SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 1

You Shall Be My Witnesses — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

The risen Jesus proves He is alive, tells His people to wait for the Spirit, and gives them one job — to be His witnesses from home to the ends of the earth. Then He goes up in a cloud with the promise that the same Jesus will come back the same way, and His church begins where it must always begin: on its knees, together.

00 The Text

ACTS 1 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach,

2 until the day when He was taken up to heaven, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen.

3 To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.

4 Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me;

5 for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

6 So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"

7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority;

8 but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

9 And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

10 And as they were gazing intently into the sky while He was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them.

11 They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day's journey away.

13 When they had entered the city, they went up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James.

14 These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.

15 At this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together), and said,

16 "Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus.

17 "For he was counted among us and received his share in this ministry."

18 (Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness, and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his intestines gushed out.

19 And it became known to all who were living in Jerusalem; so that in their own language that field was called Hakeldama, that is, Field of Blood.)

20 "For it is written in the book of Psalms, 'LET HIS HOMESTEAD BE MADE DESOLATE, AND LET NO ONE DWELL IN IT'; and, 'LET ANOTHER MAN TAKE HIS OFFICE.'

21 "Therefore it is necessary that of the men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us—

22 beginning with the baptism of John until the day that He was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection."

23 So they put forward two men, Joseph called Barsabbas (who was also called Justus), and Matthias.

24 And they prayed and said, "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men, show which one of these two You have chosen

25 to occupy this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place."

26 And they drew lots for them, and the lot fell to Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

Marked in the text

- **v1** "all that Jesus began to do and teach" — God — His character & actions
- **v3** "presented Himself alive after His suffering" — God — His character & actions
- **v3** "by many convincing proofs" — Time / place / contrast
- **v3** "over a period of forty days" — Time / place / contrast
- **v4** "not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised" — Command / instruction
- **v5** "you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" — Promise / blessing
- **v6** "is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel" — Time / place / contrast
- **v7** "It is not for you to know times or epochs" — Time / place / contrast
- **v8** "you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" — Promise / blessing
- **v8** "you shall be My witnesses" — Command / instruction
- **v8** "even to the remotest part of the earth" — Time / place / contrast
- **v9** "a cloud received Him out of their sight" — God — His character & actions
- **v11** "why do you stand looking into the sky?" — Sin / warning
- **v11** "will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven" — Promise / blessing
- **v14** "with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer" — Command / instruction
- **v16** "the Scripture had to be fulfilled" — God — His character & actions
- **v18** "the price of his wickedness" — Sin / warning
- **v19** "Field of Blood" — Sin / warning
- **v20** "LET ANOTHER MAN TAKE HIS OFFICE" — Time / place / contrast
- **v22** "a witness with us of His resurrection" — Command / instruction
- **v24** "who know the hearts of all men" — God — His character & actions
- **v25** "Judas turned aside to go to his own place" — Sin / warning
- **v26** "the lot fell to Matthias" — God — His character & actions
- **v2** "Holy Spirit" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v2** "taken up" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v9** "lifted up" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v8** "witnesses" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v22** "witness" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

01 Observation

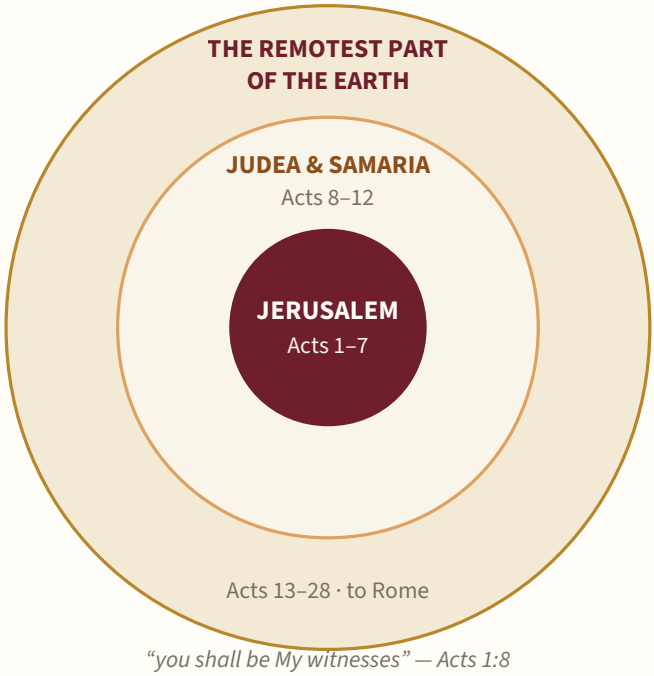
WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 1:3

"To these He also △presented Himself alive after His suffering, ◷by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God."

FIGURE · JERUSALEM, JUDEA AND SAMARIA, THE EARTH

ACTS 1:8 — THE OUTLINE OF THE WHOLE BOOK



JERUSALEM · 1–7

Pentecost, 3,000 saved (2:41)
the Twelve, the temple, Stephen

JUDEA & SAMARIA · 8–12

Philip in Samaria (8:5)
Saul turned; Cornelius (10)

TO THE NATIONS · 13–28

Paul's journeys from Antioch
"we came to Rome" (28:14)

Read Acts 1:8 from the center out: the witness starts in the city that crucified Jesus and keeps widening until it reaches Rome.

Setting. Luke writes his second account to Theophilus (v1). For forty days after His suffering the risen Jesus appears to the apostles and speaks of the kingdom of God (v3). He orders them to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father (vv4–5). On the Mount of Olives (v12) they ask about restoring the kingdom to Israel (v6); He gives them Acts 1:8 and is taken up in a cloud (v9). They return to an upper room in Jerusalem and pray (vv13–14). Peter, among about 120 believers, leads them to replace Judas, and the lot falls to Matthias (vv15–26).

Structure:

- vv1–5 — **the forty days:** the first account (v1); orders by the Holy Spirit (v2); alive by many convincing proofs, forty days, the kingdom of God (v3); "wait for what the Father had promised" (v4); baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now (v5).

- vv6–11 — **the question and the cloud:** "is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (v6); not for you to know times or epochs (v7); power, witnesses — Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, the remotest part of the earth (v8); lifted up, a cloud (v9); two men in white (v10); "This Jesus … will come in just the same way" (v11).
- vv12–14 — **the upper room:** back from Olivet, a Sabbath day's journey (v12); the eleven named (v13); with one mind devoted to prayer, with the women, Mary, and His brothers (v14).
- vv15–26 — **Judas and Matthias:** Peter stands up among about 120 (v15); "the Scripture had to be fulfilled" (vv16–17); the field and Judas' death, Hakeldama (vv18–19); two psalms (v20); the qualifications — with us from John's baptism, a witness of His resurrection (vv21–22); Joseph Barsabbas and Matthias (v23); "You, Lord, who know the hearts of all men" (vv24–25); the lot falls to Matthias (v26).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "Jerusalem" ×5 — vv4, 8, 12 (×2), 19.
- "Jesus" ×5 — vv1, 11, 14, 16, 21.
- "looking / gazing / watched / sight" ×5 — vv9 (×2), 10, 11 (×2).
- "heaven" ×3 — vv2, 11 (×2); "sky" ×2 — vv10, 11.
- "Holy Spirit" ×4 — vv2, 5, 8, 16.
- "taken up / lifted up" ×4 — vv2, 9, 11, 22.
- "baptized / baptism" ×3 — vv5 (×2), 22.
- "had to / necessary / must" ×3 — vv16, 21, 22.
- "apostles / apostleship" ×3 — vv2, 25, 26.
- "together" ×3 — vv4, 6, 15; "with one mind" — v14.
- "field" ×3 — vv18, 19 (×2).
- "witness(es)" ×2 — vv8, 22; "chosen" ×2 — vv2, 24; "ministry" ×2 — vv17, 25.
- "kingdom" ×2 — vv3, 6; "Father" ×2 — vv4, 7; "prayer / prayed" ×2 — vv14, 24; "lots / lot" ×2 — v26.

Contrasts: John baptized with water ⟷ you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit (v5). "At this time?" ⟷ not for you to know (vv6–7). Restoring the kingdom ⟷ receiving power to witness (vv6, 8). Taken up from you ⟷ will come in just the same way (v11). Standing and looking into the sky ⟷ returning to Jerusalem to pray (vv11–14). Judas, counted among us ⟷ Judas, turned aside to his own place (vv17, 25). The price of wickedness ⟷ a share in this ministry (vv17–18). Men put forward two ⟷ the Lord who knows the hearts chooses one (vv23–24).

Shape of the chapter: two halves, each ending with the apostles. The first half (1–11) is Jesus speaking and leaving; the second (12–26) is the church waiting and praying. At the center, verse 8 points forward to the whole book, and verse 11 points forward to the end of history.

Chapter theme (my words): The risen Lord commissions His witnesses, ascends as King, and promises to return the same way; His people obey, pray with one mind, and restore the Twelve while they wait for the power He promised.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 1:11

"They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, ☆ will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven.""

FIGURE · HE WENT, HE WILL COME

"IN JUST THE SAME WAY" — ACTS 1:11

HE WENT · ACTS 1:9–12	HE WILL COME
"This Jesus" — the same Lord (v11)	"This Jesus … will come" (v11)
bodily, while they watched (v9)	"every eye will see Him" (Rev 1:7)
"a cloud received Him" (v9)	"with the clouds of heaven" (Dan 7:13)
from "the mount called Olivet" (v12)	"His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives" (Zech 14:4)
to the Father's right hand (2:33)	the kingdom restored to Israel (1:6; Rom 11:26)

The angels did not say "someone like Him," or "in some way" — the same Jesus, the same way.

Each line on the left is how Jesus left in Acts 1; each line on the right is how Scripture says He will return.

Why forty days of proofs? Because the whole book rests on eyewitnesses. *Tekmērion* (v3), used only here, means a proof that settles the question. Henry: "They were honest men, and one may depend upon their testimony." Sproul insists Luke wrote as an educated historian, not a myth-maker.

Was the disciples' question about Israel a mistake? Here the teachers differ, and I want to be fair. Henry thinks they were still dreaming of "external pomp and power," and that we should "expect the cross in this world, and … wait for the kingdom in the other world." Guzik reads it as a fair question after forty days of kingdom teaching: Jesus "did not say that there was to be no restoration of the kingdom to Israel" — He only refused to give the date. Sproul ties it to the Old Testament longing for Israel's restoration and notes that Jesus does not rebuke them. I land with Guzik. Jesus corrected the timing, not the hope. Peter will speak of "the period of restoration of all things" in 3:21, and Paul says "all Israel will be saved" (Rom 11:26). God has not torn up His promises to Israel; the church's job in the meantime is witness.

What is the power of 1:8 for? Witness. Sproul: "The reason for the outpouring of the Spirit is not to make you feel spiritual." *Dynamis* gives the ability; *martys* names the job — telling what we have seen and heard about Jesus.

What happened at the ascension? Jesus went up bodily, in the glory cloud — Sproul: "This was the shekinah cloud." It was His coronation: "They were watching the King of kings going to His coronation." Guzik: the visible departure meant "He was gone for good" — no more resurrection appearances, now the Spirit.

How will He come back? "In just the same way" (v11): the same Jesus, bodily, visibly, with the clouds, to the Mount of Olives (Zech 14:4). Spurgeon: "He went up not in spirit, but in person," and "He will come down in person." I read Acts 1:11 with Zechariah 14 — a literal return to a literal mountain, when the kingdom the disciples asked about is finally set up. Before that, I believe the Lord will catch up His church to meet Him in the air (1 Thess 4:16–17).

Why pray for ten days? Because they were told to wait, and waiting people pray. Henry: "Those are in the best frame to receive spiritual blessings that are in a praying frame." Sproul: "Beloved, we cannot stand alone." Even Jesus' brothers are there — converted, Sproul says, by the resurrection, for "No one has ever been saved by somebody else's faith."

Was choosing Matthias right? Some say the apostles moved too fast and that Paul was God's twelfth. Guzik and Sproul disagree: the Scripture called for the office to be filled (Ps 109:8), they prayed first, and the lot was the Lord's (Prov 16:33). Sproul: "The Twelve were now filled out"; Paul "was not a disciple from the days of the baptism of Jesus." Guzik keeps a light touch: we will see in heaven "if the twelfth apostle of the Lamb is Paul or Matthias." I agree with them — Matthias was God's man, and the Twelve had to be whole before Israel's feast of Pentecost.

Are there apostles today? Not of this kind. The marks were: with Jesus from John's baptism, an eyewitness of the resurrection, chosen by the Lord (vv21–24). Sproul: "Beloved, there are no Apostles, in the biblical sense, today."

Word study (Greek):

- **convincing proofs — *tekmērion* (G5039):** a sure, settling proof; only Acts 1:3.
- **promise — *epangelia* (G1860):** "the promise of the Father" (1:4; Luke 24:49; Acts 2:33, 39).
- **restoring — *apokathistēmi* (G600):** to restore to a former state; compare 3:21.
- **power — *dynamis* (G1411):** ability, might — given for witness.
- **witnesses — *martys* (G3144):** one who testifies to what he has seen; later "martyr" (22:20).
- **cloud — *nephelē* (G3507):** the cloud that received Him (v9); Dan 7:13; 1 Thess 4:17.
- **taken up — *analambanō* (G353):** vv2, 11, 22.
- **with one mind — *homothymadon* (G3661):** one passion; ten of eleven NT uses in Acts.
- **devoting themselves — *proskartereō* (G4342):** to stick with it; 1:14; 2:42, 46; 6:4.
- **office — *episkopē* (G1984):** an overseer's charge (Ps 109:8; 1 Tim 3:1).
- **lot — *klēros* (G2819):** a lot cast, and the share it decides (vv17, 26).

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **Acts is volume two of Jesus** — what He began, He continues (v1).
2. **The resurrection was checked, not felt** — *tekmērion* (v3).
3. **Waiting was an order** — they could do nothing until the Spirit came (Guzik).
4. **Jesus corrected the timing, not the hope** — Israel's restoration still stands (v7; Rom 11:26).

5. **Power is for witness** — not to feel spiritual (Sproul).
6. **The ascension was a coronation** — the shekinah cloud (Sproul).
7. **Look up — but don't stand there** — look, but do not gaze (Spurgeon).
8. **A Zealot and a tax collector prayed as one** — *homothymadon* (v14).
9. **Judas did not spoil the plan** (Guzik, Henry).
10. **The Twelve had to be twelve** — Matthias, and no apostles today (Sproul).

Cross-references: Lev 23:15–16; Ps 69:25; 109:8; 110:1; Prov 16:33; Dan 7:13–14; Zech 14:4; Luke 1:1–4; 22:30; 24:44–53; John 7:39; 14:16; 16:7; Acts 2:1–4, 33; 3:21; 8:1; 22:20; Rom 11:25–27; 1 Cor 15:5–8; 1 Thess 4:16–17; Rev 1:7; 21:14.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 1:14

"These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers."

FIGURE · THE TWELVE MADE WHOLE

THE TWELVE MADE WHOLE · ACTS 1:13, 21–26

Peter	John	James	Andrew
Philip	Thomas	Bartholomew	Matthew
James son of Alphaeus	Simon the Zealot	Judas son of James	MATTHIAS (v26)

The empty place: "Judas turned aside to go to his own place" (v25)

1 · WITH US	2 · A WITNESS	3 · CHOSEN
accompanied us all the time, "beginning with the baptism of John" (vv21–22)	"a witness with us of His resurrection" (v22) — saw the risen Lord	"show which one of these two You have chosen" (v24) — the Lord picks

Sproul's three marks of an apostle: with Jesus from the start, an eyewitness of the resurrection, commissioned by Christ.

Eleven names from verse 13 and the one added in verse 26, with the three tests the apostles used to fill Judas' place.

Command to obey — wait, then witness. Jesus told His men not to leave Jerusalem until the power came, and then to be His witnesses starting right there. I am quick to run ahead and do things for God in my own strength, and slow to wait and pray. This week I will pray before I plan. And I will tell one person in my "Jerusalem" — the people who know my past best — what Jesus has done for me.

Sin to confess — curiosity without obedience. The disciples wanted the timetable. I can spend more time on charts of the end times than on the man sitting next to me who needs Christ. I love prophecy, and I believe the Lord is coming for His church and will keep every promise to Israel. But I confess that I have sometimes been gazing instead of working.

Promise to trust — "This Jesus … will come in just the same way." The same Jesus who forgave Peter and called a tax collector is the One coming back. Not a different, harder Jesus. He went up bodily, and He will come down in person (Spurgeon). That is the hope I hold out to the men I serve — many of them have been let down by every man who promised to come back. This One will.

Example to follow — the upper room. A fisherman, a tax collector, a Zealot, the women, Mary and Jesus' once-doubting brothers — "with one mind … devoting themselves to prayer." Guzik: "the resurrected Jesus in their hearts was greater than any difference." I need other men, and they need me. Sproul: "we cannot stand alone."

Warning to heed — Judas. He was "counted among us and received his share in this ministry" (v17), and still turned aside. Being close to Jesus, even serving in ministry, is not the same as belonging to Him. I will keep short accounts with God and let my brothers ask me hard questions.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. Luke says Acts is what Jesus continues to do. Where in my life right now is Jesus continuing a work He began — and am I cooperating with it? (1:1–3; Phil 1:6) *What Jesus began still continues (Guzik).*
2. Jesus told them to wait. What am I trying to do for God in my own strength that I have not first waited and prayed for? (1:4–5, 14) *They could do nothing effective until the Spirit came (Guzik).*
3. The disciples asked "when?" and Jesus answered "you shall be My witnesses." Which do I spend more energy on — the timing of His plans, or the job He gave me? (1:6–8) *Power for witness, not to feel spiritual (Sproul).*
4. Who is my "Jerusalem" — the people closest to me, who know my past best — and what would it look like to be a witness there this week? (1:8; Mark 5:19) *The witness starts at home and keeps widening.*
5. The angels asked, "why do you stand looking into the sky?" Is my hope in Christ's return making me busier and holier, or just more curious? (1:10–11; 1 John 3:2–3) *Look, but do not gaze (Spurgeon).*
6. Judas walked with Jesus for three years and still turned aside. What keeps me honest so that being near Jesus never becomes a substitute for belonging to Him? (1:16–18, 25) *He was counted among us — and went to his own place.*

Worship. The risen Lord who proved Himself alive, the King who went up in the glory cloud to His coronation, the Son who sends the promise of the Father, the Lord who knows the hearts of all men — this Jesus is coming again, in just the same way, and His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives.

Prayer. Lord Jesus, You are alive, and You are reigning. Forgive me for running ahead of You and for gazing when I should be working. Fill me with Your Spirit, not so I feel spiritual, but so I can tell the truth about You — at home first, and then wherever You send me. Make me a man of one mind with my brothers in prayer. Keep me from turning aside like Judas. And keep me ready, because You are coming back. Amen.

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SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 2

The Spirit Poured Out — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

On the feast of firstfruits God pours out His Spirit, the gospel is heard in the languages of the nations, and Peter preaches the crucified Jesus as risen, exalted, Lord and Christ. Guilty men are pierced to the heart, turn, are forgiven and baptized, and a glad new family devotes itself to the Word, to one another, to the Lord's table and to prayer.

00 The Text

ACTS 2 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place.

2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.

3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them.

4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

5 Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem, devout men from every nation under heaven.

6 And when this sound occurred, the crowd came together, and were bewildered because each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language.

7 They were amazed and astonished, saying, "Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans?

8 "And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born?

9 "Parthians and Medes and Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the districts of Libya around Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes,

11 Cretans and Arabs—we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God."

12 And they all continued in amazement and great perplexity, saying to one another, "What does this mean?"

13 But others were mocking and saying, "They are full of sweet wine."

14 But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words.

15 "For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day;

16 but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel:

17 ‘AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,’ God says,
‘THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHESY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS;

18 EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT And they shall prophesy.

19 ‘AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE.

20 ‘THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME.

21 ‘AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.’

22 “Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know—

23 this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God,
you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.

24 “But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power.

25 “For David says of Him, ‘I SAW THE LORD ALWAYS IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN.

26 ‘THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXULTED; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL LIVE IN HOPE;

27 BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES,
NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY.

28 ‘YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH YOUR PRESENCE.’

29 “Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.

30 “And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT one OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE,

31 he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY.

32 “This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.

33 “Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.

34 “For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: ‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, “SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND,

35 UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET.”’

36 “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified.”

37 Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?”

38 Peter said to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and
you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

39 “For
the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.”

40 And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation!”

41 So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls.

42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

43 Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.

44 And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common;

45 and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.

46 Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,

47 praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Marked in the text

- **v1** "When the day of Pentecost had come" — Time / place / contrast
- **v2** "a noise like a violent rushing wind" — God — His character & actions
- **v3** "tongues as of fire" — God — His character & actions
- **v4** "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" — Promise / blessing
- **v6** "each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language" — Time / place / contrast
- **v11** "the mighty deeds of God" — God — His character & actions
- **v12** "What does this mean?" — Time / place / contrast
- **v13** "They are full of sweet wine" — Sin / warning
- **v16** "this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel" — God — His character & actions
- **v17** "IN THE LAST DAYS" — Time / place / contrast
- **v17** "I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND" — Promise / blessing
- **v20** "BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME" — Time / place / contrast
- **v21** "EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED" — Promise / blessing
- **v23** "delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God" — God — His character & actions
- **v23** "you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men" — Sin / warning
- **v24** "But God raised Him up again" — God — His character & actions
- **v24** "it was impossible for Him to be held in its power" — God — His character & actions
- **v27** "NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY" — Promise / blessing
- **v32** "to which we are all witnesses" — Command / instruction
- **v33** "having been exalted to the right hand of God" — God — His character & actions
- **v36** "God has made Him both Lord and Christ" — God — His character & actions
- **v36** "this Jesus whom you crucified" — Sin / warning
- **v37** "they were pierced to the heart" — Sin / warning
- **v37** "what shall we do?" — Command / instruction
- **v38** "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" — Command / instruction
- **v38** "for the forgiveness of your sins" — Promise / blessing
- **v38** "you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" — Promise / blessing
- **v39** "the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off" — Promise / blessing
- **v40** "Be saved from this perverse generation!" — Command / instruction
- **v41** "about three thousand souls" — Time / place / contrast
- **v42** "continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer" — Command / instruction
- **v44** "had all things in common" — Time / place / contrast
- **v47** "the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved" — God — His character & actions
- **v4** "Holy Spirit" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v4** "Spirit" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v3** "tongues" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v6** "language" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

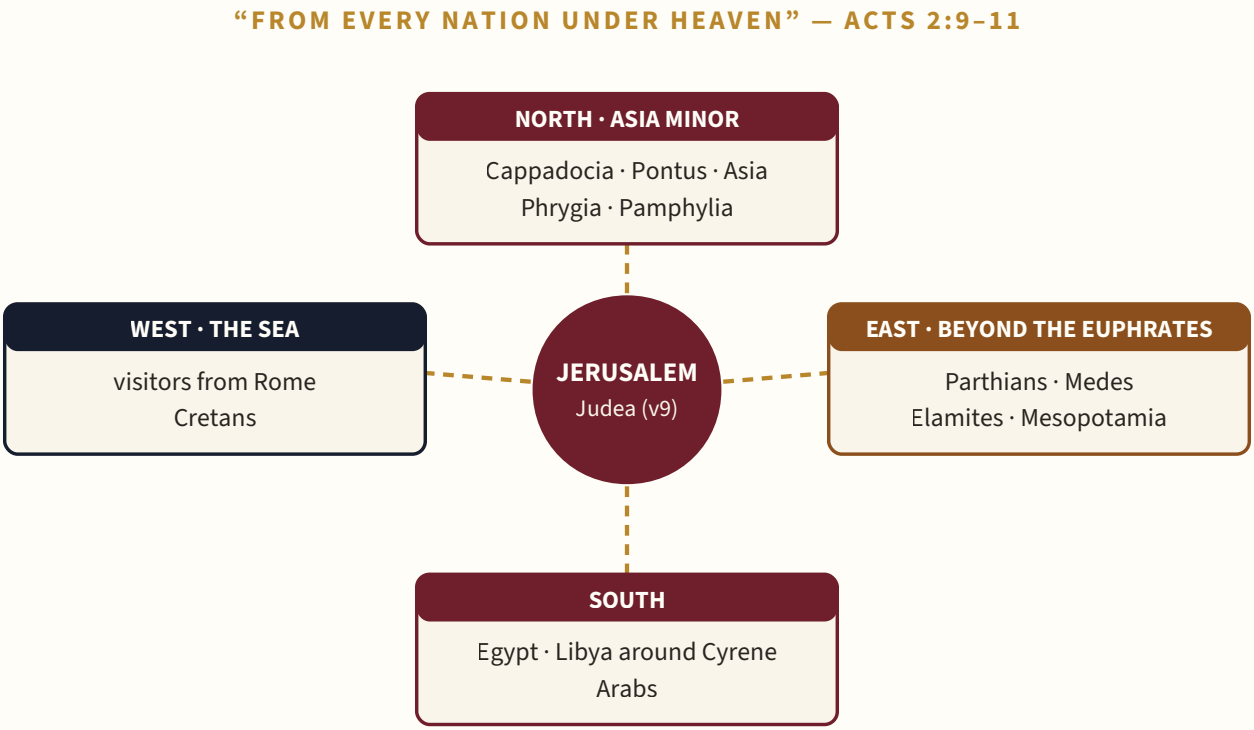
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 2:4

"And ☆ they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance."

