

**Scenes and Incidents
in the Life
of the
Apostle Paul**

**Notes prepared by
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Preface and Acknowledgements

Sometime in the fall of 1996, I was ordering some books from Christian Book Distributors and came across a book entitled: *The Life of the Apostle Paul* by Albert Barnes. Thinking that this was a harmony of Paul's life (and because it was on sale), I purchased a copy. In the foreword of the book I found out it was originally published under the title: *Scenes and Incidents in the Life of the Apostle Paul*. The book turned out to be 24 lessons from Paul's life that Barnes' felt would strengthen his readers and give them an approach to various types of people they might meet as they lived their Christian lives.

While it was not the book I expected it to be, I found the lessons to be as appropriate to my adult Bible class (and myself!) as it was to Barnes' readers 150 years ago. Of course, any scriptural lesson is applicable for all times and I think you will find these outlines to be both scriptural and thus applicable.

If you are going to use these lessons, it would be worth the effort to obtain your own copy of Barnes' book and read it through thoroughly. Please note that as a Presbyterian, Barnes held many tenets of John Calvin at least in spirit if not in form. Therefore, you will have to read past some of his opinions that lean in that direction.

Additional materials that I found helpful:

Tuten, Jimmy Jr., *From Tarsus to Rome With Paul*, (pub. date unknown)

Bruce, F.F., *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, 1977, Eerdmans Publishing Co.

As you prepare these lessons and read Barnes' book you will find that I have done nothing more than outlined his chapters, deleted his denominationalism, translated his thoughts into "modern American" and added a few questions for class discussion. Please feel free to adjust these lessons to suit your needs. If you do find anything that you deem unscriptural please let me know.

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Lesson 1 - Saul's Early Training
Acts 7:58-8:1 (Acts 22:3,20; 23:6)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. We meet Saul of Tarsus, Acts 7:58-8:1.
1. God has chosen to spread His Word through man.
 2. He has specifically chosen some men because of their potential.
 3. Saul of Tarsus was such a man.
 4. The stoning of Stephen Saul was present,
 - a. consenting to his death, (Acts 22:20)
 - b. known to the murderers,
 - c. later condemns his own attitude, (Rom. 1:32).
- B. The Mind of Saul
1. Qualified by God to propagate and defend Christianity.
 2. No man (except Jesus Himself), has done more to spread Christianity.
 - a. by explaining and vindicating its doctrines,
 - b. by adapting it to the world and the world to it,
 - c. by developing its great principles,
 - d. by giving it a systematic form,
 - e. by establishing it as "the faith" for all mankind.
 3. Responsible for much of the New Testament
 - a. "Acts of the Apostles" is mostly about him.
 - b. He wrote at least 13 of the remaining 27 books of the NT.
 - 1) These epistles are doctrinal in nature (not just history).
 - 2) They are the best explanation and defense of Christianity available for our study.
 - 3) Without his contributions, the Gospel would be hard to understand.
- C. Why Choose Saul?
1. He never knew Jesus during His earth-life; he was not one of the 12.
 2. He was obviously at odds with the cause of Christ.
 3. The answer is to be found in the character, the training and the learning of Saul of Tarsus. He was raised in a place where language, learning, and philosophy prevailed.

II. DISCUSSION

- A. The Character and Position of His Father Reflected in Saul.
1. "...the son of a Pharisee" (Acts 23:6). Little is known of his mother, (Gal. 1:15,16), while more is known of his sister (Acts 23:16), and various other relatives (Rom. 16:7,11,21).
 2. What was a Pharisee? A man who placed the form of his religion first; a believer in revelation and the resurrection of the dead; an advocate of the Law, government, morality, his own opinions, the traditions of the Fathers.

3. His Roman citizenship though he was a Jew (Phil. 3:6), his father had obtained Roman citizenship, (Acts 22:28).
 - a. It allowed him protection from the Jews
 - b. It acted as a "passport" as he traveled.
 - c. See Acts 16:37; 22:25-29; 25:10,11.

- B. The Birthplace of Saul Tarsus in Cilicia
 1. A Greek city on the river Cydnus. Known as a city of trade, commerce and, Greek philosophy, education, and literature.
 2. A crossroads of diverse religions and cultures.
 3. While he was raised a Hebrew, the influence of the Greek and Roman cultures would have their impact on Saul. He was not a stranger to Greek learning, (Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12; 1 Cor. 15:33).
 4. This Greek background would be invaluable to his ministry, as Greek was the international language of the day, (Acts 17:18).

- C. Saul's Training Under Gamaliel
 1. Educated and nurtured at the feet of Gamaliel, (Acts 22:3).
 2. His manner of life from his youth, (Acts 26:4).
 3. Sent to Jerusalem by his father to be trained in the "Law."
 4. Gamaliel the most celebrated Jewish teacher of his time.
 - a. Gamaliel was characterized by his candor and coolness of judgment. He had a good reputation among the people. (See his defense of the Apostles in Acts 5:34-40.) He was thoroughly: religious, Jewish, and a Pharisee, yet a man of noble principles.
 - b. Tradition holds that Gamaliel was versed in Greek learning and this probably impressed the young Saul, the product of a Greek city. In retrospect, we can easily see the results of this preparation, because Saul was to spend much of his public life in the centers of Greek philosophy, learning, and power.
 - c. Gamaliel held authority in high regard as a teacher and expositor of the Law. He was not ruled by his passions, as some of his colleagues obviously were (Acts 5:34ff.), but was a man who stood squarely for law and order.
 - d. There is no evidence to suggest that Gamaliel ever obeyed the Gospel of Christ. It is possible that he would have condoned Saul's later activities, including persecution of the Church, but only if sanctioned by the Law.
 5. Gamaliel's influence made manifest in Saul.
 - a. Saul persecuted the church under sanction of the Sanhedrin.
 - b. Saul endeavored to keep the Law, and by his own admission was successful to the degree that any man could keep the Law, (Phil. 3:6).
 - c. He was religious, conscientious, moral, restrained from lawless violence.
 - d. The stoning of Stephen was the act of a lawless mob and while Saul did not participate, his *heart*, was with the murderers!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How did Saul's early training prepare him to preach the Gospel in general?
2. What about Saul's early training prepared him to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles in particular?
3. Do we ever restrain ourselves from participating in something, because of our conscience or the manner in which it is being done, yet in our hearts approve of it being done? If yes, give an example from your life.

Lesson 2 Saul the Persecutor

Acts 9:1,2 (Acts 22:4,5; 26:12-20)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Saul persecuted the Church under the auspices of the Sanhedrin, (as implied in Acts 8:3).
1. He was a young man. In general, the young and the educated are not the ones at the forefront of persecution.
 2. In religion, as in other things such as politics, it is usually the older folks that are intolerant of new opinions, conservative, envious of youth, stubborn, ignorant by choice, and perhaps even bigoted. They are the ones who long for the "good old days."
 3. The young are often skeptical of doctrines held true by their elders and willing to defend ideas proposed by others of their own generation.
 4. Old men are either confirmed believers or unbelievers and account in a large part for the stinginess and bigotry of this world.
 - a. It was no accident that the Sanhedrin that condemned the Savior was composed of the "elders" of the Jewish nation.
 - b. The "Council" that condemned Stephen was made up of these same old men.
- B. Few men (young or old) have persecuted with the zeal of Saul of Tarsus.
1. His manner "breathing out threatenings and slaughter," (Acts 8:3; 26:9-11).
 2. His rage knew no gender barriers, (Acts 8:3; 9:2; 22:4).
 3. He "persecuted the church of God, and wasted it," (Gal. 1:13; 1 Tim. 1:13; 1 Cor. 15:9).
- C. The Sanhedrin claimed jurisdiction in religious matters over Jews in foreign countries. It is probable that the Sanhedrin wanted to stop the spread of Christianity to Damascus, a city of many of their Hebrew brethren. No one was more able to that task than Saul.

II. DISCUSSION

Throughout the ages, new views on philosophy and religion have not been well received to say the least. Anaxgoras was imprisoned and later exiled for teaching that there was an intelligent Cause of all things. Socrates was condemned to death for the same reason. Galileo was thrown into prison for teaching against the Roman Catholic Church and their

theory of the earth-centered universe. The pure religion of Jesus Christ has encountered opposition of men all over the world, from the Cross in Jerusalem to our very doorstep.

A. The Cause of Persecution

1. The *war of opinion* man is not easily detached from the views he already holds.
 - a. The world measures a man by his opinions; to them opinions are the man. Opinions measure his reputation and his influence and show his experience and his education. To attack a man's opinions is to attack the man himself.
 - b. Opinions already held, slow the progress of new views in religion. To attack an opinion held concerning religion attacks our conscience and our immortal hopes.
 - c. More wars have been fought over religious opinions than for any other reason in the history of mankind.
2. The *vested interests* connected with opinions.
 - a. Most religions of history have been sustained by the law of the land. While religions of other countries might be tolerated, most cultures reject any attack on their own beliefs.
 - b. Christianity violated this principle by condemning all idols, of all religions, of all countries. It further called for the overthrow of all altars and the disbanding of every priesthood of every nation.
3. Most false religions appeal in some way to the *corruptions of the heart*. When Christianity attacks the vices of this world, many of them are sanctioned by the false religions of the world.
4. The human heart seems to have an *aversion to holiness*. If not, why is the preaching of the Gospel an "offense" to some and a "stumbling-block" to others? Why do men recoil from the truth concerning the plan of salvation, and a life of self-denial, prayer, and benevolence?
5. It is not hard to see how all these things influenced Saul and contributed to his persecution of the church.

B. The Effect of Persecution

1. Persecution has never destroyed anything that was *good and true*. Conversely, it has only established the truth more firmly. Man seems to show an interest in those persecuted and in the things for which they are persecuted. A saying handed down from the early church: "the blood of martyrs is the seed of the church."
2. Persecution *tests* the reality of a religion, not necessarily its truth. Pagans, Moslems, Buddhists, Atheists and others have been persecuted and their religions still exist. Yet, the manner in which our Savior suffered on the cross caused the centurion to say, "Truly, this was the son of God." The world as a whole has been impressed by the Christian martyrs from Stephen on down to today in places like China, Russia, and the Philippines.
3. The results of persecutions are *worth* their costs. The happiness (blessedness) brought into this world by true Christianity more than outweighs the suffering of all its martyrs.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What contributed to a *young* Saul having *old* opinions?
2. If Christianity were to be destroyed by persecution, would it have been destroyed by now?
3. What is the greatest threat to Christianity today?
4. The Effect of Persecution. Has the gain been worth the cost?

Lesson 3 Saul's Conversion Acts 9:1-20 (Acts 22:6-21; 26:12-20)
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I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The potential influence of one great mind.
1. One great mind could effect more change than a war, a king, pestilence, or famine.
 2. While the kingdom of Alexander is long gone, the influence of the Greek philosophers remains until this day.
- B. The conversion of a great mind rarely occurs, except in the realm of religion.
1. The good that comes from great minds obeying the gospel is hard to measure. Their conversion causes the rest of us to take notice.
 2. Meanwhile, the conversion of the weak, unsettled, vacillating, purposeless, fickle mind shows us nothing as to the truthfulness of the Gospel.
- C. Saul was one of the greatest minds who ever lived.
1. His personal characteristics gave him advantages in his work. He was bold, moral, passionate, impetuous, independent, tireless, young, and patriotic, yet he could use reason, sarcasm, and irony to his advantage.
 2. While his public speaking skills left somewhat to be desired, historians still number him among the great Grecian orators.
 3. His influence, ambition, energy, and eloquence place his name among all those who have affected (for good or evil) the destiny of mankind.

II. DISCUSSION

- A. His Business in Damascus the suppression of a new religion that (in the mind of the Sanhedrin and Saul) threatened the extinction of the national religion, which included the sacred rites of the temple, the Law, and the traditions of the elders.
1. The stoning of Stephen had actually spread the Way, by scattering the disciples abroad.
 2. Saul was commissioned by the Council to travel to Damascus and suppress the Way using all means at his disposal.

- B. Jesus Appears to Saul on the Road to Damascus (Acts 26:14-18)
1. This is the beginning of the conversion of Saul and the spark that would lead to the establishment of the Christian religion throughout the world.
 2. His conversion was sincere. He made a change that could be seen in his views, purposes, feelings, and aims. The persecutor became the protector, the destroyer became the builder, and the injurer became the physician. While he could never completely undo the wrong that he had done, as a penitent and regenerated man, he could try to repair it to a degree.
- C. The Sincerity, Reality, and Genuineness of the Change can be seen by examining the following two questions:
1. What was the change? As always, with any change it must involve the heart the will, the emotions and to some extent, the intellect. Hatred of the Way became love. Rejection of Christ became acceptance. Reliance on his own merits for salvation became reliance on the grace of God. His bigoted, narrow spirit of the Pharisee gave way to "the Gospel is for all." It is interesting to note that conversion involves changing the will and the emotions, but calls for a redirecting of the intellect. Saul's individuality was preserved in his conversion as we can see before and after his conversion in the following attributes:
 - a. a respect for law (Acts 16:37, 22:25; 25:11; 23:3; Rom. 13:1-7)
 - b. conscientiousness (Acts 24:16; 26:9; 23:1; Phil. 3:6; 2 Cor. 1:12)
 - c. his zeal for God was redirected through Christ
 - d. his propagation of his faith (see Mt. 23:15)
 - e. his energy, daring, and enterprise (2 Cor. 11:24-27).
 2. What evidence do we have that this change was sincere, real, and genuine? We can judge a man's sincerity by the sacrifices he makes in a change. What does he give up? Does he abandon friends, education, upbringing, and family, in exchange for poverty, contempt, imprisonment, toil, and the possibility of death? Saul did all this when he obeyed the Gospel, (Phil. 3:8).
 3. If we accept the New Testament account of this change, it proves the Christian religion is true! If Jesus appeared to Saul, then He had risen, ascended, still lives, and still reigns.
 4. But how do we answer the skeptics?
 - a. Some say the whole account is false, but this cannot be proven. The account as written would explain the changes in Saul's life that history bears out.
 - b. Saul made up the story and pretended to be a Christian. What would be Saul's motives if this were true? What would he have to gain?
 - c. Saul was a fanatic or enthusiast. You do not embrace a new opinion to become a fanatic; you become a fanatic based on an opinion already held. Being a Pharisee would lend itself to fanaticism better than Christianity.
 - d. Saul was deceived by a flash of lightening. Then how do you explain Ananias and the culmination of Saul's conversion? (Acts 9:10-19)
 - e. He used Christianity to gain personal fame and glory. How could Saul have foreseen this? Most men thought that Christianity was only a cult of

Judaism and as Gamaliel indicated, that if it were not from God, it would amount to nothing.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. When would you say the conversion of Saul was completed? When could he say that he was a Christian?
2. Describe as many aspects of Saul's repentance as possible.

