growth and maturity of this young church (v. 1).
3. They made decisions through seeking God with prayer and fasting (v. 1-3).
4. Paul's pattern in his ministry that is recorded in the book of Acts was to go where spiritually interested people were and begin to proclaim the gospel to them (v. 5, 14, 46).
5. Jim Cymbala said something to the effect that the spread of the gospel is marked by "opportunity and opposition," and I think that is clearly seen in this chapter.
6. Paul contextualized the gospel when he spoke. We see in this chapter and other places in the book of Acts that he started with the Old Testament when he was speaking to Jews, but he sometimes started with different things that would have been more culturally relevant to them when he was speaking to Gentiles.
7. Jesus is our ultimate message and is the only hope for salvation. This was the essence of Paul's message and should be the church's message today.
8. We can only come to the Lord because He first chooses us and draws us to Himself. Verse 48b says, "And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed."

# Acts 14

## Outline

1. They are preaching in Iconium, and many people are getting saved, but those who oppose them attempt to kill them so they flee to the surrounding areas and continue preaching the gospel (v. 1-7).
2. A cripple is healed in Lystra, and the people attempt to worship them, which they do not accept, of course (v. 8-18).
3. Paul is stoned and thought incorrectly to be dead (v. 19-20).
4. They visit the various churches to encourage them and appoint elders (v. 21-28).

## Overview

Their missionary journey continues, and we continue to see this theme of “opportunity and opposition.” They keep preaching, people keep getting saved, and other people keep trying to kill them. We also see the importance of discipleship and leadership development as they revisit churches to appoint elders and encourage the believers.

## Takeaways

1. We see the divine and human element in salvation in these chapters. Acts 13:48 says, “And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.” Acts 14:1 says that they “so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed.” We are to do our best for the Lord but trust His power and will to ultimately produce the results.
2. Even when they had to flee to somewhere else, they kept proclaiming the gospel (v. 6-7).
3. The man who was healed “had faith to be healed” (v. 9). Do we have the faith to receive what God has for us?
4. We have to give glory to God instead of receiving accolades from people (v. 11-18).
5. Paul’s life is example of the biblical principle that a man or woman of God doing God’s will is safe until God is finished with that person.
6. Their methods of ministry illustrate the fact that we cannot separate evangelism and discipleship from each other. Both are necessary to fulfill the Great Commission.
7. Trial should be expected. We are to continue in the faith (v. 22).
8. Notice that they appointed elders (plural) in every church (singular) [v. 23]. This is a big part of the reason that we believe in a plurality of pastors.

# Acts 15

## Outline

1. There is a major dispute within the church over the question of whether or not Gentiles must be circumcised in order to be saved (v. 1-5).
2. The apostles and elders meet together in Jerusalem (often called the Jerusalem Conference) and decide that Scripture teaches that salvation is grace alone through faith in Jesus alone for everyone, Jews and Gentiles (v. 6-21).
3. The church sends out men with a letter to communicate their decision to the churches (v. 22-29).
4. Paul and Barnabas continue their missionary travels but end up splitting up over whether or not to take Mark with them (v. 30-41).

## Overview

This is a very important chapter that records the decision of the Jerusalem Conference, which was one of the most important events in the history of the church. Three crucial decisions were made:

1. The church is made up of Jews and Gentiles, who are on equal footing.
2. Salvation is by grace alone through faith in Jesus alone.
3. Scripture is the authority for the church.

## Takeaways

1. There are certain things (things pertaining to salvation being an example) that are worth fighting for. Part of being mature is knowing when to fight and when to agree to disagree (v. 2).
2. False teaching must always be confronted because it can destroy people's lives.
3. Authority is in Scripture-not in opinion, personality, or position.
4. Even the apostles made their decision based on the teaching of Scripture (v. 15-17).
5. The key issue is finding out what the Bible says and then doing what it says.
6. The apostles and elders gave leadership to the church and guided it doctrinally (v. 6).
- 6). The apostles have passed off the scene, but they left us the Lord's teaching through the New Testament. It is now the calling of elders to lead local churches and guide them doctrinally through the apostles teaching that was inspired by the Lord and recorded in the New Testament.
7. We cannot add anything to the grace of God and Jesus being the only way to God and still have the good news of the gospel.
8. We see at the end of the chapter that these were still imperfect men because they went from uniting the church at the Jerusalem Conference to dividing among themselves. Mark had deserted them on the first missionary journey, and Barnabas wanted to give him another chance but Paul did not. They divided into two teams and continued the work of spreading the gospel. We see later in the New Testament that Paul came to love and appreciate Mark. Paul and Barnabas were godly men who had different convictions on an issue. That will happen sometimes.