FIGURE · EVERY NATION UNDER HEAVEN



"we hear them in our own tongues speaking of the mighty deeds of God" (v11) · schematic, not to scale

The pilgrims of verses 9–11 came from all four directions of the Jewish world; many carried the gospel home.

Setting. Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost, fifty days after Passover (v1). The 120 are together in one place (v1); the Spirit comes with a sound like wind, tongues as of fire, and other tongues (vv2–4). Devout Jews from every nation gather and hear their own languages (vv5–12); some mock (v13). Peter preaches at the third hour of the day (vv14–36), the crowd is pierced (v37), about three thousand are baptized (v41), and the new church gathers in the temple and from house to house (vv42–47).

Structure:

- vv1–4 — **the Spirit comes:** the day of Pentecost; all together (v1); a noise like a violent rushing wind filling the house (v2); tongues as of fire on each one (v3); all filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking with other tongues (v4).

- vv5–13 — **the crowd:** devout men from every nation (v5); each hears his own language (vv6–8); the list of nations (vv9–11); "the mighty deeds of God" (v11); "What does this mean?" (v12); "They are full of sweet wine" (v13).
- vv14–21 — **Peter and Joel:** Peter stands with the eleven (v14); not drunk — the third hour (v15); "this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel" (v16); the Spirit on all mankind in the last days (vv17–18); wonders, signs, the darkened sun and bloody moon before the day of the Lord (vv19–20); everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved (v21).
- vv22–36 — **the sermon on Jesus:** attested by God with miracles (v22); delivered by God's plan, crucified by you (v23); raised — death could not hold Him (v24); Psalm 16 (vv25–28); David died and was buried; the oath and the throne (vv29–31); "This Jesus God raised up" — we are witnesses (v32); exalted, He poured forth the Spirit (v33); Psalm 110 (vv34–35); "both Lord and Christ — this Jesus whom you crucified" (v36).
- vv37–41 — **the response:** pierced to the heart — "what shall we do?" (v37); repent, be baptized, forgiveness, the gift of the Holy Spirit (v38); the promise for you, your children and the far off (v39); "Be saved from this perverse generation!" (v40); about three thousand souls added (v41).
- vv42–47 — **the first church:** teaching, fellowship, bread, prayer (v42); awe, wonders and signs (v43); all things in common, sharing with any in need (vv44–45); temple and homes, gladness and sincerity (v46); praising God, favor with all, the Lord adding day by day (v47).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "all" ×13 — vv1, 4, 7, 12, 14, 17, 32, 36, 39, 44 (×2), 45, 47.
- "God" ×12 — vv11, 17, 22 (×2), 23, 24, 30, 32, 33, 36, 39, 47.
- "day / days" ×11 — vv1, 15, 17, 18, 20, 29, 41, 46 (×2), 47 (×2).
- "Lord" ×8 — vv20, 21, 25, 34 (×2), 36, 39, 47.
- "Spirit" ×6 — vv4 (×2), 17, 18, 33, 38.
- "wonders / signs" ×6 — vv19 (×2), 22 (×2), 43 (×2).
- "amazed / astonished / bewildered / perplexity" ×5 — vv6, 7 (×2), 12 (×2).
- "hear / heard / hearing" ×5 — vv6, 8, 11, 33, 37.
- "tongues" ×3 — vv3, 4, 11; "language" ×2 — vv6, 8.
- "Jesus" ×4 — vv22, 32, 36, 38; "Christ" ×3 — vv31, 36, 38.
- "together" ×4 — vv1, 6, 44, 46; "house" ×4 — vv2, 36, 46 (×2).
- "prophesy / prophet" ×4 — vv16, 17, 18, 30.
- "David" ×3 — vv25, 29, 34; "right hand" ×3 — vv25, 33, 34.
- "pour forth / poured forth" ×3 — vv17, 18, 33.
- "saved" ×3 — vv21, 40, 47.
- "raised up" ×2 — vv24, 32; "Hades" ×2 and "decay" ×2 — vv27, 31.
- "promise" ×2 — vv33, 39; "baptized" ×2 — vv38, 41; "added / adding" ×2 — vv41, 47; "bread" ×2 — vv42, 46.

Contrasts: Amazement ⟷ mocking (vv12–13). Drunk on sweet wine ⟷ filled with the Spirit (vv4, 13, 15). The predetermined plan of God ⟷ the hands of godless men (v23). You put Him to death ⟷ God raised Him up (vv23–24). David died and was buried ⟷ His Holy One did not undergo decay (vv27, 29–31). David did not ascend

⟷ Jesus exalted to the right hand (vv33–34). This Jesus whom you crucified ⟷ both Lord and Christ (v36). This perverse generation ⟷ those who were being saved (vv40, 47).

Shape of the chapter: an event (1–13), an explanation (14–36), a response (37–41) and a result (42–47). The sermon itself moves from Scripture to Jesus — attested, crucified, raised, exalted — and ends on one sentence: Lord and Christ.

Chapter theme (my words): The exalted Jesus pours out the promised Spirit; the gospel of the crucified and risen Lord pierces guilty hearts; and the forgiven become a devoted, generous, glad church that the Lord grows day by day.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 2:36

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that ⚠ God has made Him both Lord and Christ—⚠ this Jesus whom you crucified."

FIGURE · JOEL AND THE TONGUES

"THIS IS WHAT WAS SPOKEN" — THREE READINGS OF JOEL IN ACTS 2

FULFILLED THEN *Henry*	ALREADY · NOT YET *Guzik*	FUTURIST *this study*
Joel fulfilled in the apostolic age; the blood, fire and smoke point to Jerusalem's fall (AD 70).	"Last days" run from Christ's first coming to His return; Pentecost is the first fulfillment.	Pentecost is a firstfruits preview; the sun and moon signs and Israel's outpouring come at the Day of the LORD.

Futurist anchors: Joel 2:32 ("on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem"), Joel 3:1, Zechariah 12:10, Romans 11:26.

THE TONGUES OF ACTS 2 — WHERE TEACHERS AGREE AND DIFFER

AGREED: REAL LANGUAGES, UNDERSTOOD BY THE HEARERS

"each one of them was hearing them speak in his own language" (v6; vv8, 11) — Guzik, Sproul, Henry

DOES THE GIFT CONTINUE?	IS PENTECOST REPEATED?	IS IT FOR EVERY BELIEVER?
Continuationist: a gift still given Cessationist: a sign that has ceased Guzik presents both views	Sproul: its effects continue, the event is not repeated — the Spirit for every believer	Not every believer prays in tongues (Guzik); every believer has the Spirit (2:38; Sproul)

Hold these with charity: the text settles what happened; Christians differ on what is normal now.

The top row sets the three main readings of Peter's use of Joel side by side; the bottom rows show what our teachers agree on about the tongues and where Christians differ.

Why Pentecost? Because it was the feast of firstfruits (Lev 23:16), and Jerusalem was full. Henry: "the Jewish feasts served to toll the bell for gospel services." Fifty days after the Lamb was slain, God gathered the first sheaf of His harvest from every nation.

What were the wind and fire? Signs of God's presence, not the gift itself. Sproul: "This was the wind of God, a theophany, a visible manifestation of the invisible God." Guzik: "It was real, though it could not be touched; it came by the ears." Spurgeon: "Fire, again, is a frequent symbol of Deity." The gift was the filling (v4).

What were the tongues — and do they continue? On what happened, our teachers agree: real human languages the speakers had never learned, understood by the hearers (vv6, 8, 11). Guzik: "languages that they were never taught." Sproul: "languages in which they were unskilled." Henry: Galileans "that know no other than their mother tongue." Guzik adds that some may have praised God in a language no one present knew, and he treats Acts 2 and 1 Corinthians 12–14 as the same gift. On whether the gift continues, faithful Christians differ: continuationists (Guzik lays this view out as "a gift still given by God today") and cessationists, who see tongues as a sign for the apostolic age. Pentecostals also teach tongues as the first evidence of Spirit baptism; Guzik notes that "The ability to pray in an unknown tongue is not a gift given to every believer." Sproul's line helps me: Pentecost's effects continue, but the event is not repeated — every believer receives the Spirit (2:38). I will not make tongues a test of fellowship either way.

What did Peter mean by "this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel"? Three readings, honestly stated:

- *Fulfilled then.* Henry: "This is that effusion of the Spirit upon all flesh which should come," and the blood, fire and smoke were the warnings before Jerusalem fell in AD 70 ("there was a fiery comet that hung over the city for a year").
- *Already and not yet.* Guzik: the last days "are the times of the Messiah, encompassing both His humble coming and His return in glory"; Joel's words "furnish the explanation of this first Pentecost" without being used up.
- *Futurist.* This is where I stand. Pentecost is the same kind of outpouring Joel promised and a true beginning of it — Peter can say "this is that" — but it is the firstfruits, not the full harvest. The sun did not go dark and the moon did not turn to blood that morning; those signs belong to "the great and glorious day of the Lord" (v20; Joel 2:31; Rev 6:12). And Joel's promise in context is to Israel: "on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem There will be those who escape" (Joel 2:32), when God restores "the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem" (Joel 3:1). Zechariah sees the Spirit poured out on "the house of David" when they look on Him whom they pierced (Zech 12:10), and Paul says "all Israel will be saved" (Rom 11:26), because "the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Rom 11:29). Peter himself told Israel to repent "in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" and that God "may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you" (3:19–20). Pentecost is the down payment; the rest is still coming.

How can the cross be God's plan and their sin? Verse 23 says both. Sproul: "when God brings His will to pass, He works in, through, and by the real decisions of real people." Henry: "The same that delivered him to death delivers him from death." God's sovereignty never makes a sinner innocent.

Why do Psalm 16 and 110 prove Jesus is the Christ? David "died and was buried" (v29); his body decayed. So the Holy One who would not "undergo decay" is David's descendant on David's throne — the risen Jesus (vv30–31). And David did not ascend, yet he heard the LORD say to "my Lord," "Sit at My right hand" (vv34–35). Henry: "Christ rose from the grave to rise higher." Spurgeon: "He was Lord, as God, always; but as God-and-man, he is now Lord and Christ." The throne of David is promised to Jesus; I believe He will sit on it in Jerusalem when He returns (Luke 1:32–33; Matt 19:28).

What does Acts 2:38 teach about baptism? Christians read "be baptized … for the forgiveness of your sins" differently: some see baptism as the means of forgiveness; most evangelicals see it as the commanded response of faith that pictures forgiveness already received through repentance and faith (compare 3:19; 10:43–48, where the Spirit comes before baptism). Guzik: "While baptism with water was the expected symbol for conversion, it was not an indispensable criterion for salvation." Henry: "Be washed, and you shall be washed." Reformed teachers who baptize infants also hear covenant language in "for you and your children" (v39); Baptists read "as many as the Lord our God will call" as limiting it to those who believe. All agree: repent, believe, and do not despise baptism.

Was the sharing of verses 44–45 communism? No. Guzik: "We shouldn't regard this as an early experiment in communism." Sproul: "Nowhere does the New Testament require that everybody have their goods in common" — they "gave because they wanted to give" (compare 5:4).

Word study (Greek):

- **Pentecost — *pentēkostē* (G4005):** "fiftieth," the Feast of Weeks.
- **wind — *pnoē* (G4157):** breath; only 2:2 and 17:25.
- **tongues — *glōssa* (G1100):** tongue, language; **other — *heteros* (G2087):** different.
- **utterance — *apophthengomai* (G669):** clear, weighty speech; 2:4, 14; 26:25.
- **language — *dialektos* (G1258):** a spoken language; six uses, all in Acts.
- **last days — *eschatai hēmerai* (G2078, G2250):** Peter's inspired reading of Joel's "after this."
- **pour forth — *ekcheō* (G1632):** 2:17, 18, 33; Zech 12:10.
- **predetermined plan — *horizō* (G3724) + *boulē* (G1012):** God's fixed counsel (v23).
- **Lord — *kyrios* (G2962):** the LORD of Joel and Psalm 110 is Jesus (vv21, 34, 36).
- **pierced — *katanyssomai* (G2660):** stabbed through; only 2:37.
- **repent — *metanoeō* (G3340):** change of mind that turns the life.
- **forgiveness — *aphesis* (G859):** release, a debt cancelled; **gift — *dōrea* (G1431).**
- **devoting themselves — *proskartereō* (G4342):** 1:14; 2:42, 46.
- **fellowship — *koinōnia* (G2842):** shared life; **common — *koinos* (G2839).**
- **breaking — *klasis* (G2800):** only 2:42 and Luke 24:35.

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **Pentecost was a harvest feast** — three thousand firstfruits.
2. **Breath, not just wind** — *pnoē*; a theophany (Sproul).
3. **The tongues were languages** — agreed; whether the gift continues is debated.
4. **Babel reversed** — one message heard in many languages.
5. **Joel began, but did not finish** — the cosmic signs and Israel's outpouring are still ahead.
6. **God's plan and man's guilt** — both true in v23 (Sproul).
7. **The Lord of Joel is Jesus** — *kyrios*, Lord and Christ (Spurgeon).
8. **The sermon, not the sign, pierced them** (Guzik).
9. **Real guilt needs real forgiveness** (Sproul).
10. **Four devotions, freely given** — Word, fellowship, bread, prayer; generous, not forced.

Cross-references: Gen 2:7; 11:1–9; Exod 19:16–18; Lev 23:15–21; Num 11:29; 2 Sam 7:12–16; Ps 16:8–11; 110:1; Isa 2:2–3; Ezek 36:26–27; 37:9–14; Joel 2:28–3:1; Zech 12:10; Luke 1:32–33; 24:35, 49; John 7:39; 16:7; Acts 1:4–8; 3:19–21; 10:44–48; Rom 11:25–29; 1 Cor 12:13; 14:1–25; Rev 6:12.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 2:42

"They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

FIGURE · PETER'S FIRST SERMON

PETER'S FIRST SERMON · ACTS 2:14–41

1 · SCRIPTURE vv14–21	2 · ATTESTED v22	3 · CRUCIFIED v23
"this is what was spoken" — Joel	miracles, wonders and signs by God	God's plan — and your guilt
4 · RAISED vv24–32	**5 · EXALTED vv33–35**	**6 · LORD & CHRIST v36**
death could not hold Him — Psalm 16	right hand; the Spirit poured — Psalm 110	"this Jesus whom you crucified"

THE RESPONSE · vv37–41

pierced to the heart → "what shall we do?" → repent, be baptized → about three thousand souls

Follow the six boxes in order: Peter starts with Scripture and ends with a crucified Man who is Lord and Christ — and then the crowd asks what to do.

Command to obey — repent, and keep devoted. Peter's answer to "what shall we do?" was not complicated: repent, be baptized, receive the gift. And the people who did it kept going — "continually devoting themselves" to the Word, to each other, to the Lord's table and to prayer (v42). Recovery taught me that the first step matters and the daily steps keep you alive. This week I will be in the Word every day, at the table with my brothers, and on my knees.

Sin to confess — "this Jesus whom you crucified." Peter did not soften it, and I won't either. My sin put Jesus on that cross as surely as theirs did. Sproul is right that there is real guilt, and that only real forgiveness answers it. I confess my sin by name, not in general, and I take the forgiveness Peter offered — *aphesis*, the debt released.

Promise to trust — "the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off." Many of the men I serve feel "far off" — from God, from their kids, from their own past. Peter's promise reaches them. And it reaches our children. I will pray by name for the far-off ones in my family this week.

Example to follow — Peter. Fifty-some days earlier he denied Jesus to a servant girl. Now, filled with the Spirit, he stands up before thousands and says "you crucified" Him. The Spirit did not make Peter someone else; He made Peter bold. Sproul: he "did not leave his brain in the parking lot." I can be honest and clear about Jesus with the men around me.

Warning to heed — mockery and the easy explanation. "They are full of sweet wine." When God is moving, the easy thing is to explain it away. I want to be among those asking, "What does this mean?"

A word on the hard questions. I believe the tongues of Acts 2 were real languages; I won't divide from brothers who differ on whether the gift continues. I believe Joel's prophecy began at Pentecost and will be finished when the Lord pours out His Spirit on Israel at the Day of the LORD. Either way, the question for me is the crowd's: "Brethren, what shall we do?"

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. The disciples did nothing to produce Pentecost except obey and pray. Where am I trying to manufacture spiritual power instead of asking for it? (2:1–4; Luke 11:13) *The gift comes as He wills (Guzik).*
2. Some heard the mighty deeds of God; others said, "They are full of sweet wine." When God is at work around me, am I more likely to wonder or to mock? (2:12–13) *What does this mean? (v12)*
3. Peter says the Spirit is poured out on sons and daughters, young and old, servants men and women. What gift or service am I holding back because I think I am not the kind of person God uses? (2:17–18; 1 Cor 12:7) *Poured out on all of us who are His (Sproul).*
4. Peter told the crowd plainly, "you crucified" Him — and then offered forgiveness. Have I ever let the full weight of my sin and the full offer of grace land on me at the same time? (2:23, 36–38) *Real guilt needs real forgiveness (Sproul).*
5. "What shall we do?" Peter answered: repent, be baptized, receive the gift. Which of those steps have I taken, and which am I still putting off? (2:37–41) *Change your mind, change your way (Henry).*
6. Which of the four devotions of verse 42 — teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, prayer — is weakest in my life, and what one change would strengthen it? (2:42–47) *God's prescription for church growth (Guzik).*

Worship. The exalted Christ, seated at the right hand of God, has poured out the promise of the Father. The Holy One did not see decay. The Lord on whose name we call is Jesus, both Lord and Christ — and the Lord who adds to His church day by day those who are being saved.

Prayer. Lord Jesus, You were crucified by my sin and raised by Your Father, and You have poured out Your Spirit. Pierce my heart with the truth, and then heal it with Your forgiveness. Make me bold like Peter, honest about my sin and clear about You. Keep me devoted to Your Word, to my brothers, to Your table and to prayer. Reach the far-off ones in my family. And hasten the day when You pour out Your Spirit on the house of David and all Israel looks on You and is saved. Amen.

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SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 3

What I Do Have I Give to You — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

A man who could never walk is lifted to his feet by the name of Jesus, and Peter turns the crowd's amazement toward the Prince of life they put to death. God offers even His Son's killers forgiveness, refreshing and the return of their Messiah — if they will turn around.

00 The Text

ACTS 3 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 Now Peter and John were going up to the temple at the ninth hour, the hour of prayer.

2 And a man who had been lame from his mother's womb was being carried along, whom they used to set down every day at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, in order to beg alms of those who were entering the temple.

3 When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he began asking to receive alms.

4 But Peter, along with John, fixed his gaze on him and said, "Look at us!"

5 And he began to give them his attention, expecting to receive something from them.

6 But Peter said, "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you:
In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene—walk!"

7 And seizing him by the right hand, he raised him up; and immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened.

8 With a leap he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.

9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God;

10 and they were taking note of him as being the one who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate of the temple to beg alms, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

11 While he was clinging to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them at the so-called portico of Solomon, full of amazement.

12 But when Peter saw this, he replied to the people, "Men of Israel, why are you amazed at this, or why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk?

13 "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified His servant Jesus, the one whom you delivered and disowned in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release Him.

14 "But you disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked for a murderer to be granted to you,

15 but put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses.

16 “And on the basis of faith in His name, it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man whom you see and know; and the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect health in the presence of you all.

17 “And now, brethren, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your rulers did also.

18 “But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.

19 “Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord;

20 and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you,

21 whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time.

22 “Moses said, ‘THE LORD GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN; TO HIM YOU SHALL GIVE HEED to everything He says to you.

23 ‘And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.’

24 “And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days.

25 “It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, ‘AND IN YOUR SEED ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH SHALL BE BLESSED.’

26 “For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways.”