Lesson 4 Saul Obeys the Heavenly Vision Acts 26:19 (Acts 26:12-20)

I. INTRODUCTION

A. In this lesson we want to answer the following questions:

1. God spoke to Saul through Jesus in a "vision," how does He speak to us today?
2. God's purpose for calling Saul was to send him to the Gentiles, for what purpose does He call us today?
3. It was imperative for Saul's spiritual well being to answer God's call, is it important for us to answer the "call" today?

B. Saul received the will of God through direct communication with Jesus Himself. The vision left no doubt as to its origin, its speaker, and its purpose. (Acts 26:16-18.)

C. Could God address us in this manner today through a vision? He previously used this method with Abraham and Isaac. He spoke directly to Samuel and Isaiah. He sent special messengers to Ahaz and David. He sent angels to Daniel and Mary. He could speak to us through an "internal voice" as He did to Jeremiah and Ezekiel. He could use the glorified Christ as a messenger as He did with Saul and the Apostle John.

D. The means of communication mentioned above, were unusual not usual. God does not usually speak directly to man. Why? It would take away: our ability to reason, the stimulus to search for and investigate the truth. It would make man inactive, unconcerned and dependent on supernatural impulses to regulate things that God intended for us to regulate on a material, earthly level.

E. The majority of the people in Bible times did not expect to receive (nor did they receive) a direct vision from God. Neither should we!

II. DISCUSSION

A. How then does God communicate with us today?

1. Through His Holy Word the Bible. It contains directions and counsels for every situation in which we may find ourselves. It guides us through this earth-life and prepares us for the life to come.

2. Through our rational nature in cooperation with Divine revelation, we are led to the truth. Reason reminds us of the God-given obligations of virtue, justice, and truth.
3. Through the voice of our conscience when it is true to the Lord and His Will. It urges us to do what is right and condemns that which is wrong.
4. Through events of Divine Providence when God's Will (not ours) is done. Are obstacles in the pathways of our lives, really obstacles, or are they checks and restraints set there to help save our souls?
5. Through the Gospel Call of the Word, the preacher, the teacher, the neighbor, the relative, or the friend.
6. Through the voice of a stranger Philip to the Eunuch, Paul to the Gentiles, or the brethren we have sent to Romania.
7. Through the influence of the Holy Spirit by the inspired Word, as a mediator in our prayers, and an influence added to the previous six methods of communication to make them even more effective.

B. To what purpose are we "called" today? What prompts us to our duty? How do we know what God wants of us and from us? What will the Lord have us to do? (Acts 9:6.) Is our "calling" as clearly defined as Saul's?

1. God calls us to forsake the ways of sin, (Isa. 55:7). We must be willing to give up such things as unbelief, worldliness, ambition, and love of pleasure, no matter what the cost.
2. God calls us to faith in Jesus Christ. Faith in His cross, His sacrifice, His wisdom, His goodness, His Will. The sinner is living without a Savior, but must come to realize his need for a Savior.
3. God calls us to prepare for another world, to give our account to Him. We have been fairly warned of the wrath to come; it is our obligation to watch and pray.
4. God calls us to devote ourselves to His Cause. He expects us to use our natural talents and to develop talents that are not so easy for us. We must "study to show ourselves approved..." because He expects us to be His workmen!

C. It is our duty to obey the "heavenly call."

1. We must move and that movement must be forward. It is hard for us (as it was for Saul) to "kick against the goads."
2. We must obey promptly, correctly, and completely.
3. We are called to:
 - a. Hear and learn the Word, (Rom. 10:14,17)
 - b. Believe in and become faithful to Christ, (Heb. 11:6; Jn. 6:28,29)
 - c. Repent of our old ways, (Acts 17:30; Lu. 13:3)
 - d. Confess the name of Jesus before men, (Rom. 10:10)
 - e. Be baptized for the remission of our sins, (Gal. 3:27)
 - f. Walk as a new man in the footsteps of Christ. (Rom. 6:1-4)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Are you comfortable with the fact that God does not speak directly to man today? What scriptures back up your answer?
2. Do you agree God communicates with us in the seven ways listed in this lesson?
3. Would you agree the remaining six ways all hinge on the first one in the list? Explain.

Lesson 5 Saul's Residence in Arabia Gal. 1:15-18 (Gal. 1)
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I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Arabia or Damascus? It is not clear where Saul spent the bulk of these three years, but it is obvious that he was led to get in touch with himself and God before approaching men, (including the Apostles).
1. Where in Arabia did Saul go? This is also unclear, since Arabia stretches from Cilicia in the west to Damascus in the east to the Persian Gulf in the south.
 2. If he did travel to southern Arabia, he may have walked in the footsteps of Moses and Elijah.
- B. Why did he make this journey? Was he seeking a place of solitude, contemplation, prayer, or meditation?
1. We know Moses spent years in the land of Midian preparing for his great work.
 2. Elijah wandered the desert before beginning his prophetic work.
 3. John the Baptist - was in the deserts, (Lk. 1:80).
 4. Jesus Christ - was "led by the Spirit into the wilderness," (Lk. 4:1).
- C. Compare Saul's three years of preparation to the three years spent by the 12 Apostles following Jesus.
- D. The Lesson will attempt to address the following questions: what professions are open to us as Christians, how should we choose our profession, and how should our time be spent preparing for our chosen profession?

II. DISCUSSION

- A. How do we determine what professions are available?
1. During any one generation there are a great variety of professions from which to choose. One of the beauties of God's creation is that employment exists for every person who can and wants to work.
 2. If God provides each generation with enough work to do, He also provides people with enough talent to accomplish those tasks. There are farmers, businessmen, seamen, mechanics, soldiers, scientists, civil servants, inventors, and explorers enough to fulfill the needs of humanity in each generation.
 3. The great diversity of occupations allows us to use our God-given free moral agency to pursue the profession of our choice.

- B. God expects us as His people to choose a profession that will determine our condition on this earth within the parameters of morality, legality, and godliness. Saul's choice was determined by the declared purpose of Jesus Himself, (Acts 26: 16-18). Today we cannot expect such direct Divine guidance. As we choose our avocation, we must take into account: our qualifications, circumstances, abilities, needs, and most importantly, how we might best serve the Lord.
1. We must choose our profession so that the most can be made of life for its proper purposes.
 2. If we are able to narrow our choices to a few, then we must be especially careful to look closely to the future of each of those careers.
 3. Our choice must be the one best adapted to our capabilities or ability to learn the capabilities needed for that job.
 4. The choice of profession must be from among those that are just and honorable.
 5. Likewise, we should choose a profession that allows for the fewest temptations.
 6. The choice must be one that is conducive to personal growth, good for the family, good for society, and the advancement of humanity.
 7. The choice cannot interfere with our preparation for the next world.
- C. How should we spend the time between choosing and entering the profession?
1. Make sure enough time is taken in preparation. Take time to train and practice. The average professional life will last only 25 years, and that is all the time we will have to make our mark on this world. Would it be better to enter our profession at 20, unprepared, or at 25 very well prepared? Jesus prepared for His ministry for 30 years. His ministry lasted only three years!
 2. The studies engaged in during the years of preparation should obviously have reference to the future avocation. Yet, even Saul had a trade to fall back on in the event his preaching could not support him. No one can expect to prepare to be a mechanic, a musician, a physician, a sailor, a farmer, a preacher, a lawyer, and a merchant. However, each of us must prepare to be a citizen, a spouse, and a Christian.
 3. The preparation for our profession must be subordinate to our preparation for eternity. Prayer, Bible study, love of man, and love of God must be pursued. A spirit of gentleness, purity, kindness, and conscientiousness must be cultivated. All the plans we make for this earth-life may be for nothing, but our preparations for eternity are guaranteed.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSIONS

1. Name some professions that would obviously conflict with a person's Christianity.
2. Think of some "borderline" professions that could be a stumbling block to a Christian and his or her influence in this world.
3. Are there any earthly professions that are perfect for the Christian? Name them.
4. Our preparation for eternity deserves (less, equal, or greater) attention than our preparation for our vocation.

Lesson 6 Saul Brought To Antioch Acts 11:25-26 (Acts 11)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. We are expected by the Lord to "join" ourselves to the local church, (Acts 9:26). Saul attempted to do this when he returned to Jerusalem. Unfortunately for Saul, the church feared him because of his previous reputation and their feeling that his "conversion" was insincere.
- B. Barnabas the Son of Encouragement (Acts 4:32-37). Why Barnabas formed such a strong attachment to Saul is not clear from the Bible. It is clear however, that Barnabas trusted Saul and completely believed the reports of Saul's conversion and work for the church in Damascus and Arabia, (Acts 9:27). Finally, the church accepted Saul.
- C. Saul threatened by the Grecian Jews (Hellenists), (Acts 9:29). This resulted in Saul being sent on a mission to Tarsus. The scriptures do not tell what the results of this mission were. At this point, as far as the scriptures and the world at that time were concerned, Saul's talent was buried.
- D. The call to Antioch of Syria Barnabas was already working there when he went to find Saul to assist him, (Acts 11:19-26).
- E. To understand why the time was right for Saul to begin his worldwide ministry, we will examine three points: an emergency had arisen in the church, the size of the mission field, and the arrangements the Lord has made to call men to do his Divine purpose.

II. DISCUSSION

- A. The nature of the emergency that prompted the beginning of Saul's expanded ministry.
 - 1. The church up to this time had been slowly expanding out of Judea, primarily through Jewish converts that had been scattered abroad. The outreach from Jerusalem up until this time had primarily involved them and not the Gentile heathen.
 - 2. While the Judean missionaries concerned themselves with the Jews only, (Acts 11:19), the foreign converts begin to spread the gospel to all, regardless of race, (Acts 11:20,21). This was a new idea in the church: go beyond Judea, to non-Jews, and spread the gospel with ministers that were not native Judeans. Antioch was a pagan city and one of the great capitals of the world, yet Christianity was securing a strong foothold there.
 - 3. The disciples would come to be called "Christians." This designation was first used in Antioch. Its origins are unknown, but probably did not come from the Jewish enemies of the church who generally referred to the church as "the sect of the Nazarene." It is also unlikely that the early Christians applied this name to themselves, preferring designations such as believers, saints, brethren, and disciples. The term Christian is found only twice in the Bible (Acts 26:28; 1Pet. 4:16), and in both cases it is implied as being a term used by those outside the church (namely the Gentiles). Many scholars feel that originally it was used as a term of derision and ridicule by the enemies of the church, yet the name "Christian" has turned out to be a perfect name for the followers of the true Messiah. The beauty of the name is that it carries no nationality, and is peculiar to no one language, law, custom, people, or region. Concerning the human race, only two terms are truly universal, from God's point of view: "man" names the race, and "Christian" names the redeemed among man.

- B. The expansion of the mission field
 - 1. Antioch - In the first century, Antioch could have been considered as second only to Rome in the Mediterranean world. This was because of its location, wealth, commerce, ability to communicate with other parts of the world, and the size of its population.
 - 2. The World - If Christianity could not be contained within Judea, it would not stop at Antioch. The time had come for someone of Saul's talents to step forward and preach the gospel to the world.

- C. The arrangements the Lord has made to call men to do his Divine purpose.
 - 1. Talent usually exists in one of these forms:
 - a. talent in preparation for the future,
 - b. obscure talent,
 - c. talent used for the purpose for which it was created,
 - d. talent perverted and abused.
 - 2. God has created talent in men for His purposes for each age. These talents are more than just training, genetics, or environment, they are gifts of God.
 - 3. Much talent may remain obscure or hidden until an emergency calls it out.
 - 4. Emergencies will arise, and talents will be called out. Such was the occasion of the beginning of the full-fledged mission of Saul.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1. Show scriptures to prove that the early Christian missionaries depended on the "Jewish connection."
- 2. What would be insulting, in the Jewish mind, about calling or being called of "the sect of the Nazarene?"
- 3. Can we "root out" the hidden talents in this congregation? If so, how?
- 4. Name some potential "emergencies" that could arise today that could possibly call out hidden or obscure talent in the church.

**Lesson 7 Saul and Barnabas Sent
Acts 13:2 (Acts 13,14,15)**

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Saul was called to the missionary life, (Acts 9:15; 26:17).
 - 1. Communicated directly to Saul, (Acts 22:17-21).
 - 2. Referred to himself as the Apostle to the Gentiles, (Gal. 2:8; Rom. 11:13, Gal. 1:16; Eph. 3:8).

- B. The church was beginning to realize that its responsibilities were beyond Jerusalem, Judea, and the Jews.
 - 1. The idea that Christians are bound to send the gospel into all the world dates back to the Great Commission, (Mt. 28:16-20).
 - 2. The process of "missions" continues on today Rumania for example.
 - 3. To send evangelists into unenlightened areas of the world is a part of letting our lights shine.