# Acts 16

## Outline

1. Paul and Silas continued the missionary journey by delivering the decision from the Jerusalem Conference to the churches and they added Timothy to the team (v.1-5).
2. The Spirit prevents them from going to certain places and leads them to Macedonia (v.6-10).
3. They went to Philippi to preach there, and Lydia and her household were saved and baptized (v.11-15).
4. Paul casts a demon out of a fortune telling, slave girl, and they are beaten and thrown into prison (v.16-24).
5. Paul and Silas were singing and praying at midnight, and God sent an earthquake, but they did not escape so the Philippian jailer and his family got saved and baptized (v.25-34).
6. Paul and Silas are released and leave the city (v.35-40).

## Overview

They continue to advance the gospel and experience both opposition and opportunity. Blessings recorded in this chapter are adding Timothy to the team and the household of Lydia and the Philippian jailer being saved and baptized, but they are also beaten and imprisoned again.

## Takeaways

1. Biblical church growth is spiritual and numerical. This is pictured in verses 5 and many places in the book of Acts.
2. Paul led Timothy to Christ, he became a part of the missionary team here, and later he became a pastor.
3. Paul circumcised Timothy so as not to be a stumbling block to Jewish believers. This did not contradict his position and the decision of the Jerusalem Conference because it was not a question of salvation because Timothy was already a believer. Sometimes we have to sacrifice our rights for the sake of our brothers and sisters in Christ.
4. We are clearly called to fulfill the mandate to be Christ's witnesses but where and how must be led by the Spirit. (v.6-10).
5. Paul's strategy was to find spiritually interested people and proclaim the gospel to them (v.13).
6. Jesus has power over demons (v.18).
7. Greedy people will attack those who proclaim the gospel if it threatens their financial idol (v. 19).
8. If we are praying and singing in the midst of trials, people will listen to us (v.25).
9. Salvation is only and clearly through faith in Jesus Christ alone (v.30-31).
10. Baptism should immediately follow salvation (v.33).

# Acts 17

## Outline

1. Paul went to the synagogue in Thessalonica and reasoned with them from the Old Testament Scriptures, showing them that Jesus is the Messiah who was crucified and resurrected, and some of them were saved (v. 1-4).
2. Those who did not believe gathered a mob and attacked the house of Jason, accusing the Christians of turning the world upside down and saying there is a king besides Caesar, who is Jesus (v. 5-9).
3. Paul and Silas go to Berea and minister, and the people searched the Scriptures daily and many were saved. Some people from Thessalonica came and stirred up the crowds, and Paul then traveled to Athens (v. 10-15).
4. Paul preached one of the most famous sermons in the Bible on Mars Hill in Athens (v. 16-34).

## Overview

Paul was able to minister both to Jews and Gentiles in this chapter. We see him taking different approaches with different groups but always proclaiming Jesus and seeing people saved, while still experiencing opposition as well.

## Takeaways

1. Paul reasoned with people with God's truth. He always proclaimed Jesus. He began with the Old Testament with the Jews but quoted philosophers with the Gentiles. We are to contextualize the message of the gospel.
2. The early church turned the world upside down by being witnesses for Jesus their king (v. 5-9).
3. We are to be like the Bereans and receive the Word and study the Scriptures daily (v. 11).
4. The way to deal with an idolatrous culture is not by cursing the idols, but by going to the idol worshippers where they are, engaging them in a way they understand, and proclaiming Jesus to them.
5. Idolatry should grieve our hearts (v. 16).
6. Paul didn't tell them to give up idolatry, or be a better person, or get a new philosophy, but he proclaimed the one true God and the only way to know Him, Jesus Christ.
7. To be an effective witness for Christ, especially in a secular context, here are some things we can learn from Paul:
  - Be intentional
  - Be prepared
  - Be strategic
  - Be tactful
  - Be contextual
  - Be bold
8. The truth of Jesus and the resurrection was strange to them, but it is still the truth.
9. Paul used one of their idols as a text in order to contextualize the gospel and preach

the truth.