Marked in the text

- **v1** “the hour of prayer” — Time / place / contrast
- **v2** “lame from his mother’s womb” — Sin / warning
- **v2** “which is called Beautiful” — Time / place / contrast
- **v4** “fixed his gaze on him” — Time / place / contrast
- **v6** “I do not possess silver and gold” — Time / place / contrast
- **v6** “In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene” — God — His character & actions
- **v7** “immediately his feet and his ankles were strengthened” — God — His character & actions
- **v8** “walking and leaping and praising God” — Promise / blessing
- **v12** “as if by our own power or piety” — Sin / warning
- **v13** “has glorified His servant Jesus” — God — His character & actions
- **v14** “you disowned the Holy and Righteous One” — Sin / warning
- **v14** “asked for a murderer” — Sin / warning
- **v15** “put to death the Prince of life” — Sin / warning
- **v15** “the one whom God raised from the dead” — God — His character & actions
- **v16** “it is the name of Jesus which has strengthened this man” — God — His character & actions
- **v17** “you acted in ignorance” — Sin / warning
- **v18** “His Christ would suffer” — God — His character & actions
- **v19** “repent and return” — Command / instruction
- **v19** “your sins may be wiped away” — Promise / blessing
- **v19** “times of refreshing” — Promise / blessing
- **v21** “whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things” — Time / place / contrast
- **v22** “TO HIM YOU SHALL GIVE HEED” — Command / instruction
- **v23** “shall be utterly destroyed from among the people” — Sin / warning
- **v25** “IN YOUR SEED ALL THE FAMILIES OF THE EARTH SHALL BE BLESSED” — Promise / blessing
- **v26** “For you first” — Time / place / contrast
- **v26** “turning every one of you from your wicked ways” — God — His character & actions
- **v6** “name” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v18** “prophets” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v8** “walk” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

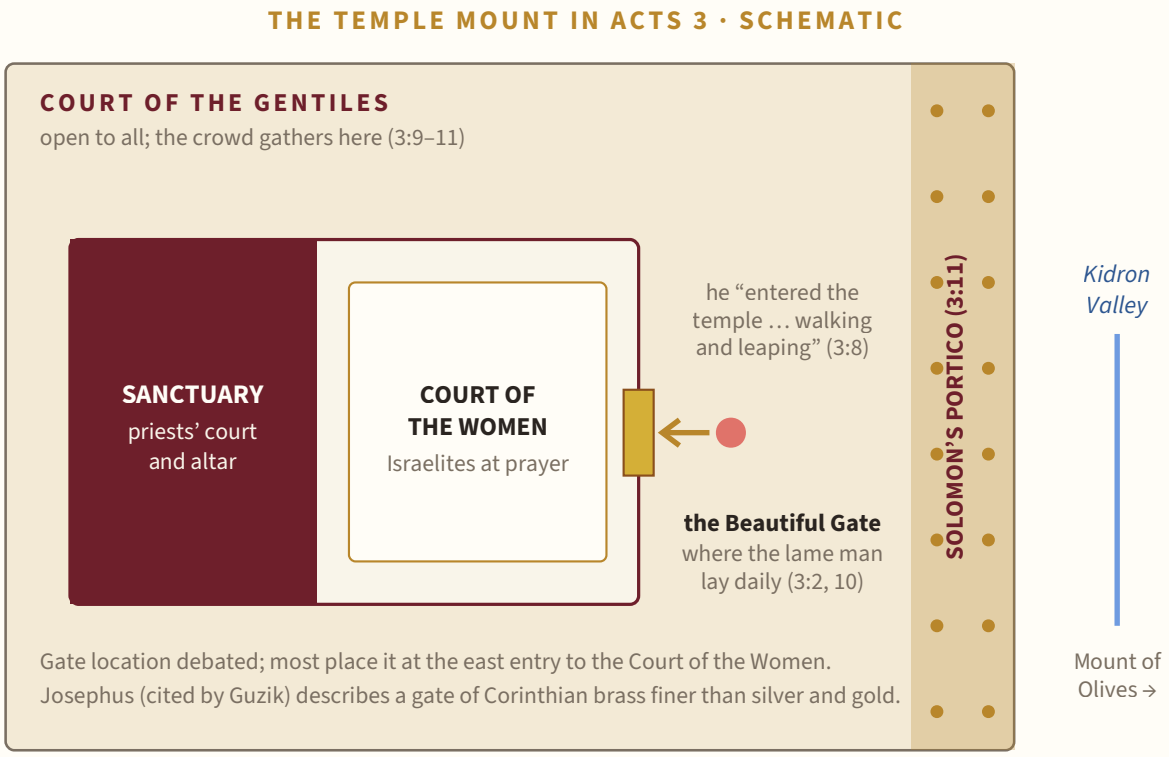
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 3:8

"With a leap he stood upright and began to walk; and he entered the temple with them, ☆ walking and leaping and praising God."

FIGURE · THE TEMPLE IN ACTS 3



Not to scale · east at right · Herod's temple as rebuilt in Jesus' day

Follow the healed man from the Beautiful Gate into the temple courts, then out to Solomon's portico on the east side, where the crowd ran together to hear Peter.

Setting. Jerusalem, the temple, the ninth hour (about 3 p.m.), the hour of prayer (v1). A man lame from birth, more than forty years old (4:22), is carried every day to the gate called Beautiful to beg (v2). After the healing the crowd runs together at Solomon's portico, the colonnade on the east side of the temple court (v11), and Peter preaches his second sermon (vv12–26).

Structure:

- vv1–10 — **the Beautiful Gate:** Peter and John go up to pray (v1); the lame man asks for alms (vv2–3); "Look at us!" (v4); "I do not possess silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you" — "In the name of Jesus Christ the

Nazarene—walk!" (v6); Peter raises him; feet and ankles strengthened (v7); walking and leaping and praising God (v8); the people recognize him and are filled with wonder (vv9–10).

- vv11–16 — **the name and the Prince:** the crowd at Solomon's portico (v11); "why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety …?" (v12); the God of Abraham has glorified His servant Jesus, whom you disowned (v13); the Holy and Righteous One vs. a murderer (v14); you put to death the Prince of life, whom God raised (v15); faith in His name has given this man perfect health (v16).
- vv17–26 — **the call and the promise:** you acted in ignorance (v17); God fulfilled what the prophets announced — His Christ would suffer (v18); "repent and return" — sins wiped away, times of refreshing (v19); He will send Jesus (v20); heaven must receive Him until the restoration of all things (v21); the Prophet like Moses (vv22–23); all the prophets from Samuel on (v24); sons of the covenant — Abraham's seed (v25); "For you first" (v26).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "God" ×9 — vv8, 9, 13 (×2), 15, 18, 21, 25, 26.
- "temple" ×6 — vv1, 2 (×2), 3, 8, 10.
- "Peter" ×6 — vv1, 3, 4, 6, 11, 12; "John" ×4 — vv1, 3, 4, 11.
- "walk / walking" ×5 — vv6, 8 (×2), 9, 12.
- "prophet(s)" ×5 — vv18, 21, 23, 24, 25 (plus "A PROPHET" in v22).
- "Jesus" ×4 — vv6, 13, 16, 20; "name" ×3 — vv6, 16 (×2).
- "amazed / amazement / wonder" ×4 — vv10 (×2), 11, 12.
- "people" ×4 — vv9, 11, 12, 23.
- "raised" ×3 — vv7, 15, 26 (plus "RAISE UP," v22); "alms" ×3 — vv2, 3, 10.
- "praising God" ×2 — vv8, 9; "leaping / leap" ×2 — v8 (×2).
- "disowned" ×2 — vv13, 14; "servant / Servant" ×2 — vv13, 26; "mouth (of the prophets)" ×2 — vv18, 21.
- "faith" ×2 — v16 (×2); "fathers" ×2 — vv13, 25.

Contrasts: Silver and gold ⟷ what I do have (v6). Lame from his mother's womb ⟷ walking and leaping (vv2, 8). Our own power or piety ⟷ the name of Jesus (vv12, 16). You disowned ⟷ God glorified (v13). A murderer ⟷ the Holy and Righteous One (v14). You put to death ⟷ God raised (v15). Ignorance ⟷ what God announced beforehand (vv17–18). Heaven receives Him now ⟷ He will send Him (vv20–21). Heed the Prophet ⟷ utterly destroyed (vv22–23). You first ⟷ all the families of the earth (vv25–26).

Shape of the chapter: a short miracle (1–10) and a long sermon (11–26). The miracle is told slowly — the hour, the gate, the look, the word, the hand, the ankles — and then the sermon explains it: the same name that lifted one man can wipe away a nation's sins.

Chapter theme (my words): Jesus is alive, and His name does what no silver or gold can do. The people who killed Him are not beyond His offer: if they turn around, their sins are wiped away and their Messiah will come back to restore all things.

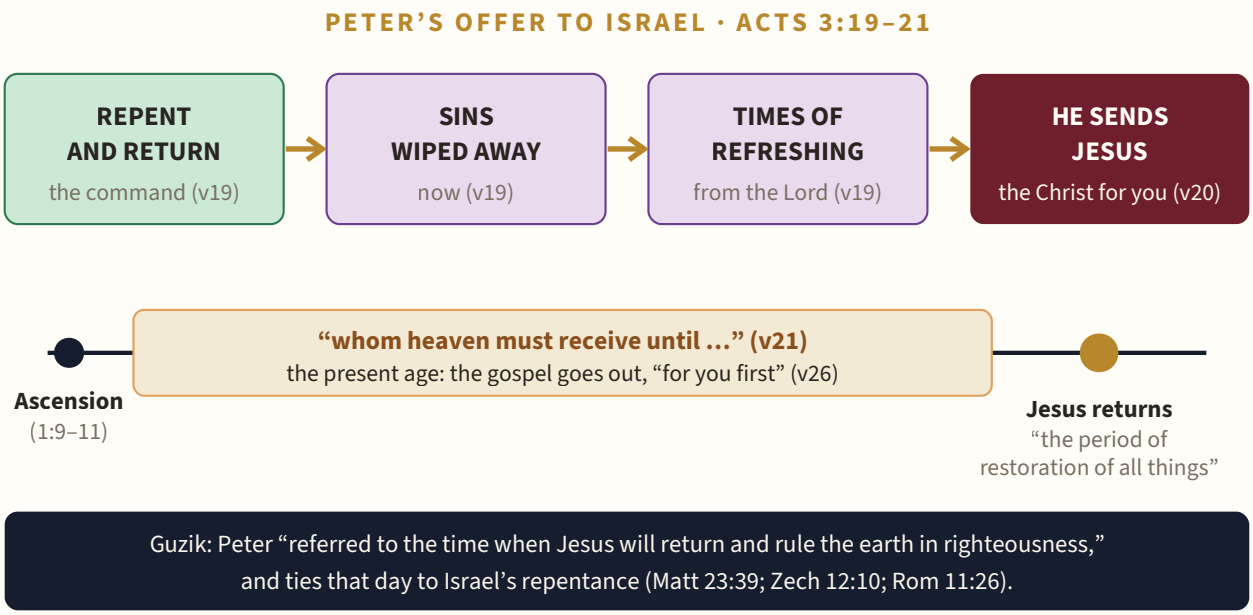
02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 3:21

"whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time."

FIGURE · PETER'S OFFER



The top row is the order of Peter's offer in verses 19–20; the line below shows Jesus held in heaven now, until the restoration of all things at His return.

Why did Peter and John still go to the temple? They were Jewish believers in Israel's Messiah, and the temple was still the house of prayer. Guzik: "Apparently Peter and John saw no problem in continuing their Jewish custom of prayer at certain hours of the day." Spurgeon sees the old giving way only gradually: "It will be time to destroy the old when the new is quite ready."

Why heal this man now, when Jesus had passed him? Guzik: "Jesus must have passed him by many times without healing him." The healing came at God's time and under the Spirit's prompting, not by technique — Peter acted "under the specific prompting of the Holy Spirit" (Guzik). It also became the doorway to a sermon and an arrest (4:1–4).

What did Peter actually give? Not money but the authority of Jesus' name. Guzik: the man "simply wanted to be supported in the condition that he was in," but "God had something better in mind." Henry: "Those who are poor in the world may yet be rich, very rich, in spiritual gifts, graces, and comforts."

What does "the name" mean (vv6, 16)? Not a magic word but the person and authority of Jesus Himself, received by faith — "the faith which comes through Him" (v16). Spurgeon: "at the mention of the great and glorious name of Jesus, his feet and ankle-bones immediately received strength."

Why does Peter refuse the credit? Because the miracle points away from the apostles to the risen Christ. Guzik: "Peter knew that it was all of Jesus and nothing was of him." Henry: "The instruments of God's favour to us, though they must be respected, must not be idolized."

Did ignorance excuse them (v17)? Peter is gentle, and Spurgeon notes he puts the truth "thus mildly." But Sproul insists "It was evincible ignorance" — they had the Scriptures — and repentance is still required (v19). Both are true: God is kind in how He calls, and the call is still "repent."

What are "times of refreshing" and "the restoration of all things" (vv19–21)? Here the teachers differ in emphasis. Guzik reads them chiefly as the coming kingdom: "Peter referred to the time when Jesus will return and rule the earth in righteousness," and "there is some sense in which the return of Jesus in glory will not happen until Israel repents" (Matt 23:39; Rom 11:26). Spurgeon finds refreshing in pardon, revival and the second coming. Henry dwells on the comfort Christ gives while He is away. I read it the way Guzik does: Peter is answering the question of 1:6. The kingdom will be restored to Israel when the nation turns to its Messiah, and in the meantime God refreshes every one who repents. Heaven holds Jesus "until" — there is a day on God's calendar.

Who is the Prophet like Moses (vv22–23)? Jesus. Guzik: the Jews expected both a Prophet and a Messiah, and "Peter made it clear that they are one and the same." Henry: "Whenever he has a mouth to speak, you must have an ear to hear."

Why "for you first" (v26)? God keeps His order — to the Jew first (Rom 1:16) — and the promise to Abraham reaches "all the families of the earth" (v25). Guzik hears in it "the undeveloped theme of the extension of the gospel to all the world."

Word study (Greek):

- **Beautiful — *hōraios* (G5611):** timely, lovely; Rom 10:15, "how beautiful are the feet."
- **fixed his gaze — *atenizō* (G816):** to look steadily (vv4, 12).
- **with a leap — *exallomai* (G1814) / leaping — *hallomai* (G242):** Isa 35:6; John 4:14; Acts 14:10.
- **piety — *eusebeia* (G2150):** godliness (v12).
- **servant — *pais* (G3816):** Isaiah's Servant (vv13, 26; 4:27, 30); KJV "Son."
- **Prince — *archēgos* (G747):** pioneer, author; 3:15; 5:31; Heb 2:10; 12:2.
- **ignorance — *agnoia* (G52):** v17.
- **repent — *metanoeō* (G3340); return — *epistrephō* (G1994):** a changed mind and a turned life (v19).
- **wiped away — *exaleiphō* (G1813):** erase; Col 2:14; Rev 7:17; 21:4.
- **refreshing — *anapsyxis* (G403):** breathing again; only here.
- **restoration — *apokatastasis* (G605):** setting right; only here (cf. 1:6).

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **Jesus had walked past him** — God's timing, God's hour (Guzik).
2. **He wanted support; God wanted change** (Guzik).
3. **No silver, no gold, all Christ** (Henry).

4. **The lame leap** — Isaiah 35:6 fulfilled (3:8).
5. **Praise proves the cure** (Henry).
6. **Get out of the way** — all of Jesus, nothing of Peter (Guzik, Henry).
7. **They killed the Prince of life** — and are still alive (Sproul).
8. **Ignorance explains; it does not excuse** (Sproul).
9. **Repent is a U-turn** (Guzik, Spurgeon).
10. **Heaven holds Him until** — the restoration of all things (3:21).

Cross-references: Gen 12:3; 22:18; Exod 3:6, 15; Lev 21:18; Deut 18:15–19; Ps 16:10; 118:22; Isa 35:6; 52:13–53:12; Zech 12:10; Matt 23:37–39; Luke 24:25–27; John 10:23; Acts 1:6; 2:22–24, 38; 5:12, 31; 14:8–10; Rom 1:16; 10:15; 11:25–27; Col 2:14; Heb 2:10; 12:2; Rev 21:4.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 3:26

"For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways."

FIGURE · YOU DID, GOD DID

"YOU" AND "GOD" IN PETER'S SERMON · ACTS 3:13–18

WHAT YOU DID	WHAT GOD DID
delivered and disowned Him before Pilate (v13)	glorified His servant Jesus (v13)
disowned the Holy and Righteous One (v14)	— the One you disowned was holy
asked for a murderer instead (v14)	gave you the Prince of life (v15)
put to death the Prince of life (v15)	raised Him from the dead (v15)
acted in ignorance, with your rulers (v17)	fulfilled what all the prophets announced (v18)

"THEREFORE REPENT AND RETURN" (v19)

God turned the worst thing they did into the very thing that saves them

Read across each row: Peter sets what Israel did to Jesus beside what God did with Him, and the gap between the two columns is where the call to repent comes in.

Example to follow — Peter and John at the gate. They were on their way to pray, and they stopped for a man everyone else had learned not to see. Peter "fixed his gaze on him" and said, "Look at us!" The men I serve know what it is to be looked past. This week I will stop, look a man in the eye, and give him what I do have — the name of Jesus, my time, a prayer, a ride.

Sin to confess — wanting support instead of change. Like the lame man, I have asked God to make my condition bearable when He wanted to make me walk. I have settled for coins at the gate. I confess that I have been comfortable with what is broken in me, and I ask Him to lift me up.

Sin to confess — taking the credit. When God uses me, I like the people to "gaze at us." Peter would not have it: "why do you gaze at us, as if by our own power or piety we had made him walk?" Every crown goes at the feet of Christ.

Command to obey — repent and return. Not just sorry — turned around (v19). Peter offered this to the men who had shouted for Barabbas. If there is forgiveness for the people who killed the Prince of life, there is forgiveness for what I have done. I will name the thing I need to turn from, and turn.

Promise to trust — sins wiped away, times of refreshing, and He is coming back. God does not just cover my record; He wipes it clean. He sends refreshing now, and heaven holds Jesus only "until the period of restoration of all things." I will live this week as a man waiting for his King.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. The lame man asked for coins and got his feet. Where am I asking God only to make my present condition bearable, when He wants to change it? (3:2–6) *He simply wanted to be supported in the condition he was in (Guzik).*
2. Peter said, "What I do have I give to you." I may not have money — what do I have from Jesus that I could give someone this week? (3:6; 2 Cor 6:10) *Poor in the world, rich in spiritual gifts (Henry).*
3. The healed man went in "walking and leaping and praising God." When did I last praise God out loud for what He did for me? (3:8–9) *Praise is the best evidence of a complete cure (Henry).*
4. Peter refused the credit: "why do you gaze at us?" Where am I tempted to take credit for what God has done through me? (3:12–16) *It was all of Jesus and nothing of him (Guzik).*
5. Peter says repentance is turning around, not just feeling sorry. What would turning around actually look like for me this week? (3:19; 26:20) *Repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away.*
6. Jesus is in heaven "until the period of restoration of all things." How does knowing He is coming back change the way I live now? (3:19–21; Titus 2:13) *Times of refreshing come from the presence of the Lord.*

Worship. The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob has glorified His Servant Jesus. He is the Holy and Righteous One, the Prince of life, the Prophet like Moses, the Seed of Abraham in whom all the families of the earth are blessed. Men put Him to death; God raised Him up; and in His name a man who had never walked went leaping into the house of God.

Prayer. Lord Jesus, I have no silver and gold to bring You, and You do not need it. Take my lame places and lift me up by the hand. Forgive me for settling for coins at the gate, and for wanting the credit when You work. I turn around today — wipe my sins away, and send me times of refreshing from Your presence. Keep me looking for the day You come back to restore all things. Amen.

Scripture: New American Standard Bible® (NASB), © 1960–1995 The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. · Teacher material summarized from David Guzik (Enduring Word), R.C. Sproul (Ligonier), C.H. Spurgeon and Matthew Henry — see Acts-3-Deep-Dive-Four-Voices.pdf for sources. · Importable: the companion .md carries the berean-study block.

SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 4

No Other Name — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

The men who killed Jesus try to silence His followers, and fail: Peter tells them there is no other name by which we must be saved. Threatened, the church prays for boldness, God shakes the room, and a Spirit-filled people share until no one is in need.

00 The Text

ACTS 4 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them,

2 being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.

3 And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening.

4 But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

5 On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem;

6 and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent.

7 When they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?"

8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people,

9 if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well,

10 let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead—by this name this man stands here before you in good health.

11 "He is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you, THE BUILDERS, but WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone.

12 "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."

13 Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.

14 And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in reply.

15 But when they had ordered them to leave the Council, they began to confer with one another,

16 saying, “What shall we do with these men? For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it.

17 “But so that it will not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no longer to any man in this name.”

18 And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

19 But Peter and John answered and said to them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge;

20 for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

21 When they had threatened them further, they let them go (finding no basis on which to punish them) on account of the people, because they were all glorifying God for what had happened;

22 for the man was more than forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

23 When they had been released, they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them.

24 And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, “O Lord, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM,

25 who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said, ‘WHY DID THE GENTILES RAGE, AND THE PEOPLES DEVISE FUTILE THINGS?

26 ‘THE KINGS OF THE EARTH TOOK THEIR STAND, AND THE RULERS WERE GATHERED TOGETHER AGAINST THE LORD AND AGAINST HIS CHRIST.’

27 “For truly in this city there were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel,

28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.

29 “And now, Lord, take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence,

30 while You extend Your hand to heal, and signs and wonders take place through the name of Your holy servant Jesus.”

31 And when they had prayed, the place where they had gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God with boldness.

32 And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.

33 And with great power the apostles were giving testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and abundant grace was upon them all.

34 For there was not a needy person among them, for all who were owners of land or houses would sell them and bring the proceeds of the sales

35 and lay them at the apostles’ feet, and they would be distributed to each as any had need.

36 Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement),

37 and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.

Marked in the text

- **v2** “proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead” — God — His character & actions
- **v3** “put them in jail” — Sin / warning
- **v4** “many of those who had heard the message believed” — Promise / blessing
- **v4** “about five thousand” — Time / place / contrast
- **v7** “By what power, or in what name” — Time / place / contrast
- **v10** “whom you crucified” — Sin / warning
- **v10** “whom God raised from the dead” — God — His character & actions
- **v11** “WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone” — God — His character & actions
- **v12** “there is salvation in no one else” — God — His character & actions

- **v12** “by which we must be saved” — Command / instruction
- **v13** “uneducated and untrained men” — Time / place / contrast
- **v13** “having been with Jesus” — Promise / blessing
- **v14** “they had nothing to say in reply” — Time / place / contrast
- **v18** “not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus” — Sin / warning
- **v19** “Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God” — Command / instruction
- **v20** “we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard” — Command / instruction
- **v24** “with one accord” — Time / place / contrast
- **v24** “it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA” — God — His character & actions
- **v28** “whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur” — God — His character & actions
- **v29** “take note of their threats” — Sin / warning
- **v29** “speak Your word with all confidence” — Command / instruction
- **v31** “the place where they had gathered together was shaken” — God — His character & actions
- **v32** “of one heart and soul” — Promise / blessing
- **v32** “all things were common property to them” — Time / place / contrast
- **v33** “abundant grace was upon them all” — Promise / blessing
- **v34** “there was not a needy person among them” — Promise / blessing
- **v36** “Son of Encouragement” — Time / place / contrast
- **v37** “laid it at the apostles’ feet” — Command / instruction
- **v7** “name” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v8** “filled with the Holy Spirit” — God — His character & actions (every occurrence)
- **v13** “confidence” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v13** “boldness” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

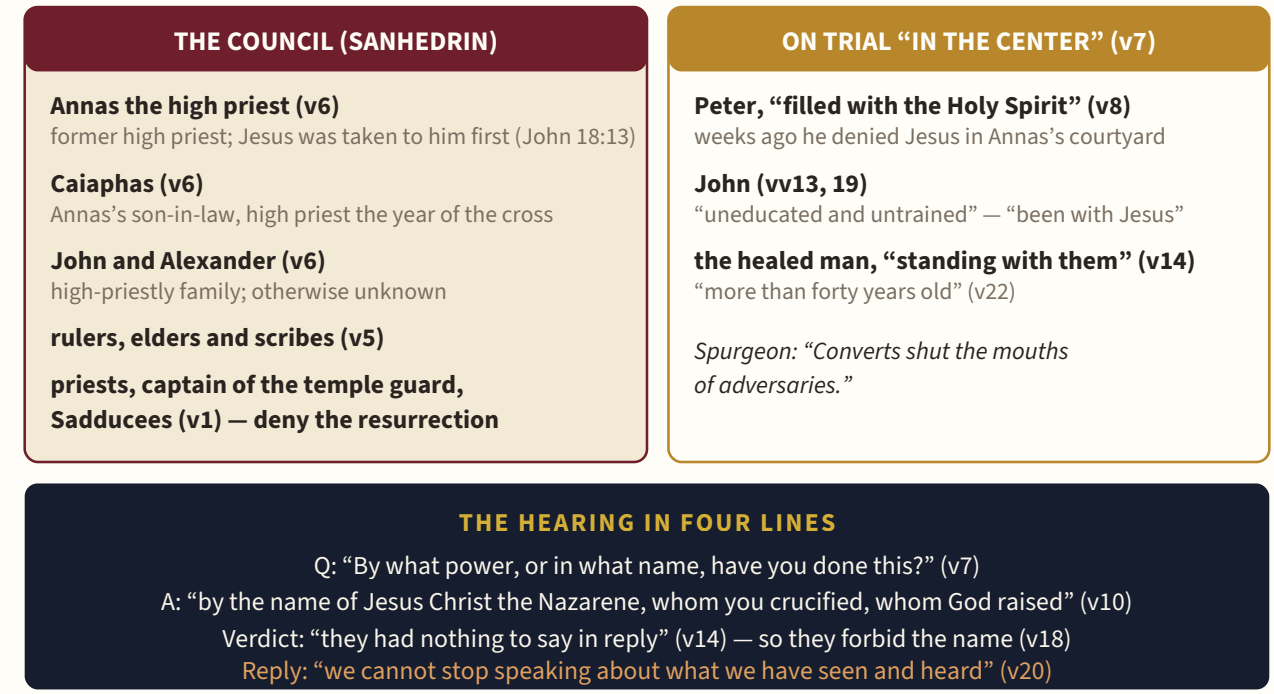
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 4:20

"for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard."