- C. Paul and Barnabas set out on their missionary journey with the right attitude the gospel is for all, (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11).
- D. When spreading the gospel from nation to nation, barriers will exist to hinder the effort. Some of these barriers will be difficult to overcome, but Christianity has the inherent ability to overcome them.

II. DISCUSSION

- A. The barriers that exist between nations that could hinder the effort to spread Christianity.
 - 1. Nationality itself the things that constitute the separation of different nationalities, such as land, language, and racial barriers; different manners and customs; diverse economies; and opposing views on the arts or even war. Any new religion claiming to be the universal religion must overcome these barriers.
 - a. The Jews divided the world into two parts, the Jews and the Gentiles.
 - b. The Greeks on the other hand divided the world into the Greeks and the Barbarians.
 - c. As recently as 200 hundred years ago the Chinese considered the world made up of the Celestials (Chinese) and "the others."
 - 2. Social rank these barriers exist within a nation as well as between nations: the rich and the poor; the learned and the ignorant; the slave and the free; and those of royal blood and those of the peasantry. Often within an echelon of social rank, a group will rise up thinking themselves better than their neighbors as regards their spirituality. They will come to believe that rank, liberty, property, salvation, and power belong to them and to them alone. They (so they believe) are God's chosen people!
 - 3. Race a barrier that even in our society: civilization, culture, education, and religion have not been able to overcome.
 - 4. Religions - Each nation holds dearly to its own religion or in the case of the United States its lack of a religion. Many believe that their religion is just for them and not to be spread universally. Therefore they are not interested in a religion coming from another country (state, area of the country, part of the world, etc.).
- B. The difficulty overcoming these various barriers.
 - 1. Convincing those of the favored class to accept their fellow citizens as their equals in spiritual matters. This was a problem among the Savior's own Apostles. He taught them that the gospel was for all men, and was to be preached unto all the world.
 - a. The example of the Syrophenician woman, (Mt. 15:26).
 - b. Peter's need for further revelation, (Acts 10:14,15).
 - 2. Man is generally unwilling to receive religious instruction from someone they see as their social inferior. In the Apostolic times, the Greeks and the Romans regarded the Jew with hatred and contempt, yet they are the very people that God chose to bring the gospel into the world.
 - a. Would a master learn from his slave, or a priest from a layman?

- b. The Apostles were generally below those of other lands in things such as social position, the arts, science, and literature, yet God sent them to elevate the people with respect to religion.
- C. The ways which Christianity can surmount these obstacles.
 - 1. By revealing that all mankind are one race in God's eyes (Acts 17: 26).
 - a. We are descendants of one couple, Adam and Eve.
 - b. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." *
 - c. Jesus is called the "Son of Man." *
 - 2. By showing that Christ is the Savior of us all.
 - 3. The hope of the eternal home is open to all.
 - 4. The plan of salvation is the same for all.
 - 5. We all possess the same God-given rights, such as sunshine, tides, winds, stars, air, and the products of the earth.
 - a. Christianity will lead us to civil, social, and religious equality.
 - b. The Christian missions of Saul began a new era in the history of man. "You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free." *
- D. Final thoughts under Christ there are "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." * Our ancestors for the most part were heathen Gentiles who worshipped idols of wood, stone, or metal. The gospel was preached to them, it raised them from their low condition and availed us the opportunity to learn it in relative safety. It is now our responsibility to spread the gospel and allow it to elevate our friends, neighbors, and families, both at home and abroad.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Find the scriptures for the quotes in the lesson (see *'s above).
2. In today's world what do you feel is the greatest obstacle that we must overcome to spread the gospel.
3. Pick one of the five ways listed in which the obstacles to Christianity can be surmounted and expand on it or come up with a way of your own.

Lesson 8 Paul and Silas at Philippi
Acts 16:37 (Acts 16)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Paul stood up for his rights as a Roman citizen. When his rights were violated by an authority supposedly acting under the auspices of Rome, he demanded a public apology.
- B. Paul could have left town quietly and safely, but that would have been tantamount to a confession of guilt on his part. He had already been condemned by the magistrates, scourged for a crime, and imprisoned for violating the laws of the empire. He wanted and needed his name cleared.

- C. What had been done unjustly to Paul and Silas could not be undone, but it could be acknowledged as a mistake by the magistrates and their names cleared. Once the magistrates heard that they were Roman citizens, the public apology was made, (Acts 16:38,39).
- D. How may a Christian assert their rights or have them vindicated under the laws of the land. How far can we go to assert our rights? When is it proper to assert them? What motives should be behind our assertion of our rights? How can we reconcile Paul's actions (and ours) with the commands of Christ concerning meekness and a spirit of forgiveness?

II. DISCUSSION

- A. The rights that Paul had as a Roman citizen. We do not know for sure how he became a Roman citizen, but we do know he was one and availed himself of the rights appertaining to that citizenship on more than one occasion. The rights of a Roman citizen were invaluable to Paul. It gave him honor among men, and protection of the best system of laws in place at the time.
 1. In general, a Roman citizen could not be crucified, scourged, or beaten.
 2. The Roman citizen had the right to a public trial. This helped in some way to offset the sternness of the Roman law.
- B. How had the Roman rights of Paul and Silas been violated?
 1. Background Philippi was a major Roman colony, (Acts 16:12). To the Romans, a colony was under the same laws as Rome itself, as contrasted to a territory, such as Judea, which was allowed to keep some of its own government and peculiar laws.
 2. As Roman citizens, Paul and Silas could have expected protection of their rights while in Philippi, but either they did not assert their Roman citizenship or their assertion was disregarded.
 3. The persecution that arose against the church (specifically Paul and Silas) occurred sometime after the conversion of Lydia. The excitement caused by the preaching of Christ versus any of the local deities often made an uproar, as well as violence, (see also Acts 19:23-34). READ: Acts 16:16-24.
 4. Note the charges brought against Paul and Silas: "troubling the city," and introducing "customs" contrary to Roman law. The magistrates, reacting to the mob, did not inquire into the true nature of the offense, gave Paul and Silas no chance to defend themselves, and commanded them to be beaten and thrown into prison.
 5. Paul had done nothing wrong under Roman law in healing the demoniac. From the Gospel's point of view, he saved it from being discredited by "soothsaying" which had no part with Christ. He actually did the citizens of Philippi a favor by putting these charlatans out of business.
 6. Paul and Silas had been treated unjustly. They had been condemned, beaten, and imprisoned without a trial and subjected to punishment in prison that even their alleged crimes did not warrant.

- C. Paul and Silas were within their rights as Roman citizens and more importantly Christians, to assert their rights. How do we reconcile this statement with such passages as Mt. 5:39-41 and Paul's own admonition of 1Cor. 6:6-8?
1. The true interpretation of the Savior's own words in the Sermon on the Mount can be seen in His own conduct. He never retaliated against the evils of individuals, but under violations of the law he would speak against those violations, (Jn. 18:23).
 2. The value of the civil law is the protection of our rights.
 - a. Paul obviously believed this to be the true value of civil law, (Acts 23:2,3; Acts 25:11).
 - b. Modern civil laws protect its citizens from arbitrary punishment, gives the accused the right to meet his accuser, and among many other things the right to a trial. These "rights" have been obtained over the years through many changes in governments and powers. They were unheard of in the time of Paul and Silas except under the Romans.
 - c. As a Christian we have the right to appeal to the laws of the land to have our grievances redressed. When we begin to make a list of all the great men who have stood up for their rights through the ages, do not forget the Apostle Paul.
 3. Paul is justified for his actions. Paul was not acting only on behalf of himself and Silas, but for all Christians that would try to practice their religion in Philippi. If the implications of Paul's punishment would have only affected him, he would not have retaliated. However, the maintenance of the young church at Philippi was at stake, so the wrongs done to him had to be publicly acknowledged. The character of Paul (and the public's proper estimate of it) was invaluable to his ministry. This demanded that his name be cleared.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Review and answer the questions posed in part D. of the introduction.
2. Why did Paul want and need his name cleared in this incident?
3. Compare and contrast the situation in Philippi with the events at Ephesus in Acts 19.

Lesson 9 Paul at Athens
Acts 17:19,29 (Acts 17)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The meeting of the minds: Paul oriental and Christian, the Athenians European and heathen. However, the Athenians were not ignorant savages, but instead a people of a "highly cultivated intellect."
1. Paul had often been in contact with those of the Jewish mind-set, and had frequently encountered the heathen thinking under various forms of idolatry.

2. But the heathen Athenians were much more sophisticated and intellectual in their approach to religion and philosophy than anyone Paul had encountered thus far in his travels.
- B. History bears out that at this point in history (the first century); the most highly cultivated minds in the world were assembled in Athens.
1. The Greek mind was very interested in things concerning morality, as well as religion and philosophy. They had probably pushed their thinking about as far as it could go without divine revelation enter the Apostle Paul.
 2. The Greek language lent itself to such things as poetry, oratory, and philosophy. It was the best language of its time for conveying abstract ideas and subtle discrimination of thought.
- C. What could Paul, as a minister of Christ, bring to these people that they did not already possess? What would he have to say to them that would interest them? Does Christianity bring something to the table of religious and philosophical thought that man cannot otherwise attain?
- D. It is the purpose of this lesson to make two major points: Paul's subject was worthy (and is worthy) of the attention of all men regardless of their background and Paul possessed a body of knowledge that was (and is) beyond that possessed by men in general. Simply said: we all have much to learn from Paul!

II. DISCUSSION

- A. The Gospel is a subject worthy of the attention of even the most sophisticated minds. Paul did not spend time convincing his listeners of this point, since they were the ones who invited him to speak.
1. However, in our day and age, it is often (if not always) necessary to show people reasons why the Gospel is worthy of their attention.
 - a. Many people believe that discussions of religion are beyond their purview and better left to the so-called "clergy." Modern man's propensity for specialization and division of labor has caused him to put religion in a list with all the other professional pursuits. The scientist might choose to study nature, the doctor chooses to study anatomy, but it is left to the preacher to study the Bible. The Athenians did not have this compartmentalized state of mind. They were as much interested in religion as in any other subject. Paul found them in this state of mind; therefore, it was not necessary for him to create it.
 - b. Some people do pursue religion to a point, and then turn back. When astronomers look into the heavens, they are on the verge of discovering God (through His handiwork), yet many of them are atheists or agnostics. When surgeons explore the inner workings of the human anatomy they see God (through His handiwork), yet few among them are true Christians.
 - c. Some people pursue religion to a point where they do see that God exists, that He has established a moral government, and has left us in need of His

revelation and when they do discover these facts they find them distasteful. They do not see the beauty in God's will and His Word. Many are actually repelled by God's will and His Word. These people are not attracted by the Gospel themes of obligation, duty, eternity, retribution, prayer, repentance, death, and judgment, (1 Cor. 2:14). We can see this very attitude among the Mar's Hill audience, (Acts 17:32).

2. There will be occasions when the Gospel teacher will need to show that his subject is worthy of the listeners attention.
 - a. When approaching someone who claims to be interested in philosophy, emphasize the philosopher's penchant for "truth." All religious subjects should be investigated, if a person is a true philosopher. People must be convinced to follow truth, no matter where it leads.
 - b. The subject of religion is as worthy of man's attention as any other matter. (Once the Gospel is obeyed it can be seen to be more worthy of man's attention.) The Athenians obviously believed this when they invited Paul, a perfect stranger, to address them. Nature does not hold all the answers to all of man's questions. Some questions can only be addressed by turning to religion.
 - c. The subject of religion applies to all men, including those of the more cultivated mind. It is not just a subject of abstract interest, but also a subject of personal interest for every man and woman. All of the philosophers that invited Paul to speak on Mar's Hill, no matter their own philosophical bent, were interested in the matters that Paul was to discuss. Today, many of the so-called "cultural and intellectual elite" feel they are exempt from the claims and requirements of religion in general. The great talents of men are not a substitute for love of God. The possession of high intelligence does not free a man from his obligations of purity and holiness. Accomplishments in earthly pursuits do not replace God's requirements for righteousness or prepare man to die. They release no man, no matter his birthright, talents, or efforts from his spiritual, moral, and physical obligations to his fellow man and God.
- B. When it came down to pure and undefiled religion, Paul was in possession of greater knowledge than his educated listeners. They had many things to learn from Paul, such as truths that they did not know and answers to questions they could not resolve with the unaided human mind.
 1. See how Paul approached his subject:
 - a. he did not directly attack their religion,
 - b. he commended their zeal as real zeal in a great cause,
 - c. he referred to their own acknowledged uncertainty of things spiritual (i.e.: altar TO THE UNKNOWN GOD),
 - d. he proposed to reveal this god, the ONE TRUE GOD, to them,
 - e. he agreed with them as far as was scripturally possible and used their own admitted philosophy as a starting point, as well as quoted their own poets, (1 Cor. 9:20-23).

2. Observe the doctrines Paul revealed to the Athenians:
 - a. doctrines that could be advanced on principles they already held:
 - (1) the existence of God (Acts 17:22-23a) Paul took their belief a step further one true God, not many gods,
 - (2) the unknown God (Acts 17:23b-24a) the Creator of the world they believed the world was created by "fate" or "chance,"
 - (3) the immensity of God (Acts 17:24b) He could not be contained within the walls of a temple or shrine they believed their gods were restricted,
 - (4) the independence of God (Acts 17:25) God needs nothing from man they believed that man must nourish his gods,
 - (5) the unity of the human race (Acts 17:26a) "one blood" then (as now) men wanted to break mankind down into races, castes, and clans,
 - (6) God has a grand purpose in the arrangements he has made for mankind (Acts 17:26b) many of the ancients believed that this grand purpose could not be defined,
 - (7) the spirituality of God and religion (Acts 17:29) they believed gods could be represented by altars and graven images,
 - b. doctrines that were peculiar to Christianity that Paul was allowed to advance before being interrupted (v.32):
 - (1) God now commands and requires universal repentance (Acts 17:30) repentance is an obligation, not a recommendation,
 - (2) the One True God will judge the world by the appointed Man (Acts 17:31a),
 - (3) there will be a resurrection of the dead (Acts 17:31b),
 - c. doctrines that Paul would likely have proclaimed if he had not been interrupted [as seen in his letters to the Romans, Corinthians, Ephesians, and (most likely) Hebrews];
 - (1) the plan of salvation made possible by the sacrifice on the cross,
 - (2) the incarnation of the Son of God,
 - (3) the atonement made for sins,
 - (4) justification through a working faith,
 - (5) the existence and work of the Holy Spirit,
 - (6) the offer of pardon for our sins.