10. From Paul's message, we learn that God is: Creator, Lord of all, spiritual, giver of life, in control of our lives and human history, near to us, and judge.

11. We are born when, where, and to whom we are born by the hand of God (v. 25-26).

12. Some people believed the gospel, some rejected it, and some were on the fence.

That is still how people respond today (v. 32-34).

# Acts 18

## Outline

1. Paul goes from Athens to Corinth, and he planted a church there among the Gentiles after he was rejected by the Jews (v. 1-17).
2. Paul begins his third missionary journey by revisiting some of the churches he had been a part of planting (v. 18-23).
3. Apollos is given private instruction by Aquila and Priscilla to help him where his knowledge was lacking, and he had a powerful ministry in Achaia of strengthening the believers and demonstrating publicly to the Jews from the Old Testament that Jesus is the Messiah (v. 24-28).

## Overview

Paul, with the help of others, plants a church in Corinth, and then he proceeds on another missionary journey, which begins with him going back and visiting churches that had already been planted. The focus then temporarily shifts away from Paul to Apollos, who is helped to grow by Aquilla and Priscilla, and then he has a powerful ministry to others.

## Takeaways

1. One of the common themes of the book of Acts is that ministry is a team effort, and I believe that is really highlighted in this chapter. Paul and Apollos are out front doing the speaking and kind of seem like the stars of the show from a human perspective. However, think about how many people are helping them behind the scenes. Aquilla and Priscilla worked with Paul and then disciples Apollos behind the scenes to make him much more effective. Silas and Timothy came and joined Paul and certainly assisted in the ministry. Justus and Crispus are mentioned as people who were entry points for the gospel getting to the Gentiles. Every Christian is important to the Lord's work. People who are out front preaching would not be effective without the people behind the scenes helping them.
2. Justus and Crispus were entry points (sometimes called "persons of peace") for the gospel to the Gentiles in Corinth. Who is in our circle of influence that we can affect the same way?
3. Notice how balanced Paul's ministry is. Time after time, we see him evangelizing the lost and teaching the Word to the church. We see him finding those who do not know the Lord to preach Jesus to them and also building up the church.
4. Sometimes we need to be like Aquilla and Priscilla and help newer believers who are defective in their knowledge. This is part of the job of more mature Christians. It is better to help them than judge them.

# Acts 19

## Outline

1. Paul leads 12 disciples to Christ who thought they were saved but had not really met Jesus. They were then re-baptized after their conversion (v. 1-7).
2. Paul preached in Ephesus for 2 years and all of Asia heard the word of God (v. 8-10).
3. Some Jewish exorcists were overcome by a demon possessed man, and people in Ephesus began confessing their sins and burned their magic books (v. 11-20).
4. There is a riot in Ephesus instigated by Demetrius because people giving up their idols was hurting their business of making silver shrines of Diana (v. 21-41).

## Overview

God does a great work in the city of Ephesus through the ministry of Paul, including planting a church. As always with Paul's ministry, we see people getting saved and other people getting highly upset.

## Takeaways

1. These disciples at Ephesus were trusting John's baptism instead of Jesus so they were not genuinely saved. They show us that we can profess but not possess genuine faith. They show us that many religious people are not genuinely saved. They also show us the importance of genuine and accurate knowledge of the gospel (v.1-4).
2. They also show us the importance and truth of believer's baptism by immersion. They were re-baptized because baptism before conversion does not count (v. 5).
3. How are we known in the spiritual realm (v. 15)?
4. We cannot have power without relationship (v. 13-16).
5. When God is evidently working, people fear Him and the name of Jesus is magnified (v. 17).
6. Repentance is always the proper response to the working and Word of God (v. 17-20).
7. People will respond loudly and maybe even violently when we challenge their idols, especially the idol of money (v. 21-41).
8. The purpose of human government is to preserve law and order and protect its citizens (v. 35-41).