FIGURE · WHO'S WHO AT THE HEARING



On the left, the court that condemned Jesus; on the right, the two fishermen and the healed man; the dark panel gives the whole hearing in four quotations.

Setting. The same afternoon as chapter 3, at Solomon's portico. The priests, the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees arrest Peter and John at evening (vv1–3). The next day they stand before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem — Annas, Caiaphas, John, Alexander and the high-priestly family (vv5–6). Released, they return to the believers, who pray (vv23–31). Luke closes with a summary of the church's common life and the gift of Barnabas, a Levite from Cyprus (vv32–37).

Structure:

- vv1–4 — **the arrest:** the leaders are disturbed at the preaching of the resurrection in Jesus (vv1–2); jail until morning (v3); yet many believe — about five thousand men (v4).
- vv5–12 — **the answer:** the council gathers (vv5–6); "By what power, or in what name?" (v7); Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit (v8): by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised (vv9–10); the stone rejected by the builders (v11); no other name (v12).

- vv13–22 — **the threat:** confidence, uneducated men, "been with Jesus" (v13); the healed man standing there — nothing to say (v14); the private conference (vv15–17); "not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus" (v18); "you be the judge … we cannot stop speaking" (vv19–20); more threats, release, the people glorifying God (vv21–22).
- vv23–31 — **the prayer:** report to their companions (v23); "O Lord, it is You who MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH" (v24); Psalm 2 (vv25–26); Herod, Pilate, Gentiles, Israel — what Your hand predestined (vv27–28); "take note of their threats, and grant … all confidence" (vv29–30); the place shaken, all filled, speaking with boldness (v31).
- vv32–37 — **one heart:** one heart and soul, nothing "his own" (v32); great power, abundant grace (v33); no needy person — proceeds laid at the apostles' feet (vv34–35); Barnabas, Son of Encouragement, sells a field (vv36–37).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "name" ×7 — vv7, 10 (×2), 12, 17, 18, 30.
- "Jesus" ×7 — vv2, 10, 13, 18, 27, 30, 33.
- "speak / speaking / spoke" ×6 — vv1, 17, 18, 20, 29, 31.
- "people" ×6 — vv1, 2, 8, 10, 17, 21 (plus "PEOPLES" v25 and "peoples" v27).
- "God" ×6 — vv10, 19 (×2), 21, 24, 31.
- "heal / healed / healing / well / health" ×5 — vv9, 10, 14, 22, 30.
- "sold / sell / sales / proceeds / money" ×5 — vv34 (×3), 37 (×2).
- "servant / bond-servants" ×4 — vv25, 27, 29, 30.
- "confidence / boldness" ×3 — vv13, 29, 31 (all *parrēsia*).
- "filled with the Holy Spirit" ×2 — vv8, 31; "Holy Spirit" ×3 — vv8, 25, 31.
- "gathered (together)" ×4 — vv5, 26, 27, 31; "threats / threatened / warn" ×3 — vv17, 21, 29.
- "heard" ×3 — vv4, 20, 24; "elders" ×3 — vv5, 8, 23; "resurrection" ×2 — vv2, 33.
- "laid / lay … at the apostles' feet" ×2 — vv35, 37; "miracle" ×2 — vv16, 22.

Contrasts: The builders ⟷ the chief corner stone (v11). No other name ⟷ this name (vv10, 12). Uneducated and untrained ⟷ confidence, been with Jesus (v13). Give heed to you ⟷ to God (v19). Speak no longer ⟷ we cannot stop speaking (vv17, 20). The rulers gathered against His Christ ⟷ God's hand and purpose (vv26–28). Their threats ⟷ Your word with all confidence (v29). Their own companions ⟷ the Council (vv15, 23). His own ⟷ common property (v32). Needy ⟷ distributed to each as any had need (vv34–35).

Shape of the chapter: two halves that mirror each other. In the council chamber the rulers gather, threaten and forbid the name (1–22). In the believers' room the church gathers, prays and is filled to speak the name (23–31). Then a closing panel shows what that Spirit-filled people looked like on an ordinary day (32–37).

Chapter theme (my words): The name of Jesus cannot be silenced, because it is the only name that saves. When the world threatens, the church prays for boldness, trusts God's sovereign hand, and loves one another with open hands.

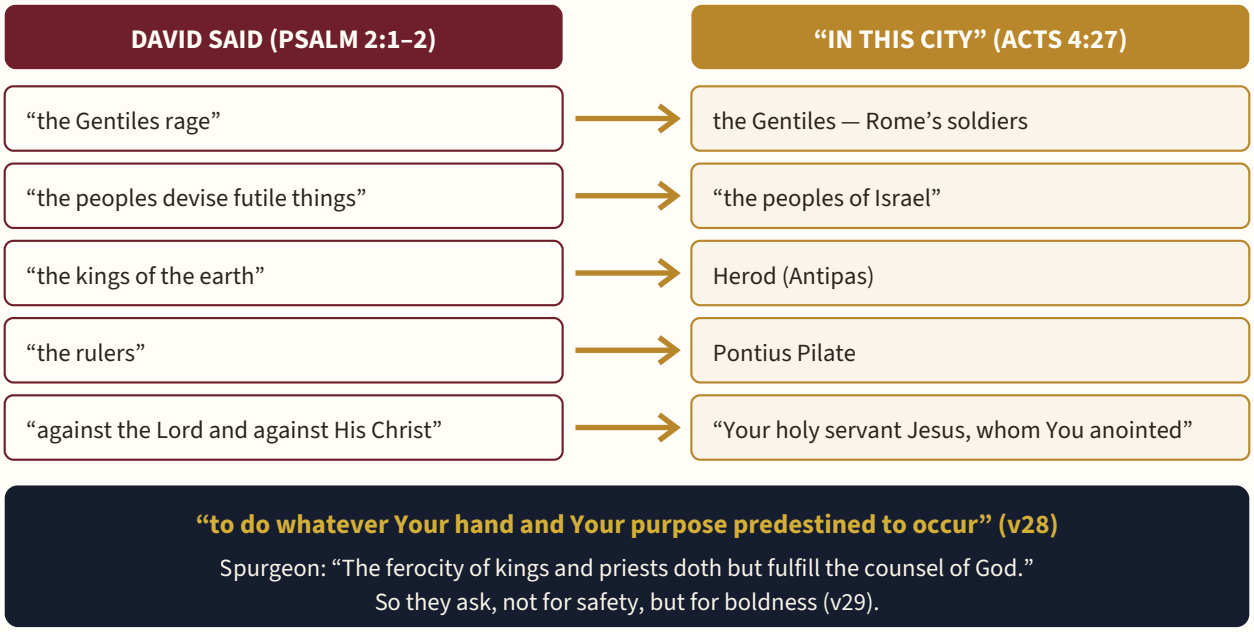
02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 4:28

"to do △whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur."

FIGURE · PSALM 2 READ AS NEWS



Read each row left to right: the church matched every line of David's psalm to the people who gathered against Jesus in Jerusalem — and saw God's hand behind it all.

Why were the Sadducees so disturbed (vv1–2)? They controlled the temple and denied the resurrection — Guzik: "they did not believe in the afterlife or the resurrection at all." Preaching "in Jesus the resurrection from the dead" challenged both their doctrine and their verdict on Jesus. Guzik: "The entire atmosphere was intended to make them afraid." Henry: "See how God trains up his servants for sufferings by degrees."

Is it fair to say Jesus is the only way (v12)? Peter says it to the highest religious court of his nation. Guzik: "Peter didn't merely proclaim Jesus as a way of salvation, but as the only way of salvation." Sproul names our culture's creed — "There is no tenet more basic to the secular culture we live in than that of religious tolerance" — and answers that only Christ satisfies God's justice and mercy together: "If we are offended by what the Lord God Almighty speaks, then the problem is not with Him, but with us." Henry: "we cannot be saved but by Jesus Christ."

What does "they had been with Jesus" mean (v13)? The council recognized them as Jesus' men — the same boldness, the same handling of Scripture. Guzik: "they knew the Scriptures, and they had been with Jesus." Henry: "One may know that they have been in the mount by the shining of their faces." Spurgeon: "I behold Christ, and I become like Christ."

When may a Christian disobey authority (vv19–20)? Sproul is careful: we normally submit, but when men command what God forbids or forbid what God commands, we obey God — never hiding behind "I'm just obeying orders." But this is not a license for disobedience when we are merely inconvenienced. Peter and John do not riot; they answer respectfully, accept the threat and keep preaching (and 5:29 will say it outright).

Why pray Psalm 2 (vv25–28)? The psalm describes nations and rulers raging against the LORD and His Anointed, and the church sees it fulfilled in Herod, Pilate, the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel. Sproul: "Psalm 2 captures the separation of the state from God in antiquity." For me there is also a forward look: Psalm 2 ends with the Son ruling the nations with a rod of iron (2:8–9) — a reign still to come. The cross was the rulers' worst, and it was inside God's plan.

How can God predestine what wicked men do (v28)? The church simply says both: the rulers "were gathered together against Your holy servant Jesus" (v27) — they are guilty — and they did "whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur" (v28). Sproul: "Every Christian believed in the sovereignty of God, and they believed in it absolutely." Spurgeon: "How strangely this doctrine of predestination comes in just there!" — and it is there to comfort a threatened church.

Was the shaking a pattern to seek? Guzik warns: "It is a snare to long to be used to do miraculous things," and the room did not become a holy place. The point of the filling was speech: "began to speak the word of God with boldness" (v31).

Was verses 32–35 Christian communism? No. Guzik: "It isn't accurate to see this as an early form of communism." Sproul: "They were not required to do it." People still owned houses and land; they gave as needs arose, and Peter tells Ananias his property was his own (5:4). The miracle was the heart — "not one of them claimed that anything belonging to him was his own."

Why single out Barnabas (vv36–37)? He is the positive example before the negative one of Ananias and Sapphira (Sproul's "amazing contrast"), and he will be the man who brings Saul to the apostles (9:27) and encourages the church at Antioch (11:23).

Word study (Greek):

- **rejected — *exoutheneō* (G1848):** to treat as nothing (v11; Luke 23:11).
- **chief corner — *kephalē* (G2776) + *gōnia* (G1137):** head of the corner (Ps 118:22).
- **name — *onoma* (G3686):** person and authority; ×7 in the chapter.
- **salvation — *sōtēria* (G4991):** deliverance; "must" — *dei* (G1163) (v12).
- **confidence, boldness — *parrēsia* (G3954):** free, open speech (vv13, 29, 31; 28:31).
- **uneducated — *agrammatos* (G62):** without letters; only here.
- **untrained — *idiōtēs* (G2399):** layman, not a professional.
- **Lord — *despotēs* (G1203):** Sovereign Master (v24; Luke 2:29; Rev 6:10).
- **predestined — *proorizō* (G4309):** to mark out beforehand (v28; Rom 8:29–30; Eph 1:5, 11).
- **shaken — *saleuō* (G4531):** v31.
- **common — *koinos* (G2839):** shared (v32; 2:44).
- **Encouragement — *paraklēsis* (G3874):** called alongside (v36).

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **Suffering days, growing days** (Henry).
2. **The same court, a different Peter** (4:6–10).
3. **They counted Him as nothing** — *exoutheneō* (4:11).
4. **Not a way — the way** (Guzik, Sproul).
5. **Educated where it counts** — the Scriptures and being with Jesus (Guzik).
6. **A healed man is an argument** (Spurgeon).
7. **Obey God — and know what He says** (Sproul).
8. **They prayed for boldness, not safety** (4:29).
9. **Sovereignty is a comfort** (Spurgeon, Sproul).
10. **Not communism, but love** (Guzik, Sproul).

Cross-references: Exod 16:18; 34:29–35; Ps 2:1–9; 118:22; Isa 28:16; Matt 10:19–20; 21:42; Luke 2:29; 12:11–12; 20:17; 21:14–15; 23:11; John 14:6; 18:13; Acts 1:8; 2:23, 42–47; 5:1–11, 29; 9:27; 11:22–24; 28:31; Rom 8:28–30; 13:1–7; 2 Cor 8:9; Eph 1:11; 2:20; Phil 2:9–11; 1 Pet 2:7; 1 Tim 2:5.

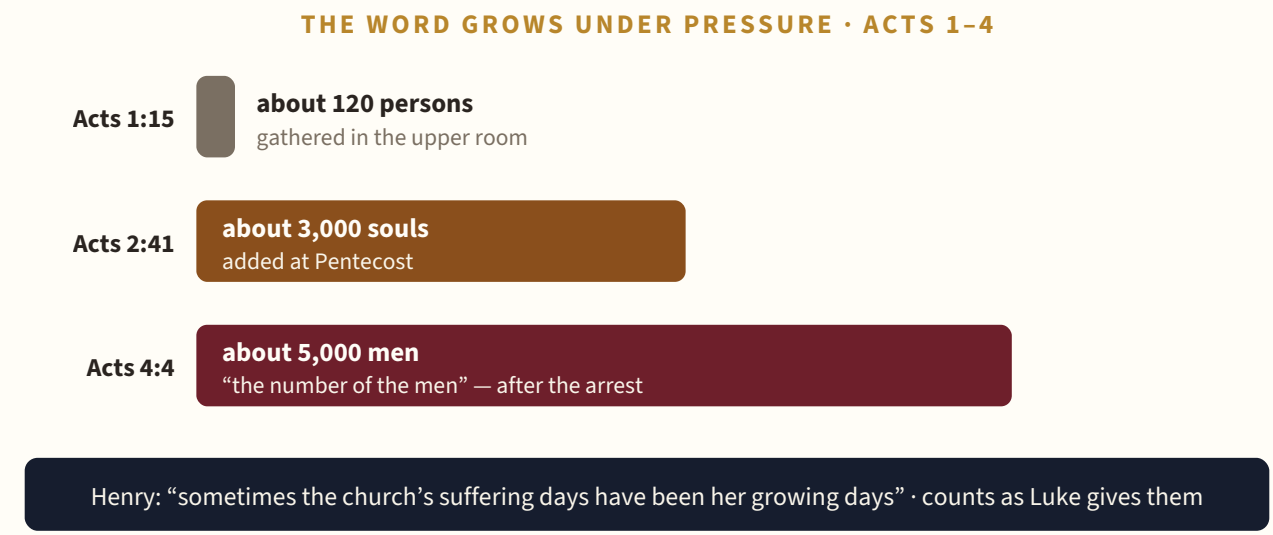
03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 4:29

"And now, Lord, ⚠ take note of their threats, and grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence,"

FIGURE · THE WORD GROWS



Compare the bars: the church Luke counts in Acts 1, 2 and 4 keeps growing, and the largest number comes on the day the apostles were jailed.

Example to follow — Peter before Annas. A few weeks earlier Peter cursed and denied Jesus to a servant girl in this high priest's courtyard. Now, filled with the Holy Spirit, he tells the same men to their faces, "whom you crucified, whom God raised." Many of the men I serve carry a failure they think disqualifies them. Peter's story says Jesus restores denied-Him men and sends them back into the same courtyard. I will tell one man this week that his worst failure is not the end of his story.

Truth to confess — there is no other name. I have softened this when it was awkward, as if Jesus were one option among many. He is not. No program, no higher power in general, no amount of trying saves a man — only Jesus. I will say it plainly and kindly when it comes up.

Command to obey — keep speaking. "We cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard." I have seen Jesus pull men out of addiction, out of despair, out of prison in their hearts. I will tell one of those stories to someone who needs it.

Promise to trust — God's hand is over the threats. Herod, Pilate and the mob did only what God's hand had marked out. Whatever is threatening me this week is inside His lines. So I will pray the way they did: not "take it away" first, but "take note of their threats, and grant … all confidence."

Example to follow — Barnabas. He sold a field and laid the money down, and the apostles named him for how he lifted people up. I will look for one need in our group I can meet with what I have, and one man I can encourage by name.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. The apostles were jailed and the church grew to five thousand men. Where has a hard season in my life become a growing season? (4:1–4; Rom 8:28) *Suffering days have been her growing days (Henry).*
2. Peter said there is "no other name under heaven … by which we must be saved." Why is that claim hard for people today, and how would I explain it to a friend with love? (4:12; John 14:6) *Not a way of salvation, but the only way (Guzik).*
3. People could tell Peter and John "had been with Jesus." What would people notice about me this week that shows I have been with Him? (4:13; 2 Cor 3:18) *I behold Christ, and I become like Christ (Spurgeon).*
4. "We cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard." What have I seen Jesus do that I have kept to myself? (4:19–20) *He must speak (Spurgeon).*
5. When the church was threatened, they prayed for boldness instead of safety. What would change if I prayed that way about my own threats? (4:24–31) *Grant that Your bond-servants may speak Your word with all confidence.*
6. Barnabas was called the "Son of Encouragement." Who needs me to be a Barnabas this week — and what could I give or say? (4:32–37; 9:27) *Not required, but freely given (Sproul).*

Worship. Sovereign Lord, You made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. The nations raged and the rulers gathered against Your Anointed, and they did only what Your hand had determined. The stone they counted as nothing You have made the chief corner stone, and there is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.

Prayer. Lord Jesus, You restored Peter and sent him back to face the men he feared; restore me and send me too. Let people see that I have been with You. Take note of what threatens me, and grant me all confidence to speak Your word. Fill me with Your Spirit, open my hands to my brothers in need, and make me a son of encouragement. Amen.

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SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 5

We Must Obey God Rather Than Men — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

God protects His young church from a lie inside and from persecution outside, and He does it by His holiness and His power. The apostles answer the rulers with one rule — obey God rather than men — and go home flogged and rejoicing, still preaching Jesus as the Christ.

00 The Text

ACTS 5 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 But a man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property,

2 and kept back some of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet.

3 But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land?

4 "While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."

5 And as he heard these words, Ananias fell down and breathed his last; and great fear came over all who heard of it.

6 The young men got up and covered him up, and after carrying him out, they buried him.

7 Now there elapsed an interval of about three hours, and his wife came in, not knowing what had happened.

8 And Peter responded to her, "Tell me whether you sold the land for such and such a price?" And she said, "Yes, that was the price."

9 Then Peter said to her, "Why is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Behold, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out as well."

10 And immediately she fell at his feet and breathed her last, and the young men came in and found her dead, and they carried her out and buried her beside her husband.

11 And great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things.

12 At the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's portico.

13 But none of the rest dared to associate with them; however, the people held them in high esteem.

14 And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number,

15 to such an extent that they even carried the sick out into the streets and laid them on cots and pallets, so that

when Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on any one of them.

16 Also the people from the cities in the vicinity of Jerusalem were coming together, bringing people who were sick or afflicted with unclean spirits, and △ they were all being healed.

17 But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and ⚠ they were filled with jealousy.

18 They laid hands on the apostles and put them in a public jail.

19 But during the night △ an angel of the Lord opened the gates of the prison, and taking them out he said,

20 "Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life."

21 Upon hearing this, they entered into the temple about daybreak and began to teach. Now when the high priest and his associates came, they called the Council together, even all the Senate of the sons of Israel, and sent orders to the prison house for them to be brought.

22 But the officers who came did not find them in the prison; and they returned and reported back,

23 saying, "We found the prison house locked quite securely and the guards standing at the doors; but when we had opened up, we found no one inside."

24 Now when the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them as to what would come of this.

25 But someone came and reported to them, "The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!"

26 Then the captain went along with the officers and proceeded to bring them back without violence (for they were afraid of the people, that they might be stoned).

27 When they had brought them, they stood them before the Council. The high priest questioned them,

28 saying, "We gave you strict orders not to continue teaching in this name, and yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us."

29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men.

30 "△ The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom you had put to death by hanging Him on a cross.

31 "He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand △ as a Prince and a Savior, ☆ to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.

32 "And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, ☆ whom God has given to those who obey Him."

33 But when they heard this, they were ⚠ cut to the quick and intended to kill them.

34 But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the Law, respected by all the people, stood up in the Council and gave orders to put the men outside for a short time.

35 And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you propose to do with these men.

36 "For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a group of about four hundred men joined up with him. But he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing.

37 "After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census and drew away some people after him; he too perished, and all those who followed him were scattered.

38 "So in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown;

39 but △ if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them; or else you may even be found ⚠ fighting against God."