C. Lessons that we can learn from Paul's experience in Athens:

1. Christianity is not afraid of investigation Jesus was serious when he gave the "Great Commission," (Lk. 24:44-49).
2. Even today, mankind is still behind Christianity in their thinking. While man has made progress in every aspect of this earthly life in the last 2000 years, he has not surpassed (or even caught up to) God in his spiritual life. Man in his own unaided studies has not yet answered questions concerning the moral character of the Creator, our soul and its immortality, the future, or redemption from sins. The answers to these questions demand revelation from God, the same revelation that Paul proclaimed on Mar's Hill 2000 years ago!

3. Christianity will remain ahead of the world as concerns these questions in the future as well. Science, nature, mathematics, and technology have much more that they can reveal to man, but their revelations will never supersede or surpass the Bible, the Cross and the Christ.
4. The three lessons above furnish proof of the Divine origin of Christianity. Where are the followers of the Greek mythology today? Where is pure Stoicism and Epicureanism to be found? Are there any followers of the astronomy of Ptolemy around today? They were there on Mar's Hill with Paul. Their teachings for the most part are history, yet the teachings of Paul live on.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Why are there not more doctors, lawyers, educators, and others of the so-called "learned professions" in the church?
2. Think about the questions posed in the introduction (I.C.).
3. Why do some people feel that studying the Bible is not their business?
4. Name at least three reasons why man needs to give Christianity his attention.
5. This lesson proposes 16 doctrines that Paul either taught the Athenians or would have taught them if he had not been interrupted. The first ten are described in our lesson context (Acts 17), find scriptures to support the remaining six [II. B. 2. c. (1-6)].

Lesson 10 Paul at Corinth
Acts 18:9-11 (Acts 18)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The contrasts between Athens and Corinth: seekers of knowledge vs. seekers of pleasure; worshipers of wisdom vs. worshipers of sensuality; home to the warriors, orators, poets, statesmen, and sages vs. home to the seekers of amusement and luxury; and the cultivated intellect vs. the provocative thinkers.
- B. Paul at Corinth Christianity in contact with seekers of amusement, luxury, and sensuality. (2 Tim. 3:4)
 1. Corinth a city of commerce, the crossroads between Europe and Asia and between Northern and Southern Greece. Corinth had population, wealth, and sanctioned licentiousness (Venus worship).
 2. Paul was anxious about his visit to this city, (1 Cor. 2:3). From the text, we see that the Lord reassured him (vv. 9,10).
 3. How would he present the gospel to such a city? (1 Cor. 2:1,2) Christ crucified is ultimately more attractive than all the artwork, splendor and vanity of Corinth; it can impart genuine happiness to the mind and soul; and it is the only effective way of turning man from sin and reconciling him back to God.

- C. How would the Corinthians receive this new topic of thought? How well could this theme be adapted to accomplish his objective? In other words, what is the purpose of the Gospel and could that purpose be achieved in a place like Corinth?

II. DISCUSSION

- A. Paul brings a new topic of thought to Corinth Christ, and Him crucified. How would a people such as the Corinthians regard this foreigner and his message? The answer to this question is important because we live among people that are the modern day Corinthians intent on pleasure! How the cross is naturally perceived by such minds as these can be seen in Paul's own writings to the church in Corinth. (READ: 1 Cor. 1:18-23.) The circumstances of the situation at Corinth can be outlined as follows:
1. Paul, as a Jew, would not impress the Greeks. Except for their religious books, the Jews had no literature, they had very little science, and their philosophers were not world renowned, as were the Greek philosophers.
 2. Paul came to speak concerning another Jew Christ. In man's eyes: Jesus was of lowly birth, had no formal education, was a carpenter, consorted mainly with fishermen, and had been rejected as a prophet and called an impostor by His own countrymen.
 3. The theme of Paul's message was not likely to hold much attraction to those who lived in Corinth.
 - a. The fact of Christ being crucified was not special. Many had been crucified in Judea during the Roman occupation. Why would the case of Jesus deserve universal attention?
 - b. Jesus was not a Roman citizen, and therefore had no immunity from crucifixion. If He was guilty, then He was "justly" executed.
 - c. His martyrdom would probably not appeal to the Corinthians; the Greeks had their martyrs as well.
 - d. To the worldly minded the subject of the cross would be repulsive, offensive, and out of place at social gatherings. While the world today at least places some sacred connection to "the cross," Paul had no such foothold as he began his ministry in Corinth. Yet, the cross was the only place Paul would seek or could find "glory," (Gal. 6:14). Today, we would be similarly repulsed by someone preaching glory in the electric chair, the gallows, the firing squad, the lethal injection or the gas chamber.
 4. Paul would preach the cross as an instrument of their salvation by inducing them to forsake their worldly ways. Paul was not going to appeal to their tactile sensuality, but to their spiritual sensibility. He was bringing them a method of attaining favor with God. In doing so he would not rely on oratory or man's philosophy, but would instead rely on the Holy Spirit and power to propel his message, (1 Cor. 1:17; 2:4). The Greeks believed that man could be reformed, civilized, and even saved strictly through philosophy, teaching, and knowledge. How could thinkers such as these come to believe in "the cross?"

- B. How can the subject of "the cross" be adapted to interest the minds of the worldly and secure their conversion and salvation?
1. The Gospel claims to be the only effective method for reforming and recovering sinners, (as already seen in 1 Cor. 1:23,24; see also Rom.1:16). The Gospel claims to be man's last hope.
 2. Yet, the power of the cross is the most difficult of the concepts of Christian theology to explain or comprehend. The Greeks saw this preaching as "foolishness." Luckily for us as Christ's messengers, we are only obligated to bring the message; it is the power of that message (the Word) that will lead the sinner to the cross and thus to salvation by the cross.
 3. However difficult the message, the fact remains that the Gospel is the Way to God.
 - a. The Gospel is more than "Law." Law can rebuke, punish, check, and restrain, but it does not have the power to reform and to save.
 - b. The Greek philosophy did not have this "saving power." (Note the lack of results at Athens.)
 - c. Science, literature, and art do not have this "saving power."
 - d. The results manifested by the Gospel cause all the man-made philosophies to pale by comparison. It worked on the Corinthians, (READ: 1 Cor. 6:9-11).
 4. Some facts concerning the cross are not difficult to explain or comprehend:
 - a. No higher expression of love for man can be found than the sacrifice of a Son.
 - b. The true evil of sin is magnified when compared to the cross and the fact that sin was the sole cause of the cross: Jesus, though sinless, suffered for our sins, and we see evil more clearly when it brings calamity on the guiltless.
 - c. Contemplating the cross will bring the deepest sense of danger to the mind of the sinner.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Would you be willing to devote one hour of the upcoming week to study and contemplate the cross? Please do it!
2. Why did Corinth respond to the Gospel, when Athens would not? (Mt. 21:31) That is, why did worldliness and sensuality come to Christ when intellect and philosophy would not?

**Lesson 11 Paul at Ephesus
Acts 19:8-10 (Acts 19)**

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. To study the contact of Christianity with idolatry in a place like Ephesus, it will be important to note some characteristics of that peculiar idolatry. It was a religion sustained

by three things: superstition, national pride, and the love of money. These difficulties in one form or another are met today wherever the Gospel is taught.

- B. What difficulties would Paul encounter at Ephesus because of their idolatry? Had the way been prepared for Paul? Were Paul's own labors successful? What effect did Christianity have on the people of Ephesus? It is the purpose of this study to answer these questions.

II. DISCUSSION

- A. Difficulties encountered by Paul in Ephesus because of their idolatry. In the time of Paul, Ephesus was one of the most distinguished cities of the world. Ephesus was the capital of Asia Minor; embracing much of the rich Ionian culture and Greek thought; a center of commerce; and home to the most imposing form of idol worship of its time the goddess Diana.

1. Two obstacles encountered everywhere by the Apostles were Judaism and Paganism. While Judaism was a fixed religion (being basically the same wherever it was encountered), the heathen religions were often as different from each other as they were from Judaism or Christianity. Christianity might have to overcome immorality in one religion, while combating the philosophy of another, while answering another religion's art or poetry, while fighting against yet another's superstition or national pride.
2. The most powerful force controlling the human mind to be found in any country is religion (or the lack of it). Whether true or false, religion is a power superior in many aspects to love of country, friends, property, liberty, and even life itself. When the religion is incorporated into: the government, the traditions, the employment, and the lucrative pursuits of men its power increases in magnitude and range. All of these characteristics were present at Ephesus.
 - a. The Ephesians worshipped one supreme divine power, known throughout the world as their goddess.
 - b. In addition to the generic natural power of religion, the worship of Diana:
 - (1) included a close connection to the practice of magic, (Acts 19:19),
 - (2) was closely combined with national pride because of the magnificence of the temple raised in her name,
 - (3) was closely connected to the wealth of the city and gave employment to many of the citizens of Ephesus.

- B. Preparations had been made for the coming of Paul. In much the same manner that John the Baptist was the forerunner of Jesus in Palestine, Apollos had brought John's teaching to Ephesus ahead of Paul, (Acts 18:24,25). He was further instructed by Priscilla and Aquila concerning Jesus, (Acts 18:26-28). Others were at Ephesus who were aware of John's teaching, (Acts 19:1-7). These men were also converted and became spokesmen for the truth.

- C. The manner in which Paul labored at Ephesus, (READ: Acts 20:18-21). These verses reveal the secret of both Paul's success and power.

1. His tender heart a heart made for and warmed by love, (Rom. 9:2,3).

2. He preached the whole Gospel everything that was profitable for the Ephesians.
 3. He preached publicly in the synagogue, the markets, or the streets, with no regard for his own safety.
 4. He taught the truth "door to door" family to family, person to person.
 5. He did not rely on the philosophy of man or human learning instead preaching repentance and faith in the Lord, (Acts 20:21).
- D. The immediate results of Paul's preaching the church was clearly and completely established in Ephesus. We can learn about the character of this congregation of the Lord's people from Acts, from Paul's letter to them, and from Jesus Himself, (Rev. 2:2,3).
1. It was not a small group inferred by Demetrius, (Acts 19:26,27).
 2. It was led by Elders (not one elder or one bishop) whose purpose was "to take heed to themselves and to the flock," (Acts 20:28).
 3. Their beliefs were based on more than emotions or feelings they had a principle-based religion, (Acts 19:19,20).
 - a. they voluntarily destroyed the books of magic,
 - b. they realized that they could not continue to practice magic and be a follower of Jesus,
 - c. their sacrifice was not small,
 - d. they did not sell the property, but destroyed it because its value was only for the purposes of evil.
- E. The effect of Paul's preaching on the people of Ephesus, the furor, the riot, and the disorder. The appeal of the Silversmith was two-pronged: his livelihood and the national reverence for the goddess. Either of these would have been likely to inflame the citizenry, but in tandem, it was guaranteed!
1. Christianity has no quarrel with anything that promotes the interests of society in general. If all the enterprises of this earth that are related to the vices of man were wiped out today by the world's wholesale conversion to Christianity, there would still be work enough for all to do.
 2. Christianity will conflict with many of man's business arrangements. Those that make their livings doing things that cannot be condoned by Christianity are going to take exception to it and its teachings. The changes that true Christianity can make would work out for the betterment of society by stopping war, eliminating the need for so many jails, restoring broken homes, and cause men to become content in whatever state they find themselves.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How can we apply the principle of "destruction of evil property" today?
2. Was Paul (Christianity) responsible for the uproar at Ephesus? Explain.
3. What were Apollos and the 12 disciples of John "missing" in their religion?
4. Superstition, national pride, and the love of money; are they problems today?

Lesson 12 Paul at Miletus
Acts 20:25-27 (Acts 20)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Paul calls the Ephesian elders to Miletus. The discourse recorded for us is valuable because it describes his labors as an evangelist in Ephesus and gives us a fair idea of how he conducted his ministry elsewhere. Additionally, the discourse is valuable to all who would be ministers for Christ today.
- B. Because of his longstanding relationship (3 years) with the Ephesians, his review of his work there stands as the best example we have as to how he conducted an extended ministry.
 - 1. It would be wise for all of us as Christians to pause from time to time and review our own personal ministry for Christ.
 - 2. Specifically, the full-time evangelist should study this passage to review his ministry and ask himself questions such as is this work my life's work, what are my proper duties, and what does the future hold if my duties are faithfully performed?