## Acts 20

### Outline

1. Paul continues his journeys (v. 1-6).
2. Paul preached until midnight at Troas, and Eutychus fell asleep and fell out of the third story window and died, but Paul raised him from the dead (v. 7-12).
3. Paul sails from Troas to Miletus (v. 13-16).
4. Paul addresses the elders of the church of Ephesus before he sails to Jerusalem (v. 17-38).

### Overview

This chapter is a record of Paul's travels as he seeks to go back to Jerusalem. He preaches in Troas and ends up raising a young man from the dead after he preached too long and Eutychus fell out of the third story window. He stops in Miletus and summons the elders of the church of Ephesus and shares a very important message with them.

### Takeaways

1. There is a plurality of elders in a single church (v. 17).
2. The power for ministry is rooted in the example of a our lives (v. 18).
3. We are to serve with humility (v. 19).
4. We should expect trials when we serve the Lord (v. 19).
5. We are to proclaim all of God's truth (v. 20).
6. The response to the message is repentance and faith in Jesus (v. 21).
7. God will sometimes lead us into difficulties (v. 22-23).
8. We have to die to ourselves to finish well. We are not to hang on to our lives but give them away to Jesus (v. 24).
9. We are not accountable if we proclaim all of God's truth (v. 26-27). We are accountable though for when we hold back and don't tell people everything we should tell them.
10. Leaders have to take heed to their own lives first and then to all of God's flock (v. 28).
11. Leaders must guard God's church against spiritual wolves and false teachers (v. 29-31).
12. We are built up by the word of God's grace (v. 32).
13. Our conviction should be that it is more blessed to give than to receive because that is what Jesus said (v. 35).
14. There should be love and close relationships among church leaders (v. 37-38).

# Acts 21

## Outline

1. Paul is sailing toward Jerusalem and is warned of the persecution that awaits him, but he is determined that God wants him to go there (v. 1-14).
2. Paul is advised to make peace with Jewish-Christian critics of his ministry by paying the temple fees for four men making their vows of purification in the temple (v. 15-25).
3. Paul's efforts are misunderstood, he is falsely accused, arrested, and almost killed by a mob rioting (v. 26-36).
4. Paul asks the commander and is granted permission to speak to the crowd (v. 37-40).

## Overview

Paul believed that God was calling him to go to Jerusalem, despite the fact that Spirit was showing him and others that he was going to be mistreated there. We will see later in Acts that this was ultimately God's springboard to get him to Rome, which is where his ministry would culminate. Paul was committed to the Lord's will over his own personal comfort. Paul tried to show people in Jerusalem that he wasn't against Judaism but for Jesus, but this backfired and he was mistreated by people falsely accusing him.

## Takeaways

1. As a follower of Christ, the will of God should take precedence over our own comfort and desires (v. 13).
2. Have we died to ourselves and fully given our lives to the Lord? If we have spiritually given ourselves to the Lord, we can give our lives for the Lord physically (v. 13).
3. We glorify God for His work in people's lives (v. 19-20).
4. The actions that Paul took in this chapter were his effort to live out the principle of becoming all things to all people for the sake of winning some with the gospel that he wrote about in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.
5. Paul was not compromising because there was nothing wrong for him and other Jews to still observe some of their customs. This was not an issue of salvation or the exclusivity of Jesus.
6. We can often do the right thing and be considerate of others but still be misunderstood and mistreated. This is why it is so important to live to please God and not people.

## Acts 22

### Outline

1. Paul is allowed to address the crowd, and he shares his experience of meeting Jesus on the Damascus Road and what Jesus has done in his life since then (v. 1-21).
2. The commander orders him to be examined through scourging, but he changes his mind after learning that Paul is a Roman citizen and sets up a meeting with Paul and the Jewish leaders (v. 22-30).

### Overview

Paul has an opportunity to address a crowd, and of course, he talks about Jesus. He does this by sharing his own spiritual story. This chapter is a good outline for how to share our spiritual story (our testimony). Paul shared about his life before Jesus, how he met Jesus, and what Jesus has done in his life since his conversion.