40 They took his advice; and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and then released them.

41 So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, ☆ rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.

42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

Marked in the text

- **v2** “kept back some of the price” — Sin / warning
- **v3** “why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit” — Sin / warning
- **v4** “You have not lied to men but to God” — God — His character & actions
- **v9** “put the Spirit of the Lord to the test” — Sin / warning
- **v12** “many signs and wonders” — God — His character & actions
- **v12** “with one accord in Solomon’s portico” — Time / place / contrast
- **v14** “multitudes of men and women” — Promise / blessing
- **v16** “they were all being healed” — God — His character & actions
- **v17** “they were filled with jealousy” — Sin / warning
- **v19** “an angel of the Lord opened the gates of the prison” — God — His character & actions
- **v20** “Go, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this Life” — Command / instruction
- **v23** “we found no one inside” — Time / place / contrast
- **v28** “you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching” — Time / place / contrast
- **v29** “We must obey God rather than men” — Command / instruction
- **v30** “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus” — God — His character & actions
- **v31** “as a Prince and a Savior” — God — His character & actions
- **v31** “to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” — Promise / blessing
- **v32** “whom God has given to those who obey Him” — Promise / blessing
- **v33** “cut to the quick” — Sin / warning
- **v39** “if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them” — God — His character & actions
- **v39** “fighting against God” — Sin / warning
- **v41** “rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name” — Promise / blessing
- **v42** “they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ” — Command / instruction
- **v5** “great fear” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v18** “prison” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v28** “name” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

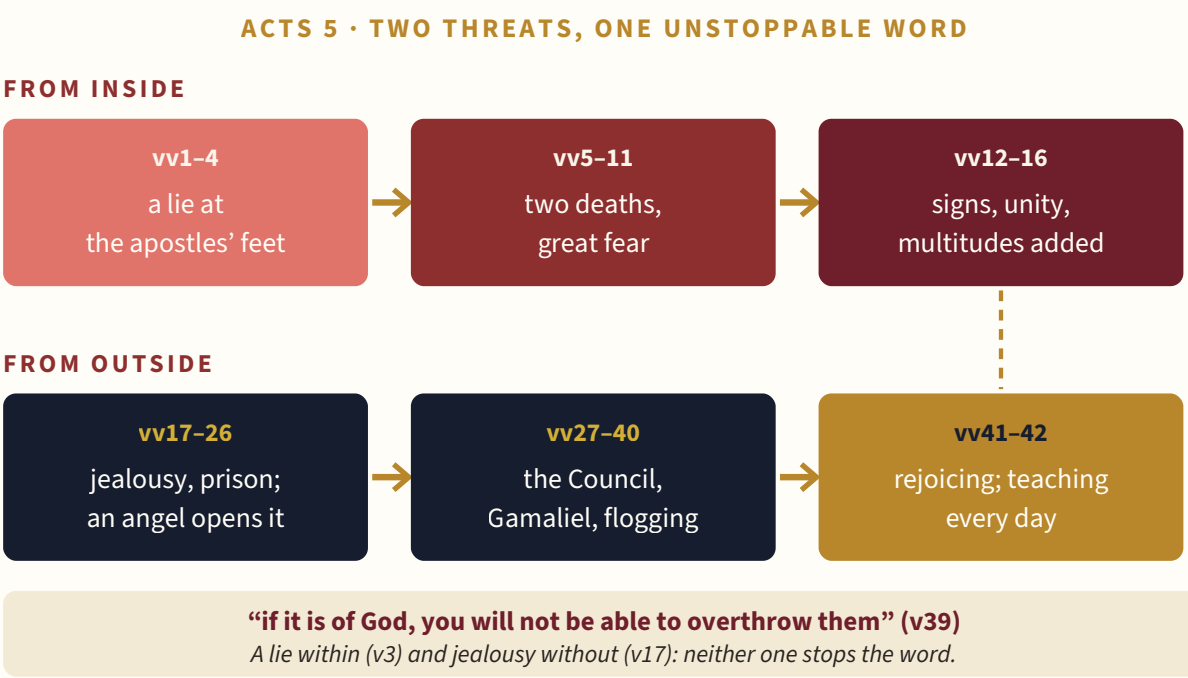
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 5:11

"And great fear came over the whole church, and over all who heard of these things."

FIGURE · TWO THREATS, ONE WORD



Read the top row (trouble inside the church) and the bottom row (trouble from the rulers): each threat ends with the church growing and the word still preached.

Setting. Jerusalem, soon after Pentecost. The believers share their goods and lay the money at the apostles' feet (4:32–37); Barnabas has just sold a field. Ananias and Sapphira sell property and keep back part of the price (vv1–2). Later the apostles meet in Solomon's portico in the temple (v12), are jailed by the high priest and the Sadducees (vv17–18), are freed by an angel (v19), and stand before the Council, the Sanhedrin (vv21, 27).

Structure:

- vv1–11 — **the lie:** Ananias and Sapphira keep back some of the price (vv1–2); "why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit?" (v3); "You have not lied to men but to God" (v4); Ananias dies — great fear (vv5–6); three hours later Sapphira repeats the lie and dies (vv7–10); great fear on the whole church (v11).
- vv12–16 — **the signs:** many signs and wonders; all with one accord in Solomon's portico (v12); outsiders keep their distance but hold them in high esteem (v13); multitudes added (v14); the sick laid in the streets for Peter's shadow; all healed (vv15–16).

- vv17–26 — **the prison:** the high priest and the Sadducees, filled with jealousy, jail the apostles (vv17–18); an angel opens the gates — "Go, stand and speak" (vv19–20); they teach at daybreak (v21); the officers find the prison locked, the guards at the doors, and no one inside (vv22–24); "The men … are standing in the temple" (v25); brought back without violence (v26).
- vv27–32 — **the Council:** "We gave you strict orders" (v28); "We must obey God rather than men" (v29); God raised Jesus, exalted Him as Prince and Savior, to grant repentance to Israel and forgiveness (vv30–31); we are witnesses, and so is the Holy Spirit (v32).
- vv33–42 — **the counsel:** cut to the quick, they intend to kill them (v33); Gamaliel: Theudas, Judas of Galilee — "if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them" (vv34–39); flogged and released (v40); rejoicing to suffer shame for His name (v41); every day, temple and house to house, preaching Jesus as the Christ (v42).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "men" ×12 — vv4, 6, 10, 14, 25, 29, 34, 35 (×2), 36, 38 (×2).
- "people" ×9 — vv12, 13, 16 (×2), 20, 25, 26, 34, 37.
- "God" ×7 — vv4, 29, 30, 31, 32, 39 (×2).
- "price / land / property" ×7 — vv1, 2, 3 (×2), 8 (×3).
- "death / dead / breathed his (her) last / killed / perished" ×7 — vv5, 10 (×2), 30, 33, 36, 37.
- "prison / jail / prison house" ×6 — vv18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25.
- "teach / teaching / teacher" ×6 — vv21, 25, 28 (×2), 34, 42.
- "hear / heard / hearing" ×6 — vv5 (×2), 11, 21, 24, 33.
- "temple" ×5 — vv20, 21, 24, 25, 42; "apostles" ×5 — vv2, 12, 18, 29, 40.
- "found / find" ×5 — vv10, 22, 23 (×2), 39; "stand / standing / stood" ×5 — vv20, 23, 25, 27, 34.
- "Council" ×4 — vv21, 27, 34, 41.
- "fear / afraid" ×3 — vv5, 11, 26 ("great fear" ×2 — vv5, 11).
- "filled" ×3 — vv3, 17, 28; "rose up" ×3 — vv17, 36, 37.
- "Spirit" ×3 — vv3, 9, 32; "name" ×3 — vv28, 40, 41; "feet" ×3 — vv2, 9, 10; "buried" ×3 — vv6, 9, 10.
- "obey" ×2 — vv29, 32; "lie / lied" ×2 — vv3, 4; "overthrow(n)" ×2 — vv38, 39.

Contrasts: Barnabas's gift ⟷ Ananias's gift (4:36–37; 5:1–2). Your own ⟷ lied to God (v4). Men ⟷ God (vv4, 29). None dared associate ⟷ multitudes added (vv13–14). A locked, guarded prison ⟷ no one inside (v23). "Strict orders" ⟷ "we must obey God" (vv28–29). You put Him to death ⟷ God raised Him up and exalted Him (vv30–31). Of men, overthrown ⟷ of God, unstoppable (vv38–39). Flogged and shamed ⟷ rejoicing and worthy (vv40–41).

Shape of the chapter: two attacks and two outcomes. A lie from inside is judged (1–11) and the church grows (12–16); a fist from outside closes in (17–40) and the apostles leave rejoicing and keep preaching (41–42). Peter's short sermon (29–32) sits at the center.

Chapter theme (my words): God guards His church with holiness inside and power outside. The Spirit cannot be lied to, the prison cannot hold the word, and the Council cannot overthrow what is of God — so the church fears Him, obeys Him rather than men, and counts it joy to suffer for His name.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 5:31

"He is the one whom △ God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, ☆ to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."

FIGURE · GAMALIEL'S TEST

GAMALIEL'S TEST · ACTS 5:35–39

THEUDAS v36	**claim** "claiming to be somebody" **following** about 400 men **end** killed · dispersed · "came to nothing"
JUDAS OF GALILEE v37	**claim** "in the days of the census" **following** "drew away some people" **end** perished · "scattered"
JESUS' APOSTLES vv30–32	**claim** "God raised up Jesus" **following** "multitudes of men and women" (v14) **end** "you will not be able to overthrow them"

Henry approves the counsel; Guzik calls it fence-sitting that ignores the evidence;

Sproul: "That was good advice but not perfect advice."

Gamaliel sets the apostles beside two failed movements; notice that only the third has a risen leader, and that our teachers weigh his counsel differently.

What exactly was the sin of Ananias and Sapphira? Not keeping money — Peter says the land and the price were under their control (v4). The sin was the pretense: passing off part as the whole to gain a reputation like Barnabas's. Sproul calls it a conspiracy and says they lied "not only to the Apostles and the church but … to the Holy Spirit." Guzik: "Pride corrupts the church more quickly than anything else." Henry: "Satan filled his heart."

Why such a severe judgment? Guzik with Bruce compares Achan (Joshua 7): at the threshold of a new work, God shows His holiness. Luke's verb "kept back" (*nosphizomai*) is the Greek Old Testament's verb for Achan's theft. Guzik adds that the greater wonder is how often God delays judgment. And Peter pronounced no sentence — "Peter did not pronounce a death sentence on Ananias" (Guzik); God acted.

Were they saved? Our teachers will not say. Guzik: "It is impossible to say for certain, for only God knows," and he cites the "sin leading to death" (1 John 5:16) and Boice: "True Christians do not lose their salvation by sinning." Henry treats the deaths as a warning to all who profess more than they possess. I leave their souls with God and take the warning for mine.

Is the Holy Spirit God? Verses 3 and 4 settle it: lie to the Holy Spirit = lie to God. He is a Person who can be lied to (v3) and put to the test (v9).

What about Peter's shadow? Luke reports what the people hoped (v15), not that the shadow healed. Guzik: "there was no power in Peter's shadow itself"; the healing in v16 was the Lord's. Henry: "Peter comes between them and the sun, and so heals them" — but he gives God the credit.

When may a believer disobey authority? The same word "obey" (*peitharcheō*) commands obedience to rulers in Titus 3:1. Guzik: "submission on the human level is never absolute." Sproul reads v29 less as civil disobedience than as bold preaching of Christ. The line is narrow: when men forbid what God commands — here, preaching Jesus — we obey God and take the consequences, as the apostles took the lash without resisting.

"A Prince and a Savior … to grant repentance to Israel" (v31). Christ rules and rescues (*archēgos*, *sōtēr*). Repentance is His gift (Spurgeon: "the Saviour can give thee this by his Spirit"), offered first to the nation that crucified Him. I believe that offer to Israel stands, and that "all Israel will be saved" when the Deliverer comes from Zion (Rom 11:26).

Was Gamaliel right? Here our teachers differ. Henry praises the counsel. Sproul: "That was good advice but not perfect advice" — what is of God cannot be overthrown, but "It is not true that if something is not of God, it fails." Guzik calls it fence-sitting: "Success is not the ultimate measure of truth." The evidence was already before them; neutrality toward Christ is not safe ground.

Why rejoice after a flogging? Because shame for His name is an honor (v41). Henry: "Reproach for Christ is true preferment." Sproul: "The only glory we have is the glory of the cross." Jesus had said it first (Matt 5:11–12).

Word study (Greek):

- **kept back — *nosphizomai* (G3557):** embezzle, pilfer; Acts 5:2, 3; Titus 2:10; LXX Joshua 7:1 (Achan).
- **lie — *pseudomai* (G5574):** to the Holy Spirit (v3) = to God (v4).
- **fear — *phobos* (G5401):** "great fear" vv5, 11.
- **church — *ekklēsia* (G1577):** first named in Acts at 5:11.
- **shadow — *skia* (G4639):** the people's hope, not the power (v15).
- **jealousy — *zēlos* (G2205):** "filled with jealousy" (v17).
- **obey — *peitharcheō* (G3980):** Acts 5:29, 32; 27:21; Titus 3:1.
- **Prince — *archēgos* (G747):** pioneer, founder; Acts 3:15; 5:31; Heb 2:10; 12:2.
- **Savior — *sōtēr* (G4990):** He rescues as He rules.
- **cross — *xylon* (G3586):** "tree"; Deut 21:22–23; Gal 3:13.
- **repentance — *metanoia* (G3341):** a change of mind, given by the exalted Christ.
- **cut to the quick — *diapriō* (G1282):** sawn through; 5:33; 7:54.
- **fighting against God — *theomachos* (G2314):** only here.

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **The first named church learns God is holy** — *ekklēsia* and "great fear" (v11).
2. **The sin was the pretense, not the price** (v4).
3. **Achan's verb** — *nosphizomai* (Josh 7:1).
4. **Lying to the Spirit is lying to God** (vv3–4).

5. **Pride corrupts fastest** (Guzik).
6. **Every heart is full of something** — vv3, 17, 28.
7. **The genuine exposes the counterfeit** (Sproul).
8. **Obedience to men is real but not absolute** (*peitharcheō*).
9. **No Saviour without the Prince** (Henry; Spurgeon).
10. **Joy under the lash** — counted worthy (v41).

Cross-references: Lev 10:1–3; Josh 7:1–26; Deut 21:22–23; Ps 2:1–3; Matt 5:11–12; Luke 12:1–2; John 10:23; Acts 2:37; 3:11, 15; 4:18–20, 32–37; 7:54; 22:3; 23:8; 26:14; Rom 11:26; 13:1; 1 Cor 11:31–32; Gal 3:13; Eph 4:25, 30; Phil 2:9–10; Titus 2:10; 3:1; Heb 2:10; 12:2, 28–29; 1 Pet 4:14; 1 John 5:16.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 5:41

"So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, ☆rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name."

FIGURE · TWO GIFTS AT THE APOSTLES' FEET

TWO GIFTS LAID AT THE APOSTLES' FEET

	BARNABAS · 4:36–37	ANANIAS & SAPPHIRA · 5:1–10
sold	"a tract of land"	"a piece of property"
brought	"the money"	"a portion of it"
kept back	nothing claimed as his own	"some of the price" (v2)
laid it	"at the apostles' feet"	"at the apostles' feet"
known as	"Son of Encouragement"	"lie to the Holy Spirit" (v3)
the end	trusted, sent, used (9:27; 11:22)	carried out, buried (vv6, 10)

The land was theirs to keep (v4). The sin was the pretense: "You have not lied to men but to God."

Compare the two columns: the outward act is the same; what differs is what was kept back and what was pretended.

Sin to confess — wanting the image without the reality. Ananias wanted Barnabas's reputation. I know that pull: to look like the man who has it together, to tell my story in group a little better than it was, to let people think I gave or prayed or stayed clean more than I did. Guzik is right: "It is too easy to be happy with the image of spirituality without the reality." I name that before God this week, because it is Him I would be lying to (v4).

Truth to face — God is holy, and He is near. "Great fear came over the whole church" (v11). I don't want a God I can manage. The fear of the Lord is not terror of a God who hates me; it is the awe of a man who knows who is in the room. That fear is what made the church safe, and strangely, attractive (v14).

Command to obey — obey God rather than men. Most days obeying God and obeying my boss, my parole officer or the law are the same thing, and I should be the most respectful man in the room (Titus 3:1). But when men tell me to be silent about Jesus or to do what God forbids, my answer is Peter's. I will settle that now so I don't have to decide it under pressure.

Promise to trust — a Prince and a Savior who gives repentance. I can't produce repentance by trying harder. Jesus is exalted to give it (v31). Spurgeon: "the Saviour can give thee this by his Spirit." So I ask Him for it, and I take Him as Prince too — not just the One who rescues me, but the One who runs my life.

Example to follow — rejoicing under the lash. The apostles went home bleeding and rejoicing, and they were back the next morning (vv41–42). For the men I serve, the shame might be a cellmate's mockery or a family that doesn't believe they've changed. That shame, carried for Jesus' name, is an honor. Keep teaching. Keep preaching. Every day.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. Ananias wanted the reputation Barnabas had without paying what Barnabas paid. Where am I tempted to look more spiritual than I am? (5:1–4; 4:36–37) *It is too easy to be happy with the image of spirituality without the reality (Guzik).*
2. Peter says the land was Ananias's to keep (v4). Why is a lie about a good deed so serious to God — and what lie of mine needs to come into the light? (5:3–4; Luke 12:1–2) *You have not lied to men but to God.*
3. "Great fear" came on the church (vv5, 11), and yet the church grew (v14). How can the fear of God make a church more attractive instead of less? (5:11–14; Heb 12:28–29) *A pure church is a powerful church.*
4. Where in my life — work, family, the yard, the unit — does obeying God put me against what men expect of me? How do I tell real conflict from mere stubbornness? (5:29; Titus 3:1; Rom 13:1) *Submission on the human level is never absolute (Guzik).*
5. Jesus is "a Prince and a Savior" (v31). Do I want Him as Savior but resist Him as Prince? Where? (5:30–32; Phil 2:9–10) *No having Christ as Saviour unless we take Him for our Prince (Henry).*
6. The apostles went home bleeding and rejoicing (v41) and were back at it the next day (v42). What shame for Christ have I been avoiding, and what would "every day" faithfulness look like for me? (5:40–42; Matt 5:11–12) *Reproach for Christ is true preferment (Henry).*

Worship. The Holy Spirit is God, and He sees the heart. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom men hanged on a tree, and exalted Him to His right hand as Prince and Savior. Locked doors are nothing to Him. No council can overthrow His work. He gives repentance and forgiveness, and He counts flogged men worthy to suffer for His name.

Prayer. Holy Spirit, You know everything I have kept back. Forgive me for wanting to look better than I am, and make me honest all the way down. Lord Jesus, You are my Prince and my Savior; give me repentance, and rule what You have rescued. When men tell me to be quiet about You, give me Peter's answer, and give me the apostles' joy if it costs me. Keep me teaching and telling about You every day. Amen.

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SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 6

Seven Men and a Face Like an Angel — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

The church meets its first internal crisis with humility and wisdom: the apostles guard prayer and the word, and Spirit-filled men take up the tables, and the word spreads. Then one of those servants, Stephen, is falsely accused like his Lord and shines with God's glory before the Council.

00 The Text

ACTS 6 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food.

2 So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.

3 "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.

4 "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

5 The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch.

6 And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.

7 The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people.

9 But some men from what was called the Synagogue of the Freedmen, including both Cyrenians and Alexandrians, and some from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and argued with Stephen.

10 But they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking.

11 Then they secretly induced men to say, "We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God."

12 And they stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes, and they came up to him and dragged him away and brought him before the Council.

13 They put forward false witnesses who said, "This man incessantly speaks against this holy place and the Law;

14 for we have heard him say that this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place and alter the customs which Moses handed down to us."

15 And fixing their gaze on him, all who were sitting in
the Council saw △ his face like the face of an angel.

Marked in the text

- **v1** “a complaint arose” — Sin / warning
- **v1** “their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food” — Sin / warning
- **v2** “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables” — Time / place / contrast
- **v3** “select from among you seven men of good reputation” — Command / instruction
- **v4** “we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word” — Command / instruction
- **v5** “a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit” — Promise / blessing
- **v6** “after praying, they laid their hands on them” — Time / place / contrast
- **v7** “The word of God kept on spreading” — God — His character & actions
- **v7** “a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith” — Promise / blessing
- **v8** “full of grace and power” — God — His character & actions
- **v9** “the Synagogue of the Freedmen” — Time / place / contrast
- **v10** “they were unable to cope with the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking” — God — His character & actions
- **v11** “they secretly induced men” — Sin / warning
- **v13** “They put forward false witnesses” — Sin / warning
- **v14** “this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place” — Time / place / contrast
- **v15** “his face like the face of an angel” — God — His character & actions
- **v2** “word” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v3** “full of” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

01 Observation

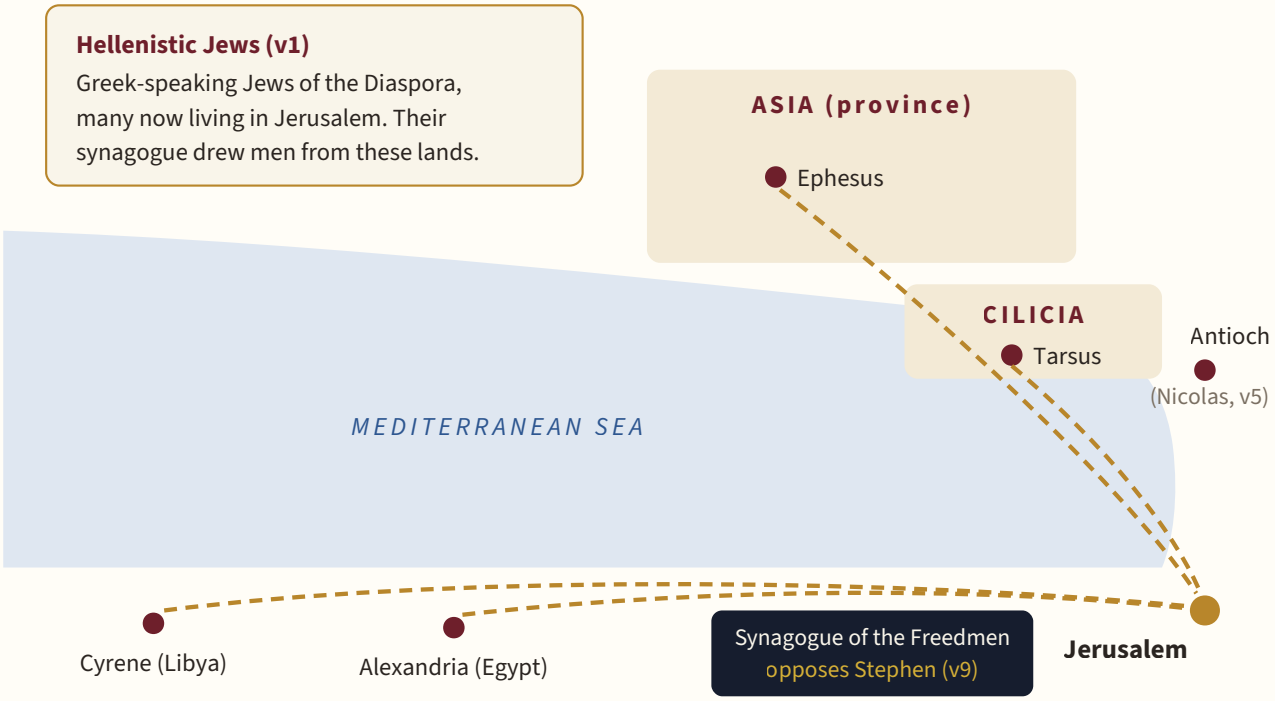
WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 6:1

"Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, ⚠a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because ⚠their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food."

FIGURE · WHERE THE HELLENISTS CAME FROM

Schematic, not to scale · north at top



The Greek-speaking Jews of verse 1 and Stephen's opponents in verse 9 came to Jerusalem from these Diaspora lands — including Cilicia, home of Tarsus.