II. DISCUSSION

- A. The work of an evangelist, as a work of life. Paul had no regrets as to his chosen life. However, we know that every man has times when he questions the course his life has taken. Paul's own review of his life as an evangelist shows that he regarded the work as noble, with a righteous objective, (Phil. 3:8).
- B. The character of an evangelist and the nature of his ministry can be seen from Paul's address to the Ephesian elders.
 - 1. "I am pure from the blood of all men" (v.26). (Read: Eze.3:18,19; 2 Cor. 2:15.) This statement has two major implications:
 - a. Paul's ministry contained nothing that would lead them from God or ruin their souls:
 - b. he had done all that was within his power to lead them to Christ, (Acts 18:6).
 - 2. He had "not shunned to declare all the counsel of God." "Counsel" in this passage means all the purposes, determinations, plans, and decrees of God for mankind. It would include God's plan for man's salvation as well as the duties of the Christian. Paul had hidden none of these things from the Ephesians.
 - a. There is a danger that an evangelist might hide part of the "counsel of God" from his congregation for various reasons.
 - b. Heaven cannot be properly preached apart from Hell, nor love apart from hate, nor marriage apart from divorce, nor the washing away of our sins apart from water baptism, etc.
 - c. To further understand Paul's view as to the scope of the "whole counsel of God," see his letter to the Ephesians.

3. "I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel; yes you yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. (vv.33,34). Paul was willing to decline support from the Ephesians while he was among them to show that he had no love of gain.
 - a. We know from other passages that Paul was a champion of the evangelist's right to be supported (READ: 1 Cor. 9:7-14).
 - b. However, circumstances can arise when the evangelist should decline support. If support would make the evangelist appear covetous, if the congregation is too poor, if acceptance of support would appear as a way to just make some extra cash, support should be declined.
 - c. The evangelist's example of industry in manual labor, a part-time job, or even a full-time secular job could be more than just a way of putting food on the evangelist's own table; it could be a lesson to his congregation. Even if outside employment is not necessary, the evangelist must be busy about the Lord's business.
- C. Paul's view of the future based on his faithful performance of his duties as a minister for Christ, (vv.22-24). Paul had had his share of trials and persecutions and was guaranteed more in the future; yet he pressed on.
1. Things that may happen to any of us persecution, sickness, disappointment, poverty, and reproach.
 2. The thing that must happen to us death. (See: Barnes' The Life of the Apostle Paul, pp. 266-67.) Yet even with this prospect looming ahead of him, Paul remained calm, (v. 24). He was calm because he had been faithful to God and had the hope of eternal salvation. We should be just as calm as we face physical death.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. As a Christian or a Christian evangelist, can you imagine yourself uttering the words: "I am pure from the blood of all men" (v.26)?
2. List some reasons why an evangelist might not present the "whole counsel of God."
3. Read the letter to the Ephesians this week and note any "doctrine" that Paul emphasized there.
4. What are circumstances when a minister of the Gospel should decline support?
5. Can you truly say, "I will fear no evil, for You are with me?"

Lesson 13 Paul in the Temple at Jerusalem
1 Cor. 9:20-22 (Acts 21)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Paul anticipated that his visit to Jerusalem would probably cause some kind of stir, (Acts 20:22). Disciples at Tyre warned Paul not to go to Jerusalem, (Acts 21:4). Agabus prophesied at Caesarea concerning Paul's future, (Acts 21:10-12).

- B. His arrival at Jerusalem was met with mixed emotions, (READ: Acts 21:15-21).
- C. The proposal to appease the Jews and its outcome, (Acts 21:22-28).
- D. What does Paul's willingness to participate in this obviously "Jewish" ceremony say to us today? We know he had Timothy circumcised and had fulfilled a vow of his own, (Acts 16:3; 18:18). All of these things were done publicly, (1 Cor. 9:20-22). In other words, how far can we go in yielding to the customs and complying with the prejudices of the world in order to promote Christianity?
- E. The two extremes:
 1. "A rigid, unbending, and stern application of religious principles to all cases that occur, and to all questions that pertain to conduct." That is, there is no room for different social customs or manners, different styles of dress or living, different customs formed by education or employment, etc. Yet, some leeway must be allowed under the parameters of passages such as Phil. 4:8. When man carries religious principles into regions of life where God never intended, then bigotry, persecution, and exclusiveness are sure to follow.
 2. "The abandonment of the proper principles of religion, by conformity to the customs of the world." Immoral lifestyles, dress, manners, and customs are not tolerated by God's principles.

II. DISCUSSION

- A. Where in the middle ground can the Christian safely tread? What does the example of the Apostle Paul in our text, authorize for us today?
- B. Some principles to which all Christians should be able to agree:
 1. Vows (voluntary promises or pledges) are not in themselves, immoral or improper. The New Testament does not forbid them and we have Apostolic example of them being carried out (Paul). Anytime we purpose in our hearts to do anything, we have made a vow.
 2. Some aspects of human conduct are neither moral nor immoral. Within God's Will certain things are of no consequence, such as certain clothing, habits, social customs, living arrangements, methods of greeting one another, etc. Even some aspects of our worship to God have been left to us to decide. Posture in prayer, for example.
 3. Some things that are not intrinsically right or wrong can become wrong because of the positive commands of Christianity. When any earthly pursuit causes conflict with our spirituality, that pursuit must be abandoned.
 4. Some things are always wrong, forbidden by God's rules of morality and religion. Regardless of modern philosophy, there are things that are intrinsically right and wrong, good and evil, true and false, and helpful and hurtful, because God says they are! God has engraved these things on our very consciences, (Rom. 2:14,15).
 5. There are things practiced in the world (and in the church) that are strictly condemned by Christianity. Even the world can see the inconsistency between the

practice of these things by them and by those professing to be Christians. Even the most worldly person knows that there is no affinity between the communion table and the gambling table, yet churches all over this country have bingo in the name of God, (2 Cor. 6:14,15; 1 Cor. 10:21).

- C. "All things to all men" to Paul (and to us) means "all things" within the limits of the principles of God. A "vow" cannot be allowed to interfere with spreading the Gospel. Will our attendance at some social functions, movies, plays, or night clubs be seen by the world as being "all things to all men, that (we) might save some;" or will it be perceived by them as hypocrisy, or even worse, bring reproach upon the church and thus, Christ?
- D. Applying the five principles as rules of life:
1. We must not needlessly make war with the world (neighbors, co-workers, friends). We must ignore their innocent customs, and modes of speech, dress, and manners. Just as husbands and wives must learn to adjust to each other, so must we as Christians be willing to adjust (within the limits established by God) to the world for the sake of harmony and the good of the Gospel.
 2. No truth of God can be sacrificed or compromised in our dealings with the world. Paul's manner of conduct complied with his religion and consistent with his goal (vow?) to serve God and his Savior.
 3. We must take care not to call things religious that are not specified as religious by God's Word. The Pharisees were guilty of falling into this trap. Principle and truth outclass shadow and form every time.
 4. As Christians, we can mingle with the world up to the point where God-given principles are involved. We can conform to the ordinary customs of man and country. Being odd simply for the sake of being odd is not condoned. Christians are going to be "peculiar" enough without binding customs on ourselves that God has not bound.
- E. "...that I by all means might save some." Salvation of souls is important. We must be willing to set aside our own "ways" to further the cause of "the Way." Paul acted on this principle, as did Jesus, the Savior of the World.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Can man legislate in religion where God has chosen not to?
2. Name specific examples of our conduct that is not regulated by God.
3. Name examples of earthly pursuits that may have to be abandoned for Christ.
4. Do you know any passages of scripture that establish the "right or wrong" of: abortion, homosexuality, drunkenness, fornication, and other sins of the flesh (world)?

Lesson 14 Paul Before the Sanhedrin
Acts 23:6-7 (Acts 22-23)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. It is obvious from the reading that Paul purposefully used a point of dissension among the Pharisees and Sadducees to divide the Sanhedrin namely, the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. Some commentators have felt that this tactic was beneath the Apostle Paul. Was he simply trying to confuse his opponents so he could secure his own safety, rather than defend the truth?
- B. How far may we, as Christians, go in using the opinions and dissensions of others to carry a point of argument, secure our personal safety, condone our character, or defend the truth? How is Paul our example?
- C. To see the application, we must consider Paul's circumstances, examine possible objections to his conduct, determine whether his conduct can be defended, and see if his conduct is consistent with fairness, honor and especially truth.

II. DISCUSSION

- A. The circumstances leading up to and associated with Paul's case.
 - 1. The riot and the arrest.
 - a. The cause of the uproar (Read Acts 21:27-34).
 - b. Lysias saves Paul's life (Read Acts 21:35-40).
 - c. Paul addresses the multitude (Read Acts 22:1-21).
 - d. The multitude reacts (Read Acts 22:22-30).
 - 2. The trial.
 - a. Paul affirms that he has lived in good conscience (Acts 23:1).
 - b. The counsel responds! (Acts 23:2). This response was against the rules of justice and set the tone for the entire trial the Sanhedrin meant to condemn Paul regardless of the evidence. Determining this, Paul resolved to divide the assembly and trust his own safety to the protection of the Romans.
- B. Objections that might be made concerning Paul's conduct.
 - 1. Paul said he was a Pharisee. Was he really? Had he not spent his entire Christian life fighting against just about everything the Pharisees stood for? At one time, he was a Pharisee of Pharisees; but was he one now?
 - 2. Was he really under arrest for the "hope and resurrection of the dead?" Or was he in trouble for his views on the Law of Moses, the traditions of the rabbis and allegedly polluting the Temple by bringing in the Greeks?
 - 3. Was Paul using oratory tricks to cunningly turn the subject from the one at hand to save himself? Was he attempting to divide, embarrass, and confuse the court to avoid mounting a defense he could not win?

- C. Can Paul's conduct be vindicated? Was it consistent with fairness, honor, and truth?
1. The Sanhedrin had no real authority in this matter. They had been given some authority over matters that pertained to the Hebrew religion. The Roman magistrate had referred the case to them so that he could discover the reason for the riot. A breach of the peace was a matter for the Roman authorities, (Acts 22:30).
 2. Paul did not cause the difference of opinion concerning the resurrection in the Sanhedrin; it already existed. Additionally, differences of opinion existed concerning the state of the soul after death, the future state and its hope, judgment, and retribution for unrighteousness. All of these stemmed from the first, and if it (resurrection) was not a true doctrine, then there could be no judgment, heaven or hell! Paul could not have magnified this difference between the two factions any more than it was already.
 3. As far as the Pharisees and the Sadducees were concerned, Paul was a Pharisee. As far as the doctrine at hand (resurrection), he was a Pharisee. Indeed his conversion to Christ amplified his belief in the resurrection, (1 Cor. 15:13-19).
 4. Paul possessed knowledge superior to either the Sadducees or the Pharisees, he was a witness of the risen Savior.
 - a. Man is generally skeptical of a doctrine that can only be proved by education or tradition.
 - b. Man's opinion concerning the resurrection, as well as the future state of mankind, is weak proof of their existence. Nature does not reveal these doctrines nor can man establish them through his powers of reasoning.
 - c. Proof derived from the Old Testament is tenuous at best. The Old Testament infers the doctrine. Even Jesus in his teaching had to rely only on this inference, (Lk. 20:37,38). Remember, we can see these inferences more clearly than the first century Jews because we have the New Testament to shed light on them.
 - d. Paul's view of the resurrection was a view from fact - fact without doubt (1 Cor. 15:20-23).
 5. Paul had indeed suffered at home and abroad for his belief in the resurrection of the dead, because it was directly tied to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. To refer to this doctrine was Paul's normal modus operandi; we should not be surprised that he brings it up here. Neither should we be ashamed of him for doing so, nor think less of him, nor question his fairness, honor, or truth.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Answer the questions posed in the introduction, point B.
2. Compare the Sanhedrin's "behavior" in this case with other references to them in the New Testament.
3. Show that preaching the resurrection of the dead (specifically Christ's) was indeed Paul's method.

Lesson 15 Paul in the Castle at Jerusalem
Acts 23:11 (Acts 23)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Three instances of Divine encouragement:
1. Approaching Corinth, (Acts 17:9,10);
 2. In the castle at Jerusalem, (Acts 23:11);
 3. On the voyage to Rome, (Acts 27:23,24).
- B. Can we as Christians expect the same kind of encouragement? What difficulties and dangers surrounded Paul at the time of his imprisonment in the castle? What can we learn from God's assurance that Paul would be protected and permitted to carry the Gospel to Rome?

II. DISCUSSION

- A. The difficulties and dangers that surrounded Paul.
1. The conspiracy against his life, (Acts 23:12-15):
 - a. was real and was strong the conspirators had put themselves under a death-pact,
 - b. their plan was logical Lysias would probably fall for their deception,
 - c. given that their request would have been granted, the likelihood of their plan being successful was high,
 - d. the conspiracy thwarted by Paul's nephew, (Acts 23:16-24).
 2. The trials before the Roman governors His safe delivery to Caesarea did not insure his continued safety. The Roman governors had the power to release him or turn him over to his enemies.
 - a. Felix, (Acts 24:22-27) A corrupt man, ready to take a bribe, unfamiliar with the Jewish customs, and willing to do anything within Roman law to placate the Jews.
 - b. Festus, (Acts 25:9) - As willing to conciliate the Jews as his predecessor (Felix), he planned to send Paul back to Jerusalem. This plan caused Paul to appeal to Rome and thus guarantee his journey there.
 3. Further circumstances would come Paul's way where the recollection of the promise of safety could comfort him. On the voyage to Rome, his life would be in danger from storm, shipwreck, serpent, and man. Yet, Paul had his promise from the Lord that he must testify in Rome.
- B. The assurance that Paul received in the vision, could be an illustration of what may occur in our lives. We are not given our assurances in a direct vision, but through God's Word we see a hope of success as we practice our Christianity in this life. If God had not made some arrangements for us here on earth, we would certainly become despondent amid the evil of this world. Consider the following three things, which give hope to men:
1. The past record troubles, conflicts, and persecutions have been overcome before, by others as well as ourselves. We have as our example all of those who have

gone before us both in the physical battles of this world and in the spiritual battles. Those that have struggled and succeeded stand behind us as part of our assurance.