### Takeaways

1. Jesus obviously chose Paul-not the other way around. Jesus knocked Paul off his high horse and humbled him.
2. Persecuting the church is the same as persecuting Jesus (v. 7-8).
3. Ananias was brave and obedient. God used his obedience greatly (v. 12-15).
4. Sometimes verse 16 is confusing to people. It is not making baptism the means of our salvation. Paul met Jesus on the Damascus Road. Baptism is symbolizing what Jesus did in his life. However, I do think it underscores the importance of baptism.
5. Jesus used Paul with Jews, but his ultimate plan was always to send him to minister to Gentiles (v. 21).
6. Paul's focus was doing the will of God, but he did use his Roman citizenship as needed (v. 25). There is nothing wrong with us wanting our rights as the citizen of a country as long as our top priority and motivation is doing the will of God and not our personal comfort.
7. Paul referenced Stephen's martyrdom in verse 20. I am somewhat speculating here, but it seems as though he must have been greatly influenced by Stephen's testimony. My opinion is that he was touched by it, and then its truthfulness was confirmed when he saw Jesus alive on the Damascus Road. Seeing the risen Christ settled everything for Paul and instantaneously transformed his life.



## Acts 23

### Outline

1. Paul addresses the council, where he has a conflict with the high priest and the Pharisees and Sadducees end up at odds with one another through a wise strategy by Paul (v.1-10).
2. There was a plot to kill Paul, but it was discovered by Paul's nephew (v.11-22).
3. In order to keep Paul safe, he is delivered by soldiers to the governor, Felix, at Caesarea (v. 23-35).

### Overview

The key verse in this chapter is verse 11, which says, "But the following night the Lord stood by him and said, Be of good cheer, Paul; for as you have testified for me in Jerusalem, so must you also bear witness at Rome." This chapter is another step in the process of God's plan for Paul to proclaim Jesus in Rome being fulfilled.

### Takeaways

1. Paul basically apologized for the way he spoke to the high priest even though the high priest had mistreated him (v.1-5). This illustrates the truth (Romans 13) that we are to be respectful and submissive to human authority unless it conflicts with God's Word and authority .
2. Paul obviously trusted Jesus, but he used wise strategy as well because he played the Pharisees and Sadducees differences against each other (v.6-10). There is no conflict between truth and employing wise strategy.
3. God's plan was for Paul to go to Rome (v.11). However, there is a process that he went through for God's plan to be fulfilled. God has a plan for us as well, but there is a process we must go through as well.

# Acts 24

## Outline

1. Ananias, the elders, and an orator named Tertullus spoke against Paul before Felix the governor (v.1-9).
2. Paul defends himself against their false accusations (v.10-21).
3. Paul speaks the truth to Felix and his wife, Drusilla, and Felix is deeply convicted but procrastinates in regard to responding to Jesus (v. 22-27).

## Overview

Paul was being falsely accused, but he used it as an opportunity to proclaim the truth to Felix, but Felix did not give his life to Jesus.

## Takeaways

1. Christians should expect to be falsely accused when standing for the gospel (v.1-9)
2. Integrity is vital in our lives (v.20).
3. Paul reasoned with them about righteousness, self-control, and the judgement to come. Jesus justifies us and makes us righteous as He forgives us of sin. He sanctifies us and gives us self-control which enables us to overcome temptation. He glorifies us and removes all judgement and condemnation from us. He is the answer past, present, and future.
4. Warren Wiersbe has written of Felix, "The governor's mind was enlightened (Acts 24:22), his emotions were stirred (Acts 24:25), but his will would not yield. he tried to gain the world, but, as far as know, he lost his soul. He procrastinated himself into hell."

## Acts 25

### Outline

1. Paul appears before the new governor, Festus, and he ends up appealing to have his case heard before Caesar (v.1-12).
2. King Agrippa came to visit Festus at Caesarea and Festus explained the situation with Paul, and they decided for Paul to appear before Agrippa (v.13-27).

### Overview

This is a chapter that has less action than most chapters in Acts, but it is still very important because Paul appeals to appear before Caesar, which is the destiny that God prepared for his life and ministry.