Setting. Jerusalem, as the church keeps growing after Acts 5. Greek-speaking Jewish believers (Hellenists) complain that their widows are overlooked in the daily food distribution (v1). The Twelve call the congregation together (v2); seven men are chosen and set apart (vv5–6). Stephen, one of the seven, works wonders and is opposed by the Synagogue of the Freedmen, then dragged before the Council (vv8–12).

Structure:

- vv1–4 — **the complaint:** disciples increasing; a complaint from the Hellenists — widows overlooked (v1); "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables" (v2); select seven men of good

reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom (v3); "we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word" (v4).

- vv5–7 — **the seven:** the congregation approves and chooses Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas (v5); prayer and the laying on of hands (v6); the word keeps spreading; many priests obey the faith (v7).
- vv8–10 — **Stephen's wisdom:** full of grace and power, great wonders and signs (v8); the Synagogue of the Freedmen — Cyrenians, Alexandrians, Cilicia, Asia — argue with him (v9); they cannot cope with his wisdom and the Spirit (v10).
- vv11–15 — **the charges:** men secretly induced — "blasphemous words against Moses and against God" (v11); the people, elders and scribes stirred; dragged to the Council (v12); false witnesses: "against this holy place and the Law" (v13); "this Nazarene, Jesus, will destroy this place" (v14); his face like the face of an angel (v15).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "say / said / speak / speaks / speaking" ×7 — vv2, 10, 11 (×2), 13 (×2), 14.
- "word" ×3 — vv2, 4, 7 ("the word of God" ×2 — vv2, 7).
- "disciples" ×3 — vv1, 2, 7; "serving / serve / ministry" ×3 — vv1, 2, 4.
- "full of" ×3 — vv3, 5, 8; "Spirit" ×3 — vv3, 5, 10.
- "God" ×3 — vv2, 7, 11; "Stephen" ×3 — vv5, 8, 9; "men" ×3 — vv3, 9, 11.
- "increase / increasing" ×2 — vv1, 7; "congregation" ×2 — vv2, 5; "pray / praying" ×2 — vv4, 6.
- "wisdom" ×2 — vv3, 10; "faith" ×2 — vv5, 7; "Moses" ×2 — vv11, 14; "place" ×2 — vv13, 14.
- "Council" ×2 — vv12, 15; "heard" ×2 — vv11, 14; "face" ×2 — v15; "arose / rose up" ×2 — vv1, 9.

Contrasts: Hellenists ⟷ native Hebrews (v1). The word of God ⟷ serving tables (v2). The seven at the tables ⟷ the Twelve at prayer and the word (vv3–4). Priests who condemned Jesus ⟷ priests obedient to the faith (v7). Stephen's wisdom and Spirit ⟷ opponents unable to cope (v10). Honest debate ⟷ secretly induced men and false witnesses (vv9–13). Accused of blasphemy against Moses ⟷ a face shining like Moses' (vv11, 15).

Shape of the chapter: a problem solved (1–7) and a servant attacked (8–15). Verse 7 is a hinge — one of Luke's progress reports — and the chapter ends on a face, not a verdict, setting up Stephen's speech in chapter 7.

Chapter theme (my words): The church shares its work so the word of God keeps first place, and Spirit-filled servants become powerful witnesses. When the truth cannot be answered, it is lied about — but God puts His glory on the face of His servant.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 6:7

"△ The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and ☆ a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith."

FIGURE · ONE WORD, TWO MINISTRIES



Luke uses the same word for serving food and for the ministry of the word; the apostles divide the work, not its dignity.

Who were the Hellenists and the Hebrews? Both were Jewish believers. Hellenists were Greek-speaking Jews from the Diaspora; Hebrews were Aramaic-speaking Jews of Judea (Guzik). The cultural gap made a small neglect feel like a big injustice. Henry calls it "not an open falling out, but a secret heart-burning," and Spurgeon warns that "A breach once made has a tendency to widen."

Were the apostles too proud to serve tables? No. They had been serving tables (the money came "at the apostles' feet," 4:35), and the same word *diakonia* names both jobs. The issue is calling and priority, not dignity. Sproul: "Pastors are to be ministers of the Word because that is our mandate." Guzik: "Practical service is spiritual service."

Were the seven the first deacons? Our teachers differ in emphasis. Guzik: "Nowhere in this chapter of Acts are these men called deacons," though "most consider they were the first to fulfill the office of deacon." Sproul: "This was how the diaconate was founded." Henry calls Stephen "a deacon in the church." I take it as the seed of the office in 1 Timothy 3:8–13, even if the title comes later.

Why Greek names? Guzik: they "were probably Hellenists themselves." The church put the remedy in the hands of the hurt group — a model of humility for any group or church in conflict.

What does the laying on of hands mean (v6)? The apostles prayed and publicly set the men apart for a task (Sproul). It confers recognition and commission, not magic; the men were already "full of the Spirit" (v3).

"Full of grace and power" or "faith and power" (v8)? NASB follows the older manuscripts (*charitos*, grace); KJV, Guzik and Sproul read "faith." Either way, Stephen is "full" in every direction (vv3, 5, 8), and Henry's line holds: "Those that are full of faith are full of power."

Was Saul in the synagogue? Possibly. Men "from Cilicia" (v9) argued with Stephen; Tarsus was in Cilicia (22:3), and Saul is at the stoning (7:58). Guzik: "The mention of Cilicia suggests this may have been Paul's synagogue." Luke doesn't say, so I hold it loosely.

Were the charges true? Twisted. Jesus did say "Destroy this temple" — of His body (John 2:19–21). Sproul: nearly everything the witnesses said was false, and the one true thing they twisted. Stephen taught that Jesus is greater than Moses, the temple and the Law (Guzik), not that God's Law was evil.

What was the angel-like face? Guzik and Sproul both think of Moses' shining face (Exodus 34). Sproul: "It was reflected glory, reflected by having been in the presence of God." Henry: "such an unaccountable mixture of mildness and majesty" — but it did not stop the stones.

Word study (Greek):

- **complaint — *gongysmos* (G1112):** grumbling; John 7:12; Acts 6:1; Phil 2:14; 1 Pet 4:9; LXX Exodus 16.
- **Hellenistic Jews — *Hellēnistēs* (G1675):** Greek-speaking Jews; 6:1; 9:29.
- **Hebrews — *Hebraios* (G1445):** Aramaic-speaking Jews of the homeland.
- **serving / ministry — *diakonia* (G1248):** food (v1) and the word (v4).
- **serve — *diakoneō* (G1247):** to wait on; Luke 22:27.
- **devote ourselves — *proskartereō* (G4342):** persist in; Acts 1:14; 2:42; 6:4.
- **spreading — *auxanō* (G837):** the word grows (v7).
- **becoming obedient — *hypakouō* (G5219):** priests obeying the faith (v7).
- **grace — *charis* (G5485) / power — *dynamis* (G1411):** v8.
- **Freedmen — *Libertinos* (G3032):** freed slaves; only here.
- **secretly induced — *hypoballō* (G5260):** suborned; only here.
- **false — *pseudēs* (G5571):** false witnesses (v13).
- **angel — *angelos* (G32):** "the face of an angel" (v15).

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **Satan tries the dinner table** (Guzik).
2. **Grumbling is a wilderness word** — *gongysmos*.
3. **Tables and the word are both diakonia.**
4. **Prayer comes first** (v4; Sproul).
5. **Greek names for a Greek complaint** (Guzik).
6. **Unity is a means of blessing** (Spurgeon).

7. **Priests obeyed the faith** (Henry).
8. **Full, full, full** — Spirit, wisdom, faith, grace, power.
9. **Tried like his Master** (Matt 26:59–61).
10. **Reflected glory** (Sproul; Henry).

Cross-references: Exod 16:7–8; 18:17–23; 20:16; 34:29–35; Deut 19:15; Matt 26:59–61; Luke 21:15; 22:27; John 2:19–21; 7:12; 15:20; Acts 1:8, 14; 2:42; 4:35; 7:58; 8:4–5; 9:29; 21:8; 22:3; Rom 1:5; 2 Cor 3:7, 18; Gal 3:28; Eph 4:11–12; Phil 2:14; 1 Tim 3:8–13; 2 Tim 2:2; James 1:27; 1 Pet 4:9.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 6:15

"And fixing their gaze on him, all who were sitting in the Council saw △his face like the face of an angel."

FIGURE · TRIED LIKE HIS MASTER

THE SERVANT TRIED LIKE HIS MASTER

	JESUS · Matthew 26	STEPHEN · Acts 6
court	"the whole Council" (26:59)	"brought him before the Council" (v12)
witnesses	"many false witnesses" (26:60)	"false witnesses" (v13)
charge	"destroy the temple of God" (26:61)	"will destroy this place" (v14)
method	"trying to obtain false testimony"	"secretly induced men" (v11)
his face	"they spat in His face" (26:67)	"like the face of an angel" (v15)

Jesus had said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" — "of the temple of His body" (John 2:19, 21).
Guzik: "It is a good thing to be accused of the same things Jesus was accused of."

Read across each row: Stephen's trial follows the pattern of Jesus' trial almost point for point.

Sin to confess — quiet grumbling. The complaint in verse 1 was real, but Henry calls it "a secret heart-burning." I know that kind of burn — the slow resentment when I think I've been overlooked. I confess it to God and, where it's fair, I speak it plainly to the right person instead of muttering. Grumbling is the wilderness word; I don't want to live there.

Example to follow — the apostles' humility and focus. They didn't defend themselves or form a committee (Guzik). They named the problem, kept their calling, and handed real authority to men from the hurt side. When there is conflict in my group, I want to listen first, fix what's wrong, and give the people who were hurt a seat at the table.

Command to obey — devote yourself to prayer and the word. For me as a teacher of men, verse 4 is personal. The tables will always call. If I neglect prayer and the word, I will have nothing to give. This week I will guard my mornings for prayer and the word before anything else.

Truth to face — ordinary service is spiritual work. The seven had to be full of the Spirit to serve food. The man who mops the floor, runs the van or cooks for the group is doing ministry. Some of the men I serve think they have nothing to give. Stephen started at the tables.

Promise to trust — the word keeps spreading. Even priests obeyed the faith (v7). No one is too far gone. Jesus promised "utterance and wisdom which none of your opponents will be able to resist" (Luke 21:15), and Stephen lived it.

Example to follow — Stephen's face. Lied about, dragged in, surrounded — and his face shone. Sproul: "reflected glory, reflected by having been in the presence of God." I can't manufacture that. I can only spend time with God and let Him put it there.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. The complaint was real but quiet — a "secret heart-burning" (Henry). What grumbling am I carrying that I have never brought into the open in a healthy way? (6:1; Phil 2:14) *Satan loves to use an unintentional wrong (Guzik).*
2. Who are the "overlooked widows" around me — the people easy to miss in my church, unit or neighborhood — and what is one way I can see them this week? (6:1; James 1:27) *Pure religion visits widows in their distress.*
3. The apostles knew what only they could do and protected it. What is the main thing God has given me to do, and what am I letting crowd it out? (6:2–4) *Prayer and the ministry of the word (v4).*
4. The seven had to be "full of the Spirit and of wisdom" to serve food. Do I think of my ordinary service — cooking, cleaning, driving, fixing — as spiritual work? (6:3–6; Eph 4:11–12) *Practical service is spiritual service (Guzik).*
5. Stephen's enemies could not answer him, so they lied about him. How do I respond when I am misrepresented for following Jesus? (6:10–14; John 15:20) *It is a good thing to be accused of what Jesus was accused of (Guzik).*
6. Stephen's face reflected glory because he had been with God. What would it take for people to see Christ on my face, not just hear Him in my words? (6:15; 2 Cor 3:18) *Reflected glory, from being in the presence of God (Sproul).*

Worship. The Lord of the church sees the overlooked widow and fills ordinary men with His Spirit for ordinary work. His word keeps spreading and growing, reaching even the priests who had condemned Him. He gives His servants wisdom no one can resist, and when they are lied about, He puts His own glory on their faces.

Prayer. Lord, forgive my quiet grumbling and the times I have overlooked someone You see. Keep me devoted to prayer and to Your word. Fill me with Your Spirit and wisdom for the small jobs as much as the big ones. When I am misrepresented for Your name, keep my mouth honest and my face turned toward You, so that people see Your glory and not my anger. Amen.

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SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 7

The Son of Man Standing — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

Stephen, on trial for his life, shows from Israel's own story that God was never confined to a building and that His people always resisted the deliverers He sent — and now they have murdered the Righteous One. He dies seeing Jesus standing for him and praying for the men who kill him, and the man holding their coats is the next one God will save.

00 The Text

ACTS 7 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 The high priest said, "Are these things so?"

2 And he said, "Hear me, brethren and fathers! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran,

3 and said to him, 'LEAVE YOUR COUNTRY AND YOUR RELATIVES, AND COME INTO THE LAND THAT I WILL SHOW YOU.'

4 "Then he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. From there, after his father died, God had him move to this country in which you are now living.

5 "But He gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot of ground, and yet, even when he had no child, He promised that HE WOULD GIVE IT TO HIM AS A POSSESSION, AND TO HIS DESCENDANTS AFTER HIM.

6 "But God spoke to this effect, that his DESCENDANTS WOULD BE ALIENS IN A FOREIGN LAND, AND THAT THEY WOULD BE ENSLAVED AND MISTREATED FOR FOUR HUNDRED YEARS.

7 " 'AND WHATEVER NATION TO WHICH THEY WILL BE IN BONDAGE I MYSELF WILL JUDGE,' said God, 'AND AFTER THAT THEY WILL COME OUT AND SERVE ME IN THIS PLACE.'

8 "And He gave him the covenant of circumcision; and so Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs.

9 "The patriarchs became jealous of Joseph and sold him into Egypt. Yet God was with him,

10 and rescued him from all his afflictions, and granted him favor and wisdom in the sight of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and he made him governor over Egypt and all his household.

11 "Now a famine came over all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction with it, and our fathers could find no food.

12 "But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our fathers there the first time.

13 "On the second visit Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph's family was disclosed to Pharaoh.

14 "Then Joseph sent word and invited Jacob his father and all his relatives to come to him, seventy-five persons in all.

15 "And Jacob went down to Egypt and there he and our fathers died.

16 "From there they were removed to Shechem and laid in the tomb which Abraham had purchased for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

17 "But as the time of the promise was approaching which God had assured to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt,

18 until THERE AROSE ANOTHER KING OVER EGYPT WHO KNEW NOTHING ABOUT JOSEPH.

19 "It was he who took shrewd advantage of our race and mistreated our fathers so that they would expose their infants and they would not survive.

20 "It was at this time that Moses was born; and he was lovely in the sight of God, and he was nurtured three months in his father's home.

21 "And after he had been set outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and nurtured him as her own son.

22 "Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds.

23 "But when he was approaching the age of forty, it entered his mind to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel.

24 "And when he saw one of them being treated unjustly, he defended him and took vengeance for the oppressed by striking down the Egyptian.

25 "And he supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him, but they did not understand.

26 "On the following day he appeared to them as they were fighting together, and he tried to reconcile them in peace, saying, 'Men, you are brethren, why do you injure one another?'

27 "But the one who was injuring his neighbor pushed him away, saying, 'WHO MADE YOU A RULER AND JUDGE OVER US?

28 'YOU DO NOT MEAN TO KILL ME AS YOU KILLED THE EGYPTIAN YESTERDAY, DO YOU?'

29 "At this remark, MOSES FLED AND BECAME AN ALIEN IN THE LAND OF MIDIAN, where he became the father of two sons.

30 "After forty years had passed, AN ANGEL APPEARED TO HIM IN THE WILDERNESS OF MOUNT Sinai, IN THE FLAME OF A BURNING THORN BUSH.

31 "When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight; and as he approached to look more closely, there came the voice of the Lord:

32 'I AM THE GOD OF YOUR FATHERS, THE GOD OF ABRAHAM AND ISAAC AND JACOB.' Moses shook with fear and would not venture to look.

33 "BUT THE LORD SAID TO HIM, 'TAKE OFF THE SANDALS FROM YOUR FEET, FOR THE PLACE ON WHICH YOU ARE STANDING IS HOLY GROUND.

34 'I HAVE CERTAINLY SEEN THE OPPRESSION OF MY PEOPLE IN EGYPT AND HAVE HEARD THEIR GROANS, AND I HAVE COME DOWN TO RESCUE THEM; COME NOW, AND I WILL SEND YOU TO EGYPT.'

35 "This Moses whom they disowned, saying, 'WHO MADE YOU A RULER AND A JUDGE?' is the one whom God sent to be both a ruler and a deliverer with the help of the angel who appeared to him in the thorn bush.

36 "This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in the land of Egypt and in the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years.

37 "This is the Moses who said to the sons of Israel, 'GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR BRETHREN.'

38 "This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness together with the angel who was speaking to him on Mount Sinai, and who was with our fathers; and he received living oracles to pass on to you.

39 "Our fathers were unwilling to be obedient to him, but repudiated him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt,

40 SAYING TO AARON, 'MAKE FOR US GODS WHO WILL GO BEFORE US; FOR THIS MOSES WHO LED US OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT—WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM.'

41 "At that time they made a calf and brought a sacrifice to the idol, and were rejoicing in the works of their hands.

42 "But God turned away and delivered them up to serve the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the

prophets, ‘IT WAS NOT TO ME THAT YOU OFFERED VICTIMS AND SACRIFICES FORTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS, WAS IT, O HOUSE OF ISRAEL?

43 ‘YOU ALSO TOOK ALONG THE TABERNACLE OF MOLOCH AND THE STAR OF THE GOD ROMPHA, THE IMAGES WHICH YOU MADE TO WORSHIP. I ALSO WILL REMOVE YOU BEYOND BABYLON.’

44 “Our fathers had the tabernacle of testimony in the wilderness, just as He who spoke to Moses directed him to make it according to the pattern which he had seen.

45 “And having received it in their turn, our fathers brought it in with Joshua upon dispossessing the nations whom God drove out before our fathers, until the time of David.

46 “David found favor in God’s sight, and asked that he might find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob.

47 “But it was Solomon who built a house for Him.

48 “However, the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands; as the prophet says:

49 ‘HEAVEN IS MY THRONE, AND EARTH IS THE FOOTSTOOL OF MY FEET; WHAT KIND OF HOUSE WILL YOU BUILD FOR ME?’ says the Lord, ‘OR WHAT PLACE IS THERE FOR MY REPOSE?

50 ‘WAS IT NOT MY HAND WHICH MADE ALL THESE THINGS?’

51 “You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.

52 “Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become;

53 you who received the law as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it.”

54 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him.

55 But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God;

56 and he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”

57 But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse.

58 When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

59 They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!”

60 Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them!” Having said this, he fell asleep.

Marked in the text

- **v2** “The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham” — God — His character & actions
- **v5** “not even a foot of ground” — Time / place / contrast
- **v9** “became jealous of Joseph” — Sin / warning
- **v9** “Yet God was with him” — God — His character & actions
- **v10** “rescued him from all his afflictions” — God — His character & actions
- **v17** “the time of the promise was approaching” — Time / place / contrast
- **v25** “but they did not understand” — Sin / warning
- **v33** “THE PLACE ON WHICH YOU ARE STANDING IS HOLY GROUND” — God — His character & actions
- **v34** “I HAVE COME DOWN TO RESCUE THEM” — God — His character & actions
- **v35** “This Moses whom they disowned” — Sin / warning
- **v35** “God sent to be both a ruler and a deliverer” — God — His character & actions
- **v37** “GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME” — Promise / blessing
- **v38** “living oracles” — God — His character & actions
- **v39** “in their hearts turned back to Egypt” — Sin / warning
- **v41** “they made a calf” — Sin / warning
- **v48** “the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands” — God — His character & actions
- **v49** “HEAVEN IS MY THRONE” — God — His character & actions
- **v51** “stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears” — Sin / warning
- **v51** “always resisting the Holy Spirit” — Sin / warning
- **v52** “the Righteous One” — God — His character & actions

- **v55** “being full of the Holy Spirit” — Promise / blessing
- **v55** “saw the glory of God” — God — His character & actions
- **v56** “the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God” — God — His character & actions
- **v58** “a young man named Saul” — Time / place / contrast
- **v59** “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!” — Promise / blessing
- **v59** “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” — Promise / blessing
- **v60** “Lord, do not hold this sin against them!” — Command / instruction
- **v60** “he fell asleep” — Promise / blessing
- **v2** “fathers” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v20** “Moses” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

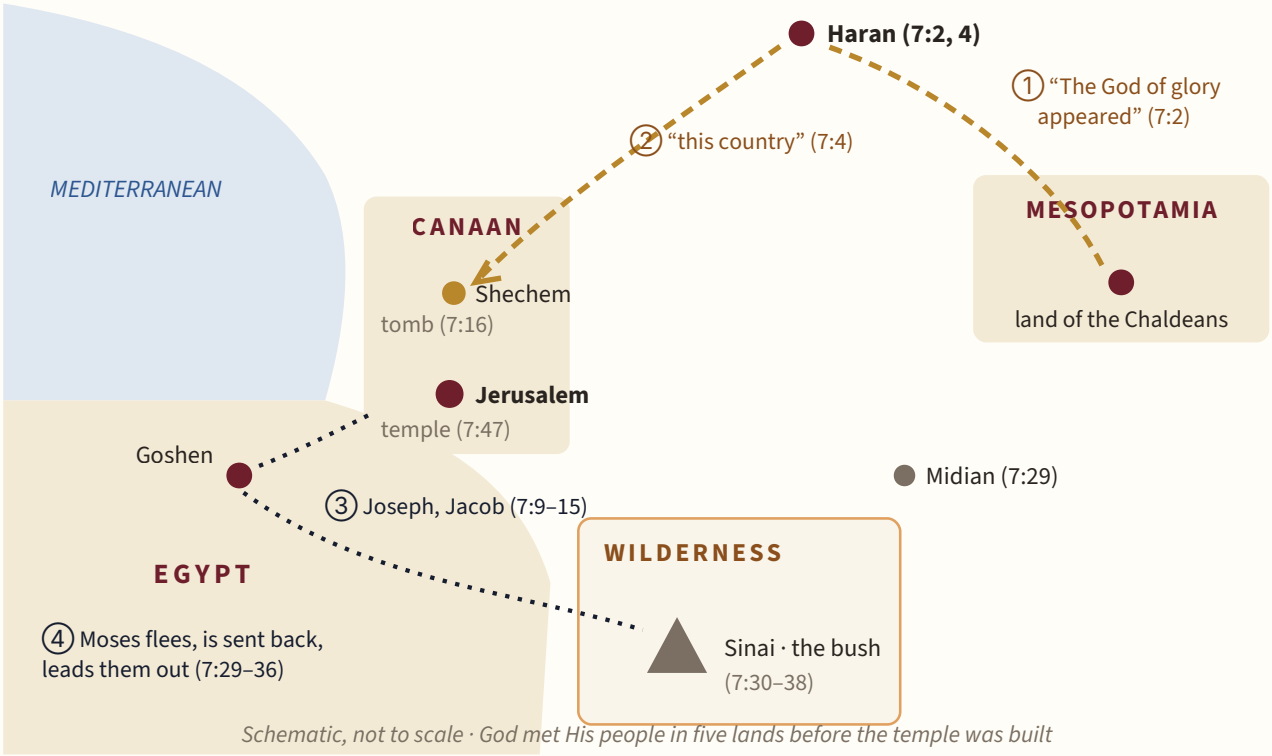
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 7:2

"And he said, "Hear me, brethren and fathers! △The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran,"

FIGURE · WHERE GOD MET HIS PEOPLE



Trace Stephen's story across the map: God appeared in Mesopotamia, Canaan, Egypt, Midian and Sinai — all of it before anyone built a house for Him in Jerusalem.