2. Promises of God's Word as regards both temporal and spiritual matters. The promises made for us concerning temporal things are neither absolute nor specific, but the promises concerning our salvation and the eternal life are both.
 - a. general promises regarding this life, (Isa. 33:15,16; Ps. 23:1;37:25; 1 Tim. 4:8; Phil. 4:19; Heb. 13:5).
 - b. specific promises regarding the future life, (Mt. 7:7,8; Mk. 16:16; Jn. 7:37; Rev. 22:17).
 - c. We know that enemies will stand in the way of our salvation. We will have to contend with the corruptions of our own heart. However, God's promise of victory in these matters is positive "seek and you shall find."
3. God has given us an internal confidence - a buoyant, elastic spirit. "He has made us capable of being stimulated by hope; of looking forward to brighter things." This elastic spirit is made manifest in man's general optimism concerning his life. Imagine if God had made man without this spirit of optimism. Examples of this spirit can be seen in:
 - a. the imagination of youth who does not dwell on the negative, but looks towards the future and fixes itself on the hope of success; on health, happiness, prosperity; on things that bring a smile to their faces and moves them to action.
 - b. the faith of the sailor (explorer, astronaut, etc.) who does not dwell on any horrible things that have happened to sailors in the past, but instead thinks about favorable seas and a prosperous voyage with rich returns.
 - c. the case of the businessman who cannot begin his business thinking only about the number of failures in like enterprises, the hazards of trade, or the possibility of bankruptcy. His mind is stimulated by the hope of success.
 - d. the case of the man trying to do good (farmers, soldiers, preachers, etc.) they cannot allow their minds to dwell on the hardships that their chosen vocation presents, but instead must consider the good that they can do for man's physical nourishment, physical safety, or spiritual sustenance.
 - e. the instance of the physically sick and the sin-sick neither of these must occupy their minds with the pain of their condition, but must look ahead to a possible cure for their condition. While the former has the hope of modern medicine and the prayers of the righteous on their behalf, the latter have the direct promises of God, the cross of Christ, the plan of salvation, and the example of the saints gone before. God has made man a hopeful creature, thinking first of recovery and success rather than anticipating disaster and defeat. Through his Gospel the Lord has told us all, "Be you of good cheer!"

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Find scriptures that reflect the tone of this lesson, that is, that man should be optimistic, based on what God and His Son have done for us. How does God encourage us today? Directly, through others, through His Word? How?

Lesson 16 Paul Before Felix Acts 24:24-25 (Acts 24)
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I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The Gospel in contact with the unrepentant heart. Characters such as Pilate, Gamaliel, Gallio, Festus, Agrippa, Drusilla, and Felix are placed in the Gospel narrative so that we may see their reaction to the Gospel. The inspiration of the scripture allows us to know these characters' real motives, know what things influenced them, and what it was that made them what they were.
- B. The case of Felix
1. He was born a slave, but rose to prominence under Claudius Caesar. After winning many military honors, he was made governor of Judea. Secular history points out many of his character flaws, including: being lustful, cruel, ill-tempered, thinking himself above the law, and a poor administrator. He was a man of ambition, energy, and power, but he was susceptible to bribery, corruption, and lying. He knew his life was corrupt and he trembled at the preaching of Paul; yet he was unwilling to repent. He kept Paul in prison even though he knew Paul was innocent, hoping to receive a bribe for his release.
 2. He was married three times - to a niece of Cleopatra, to an unknown woman, and finally to Drusilla. Drusilla was the daughter of Herod Agrippa and had previously been married to the King of Emesa. Felix convinced her to leave her husband and become his consort.
 3. Paul before Felix
 - a. Acts 24:1-21 The first public trial. Felix deferred his judgment until he could gather more information from Lysias.
 - b. Acts 24:22-27 Before Felix and Drusilla. Paul takes this opportunity to preach the Gospel. Paul did not use rude or severe language as he preached against everything that Felix stood for, but "reasoned about righteousness, self-control and the judgment." The truth found its way into the conscience of Felix and he "was afraid." (NKJV)
- C. What happens when Christianity encounters a corrupt heart and a life of guilt? With what truths can Christianity address a man like Felix? How should these truths properly affect the mind of the hearer? How would someone of Felix's character reject these truths?

II. DISCUSSION

- A. With what appropriate truths can Christianity address a man like Felix? The truths chosen by Paul for the occasion were indeed appropriate for preaching to Felix. Beyond that, they are appropriate today. These are the topics that God employs to arouse our minds, convict us of our unrighteousness, make us realize our guilt, and lead us to feel the need for a Savior. Under the condemnation of this preaching, Felix "trembled." (KJV)

1. Righteousness a subject that applies to every man, but especially to one whose job calls for him to dispense justice. This topic covers a broad range of scripture including right and wrong, the obligations of justice, the character of a righteous God, and how a sinner may attain and maintain righteousness. All views of religion must begin here - because salvation comes through obtaining righteousness.
 2. Temperance "self-control." This would include controlling: our sensual passions, pride, selfishness, ambition, anger, and revenge. All of these are in addition to the more commonly held subjects of temperance: eating and drinking. The proper restraint and government of our passions is also a scriptural topic for preaching and teaching the Gospel.
 3. Judgment to Come - the day of final reckoning when God will call all men to give account of their life. There will be a judgment; the judgment will render certain results; it will be a solemn occasion; and the Divinity and qualifications of the Judge; are all fit subjects to be preached. What then does Christianity teach us concerning the judgment?
 - a. Judgment is awesome and to be feared (respected).
 - b. All men will be judged, (Rev. 20:12-14).
 - c. The Judge is revealed to be Jesus Christ, (Jn. 5:22,23).
 - d. The consequences of judgment are spelled out, (Mt. 25:31-46).
- B. Was the effect produced by this preaching on the mind of Felix, natural and proper?
1. The natural marks of conscience guilt blushing, averting the eyes, trembling, fearful suspicious looks. All mankind possesses these natural signs of guilt; they transcend race, nationality, and locality.
 2. We feel guilt because God has provided us with a moral government that He wishes all men to obey and we do not always live according to His precepts.
 - a. The marks of conscience guilt were given to us by God and cannot be transferred to the opposite course of conduct.
 - b. When these signs operate freely, they cannot be misinterpreted. Felix "trembled," he was visibly "afraid." It was an outward sign of his inward guilt.
 - c. The signs are there to put others on their guard and to restrain us from sin.
 - d. Compare Felix to the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:29,30).
- C. How would someone of Felix's character reject these truths?
1. While the jailer yielded, Felix refused. Felix resisted his natural inclination, violated his conscience, and in doing so put his everlasting welfare in jeopardy.
 2. He tried to quell his present alarm by deferring to a future time procrastination is what we call it today.
 3. Why would he (and men today) plead for delay? The interpretation of the Greek scripture shows that Felix was asking for more time to consider the matter. The time was not convenient, suitable, or appropriate in Felix's mind.
 4. He did not realize that each opportunity might be his last! Tomorrow, even the next moment, may never come.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. It is possible for man to "sear" his conscience to the degree that he might not exhibit any outward signs of guilt?
2. How can we show men that their decision for Christ must be made now?
3. Think of other examples of the "sin now, repent later" attitude in scripture and in your personal experience.

Lesson 17 Paul Before Festus Acts 25:17-19 (Acts 25)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. In keeping with the purpose of these lessons, we will see Christianity in contact with a certain frame of mind, as we study Paul before Festus. Festus thought that Christianity was a trivial subject and one with which he would not and should not have to concern himself.
- B. We will examine Festus from two points of view:
 1. How his class of mind regards religion in general and Christianity specifically,
 2. Whether or not the attitude towards religion held by Festus (and his ilk) is the proper manner in which it (especially Christianity) should be regarded and treated.

II. DISCUSSION

- A. Festus is representative of a certain class of minds.
 1. His general character Felix was removed from office for his failure as an administrator. Festus was chosen as his replacement because he was known to be honorable, incorruptible, and more likely to get along with the Jews.
 - a. He refused to give into the request of the Jews to bring Paul to Jerusalem, (Acts 25:1-6).
 - b. He was prompt in bringing the case to trial, (v.6).
 - c. He was ready to concede Paul's right of appeal to Rome; even though he personally believed the case was inappropriate for a Roman court, (vv. 12,16). Believing that the matter of religion could be better tried in Jerusalem (and wanting to placate the Jews) Festus proposed moving the trial there, (vv.7-9). Paul realized that he would never survive the trip to Jerusalem, so he appealed to Caesar, (vv.10-11).
 - d. He upheld the Roman law that, "every citizen has the right to face his accusers," (v. 16).
 2. While Festus appears to be as honest, upright, and moral as any Roman, this seems to be his first contact with the religion of the Jews and the Christians. His thoughts concerning his first contact with Christianity can clearly be seen in his conversation with Agrippa, (vv. 18-20).

- a. He regarded the disputes as pertaining to the Jews and not to himself "their own religion," (v. 19a). He did not want to interfere or meddle with their religion. He did not degrade it, even though he called it "superstition" (KJV).
- b. He had no belief concerning Jesus. He could not tell whether Jesus was alive or dead, based on the arguments of the Jews and Paul, (v. 19b). He did not comprehend that the argument was about "Christ and Him crucified."
- c. He did not try to settle these points of conflict, nor did they appear to make an impression on his mind as they did on the minds of Felix and Agrippa.

B. Had Festus chosen the proper way to regard and treat the subject of religion?

- 1. Man is the only earthly creature that has an interest in the questions that belong to religion. The religious men of history, such as Abraham, David, and Paul, show us what man was made to be. Consider just a few of the questions that stem from religious thought: is there a God, what is His nature, is man a fallen being, has atonement been made for our sins, is the Bible inspired, is there a heaven, a hell, a judgment day. Each of these questions pertain to all men equally, not just the Jews or the Christians.
- 2. Every man is bound to perform religious duties prescribed by God, but men believe that they are only bound to a religion to which they profess. The mistake made by men is that they are already obligated to God's religion before they ever determine to profess it! Professing the religion only recognizes the obligation, it does not create it. No one is exempt from the worship of God, faith in Christ as our Redeemer, a life of piety, or the acknowledgment of God's mercies.
- 3. All men everywhere need the provisions that the Gospel has made for our salvation. Festus should have inquired as to what these provisions entail. Here men make another grave error they feel that they do not need salvation.
- 4. Lack of interest in God's religion is a sure sign of a man being lost. There is no substitute for the provisions of the Gospel or faith in Jesus Christ.

III. CONCLUSION

- A. Men are not merely on-lookers in the world. We all have a deep personal interest in things that pertain to life and godliness, whether we realize it or acknowledge it.
- B. Men cannot escape from God's religion and its precepts. It is a personal interest which God demands man's attention.
- C. Men should not desire to drive the subject of God's religion from their minds. (See: Barnes, pg. 372, third point.)

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1. Contrast and compare Festus to Felix.

2. Do people today have the attitude of Festus "Christianity does not apply to me?" Would you regard these people as moral or immoral, neither moral nor immoral, or a mixture of both?
3. How can we convince people that Christianity is for them, as well as us? How can we show them that the mode of belief in God is as important as a moral, just, and honest life?
4. Show from the scriptures that all men need a Savior and that Savior is Jesus Christ. (Hint: What name is given under heaven, whereby men might be saved? Is that the only name?)

Lesson 18 Paul Before Agrippa
Acts 26:28-29 (Acts 25:13; 26:32)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Upon Paul's appeal to Caesar, Festus was required to state the charges in a letter to accompany Paul to Rome. Because he was ignorant of the Jewish customs and law, he sought the advice of Herod Agrippa, concerning what charges should actually be levied against Paul, (Acts 25:27).
- B. Herod Agrippa II
 1. The son of Herod Agrippa, the great grandson of Herod the Great. He inherited only part of the kingdom after his father's miserable death, (Acts 12:20-23).
 2. His duties as "King of Chalcis" included the superintendence of the temple and the right of appointing the high priest.
 3. He was a Jew, and therefore had more respect for the message of Paul concerning a Messiah than the Romans did.
 4. It does not appear that he held with the conspirators who wanted Paul dead. History tells us he was a mild, candid, and unsophisticated man. He believed the charges against Paul were unworthy of trial, (Acts 26:32).
 5. He actually was brought to the point of decision by Paul's eloquent defense of Acts 26:1-23.
 6. He refused to obey the Gospel. He was what Barnes called, "a speculative believer." He knew and believed the prophets, yet failed to take their teachings to their logical conclusion Christ.
- C. What are the circumstances that cause someone like Agrippa to "almost be persuaded?" Why are these people not wholly persuaded? How may we continue to appeal to those that are in this state of mind?

II. DISCUSSION

- A. What are the circumstances that cause someone like Agrippa to "almost be persuaded?"
 1. There are those that have always presumed that they would someday become a Christian, yet have not obeyed the Gospel.
 2. There are those who have always been skeptical of the Bible and/or organized religion, yet some person, book, or event causes them to rethink their position.

They may even come to believe the Bible is the word of God, yet they are not quite converted.

3. There are those that might come to realize their need for a Savior. They approach Christianity as a possible avenue to attaining salvation, yet stop short of answering the Gospel call.
4. There are those that have a calamity in their lives and are almost persuaded to become Christians.

B. Why are these people not wholly persuaded to become Christians?

1. The love of sin not necessarily sin in general, but some specific sin that they are not willing to give up. It could be pride, ambition, lasciviousness, covetousness, or any of the other sins of the flesh. It may be a public or private sin. It may be something that he truly would like to give up, but cannot muster the willpower to overcome it.
2. The love of the world the love of position, honor, distinction, or amusements. Man often underplays the gravity of these types of sin, because they seem to be on a different level than murder, fraud, or thievery. God's Word makes no such distinction!
3. The fear of shame of being derided by friends, loved-ones, or co-workers for becoming serious, religious, and prayerful.
4. The desire to be free from the restraints and obligations of religion such as mode of life, attendance at worship services, or contributions of money and time. If a man is not prepared to fulfill these obligations, then he realizes he cannot truly be a member of the church.