### Takeaways

1. Paul was submissive to God-ordained human authority (Romans 13) and used his rights as a Roman citizen when needed. Those are God-honoring actions as long as they are secondary to our ultimate allegiance to Jesus Christ.
2. God uses human means to fulfill his sovereign purpose, such as getting Paul to Rome to proclaim the gospel.
3. Paul made the gospel so clear that even his enemies recognized that he was being persecuted for proclaiming the message that Jesus is alive.(v.19).
4. Paul was in a very difficult trial, but God used his faithfulness to give him opportunities to speak about Jesus to kings and rulers.
5. We all go through trials, but the key is how we respond to them. In the words of Craig Groeschel, that can often be "set ups instead of setbacks." That was true of Paul.

# Acts 26

## Outline

1. Paul shares his spiritual story with Agrippa and the others assembled there (v. 1-23).
  - A. Paul's life before meeting Jesus (v. 1-11).
  - B. Paul's experience of meeting Jesus (v. 12-18).
  - C. Paul's life after meeting Jesus (v. 19-23).
2. Agrippa is almost persuaded to become a Christian, and he recognizes that Paul is innocent of the charges and would have let him go had he not appealed to Caesar (v. 24-32).

## Overview

Paul demonstrates his innocence to Agrippa, but his primary concern is telling them about Jesus, and Agrippa tells Paul that "you almost persuade me to become a Christian." Agrippa speaks to us of people who hear the gospel and know about Jesus but do not respond to Him and are so close, but so far from the Lord. Paul once again gives us an outline of how to share our testimonies through the way he told his story as recorded in this chapter.

## Takeaways

1. Paul was very tactful in the way he presented his story (v. 1-3). It takes wisdom and tact to speak effectively to unbelievers. We are to rely on the Holy Spirit, but that is not an excuse for sloppy speaking. There are places in Acts where it refers to Paul reasoning with people from the Scriptures.
2. Paul is a prime example that religious zeal is not enough to save us. He was zealous but misguided. Our faith must be in Jesus for salvation (v. 4-11).
3. The glory of God is brighter than the sun (v. 13).
4. Meeting Jesus obviously changed everything for Paul. It changed his beliefs, character, and purpose.
5. Verse 18 lists some of things that happen when we are saved: our eyes are opened, we are turned from darkness to light, we are turned from the power of Satan to God, we receive the forgiveness of sins, are given an inheritance, and are sanctified. All of this is through faith in Jesus.
6. Paul always presented the gospel. In verse 23, he references the cross and the resurrection.
7. His message was rooted in the Old Testament (v. 22). The coming of Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament.
8. Paul presented his message as a historical reality, and Agrippa did not dispute the facts (v. 26).
9. Agrippa knew the truth, but he would not respond to Jesus in repentance and faith (v. 28).

## Acts 27-28

### Outline

1. Paul is placed on a ship to sail to Italy (27:1-8).
2. Paul warns them about the dangers of the journey, but his warning is ignored (27:9-12).
3. The ship encounters a terrible storm, but the Lord spares their lives for the sake of fulfilling his purpose of Paul preaching in Rome (27:13-44).
4. They are shipwrecked on the island of Malta where Paul is spared from the bite of a viper and he heals the father of Publius (28:1-10).
5. They finally arrive at Rome where Paul is basically under house arrest instead of in prison (28:11-16).
6. Paul spends the next two years in Rome under house arrest “preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him” (28:17-31).

### Overview

These chapters kind of feel like we are watching the Travel Channel or National Geographic, but they are important because they bring us to the end of the book where Paul is fulfilling God’s purpose of preaching the gospel in Rome. They show us that God works in and through common human means to fulfill His ultimate purposes.

### Takeaways

1. God gave Paul wisdom to guide this trip even though it was not his area of expertise or in a Christian setting (27:9-10). God gives direction to people who are in tune with Him.
2. God’s will is more powerful than our circumstances, and He will bring about His plans (27:21-26).
3. God’s servant is safe in God’s plan until God is finished with him or her (27:21-26, 28:3-6).
4. Paul led by example, which is the key to leadership.
5. God answers prayers and He physically heals people in some cases (28:7-10).
6. Paul preached Jesus from the Old Testament, which shows us that the whole Bible is about Jesus (28:23).
7. Paul’s focus continued to be preaching the Kingdom of God and teaching about Jesus Christ (28:31). Nothing dissuaded him from that.