Setting. Jerusalem, before the Council (the Sanhedrin). The high priest asks Stephen, "Are these things so?" (v1) — the charges of 6:11–14: speaking against "this holy place and the Law," and saying Jesus would destroy the temple. Stephen answers with a sermon from Abraham to Solomon (vv2–50), turns it into an indictment (vv51–53), and is stoned outside the city (vv54–60) while a young man named Saul watches the coats (v58).

Structure:

- vv1–16 — **Abraham and Joseph:** the God of glory appears in Mesopotamia (v2); Haran, then "this country" (vv3–4); no inheritance, "not even a foot of ground," but a promise (v5); four hundred years foretold (vv6–7); the covenant of circumcision (v8); Joseph sold, "Yet God was with him" (vv9–10); famine, two visits, seventy-five persons (vv11–14); death and burial at Shechem (vv15–16).

- vv17–36 — **Moses rejected and sent:** the time of the promise; another king (vv17–19); Moses born, nurtured, educated (vv20–22); at forty he defends a brother — "they did not understand" (vv23–25); "Who made you a ruler and judge over us?" (vv26–28); flight to Midian (v29); the bush, holy ground, "I will send you" (vv30–34); "This Moses whom they disowned" God sent as ruler and deliverer (vv35–36).
- vv37–50 — **the Prophet and the temple:** "a prophet like me" (v37); the living oracles (v38); the fathers turned back to Egypt — the calf (vv39–41); God gave them up — Amos quoted (vv42–43); the tabernacle of testimony (v44); Joshua to David (vv45–46); Solomon built a house — but the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands (vv47–50; Isa 66:1–2).
- vv51–53 — **the indictment:** stiff-necked, uncircumcised in heart and ears, always resisting the Holy Spirit; the prophets persecuted, the Righteous One betrayed and murdered; the Law received but not kept.
- vv54–60 — **the first martyr:** cut to the quick (v54); full of the Holy Spirit, he sees the glory of God and Jesus standing (vv55–56); they cover their ears and rush at him (v57); stoned outside the city; the witnesses' robes at Saul's feet (v58); "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" (v59); "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" — he fell asleep (v60).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "God" ×20 — vv2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 17, 20, 25, 32 (×2), 35, 37, 42, 43, 45, 46 (×2), 55 (×2), 56.
- "father(s)" ×20 — "fathers" ×13 (vv2, 11, 12, 15, 19, 32, 38, 39, 44, 45 ×2, 51, 52), "father" ×7 (vv2, 4, 8 ×2, 14, 20, 29); "our fathers" alone ×9.
- "Egypt / Egyptian(s)" ×16 — vv9, 10 (×2), 11, 12, 15, 17, 18, 22, 24, 28, 34 (×2), 36, 39, 40.
- "said / saying / spoke / speaking" ×16 — God and Moses keep speaking; Israel keeps refusing to listen.
- "Moses" ×9 — vv20, 22, 29, 31, 32, 35, 37, 40, 44.
- "land" ×6 — vv3, 4, 6, 29, 36, 40; "wilderness" ×5 — vv30, 36, 38, 42, 44.
- "Abraham" ×5 — vv2, 8, 16, 17, 32; "Joseph" ×5 — vv9, 13 (×2), 14, 18; "brethren" ×5 — vv2, 23, 25, 26, 37.
- "house(s)" ×4 — vv42, 47, 48, 49; "place" ×4 — vv7, 33, 46, 49; "heaven(s)" ×4 — vv42, 49, 55, 56.
- "forty" ×4 — vv23, 30, 36, 42; "deliverance / deliverer / rescue(d)" ×4 — vv10, 25, 34, 35.
- rejection words — "pushed him away" (v27), "disowned" (v35), "unwilling … repudiated" (v39).
- "standing" ×3 — v33 (Moses on holy ground), vv55, 56 (Jesus at God's right hand).
- "glory" ×2 — vv2, 55, framing the chapter.

Contrasts: God of glory ⟷ a people in bondage (vv2, 6). No foot of ground ⟷ the promise (v5). Brothers who sold Joseph ⟷ God who was with him (v9). "Who made you a ruler?" ⟷ "God sent to be both a ruler and a deliverer" (vv27, 35). Living oracles ⟷ a calf made with hands (vv38, 41). The tabernacle God designed ⟷ the house Solomon built ⟷ heaven, His throne (vv44–49). Received the Law ⟷ did not keep it (v53). Cut to the quick, gnashing teeth ⟷ full of the Holy Spirit, gazing into heaven (vv54–55). Covered ears ⟷ heavens opened (vv56–57). Stones ⟷ a prayer for the throwers (vv59–60). Stephen falls asleep ⟷ Saul is wide awake (vv58–60).

Shape of the chapter: fifty verses of history, three verses of verdict, seven verses of martyrdom. The history is not a detour; it is the argument. The last scene turns the trial around: the Council condemns Stephen, but heaven opens and the Son of Man stands.

Chapter theme (my words): God has always met His people wherever He chose, and His people have always resisted the men He sent — Joseph, Moses, the prophets and finally Jesus. Stephen tells the truth, sees Jesus standing for him, and dies forgiving, and the grace that held him is already reaching for Saul.

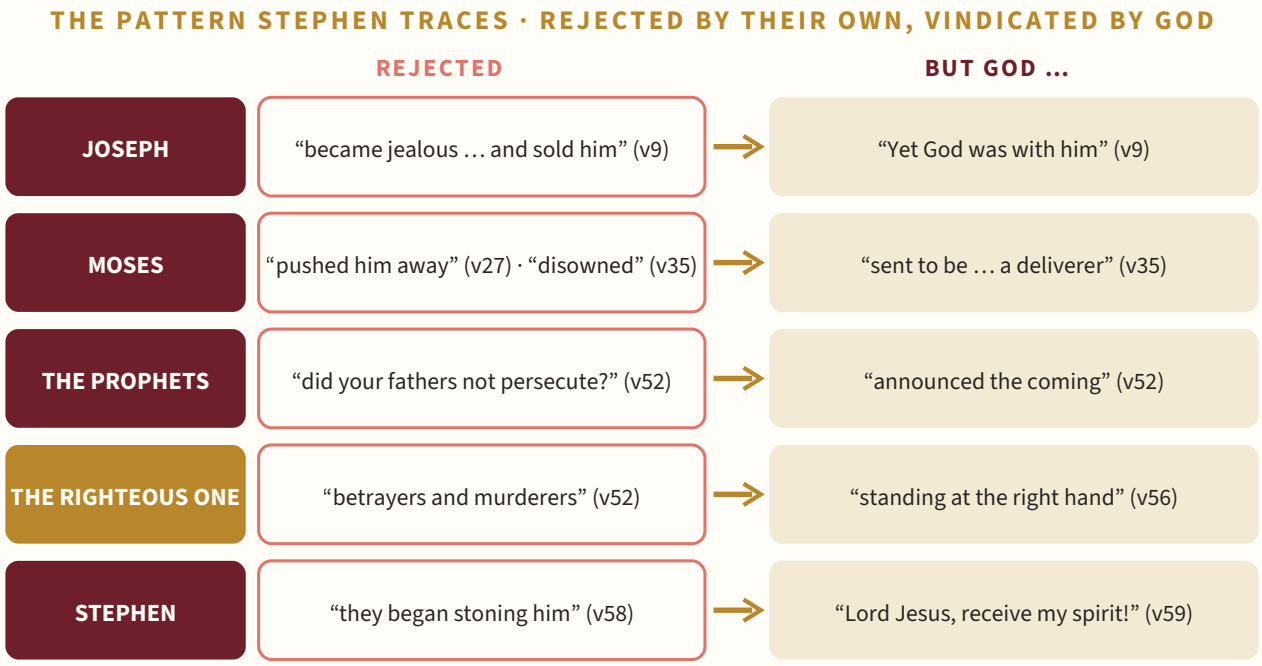
02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 7:51

"You men who are ⚠stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are ⚠always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did."

FIGURE · REJECTED BY THEIR OWN, VINDICATED BY GOD



"You are doing just as your fathers did" (v51) — and God is doing just as He always did.

Read each row left to right: every deliverer God sent was first refused by his own people, and every time God had the last word.

Is Stephen attacking the temple and the Law? No. Guzik: the speech is "not so much a legal defense" as an explanation. Henry: God "had a church in the world many ages before that holy place was founded and the ceremonial law given." Stephen calls the Law "living oracles" (v38) and indicts the Council for not keeping it (v53). His target is a heart that trusts a building and resists the Spirit.

Why tell the whole history? Because the history makes two points at once. God appears outside the land — Mesopotamia, Egypt, Midian, Sinai — and Israel resists the deliverers He sends. Sproul: "He began to give them a lesson in redemptive history" — the Emmaus-road lesson of Luke 24:27 again.

What about the details in verses 4, 14 and 16? Stephen quotes the Greek Old Testament (hence seventy-five persons, v14; Gen 46:27 Hebrew has seventy). Guzik: the Septuagint is "not wrong, just arrived at in a different way." Verse 16 compresses two purchases (Gen 23; 33:19) and two burials (Gen 50:13; Josh 24:32), as a preacher telling a familiar story might. Verse 4 (Abraham left Haran "after his father died") has also been discussed since

ancient times; Guzik does not press it. Luke accurately records what Stephen said; the point of the speech does not hang on any of these.

Joseph and Moses as types of Christ. Guzik: "Stephen mentioned the story of Joseph because he is a picture of Jesus," and Moses was "favored by God from birth and preserved in childhood." Spurgeon: "Now you see that Moses was thus a type of Christ." Each was rejected by his brothers first, and each became their deliverer (v35; Ps 118:22).

"Houses made by human hands" (v48). The word *cheiropoiētos* echoes "the works of their hands" — the calf (v41). God commanded the tabernacle and accepted Solomon's house, so this is not a rejection of the temple but of treating it as God's container. Isaiah 66:1–2 says it first. Henry: "The whole world is his temple, in which he is every where present."

Is Stephen writing Israel off? No. He calls them "brethren and fathers" (v2) and speaks as a Jew inside Israel's story, indicting the leaders of his generation the way Moses and the prophets indicted theirs. The same chapter ends with God reaching for Saul, a Pharisee. I believe God is not finished with Israel (Rom 11:1–2, 25–26); Acts 7 is a prophet's rebuke, not a divorce.

Why is Jesus standing (vv55–56)? Everywhere else He is seated (Luke 22:69; Heb 1:3). Guzik lists possibilities — solidarity, "a standing ovation," pleading Stephen's case. Sproul: the Judge rises as defense attorney. Henry: Christ rises to plead for His servant. Spurgeon wonders whether it was a vision of faith rather than physical sight. They differ on the reason, and all agree He is not indifferent: "He sees Christ is for him, and then no matter who is against him" (Henry).

"He fell asleep" (v60). Guzik: "Instead of saying simply that he died, it says that he merely fell asleep." The body sleeps until the resurrection (1 Thess 4:13–17); the believer is "at home with the Lord" (2 Cor 5:8).

Saul at the coats. Sproul: "But here was the first introduction of the Apostle Paul in biblical history." Henry: Paul later "reflected upon with regret" his part (Acts 22:20; 26:10). Guzik passes on Augustine: without Stephen's prayer "the church would not have had Paul."

Word study (Greek):

- **glory — *doxa* (G1391):** frames the chapter, vv2 and 55.
- **alien — *paroikos* (G3941):** a resident foreigner; vv6, 29; 1 Pet 2:11.
- **affliction — *thlipsis* (G2347):** crushing pressure; vv10, 11.
- **signs — *sēmeion* (G4592):** Moses' signs (v36) and Stephen's (6:8).
- **oracles — *logion* (G3051):** the Law as "living oracles" (v38; Rom 3:2).
- **made by hands — *cheiropoiētos* (G5499):** v48; cf. "works of their hands" (v41); Acts 17:24.
- **stiff-necked — *sklērotrachēlos* (G4644):** only here in the NT; Israel at the calf (Exod 33:3).
- **uncircumcised — *aperitmētos* (G564):** "in heart and ears" (v51).
- **resist — *antipiptō* (G496):** to fall against; only here in the NT.
- **Righteous One — *dikaios* (G1342):** Messiah's title (Acts 3:14; 22:14).
- **standing — *histēmi* (G2476):** vv55, 56; contrast Luke 22:69.
- **witnesses — *martys* (G3144):** v58; 1:8; 22:20; the root of "martyr."
- **fell asleep — *koimaō* (G2837):** v60; 1 Thess 4:13–14.

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **The speech is an answer, not an apology** — God met His people before the temple.
2. **Glory at both ends** — v2 and v55.
3. **Holy ground was in the desert** (v33; Henry).
4. **Every deliverer was refused first** — "As Israel was in its history, so you are today" (Guzik).
5. **Hand-made religion** — vv41, 48.
6. **Outward signs, uncircumcised hearts** — "It never reached your heart" (Sproul).
7. **The Judge stood up** (Sproul).
8. **He died the way his Lord died** (Luke 23:34, 46).
9. **Calm is a gift of the Spirit** (Spurgeon).
10. **The man holding the coats** — no Stephen, no Paul (Augustine via Guzik).

Cross-references: Gen 12:1–3; 15:13–14; 23; 33:19; 37; 46:27; 50:13; Exod 1–3; 32:9; 33:3; Deut 17:7; 18:15; Josh 24:32; 2 Sam 7; 1 Kings 8:27; Ps 118:22; Isa 53:11; 66:1–2; Jer 9:26; Amos 5:25–27; Matt 23:37; Luke 22:69; 23:34, 46; 24:27; Acts 3:14; 6:8–15; 17:24; 22:20; 26:10; Rom 3:2; 11:1–2, 25–26; 2 Cor 5:8; 1 Thess 4:13–17; Heb 11:8–10; 13:12–14; 1 Pet 2:11.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 7:60

"Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep."

FIGURE · LIKE MASTER, LIKE SERVANT

LIKE MASTER, LIKE SERVANT · HOW LUKE TELLS TWO DEATHS

	JESUS (LUKE)	STEPHEN (ACTS)
THE CHARGE	false witnesses: "this temple"	false witnesses: "this place" (6:13–14)
THE VISION	Son of Man "SEATED" (Lk 22:69)	Son of Man "standing" (7:56)
THE PLACE	"outside the gate" (Heb 13:12)	"driven him out of the city" (7:58)
HIS SPIRIT	"INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT"	"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" (7:59)
HIS KILLERS	"Father, forgive them" (Lk 23:34)	"do not hold this sin against them!"
THE CRY	"crying out with a loud voice" (23:46)	"cried out with a loud voice" (7:60)

The first martyr dies the way his Lord died — and sees his Lord risen to receive him.

Luke wrote both books; set the two columns side by side and see how closely the first martyr's death follows his Lord's.

Promise to trust — no foot of ground, but a promise. Abraham got "not even a foot of ground" — only God's word (v5). Some of the men I serve are sitting in a cell or a halfway house with nothing in their hands but a promise. So am I, more often than I admit. God's promises "though they are slow, are sure" (Henry). I will name one promise and live on it this week.

Sin to confess — resisting the Holy Spirit behind good religion. The Council had the temple, the Law and the right ancestors, and still "always resisting the Holy Spirit" (v51). I can hide behind my Bible studies, my ministry, my years in church. Sproul's line cuts me: "It never reached your heart." I confess the places where I know what God is saying and I cover my ears (v57).

Example to follow — Stephen's two prayers. "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" and "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" (vv59–60). He trusted Jesus with his death and his enemies. I want to die like that, so I have to learn to live like that — praying for the man who hurt me, by name, before I feel like it.

Truth to hold — Jesus stands for His people. Whatever court I stand in — a judge, a parole board, a doctor's office, my own accusing conscience — the Son of Man is at the right hand of God, and He is for me. Sproul: "It does not get any better in a trial than to have the judge be your defense attorney."

Hope to carry — the man holding the coats. Saul approved of Stephen's death (8:1), and God saved him anyway. No man in my group, and no man on the other side of the glass, is too far gone. I will keep praying for the Sauls in my life.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. Abraham received "not even a foot of ground," only a promise (7:5). What promise of God am I being asked to live on without outward proof yet? (7:2–8; Heb 11:8–10) *He could only trust God for the fulfillment of these things (Guzik).*
2. Joseph and Moses were both rejected by their own brothers before God used them. Where have I been rejected — or where have I rejected someone God sent? (7:9–10, 23–35) *Suffering times have often been growing times (Henry).*
3. Stephen's hearers had the temple, the Law and the right family tree, but resisted the Holy Spirit. What religious "good things" could I be hiding behind? (7:48–53) *It never reached your heart (Sproul).*
4. What do I treat as if God lived there — a building, a ministry, a routine, a past experience — instead of meeting Him wherever He speaks? (7:44–50; Isa 66:1–2) *God is too big to fit in any temple man could make (Guzik).*
5. Jesus stood for Stephen. How does knowing Christ is "for me" change the way I face hostility, a parole board, a diagnosis or my own death? (7:55–56; Rom 8:31) *He sees Christ is for him, and then no matter who is against him (Henry).*
6. Who is the person I would least like to forgive — and what would it take for me to pray Stephen's prayer for him this week? (7:59–60; Luke 23:34) *Without Stephen's prayer, the church would not have had Paul (Guzik).*

Worship. The God of glory who appeared to Abraham in a pagan land, who was with Joseph in a pit and with Moses in a desert, who will not be housed by human hands — this God raised the Righteous One the Council murdered, seated Him at His right hand, and had Him rise to receive His first martyr. Heaven is His throne, and He looks to the man who is humble and contrite and trembles at His word.

Prayer. Lord Jesus, You stood for Stephen, and You stand for me. Forgive me for resisting Your Spirit behind good religion. Give me Abraham's faith to live on a promise, Stephen's courage to tell the truth, and Stephen's heart to pray for the men who hurt me. When my time comes, receive my spirit. And reach the Sauls I know, the way You reached the man holding the coats. Amen.

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SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 8

Joy in Samaria, Joy on the Road — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

The persecution meant to stamp out the church scatters it like seed, and the word goes to Samaria and down a desert road toward Africa. God's gift cannot be bought, only received — and wherever Christ is preached and believed, there is joy.

00 The Text

ACTS 8 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.

2 Some devout men buried Stephen, and made loud lamentation over him.

3 But Saul began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.

4 Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.

5 Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming Christ to them.

6 The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing.

7 For in the case of many who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of them shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed.

8 So there was much rejoicing in that city.

9 Now there was a man named Simon, who formerly was practicing magic in the city and astonishing the people of Samaria, claiming to be someone great;

10 and they all, from smallest to greatest, were giving attention to him, saying, "This man is what is called the Great Power of God."

11 And they were giving him attention because he had for a long time astonished them with his magic arts.

12 But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.

13 Even Simon himself believed; and after being baptized, he continued on with Philip, and as he observed signs and great miracles taking place, he was constantly amazed.

14 Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John,

15 who came down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

16 For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

17 Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit.

18 Now when Simon saw that the Spirit was bestowed through the laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money,

19 saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit."

20 But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money!

21 "You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God.

22 "Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you.

23 "For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity."

24 But Simon answered and said, "Pray to the Lord for me yourselves, so that nothing of what you have said may come upon me."

25 So, when they had solemnly testified and spoken the word of the Lord, they started back to Jerusalem, and were preaching the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans.

26 But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, "Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza." (This is a desert road.)

27 So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship,

28 and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and was reading the prophet Isaiah.

29 Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot."

30 Philip ran up and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet, and said, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

31 And he said, "Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him.

32 Now the passage of Scripture which he was reading was this: "HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER; AND AS A LAMB BEFORE ITS SHEARER IS SILENT, SO HE DOES NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH.

33 "IN HUMILIATION HIS JUDGMENT WAS TAKEN AWAY; WHO WILL RELATE HIS GENERATION? FOR HIS LIFE IS REMOVED FROM THE EARTH."

34 The eunuch answered Philip and said, "Please tell me, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?"

35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.

36 As they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?"

37 [And Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may." And he answered and said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."]

38 And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch, and he baptized him.

39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but went on his way rejoicing.

40 But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he kept preaching the gospel to all the cities until he came to Caesarea.

Marked in the text

- **v1** "Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death" — Sin / warning
- **v1** "a great persecution began against the church" — Sin / warning
- **v4** "those who had been scattered went about preaching the word" — Command / instruction
- **v5** "began proclaiming Christ to them" — God — His character & actions

- **v8** “much rejoicing in that city” — Promise / blessing
- **v9** “claiming to be someone great” — Sin / warning
- **v12** “the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ” — God — His character & actions
- **v13** “Even Simon himself believed” — Time / place / contrast
- **v14** “Samaria had received the word of God” — Time / place / contrast
- **v17** “they were receiving the Holy Spirit” — Promise / blessing
- **v18** “he offered them money” — Sin / warning
- **v20** “you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money” — Sin / warning
- **v21** “your heart is not right before God” — Sin / warning
- **v22** “repent of this wickedness of yours” — Command / instruction
- **v23** “the gall of bitterness” — Sin / warning
- **v23** “the bondage of iniquity” — Sin / warning
- **v26** “Get up and go south” — Command / instruction
- **v29** “Go up and join this chariot” — Command / instruction
- **v30** “Do you understand what you are reading?” — Command / instruction
- **v31** “unless someone guides me” — Time / place / contrast
- **v32** “HE WAS LED AS A SHEEP TO SLAUGHTER” — God — His character & actions
- **v35** “he preached Jesus to him” — God — His character & actions
- **v36** “What prevents me from being baptized?” — Time / place / contrast
- **v39** “the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away” — God — His character & actions
- **v39** “went on his way rejoicing” — Promise / blessing
- **v15** “Holy Spirit” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v12** “baptized” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

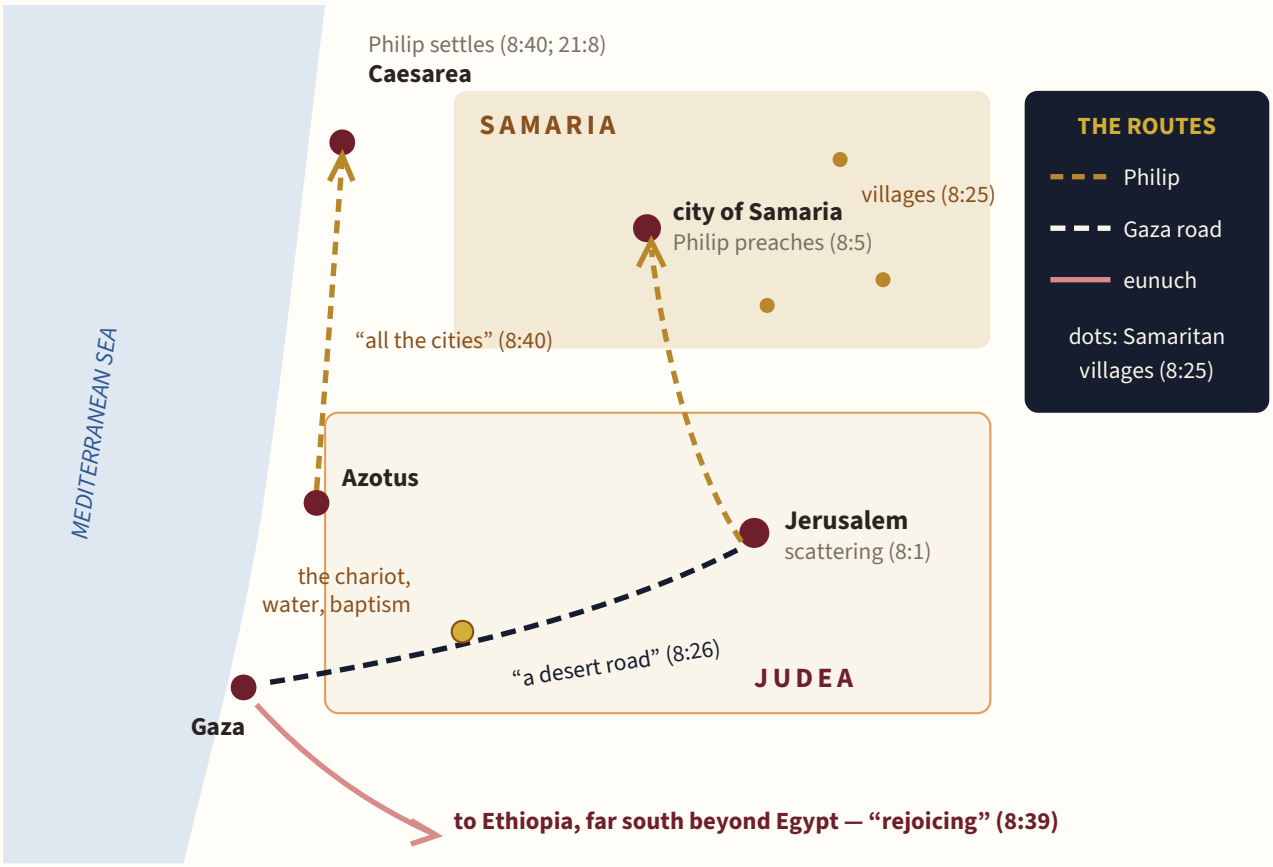
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 8:5

"Philip went down to the city of Samaria and △began proclaiming Christ to them."