C. How may we continue to appeal to those that are in this state of mind (almost persuaded)?

1. Based on their state of mind Agrippa believed in revelation (the prophets). Paul did not need to start at "square one" as if Agrippa was a heathen. The appeal to one of Agrippa's mind set is for them to carry out the convictions of their own minds.
2. Based on consistency if they believe in the truths of the Bible, then they are in fact admitting: their own depravity, their need of rebirth, their need to repent, the importance of faith, and the obligations of prayer and holy living. If a man holds an opinion concerning his business or the welfare of his home and family, he acts on that opinion. Why would a man not act on an opinion held concerning his eternal salvation (see II. B.)? At least the atheist and the skeptic are consistent in their beliefs and actions, but the man "almost persuaded" to be a Christian is totally inconsistent concerning his beliefs and actions.
3. Based on guilt and danger both increase by the admittance of spiritual obligations that a person chooses to disregard.
 - a. Guilt magnified by light and knowledge and by neglecting what is known to be duty and truth. This is not to say that the heathen do not feel some sense of guilt, but knowledge of Christ and failure to respond to His call heightens the feelings of guilt.

- b. Danger always follows guilt and the one is commensurate with the other, (Mt. 11:23,24; Lk. 8:34,35; Prov. 1:24-26; 29:1).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Think of other "speculative believers" in the New Testament and the scriptures that refer to them.
2. Find a copy of the hymn, Almost Persuaded and compare and contrast the lyrics of that song with the points made in this lesson.
3. Do passages such as Lk. 12:47 and Jas. 4:17 shed more light on our discussion of the failure to act on our knowledge causing an enhanced sense of guilt and danger? If so, how?

Lesson 19 The Voyage to Rome Acts 27:21,22,30,31 (Acts 27)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The voyage from Caesarea to Rome was long, tedious, and dangerous. It would generally take months and depend on changing winds and the ability to find safe harbors during the seasons of dangerous weather.
- B. The only thing that distinguishes this voyage from thousands of others made during these ancient times is the presence of the Apostle Paul on board. We are interested in the calmness he displayed in the midst of danger, his confidence in God, and his assurance that he would be brought safely to Rome, (Acts 23:11; 27:23-25).
- C. God would only save the ship's company if every man remained on board, (Acts 27:31). The point to be made here (and throughout this lesson) is that God often employs human agency to carry out His will. The sailors were needed on board to bring the ship as close to land as possible so that all could make it to shore safely, (Acts 27:44).
- D. To put our point in even stronger language: the plans and purposes of God for man are dependent on the participation of man. This dependency can be seen in:
1. God's plan for man's salvation,
 2. and how that plan is to be accomplished through human agency.

II. DISCUSSION

- A. God's plan for man's salvation
1. First, we must see that such a plan exists. This can be seen from such passages as Isa. 53:11 Christ's sacrifice would not be in vain; Jn. 6:37 His people would come to Him; Jn. 10:15,16; Eph. 1:4-11. There are a class of people that will be saved, if they meet the conditions set forth in the plan.

- a. The success of this plan was not left to chance, but to choice. The coming of Christ was not an experiment that might redeem mankind.
 - b. The plan is eternal the church-age is not a stopgap measure to carry us to a millennium. God has had this plan in place from before time. Man can be saved through obedience to Christ's Gospel and membership in His kingdom (the church).
 - c. Since it is God's plan, it is the right plan.
2. The plan of God is specific and particular it outlines who can be saved and how they can be saved. Just as all that remained on board the ship were saved from physical death, so will all that remain under the authority of Christ be saved from spiritual death.
- a. While men's plans are often formed on uncertainties, God's plan is based on his infinite knowledge, unlimited power, and immeasurable will.
 - b. God needs no contingency plan, because His plan is definite and certain.
 - c. Scripture points to the certainty of God's plan concerning: "the elect of God, (Col. 3:12; 1 Pet. 1:2; Mt. 24:22,31; Rom. 9:11,12,15,16); salvation of the innocent and obedient (Phil. 1:6; Mt. 18:14; Jn. 10:27-29;17:24; Rom. 8:29,30); and possibility of apostasy (Acts 1:25; 1Jn. 2:19; Mt. 13:21).
- B. God's plan for man's salvation is to be carried out through human agency.
- 1. God at times has used his absolute and independent power to accomplish His purposes. Some good examples are the creation of the world, the formulation of the plan of salvation, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. These things were accomplished by the Godhood alone, without the instrumentality of means. That is to say, God did not need man's participation.
 - 2. However, God's ordinary method of working in the affair's of men is through men. The salvation of the men on the ship depended on all remaining on board. If they had been allowed to leave the ship, all would have been lost. In secular matters, God expects man to work to clothe, feed, and shelter himself and his family. God could provide all of these things directly to man, but He has chosen man to provide for himself in these areas. In religion God has chosen a similar manner of working. He could inspire each man individually, making His will known by miracles to each generation, but instead He has chosen "the foolishness of the message preached." God does not save us by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit, but through His grace bestowed on those who will hear, believe, repent, be baptized, and walk according to His precepts. While our own efforts will not save us, our lack of effort will cause us to be lost!
 - a. This doctrine of God's plan being implemented through man should lead every one of us to an active, energetic pursuit of the Truth. The false doctrine of "those saved are fixed by God and our own efforts are needless and worthless" fails to account for the need for man to preach, teach, and obey the Word.
 - b. We cannot disconnect our hope of salvation from the means of that salvation that God has appointed.

- c. Our life on earth is a perilous voyage. Our problems here on earth mimic the problems suffered by Paul, his companions, and the ship's company on the voyage to Rome. Yet, in Christ, God has provided a safe harbor, a refuge. While the ship sought to be brought to a safe haven, we must seek to be brought safe to heaven.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The scriptures listed in Point II.A.2.c are proof texts for false tenets of Calvinism such as "God predetermines an individual's salvation and 'once saved always saved.'" How can we use our lesson to defeat these false doctrines?
2. What is God's plan for man's salvation?
3. How are we instruments of God in our own salvation? In the salvation of others?

Lesson 20 Paul at Malta Acts 28:4 (Acts 28)
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I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Malta (Melita) a relatively small island (18 miles long and 9 miles wide) located about 60 miles south of Sicily in the Mediterranean Sea. Its inhabitants were a mixture of Phoenicians and Greeks. They were called "barbarians" by the Greeks because they spoke a language other than Greek (compare: Rom. 1:14; Col. 3:11), yet in relation to many of the other non-Greek cultures they were quite civilized.
- B. This lesson will concern itself with the fact that the natives believed Paul was being punished by the gods for some crime he had committed. They reached this conclusion upon seeing the viper come out of the fire and fasten itself to Paul's hand. These men had in them a sense that due punishment will overtake the guilty and that punishment will fit the crime. We do not know why they assumed he was a murderer, other than the fact that murder seems to be one crime that is an atrocity in almost every culture.
- C. Do men naturally possess a general sense of Divine justice? Do men believe that the world is under some type of moral government, and crime is to be punished? Do men believe that the crimes of men will eventually be detected? Are men generally of a persuasion that it is right that crimes should be detected and punished?

II. DISCUSSION

- A. There is a general sense of Divine justice among men, even among the worldly and uncivilized. For example, the people of Malta, as described in our text.
 1. We know that man in general is apart from God, yet we know that man was made in God's own image. Therefore, we should not be surprised that vestiges of godliness sometimes occur in the vilest of mankind. Even among the so-called heathen, we often find:

- a. the belief in some form of Divinity, such as was the case of these Maltese islanders.
 - b. a sense of justice and a feeling that the guilty should be punished.
 - c. the sentiment that anything contrary to a. or b. is wrong.
2. With the above thoughts in view, men often maintain a code of morals. All cultures through the ages, no matter how far apart from God they grew, had some sense of right and wrong. Obviously, many have chosen in the past not to abide by these codes, but that does not mean the code did not exist (e.g. the culture of Noah's time or Sodom and Gomorrah). Any book or writings that might be found from any culture concerning a code of morals is in relative agreement with any other similar writings - be it Moses, Christ, Plato, Confucius or Pliny. Of course the writings of man do not measure up to God's inspired Word, but they are strikingly coincidental in their concepts of right and wrong.
3. Vengeance for murder by the next of kin was practiced prior to the Hebrew law which named the "avenger of blood," (Num. 35:19; Deut. 19:6,12; Josh. 20:3; 2 Sam. 14:11). Places of refuge were set by Moses to try to control this type of revenge, (Num. 35:10-15; 1 Kings 2:28). The point to be made here is that "within man there is a deep conviction of the necessity of punishment."
4. Beyond murder, man has arranged through the ages for punishment for all crimes to enter into their laws. Each civilization has had its courts, judges, law officers, prisons and other instruments of punishment.

B. There is a process under the Divine government by which crime will be detected and punished. The Maltese islanders evidently believed this to be true and it can be shown that this belief is in the very nature of man. In the case at hand, the islanders felt that even though Paul had survived the shipwreck, the viper had been reserved to make his escape impossible. While they were in error concerning Paul, their supposition was based on an old truism, "murder will out," that is, murder will always be discovered. But how can we show that this more than just a proverb of man, but a Divine arrangement of God?

1. When a murder is committed in a community, every man becomes a detective of sorts. Each person becomes more vigilant, and concerned with the capture and prosecution of that particular murderer.
2. The difficulty of covering up the crime of murder, no matter how many precautions are taken by the perpetrator, is amazing. You would think (as obviously the murderers do) that it would be easy to conceal the crime, yet repeatedly criminals are caught and convicted of "the perfect crime."
3. The ability to detect the crime through minuscule means, such as DNA, a hair, a drop of any bodily fluid, a footprint, a fingerprint, an unguarded remark, or the possession of an article the perpetrator thought was innocent; baffles criminals, defense lawyers, and liberal judges alike.
4. Remorse, indications of guilt, inability to sleep, nightmares, or feelings that they have been deserted by God, on the part of the murderer often lead to their apprehension and conviction.

- C. There is a general feeling among all men that criminals should be prosecuted and punished. What are the purposes of punishment?
1. Not primarily for the reformation of the guilty capital punishment never reformed anyone, yet it has been ordained by God as just.
 2. Not designed as mere restraint the moral sense of man would not be met or satisfied by this alone.
 3. Punishment when administered properly is deserved and justice demands it, even if it is believed that the offender will not repeat the crime.
 4. We, as citizens, concede that punishment is proper. The punishment is appointed by the law and demanded by justice; therefore, it is required.
- D. In conclusion, the guilty may have to pay the consequences of their crimes here on earth, but they may yet escape impending eternal judgment through faith in Jesus Christ. He will bear our sins on His shoulders and in Him we can find safety, pardon, and peace, (Isa. 53:4-6).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Consider the questions posed in the introduction, point C. Where would man get these beliefs?
2. Distinguish between consequences of sin and forgiveness of sin.

Lesson 21 Paul in Rome
Acts 28:30-31 (Acts 28)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Paul was a prisoner in Rome, even though he was kept in his own quarters. While he was obviously given some privileges that were probably not afforded most Roman prisoners, it is likely that he was shackled to one or two guards for the duration of this imprisonment, (compare passages such as: Acts 28:16; Phil. 1:13; Col. 4:18; Eph. 6:20).
- B. What practical lessons can we learn from Paul's imprisonment? First, we see that his desire to come to Rome had been fulfilled. Second, let us notice how he kept himself employed while imprisoned. Third, we will examine his attitude in bonds. Finally, we will notice the far-reaching consequences of his imprisonment.

II. DISCUSSION

- A. Paul's desire to come to Rome and preach the Gospel there had been accomplished.
1. Rom. 1:9-12 In accordance with this wish, the Lord already assured him twice in visions that he would bring the good news to Rome.
 2. Paul's purpose for wanting to come to Rome was not personal, but to conform to the purpose of the Lord set forth for all the Apostles: "that repentance and remission of sins should be preached among all nations..." (Lk. 24:46,47).

- a. Then, as now, the hubs of influence were the great cities, the population centers. These cities were the birthplaces of the habits, opinions, and laws, which regulated the views and customs of the entire known world.
 - b. The church had already been founded in Rome, (Rom. 16:3-15). They had Paul's epistle. The letter to the Romans is "the most complete and profound exposition of the doctrinal system of the Christian religion..." we have in our possession. Yet, he longed to be with them, to instruct them in person.
3. He came to Rome in a manner that he did not originally anticipate, and which was contrary to his plans, (Rom. 15:24).
- B. What did Paul do while imprisoned in Rome? Many of us, in similar circumstances, might have spent our time waiting for our trial worrying about ourselves. Not Paul. How was Paul able to continue his life's work, even though in bonds?
1. The church at Rome The Christians in Rome had already come out into the highway to conduct Paul to Rome, (Acts 28:15). Paul's situation actually worked to strengthen these brethren, (Phil. 1:14).
 2. His own countrymen He invited them to his quarters to hear his side of the charges against him, (READ: Acts 28:16-20). He preached the Gospel to them, and as always, some accepted it, but most rejected it.
 3. His influence among the Roman people while his only opportunity to preach was to those that came to his quarters, there are incidental scriptures that show us that the Gospel was preached by Paul to the Romans, and converts were made from among them, (Phil. 1:12,13; 4:22).
 4. "the care of all the churches," (2 Cor. 11:28) It is most likely that Paul penned four of his letters while imprisoned in Rome. These would include Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, and Philippians. Taking time to compose these letters while under these circumstances point to Paul's unswerving desire to do good, his unselfishness, and his interest in the general condition of the church worldwide.
- C. What can we learn from Paul's behavior while incarcerated?
1. His forbearance towards the Jews and those who perverted his teachings. Even though his imprisonment was because of the Jews, he held no ill will towards his countrymen in Rome. Others had supposed they could "steal Paul's thunder" while he was imprisoned, but he even rejoiced in that, (Phil. 1:16-18).
 2. He held no grudges against anyone concerning his situation, believing instead that his tribulations had been for the sake of the Gospel, (Phil. 1:12).
- D. What do the church and the world in general owe to the imprisonment of Paul?
1. The epistles penned by Paul during his imprisonment are invaluable to the church, and are worth more, to us as Christians, than all the sufferings of the Apostle.
 2. Yet, the world needs to see that oppressions, wrongs, and trials will never stop the Gospel. Even in prison, Paul let his light so shine as to illuminate the church of Christ and through the church, the world as a whole!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Is it possible that God answers prayers in ways that we never imagine? Think of an example in your life.
2. If a beloved Christian were being brought to our community in chains, would we go out to greet him as the Roman Christians did Paul?
3. Imagine yourself as a member of the church at Philippi. How would you feel upon hearing Paul's prison epistle read before the congregation?
4. Compare Paul's attitude toward his "enemies" as portrayed in this lesson, with the teachings of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount.

Lesson 22 Paul's First Trial Before Caesar 2 Tim. 4:16-18 (2 Tim. 4)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Luke's history of Paul ends in Acts 28:30,31, leaving Paul in the custody of the Romans for two years.
- B. To determine what happened to Paul after the two-year imprisonment, we must rely on his later epistles (especially 2 Timothy) and secular history. In our text, Paul refers to his first trial as his "first defense" or "first apology." Tradition holds that after this first trial: Paul was released, traveled to Spain, was arrested again, brought back to Rome, tried again, and finally put to death.
- C. This lesson will concern itself with the following major points: the trial, the acquittal, the fact that Paul was deserted by those that should have stood beside him and Paul's prayer for those who deserted him.

II. DISCUSSION

- A. The trial From Acts 28 we can see that there is at least a two-year delay in bringing Paul to trial. We have no way of knowing what caused this delay, but based on Paul's previous experience with the courts, we should not be surprised. The emperor himself generally heard cases such as Paul's. The emperor at this time was Nero, who was as little qualified to be a righteous judge as any man who ever lived. While we have no record of this trial, we can perhaps reconstruct it by using the previous trials before Felix and Festus.
 1. The accusations treason against the Roman government, heresy against the Law of Moses, and attempting to defile or profane the Temple in Jerusalem.
 2. As Paul had stated before Festus, these charges had not been proven, nor could they be proven.
 - a. Paul had already affirmed before Felix and Festus that no crime had been committed by him, (Acts 24:13; 25:7). Since no evidence had been brought forth to the contrary, Paul should have been acquitted based on this point alone.

- b. Paul, in his own defense, could have referred to the judgment of the Roman authorities that had already looked into his case. Lysaias, Felix, Festus, and Agrippa had not seen anything in the "evidence" presented by the Jews to find Paul guilty of any crime, (Acts 23:27-29; 25:18,19,24,25; 26:31). While secular history tells us that Nero did condemn Paul to death at his second trial, it must have been for charges other than these.
 - c. Paul could have related his problems in terms of his dispute with the Jews. He could have referred to cases such as Jesus before Pilate and himself before Gallio, (Jn. 18:31; 19:6; Acts 18:14,15). In these cases, the Roman government had chosen to "wash their hands" of the matter.

- B. Paul's acquittal 2 Tim. 4:17 implies that he was released after this first trial. Whether the "lion" referred to here is Nero or the literal lions of the arena, is not clear. The scriptures often refer to tyrants as ravenous beasts, (Ps. 22:13,21; Jer. 2:30). Paul gives the Lord credit for his release, (2 Tim. 4:17). The so-called early church Fathers confirm Paul's first acquittal (see the works of Eusebius, Chrysostom, and Jerome).

- C. "No man stood with me, but all men forsook me," (2 Tim. 4:16). We know that Paul had tried and true friends in Rome, (Rom. 16:4-10). He might have expected support from these friends as well as others that he could have made during the two year interim.
 - 1. Paul was not the first person to find himself in this situation, Compare: Job 19:13-19; The Psalmist, Ps. 35:11-16; 38:11; Jesus Christ, Mt. 26:56.
 - 2. There are friendships that will endure the ordinary trials of life, but will not withstand the severe trials. The severe trials are the ones that separate casual friends, co-workers, school chums, and neighbors from true blue compatriots.
 - 3. There are false friendships founded on wealth, station, beauty, manners, and hope of gain.
 - 4. True friendships do exist e.g.: David and Jonathan, (2 Sam. 1:26).
 - 5. Even friendships based on true love and motives may shrink back at times. So it was with the disciples of the Lord and most likely with the friends of Paul.
 - 6. Amid the severe trials that have come upon Christians in the last 2000 years it is remarkable that so few apostates have been reported.

- D. The Prayer of the Apostle for those who had forsaken him "I pray God that it may not be laid at their charge." Compare the language here to that of the Lord and Stephen, (Lk. 23:34; Acts 7:60). It seems that it is natural for the human heart to take the opposite viewpoint, that is, not to forgive but to begrudge. While civil laws can to a degree prevent revenge, it is the Gospel that works on man's hearts to prevent anger, restrain passions, to bear and forbear, and to forgive even to the "seventy times seven" time. The world is unwilling to acknowledge all it owes to Christianity concerning the ways that man interacts with man.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. List the three probable charges brought against Paul.
2. What do you consider to be the tests of true friendship?
3. Is Paul's attitude concerning the friends that forsook him in line with his own teaching?
Hint: see Rom. 12:17,19,21. What about with the Lord's teaching? See Mt. 6:12-15.

Lesson 23 Paul Anticipates His Death 2 Tim. 4:6-8 (2 Tim. 4)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. The result of Paul's final trial before Caesar condemned to death. Little is known concerning this second trial, but secular history and some things Paul said during his first imprisonment point to the likelihood of a second trial, (Phil. 1:23-25). The language of 2 Timothy shows that Paul believed his death was inevitable and imminent.
- B. "I am ready to be offered" suggests that he was prepared and willing to die. The expression further implies that he was ready to sacrifice himself as a martyr for Christ.
- C. "The time of my departure is at hand" he was ready to be released from this world and prepared to go to eternity.
- D. How a man feels when he is about to die is of interest to us all. How does he feel if he is a Christian? A heathen? What is his opinion concerning this world, and the next world? What does the dying man feel is truly valuable? Was (is) religion important to them? Has the dying one found anything to comfort them as they anticipate their departure?

II. DISCUSSION

- A. Reviewing the life of Paul the dying man.
 1. How he regarded his life here on earth.
 - a. Paul viewed his life as a conflict or fight, "I have fought the good fight." (See also: Phil. 1:30; Col. 2:1; 1 Thess. 2:2; 1 Cor. 9:25.) He saw a crown or reward waiting at the end for those who completed the struggle. Laziness and lack of exertion could cause one to lose their reward.
 - b. Paul viewed life as a race to be run, "I have finished my course." As a race, life has a beginning and ending point. It is short, and only will be run once.
 - c. Paul viewed life in terms of keeping the faith, being true to His Master and his Master's cause.
 2. What would Paul remember about his life?
 - a. He had sacrificed many things on this earth: honor, position, wealth he could have earned, and fame as a scholar, defender of Judaism, or orator. He had abandoned everything for Christ.

- b. He had been called upon to suffer for the Way. He had lived a life of sacrifice, toil, self-denial, peril, persecution, and poverty. He labored by his hands, he had no home, he was often alone, he had been shipwrecked, stoned, and scourged, (Acts 18:3; 2 Cor. 11:23- 27). He had been slandered by his enemies, reviled as a disturber of the peace by his Jewish brethren and deserted by his friends in time of need, (1 Cor. 4:9-13).
 - 3. How did Paul feel about the course his life had taken? He was not sorry, nor did he feel himself a failure. He held no doubts concerning his religion or the crown for which he labored. He was happy to be associated with the despised "sect of the Nazarene."
 - 4. Contrast and compare Paul's review of his life with the review we hear from others as they anticipate their death.
 - a. Many feel that they have wasted their lives by wasting time, talents, wealth, and opportunities for doing good, gaining knowledge, helping the poor, and preparing for eternity.
 - b. Many will look back on a wicked life of perverting powers and corrupting, seducing, and leading others away from their religious hopes. Instead of guiding others to God, they have spent their lives saying there is no God, no heaven, and no eternal spirit.
 - c. The misery of life without religion. The extent of this misery will be realized as death approaches: no prospect of happiness beyond the grave; no treasures laid up in heaven; no knowledge of God or how a sinner obtains salvation; no hope of a better life or fitness for heaven.
- B. Based on the review of the past, what are the dying man's prospects for the future? In Paul's case: because he had fought the good fight, finished his course, and kept the faith he had a crown of righteousness reserved in his name.
- 1. The best view of a man's future then, is a review of his past. This does not mean that a man cannot repent and be baptized for the remission of his sins in life's waning hours. We know God's mercy provides for salvation through obedience, even at the last hour, (Mt. 20:1-16). An obvious advantage of the Christian "race" is that it can be entered at any time during one's life. Nevertheless, the prospect of the "crown of righteousness" can be best seen in the light of a life lived in service to the Savior.
 - 2. In Paul's case, on what was his hope of a "crown" founded? We know the "crown" was not earned by Paul's own righteousness, but by the grace, mercy, and righteousness of Jesus Christ, (Titus 3:4-7; Eph. 2:8,9; Rom. 3:20-24; Phil. 3:7-9). The crown illustrates the righteousness of God, not the righteousness of man! God the Judge will show no partiality. He will not base His judgment on our rank, station, position, or wealth, but on our belief, obedience, and service.
- C. These are Paul's last words recorded for our benefit. Note their calmness. They are not fervid expressions of ecstasy, or visions of angels with outstretched arms; but quiet, calm utterances of faith.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Based on this lesson and your own study, answer the questions posed in the introduction under letter D.
2. Find scriptures that could be used to contrast the deathbed scenes of a dying Christian and a dying unbeliever.
3. Paul's allusions to the Grecian games are apparent in our text. Find other passages where he makes these athletic comparisons.

Lesson 24 Paul's Death Phil. 1:20-21 (Phil. 1)

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. While we know little concerning the actual circumstances of Paul's death, the event leaves us with some particular food for thought.
1. When one of Paul's stature dies it is a great event, if for no other reason than the loss of his influence for good.
 2. His death left a vacuum that could not easily be filled; in fact, the world has never found another to take his place.
- B. Tradition holds that Paul was tried before Caesar a second time and beheaded. His circumstances render this as probable due to his Roman citizenship. Under their laws he could not be tortured or crucified. It is also probable that he was executed outside the city limits of Rome, to avoid undue attention within the city. There is no reliable evidence concerning the disposal of his body.
- C. We know none of his dying words. We have no knowledge of who attended his funeral or if he had one. This should not surprise us as Paul had always emphasized his feelings concerning the lives of the believers, not their deathbed expressions. Yet, for Paul to die would be "gain," (Phil. 1:21). He meant it would be an advantage to himself based on the facts of the very religion he taught. In this sense, it would be an advantage for any Christian to die, because his eternal circumstances would be so much better than his earthly ones. This would hold true for the richest Christian as well as the most downtrodden. Heaven is a better, happier place than this world can ever be.

II. DISCUSSION

- A. Paul's influence on this world cannot be measured. While every great man has left his mark, someone could have taken their place. No one could have replaced Paul. His conversion to Christianity accounts for much, if not all, of the influence he has had on successive generations.

- B. What are some of the characteristics of Paul that caused him to be able to wield such influence? What are some of the traits that made him the right man for the job of taking Christianity to the Gentile world?
1. He was a profound thinker with the ability to reason from the scriptures.
 2. He was eloquent, not in his manner of speech or voice (1 Cor. 2:3,4; 2 Cor. 10:10), but in the message that he delivered.
 3. He was zealous no earthly obstacle was insurmountable in his eyes.
 4. His actions were always controlled by his conviction of what was right, his sense of integrity, and by always taking the high ground.
 5. His heart was tender and gentle, even to the point of a willingness to sacrifice his own soul to save that of his kinsmen, (Rom. 9:3).
- C. More specifically, let us examine Paul's particular religious characteristics.
1. In his religious principles he was absorbed, fixed, and immovable. Everything else in his life (whether as a Pharisee or a Christian) was subordinate to his religion.
 2. He truly believed that the "gospel is for all." In his eyes, there were no longer any human barriers that could not and were not transversed by Christianity. The one God, one Savior, one hope, one faith, and one baptism belong to all men universally.
 3. With regards to his own personal religion, he was humble, earnest, sincere, and prayerful. Principle was more powerful than feeling, truth more powerful than emotions. He was duty bound, honest, sincere, and possessed integrity. Both his energy and his love knew no bounds.
- D. Paul was a martyr not the first, but one of the first. He bore witness and faithful testimony to the truth of the Gospel, even as he faced death. "When the time came for him to seal his faith with his blood, he did not refuse to die."

III. CONCLUSION

- A. Paul's view of the results of his conversion to Christianity was surely broadened by his death. Do you think he regrets his decision to follow Jesus, as he awaits the judgment day, (Col. 3:9-17)?
- B. We must give up all for Christ. If we do, we will never regret it, either here on earth or in eternity. With Christ on our side, we can withstand poverty, disappointment, persecution, reproach, scorn and even death.

QUESTION FOR DISCUSSION

1. If to "die is gain" then why is suicide not an option to the Christian?
2. Would the characteristics described in the discussion point B. have been to Paul's advantage no matter what he chose as his life work? Explain how these characteristics need to be incorporated into both our secular and religious lives.
3. Compare Paul's "religious characteristics" (discussion point C.) to your own. How do you measure up to Paul?