FIGURE · PHILIP'S ROADS



Philip goes north to Samaria, is sent south to the desert road toward Gaza, and finishes on the coast at Caesarea — while the Ethiopian heads on south toward home.

Setting. The day of Stephen's burial in Jerusalem (vv1–3). The scattered believers go out through Judea and Samaria (v4). Philip preaches in "the city of Samaria" (v5); Peter and John come down from Jerusalem (v14) and preach in Samaritan villages on the way back (v25). Then an angel sends Philip south to the desert road from Jerusalem to Gaza (v26), where an Ethiopian official is riding home (vv27–28). The chapter ends with Philip at Azotus and preaching up the coast to Caesarea (v40).

Structure:

- vv1–4 — **scattered:** Saul in hearty agreement (v1a); a great persecution; all scattered except the apostles (v1b); devout men bury Stephen (v2); Saul ravages the church (v3); the scattered go about preaching the word (v4).

- vv5–13 — **Philip in Samaria:** Philip proclaims Christ (v5); the crowds hear and see signs; unclean spirits, the paralyzed and lame healed (vv6–7); much rejoicing (v8); Simon's magic and fame — "the Great Power of God" (vv9–11); they believe and are baptized (v12); even Simon believes, is baptized and is constantly amazed (v13).
- vv14–25 — **the Spirit and Simon:** apostles hear Samaria has received the word (v14); prayer; the Spirit had not yet fallen (vv15–16); hands laid, the Spirit received (v17); Simon offers money (vv18–19); "May your silver perish with you" — no part or portion, heart not right, repent, gall of bitterness (vv20–23); "Pray to the Lord for me" (v24); return through Samaritan villages (v25).
- vv26–35 — **the chariot:** "Get up and go south" (v26); the Ethiopian eunuch, treasurer of Candace, reading Isaiah (vv27–28); "Go up and join this chariot" (v29); "Do you understand what you are reading?" — "how could I, unless someone guides me?" (vv30–31); Isaiah 53:7–8 (vv32–33); "of whom does the prophet say this?" (v34); Philip preaches Jesus (v35).
- vv36–40 — **baptism and joy:** "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" (v36); [v37, bracketed in the NASB: the confession]; both go down into the water; he is baptized (v38); the Spirit snatches Philip away; the eunuch goes on rejoicing (v39); Philip at Azotus, preaching to Caesarea (v40).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "Philip" ×14 — vv5, 6, 12, 13, 26, 29, 30, 31, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 40 (v37 is bracketed).
- "Spirit / Holy Spirit" ×9 — vv15 (×2), 17 (×2), 18, 19 (×2), 29, 39 (counting pronoun "He" in v16 would make ten).
- "Jesus / Christ" ×7 — vv5, 12 (×2), 16, 35, 37 (×2); outside v37, ×5.
- "preaching / preached / proclaiming" ×6 — vv4, 5, 12, 25, 35, 40.
- "Lord" ×6 — vv16, 22, 24, 25, 26, 39; "God" ×6 — vv10, 12, 14, 20, 21, 37.
- "baptized" ×5 — vv12, 13, 16, 36, 38.
- "Samaria / Samaritans" ×5 — vv1, 5, 9, 14, 25; "Jerusalem" ×5 — vv1, 14, 25, 26, 27.
- "eunuch" ×5 — vv27, 34, 36, 38, 39.
- "Isaiah / the prophet" ×5 — vv28 (×2), 30 (×2), 34.
- "Simon" ×4 — vv9, 13, 18, 24; "believed / believe" ×4 — vv12, 13, 37 (×2).
- "water" ×4 — vv36 (×2), 38, 39; "receive(d) / receiving" ×4 — vv14, 15, 17, 19.
- "word" ×3 — vv4, 14, 25; "heart" ×3 — vv21, 22, 37; "pray / prayed" ×3 — vv15, 22, 24.
- "money / silver" ×3 — vv18, 20 (×2); "magic" ×2 — vv9, 11.
- "rejoicing" ×2 — vv8, 39, the two ends of Philip's ministry here.

Contrasts: Saul ravaging ⟷ devout men mourning (vv2–3). Scattered ⟷ preaching (v4). Simon's magic ⟷ Philip's signs (vv9–13). "Great Power of God" ⟷ the gift of God (vv10, 20). Money ⟷ a gift (v20). A heart not right ⟷ believe with all your heart (vv21, 37). A crowded city ⟷ a desert road (vv5, 26). A multitude ⟷ one man (vv6, 27). Simon asks others to pray for him ⟷ the eunuch asks for baptism (vv24, 36). Philip taken away ⟷ the eunuch goes on rejoicing (v39).

Shape of the chapter: two scenes of Philip's ministry — one public, one private — each ending in baptism, with the Simon episode in the middle as a warning. The word moves outward exactly on Jesus' map: Jerusalem (v1), Judea and Samaria (vv1–25), and on toward the remotest part of the earth (vv26–40).

Chapter theme (my words): God turns persecution into a missionary movement. The gospel crosses the old wall into Samaria and goes home to Africa in a chariot. It cannot be bought, only received by faith, and where it is received there is joy.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 8:35

"Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture △he preached Jesus to him."

FIGURE · SIMON AND THE ETHIOPIAN

TWO MEN, BOTH BAPTIZED · TWO VERY DIFFERENT HEARTS

	SIMON OF SAMARIA	THE ETHIOPIAN
BAPTIZED	"after being baptized" (v13)	"he baptized him" (v38)
DRAWN BY	"signs and great miracles" (v13)	"reading the prophet Isaiah" (v28)
HE ASKS FOR	"Give this authority to me" (v19)	"unless someone guides me?" (v31)
HE OFFERS	"he offered them money" (v18)	"invited Philip to … sit with him" (v31)
HE HEARS	"your heart is not right" (v21)	"he preached Jesus to him" (v35)
HE ENDS	"Pray to the Lord for me" (v24)	"went on his way rejoicing" (v39)

One wanted Christ's power; the other wanted Christ. Water alone could not tell them apart.

Read across each row: both men were baptized, but what they wanted, asked for and went away with show two different hearts.

Who was scattered? "They were all scattered … except the apostles" (v1). Guzik calls them "accidental missionaries"; Sproul: "Those who were scattered proclaimed the gospel of Christ everywhere they went." Henry reads it narrower: "not all the believers, but all the preachers, who were principally struck at." Acts 8:3 and 11:19 suggest a broad scattering; either way, the people who preached were not the apostles.

Why did God use persecution? Acts 1:8 had been given; the church had stayed in Jerusalem. Spurgeon: "Yet it was that persecution that made the disciples go abroad, everywhere preaching the Word!" Guzik sees Stephen's death as seed. God was not caught off guard by Saul; He used him before He saved him.

Did Simon really believe? The text says he "believed" and was baptized (v13), and then that his heart was "not right before God" (v21). Guzik leaves it open — nothing before v13 shows his faith was false, it would be "tested by his conduct," and "We don't know what became of Simon." Sproul is firm: "Peter knew right away that Simon's profession of faith was spurious." Henry: Philip baptized on a judgment of charity; "The disguises of hypocrites

many times are soon seen through." I lean with Sproul and Henry — Peter's words "no part or portion" and "the gall of bitterness and … the bondage of iniquity" describe a lost man — but the point for me is the warning: a man can be impressed by miracles, baptized and close to the ministry, and still want Christ's power without Christ.

Why did the Samaritans receive the Spirit later (vv14–17)? Elsewhere the Spirit comes with faith (Acts 2:38; 10:44; Eph 1:13). Guzik lists five views; one is that God held back the gift until the apostles came so that Samaria and Jerusalem would be one church, not two rival bodies — the old Jew–Samaritan split healed in Christ. Guzik himself prefers the view that they were born again and received a filling with gifts through the apostles. Sproul calls it the extension of Pentecost to non-Jews. I read it as a one-time, transitional moment as the gospel crossed each new line in Acts 1:8 (compare 2:4; 10:44–46; 19:6), not a pattern of a second blessing for every believer.

What was Simon's sin? He wanted to buy the authority to give the Spirit (v19). Guzik: "Simon thought that the Holy Spirit was merely a power that could be bought or sold." Sproul: "God is simply not for sale." The church named the sin after him — simony.

Why Isaiah 53? The eunuch was reading 53:7–8 in the Greek version (hence small differences from our Hebrew-based Isaiah). His question — "of whom does the prophet say this?" (v34) — is the question; Guzik notes the Jews debated Israel, Isaiah or Messiah. Philip "beginning from this Scripture … preached Jesus" (v35), as Jesus Himself had done on the Emmaus road (Luke 24:27). Sproul: "Not one word of the New Testament was yet in print."

What about verse 37? The NASB prints it in brackets because the oldest Greek manuscripts lack it; it is in the KJV from later manuscripts. Guzik and Henry comment on its words without raising the question; Sproul does not mention it. The confession it records is true — faith in Christ with the whole heart comes before baptism (Rom 10:9) — and verse 36 already implies it, since the man had just heard Jesus preached. I will not build anything on verse 37 that the rest of the chapter does not already teach.

Baptism — mode and meaning. Guzik reads "went down into the water" as immersion. Sproul: "There is not one word in this text about the mode of baptism." Both agree on the order: the gospel heard, faith, baptism without delay. Sproul (citing Cullmann) hears an early-church question in "What prevents me?" and notes that a simple profession was enough.

Snatched away (v39). *Harpazō* is the word of 1 Thess 4:17. Guzik compares Philip's removal to the catching up of the church. I see a small picture of the rapture here — sudden, by the Spirit, and the one left behind is not left without the Word (Spurgeon: "The Spirit of the Lord did not take away the Bible—that was left for the eunuch").

Word study (Greek):

- **scattered — *diaspeirō* (G1289):** to scatter like seed; vv1, 4; 11:19.
- **preaching the word — *euangelizō* (G2097):** to tell good news; vv4, 12, 25, 35, 40.
- **ravaging — *lymainomai* (G3075):** to lay waste; only v3 in the NT.
- **proclaiming — *kēryssō* (G2784):** to herald; v5.
- **joy — *chara* (G5479):** v8; rejoicing (*chairō*) v39.
- **magic — *mageuō* (G3096) / *mageia* (G3095):** vv9, 11; "Great Power" — *dynamis* (G1411), v10.
- **gift — *dōrea* (G1431):** v20; Acts 2:38; John 4:10.
- **part / portion — *meris* (G3310) / *klēros* (G2819):** v21, a share in the inheritance.
- **repent — *metanoeō* (G3340):** v22.
- **gall / bitterness / bondage — *cholē* (G5521), *pikria* (G4088), *syndesmos* (G4886):** v23.

- **eunuch — *eunouchos* (G2135); court official — *dynastēs* (G1413); treasure — *gaza* (G1047):** v27.
- **guide — *hodēgeō* (G3594):** v31; John 16:13.
- **baptize — *baptizō* (G907):** vv12, 13, 16, 36, 38.
- **snatched away — *harpazō* (G726):** v39; 1 Thess 4:17.

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **Scattered like seed** — *diaspeirō*; "Therefore" (v4).
2. **Ordinary men carried it** — not the apostles (vv1, 4).
3. **Philip preached Christ** — in a city and in a chariot (vv5, 35).
4. **Joy is the fruit** (vv8, 39).
5. **A believer who wasn't?** — Simon (vv13, 21).
6. **God is not for sale** (Sproul).
7. **One man matters** (Spurgeon).
8. **Isaiah 53 has one answer** — Jesus (vv34–35).
9. **The dry tree blossoms** — Isa 56:3–5.
10. **Verse 37, honestly** — bracketed, true, not built on.

Cross-references: Deut 23:1; 29:18; Ps 68:31; Isa 53:7–8; 56:3–5; Matt 7:21–23; 27:34; Luke 24:27; John 4:9, 35–38; 16:13; Acts 1:8; 2:38; 6:5; 10:44–46; 11:19; 19:6; 21:8–9; 22:4; Rom 10:9; Gal 1:13; Eph 1:13; 4:31; 1 Thess 4:17; 1 Pet 1:18–19.

03 Application

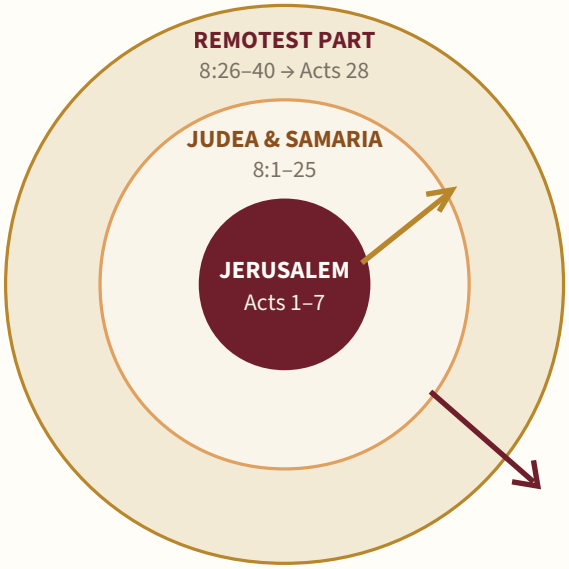
HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 8:39

"When they came up out of the water, △the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; and the eunuch no longer saw him, but ☆went on his way rejoicing."

FIGURE · ACTS 1:8 IN MOTION

ACTS 1:8 IN MOTION · ACTS 8 CROSSES TWO LINES IN ONE CHAPTER



8:1	the church scattered from Jerusalem
8:4	the scattered preach the word everywhere
8:5–8	Philip: Christ proclaimed to Samaritans
8:14–17	Samaritans receive the Spirit
8:25	the apostles preach in Samaritan villages
8:27	an Ethiopian official, heading home
8:39	he goes on his way rejoicing

Jesus named three circles in Acts 1:8; follow the arrows and the list to see Acts 8 carry the word across the second line and start on the third.

Example to follow — the scattered believers. They lost homes and jobs and ran for their lives, and they "went about preaching the word" (v4). Many of the men I walk with have been scattered — by prison, by addiction, by divorce, by a move they didn't choose. God doesn't waste scattering. Wherever I have landed is where I preach the word this week.

Command to obey — get up and go. "Get up and go south … Go up and join this chariot" (vv26, 29). Philip didn't argue that a desert road made no sense after a revival. He got up, went, and ran (vv27, 30). I want to be that quick when the Spirit points me to one man.

Sin to confess — wanting God's power without God. Simon wanted to be impressive. I have wanted the results of ministry — respect, influence, a name — more than I wanted Christ. I confess the Simon in me: the part of me that wants to use God. "God is simply not for sale" (Sproul), and I can't buy Him with service either.

Truth to hold — a man can be close and still not right. Simon was baptized, followed Philip, saw miracles, and his heart was "not right before God" (v21). That sobers me for myself and for the men I lead. I will not settle for impressed; I want to know Christ, and help other men know Him.

Promise to trust — no dry trees in God's house. The eunuch was the man the rules kept out. Isaiah said, "Nor let the eunuch say, 'Behold, I am a dry tree'" (Isa 56:3), and in Acts 8 he goes home rejoicing. No man is too far out — not the felon, not the addict, not the outsider. Christ brings him in.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. The church only left Jerusalem when persecution scattered it (8:1, 4). What hard thing in my life might God be using to send me to people I would never have reached? (8:1–4; Acts 1:8) *Sometimes it is a blessing to a church to have a great trial (Spurgeon).*
2. Philip took Christ to Samaritans, the people his own background taught him to avoid. Who are the "Samaritans" in my world, and what keeps me from them? (8:5–8; John 4:9) *Because Jesus had worked in him there was no room for prejudice (Guzik).*
3. Simon believed, was baptized and followed Philip, but his heart was not right. How can a man tell the difference between being impressed by Jesus and belonging to Him? (8:13, 18–23; Matt 7:21) *God is simply not for sale (Sproul).*
4. Where am I tempted to treat God's power as something to get, use or earn — instead of a gift I receive? (8:18–20; 1 Pet 1:18–19) *You thought you could obtain the gift of God with money.*
5. The Ethiopian said, "How could I, unless someone guides me?" Who is guiding me in the Scriptures — and whom am I guiding? (8:30–35; Luke 24:27) *Read it until you understand it (Spurgeon).*
6. Philip was sent from a whole city to one man on a desert road. Who is the one person God may be sending me to this week? (8:26–29, 35) *Philip must now be of service to a solitary individual (Spurgeon).*

Worship. The Lord of the harvest turns a persecutor's rampage into a missionary movement, sets a Samaritan city free, refuses to be bought, and sends His Spirit down a desert road for one seeking man. He is the Lamb led to slaughter who did not open His mouth, the free gift of God, and the joy of everyone who believes.

Prayer. Lord Jesus, wherever I have been scattered, let me preach Your word there. Root out the Simon in me that wants Your power without You. Make me quick to get up and go when Your Spirit points to one man, and give me the words to start from his Scripture and preach You. And send me home from every meeting with You the way the eunuch went — rejoicing. Amen.

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SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 9

From Persecutor to Chosen Instrument — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

The risen Jesus meets the church's worst enemy on the road, takes his violence personally, and turns him into a chosen instrument who preaches "He is the Son of God." Then, through Peter, the same Jesus lifts a man who had been down eight years and raises a servant-hearted woman from the dead — and many believe.

00 The Text

ACTS 9 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 Now Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest,

2 and asked for letters from him to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, both men and women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.

3 As he was traveling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him;

4 and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?"

5 And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" And He said, "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting,

6 but get up and enter the city, and it will be told you what you must do."

7 The men who traveled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice but seeing no one.

8 Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; and leading him by the hand, they brought him into Damascus.

9 And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

10 Now there was a disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and the Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord."

11 And the Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying,

12 and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight."

13 But Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he did to Your saints at Jerusalem;

14 and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name."

15 But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel;

16 for I will show him how much he must suffer for My name's sake."

17 So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "☆ Brother Saul, the ⟲ Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and ☆ be filled with the Holy Spirit."

18 And immediately there fell from his eyes ◷ something like scales, and he regained his sight, and he got up and was baptized;

19 and he took food and was strengthened. Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus,

20 and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "△ He is the Son of God."

21 All those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying, "Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this ⟲ name, and who had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?"

22 But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by △ proving that this Jesus is the Christ.

23 When many days had elapsed, the Jews plotted together to do away with him,

24 but their plot became known to Saul. They were also watching the gates day and night so that they might put him to death;

25 but his disciples took him by night and let him down through an opening in the wall,
◷ lowering him in a large basket.

26 When he came to Jerusalem, he was trying to associate with the disciples; but ⚠ they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple.

27 ▤ But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the ⟲ Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the ⟲ name of Jesus.

28 And he was with them, moving about freely in Jerusalem, speaking out boldly in the ⟲ name of the ⟲ Lord.

29 And he was talking and arguing with the Hellenistic Jews; but they were attempting to put him to death.

30 But when the brethren learned of it, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.

31 So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on ☆ in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase.

32 Now as Peter was traveling through all those regions, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda.

33 There he found a man named Aeneas, who had been bedridden eight years, for he was paralyzed.

34 Peter said to him, "Aeneas, △ Jesus Christ heals you; ▤ get up and make your bed." Immediately he got up.

35 And all who lived at Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they ☆ turned to the Lord.

36 Now in Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which translated in Greek is called Dorcas); this woman was ▤ abounding with deeds of kindness and charity which she continually did.

37 And it happened at that time that she fell sick and died; and when they had washed her body, they laid it in an upper room.

38 Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, having heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him, imploring him, "Do not delay in coming to us."

39 So Peter arose and went with them. When he arrived, they brought him into the upper room; and all the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing all the tunics and garments that Dorcas used to make while she was with them.

40 But Peter sent them all out and ▤ knelt down and prayed, and turning to the body, he said, "△ Tabitha, arise." And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up.

41 And he gave her his hand and raised her up; and calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive.

42 It became known all over Joppa, and ☆ many believed in the Lord.

43 And Peter stayed many days in Joppa with ◷ a tanner named Simon.

Marked in the text

- **v1** “breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord” — Sin / warning
- **v2** “belonging to the Way” — Time / place / contrast
- **v3** “a light from heaven flashed around him” — God — His character & actions
- **v4** “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me” — Sin / warning
- **v5** “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting” — God — His character & actions
- **v6** “get up and enter the city” — Command / instruction
- **v9** “three days without sight” — Time / place / contrast
- **v10** “Here I am, Lord” — Command / instruction
- **v11** “for he is praying” — Promise / blessing
- **v15** “he is a chosen instrument of Mine” — God — His character & actions
- **v15** “to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel” — Promise / blessing
- **v16** “how much he must suffer for My name’s sake” — Sin / warning
- **v17** “Brother Saul” — Promise / blessing
- **v17** “be filled with the Holy Spirit” — Promise / blessing
- **v18** “something like scales” — Time / place / contrast
- **v20** “He is the Son of God” — God — His character & actions
- **v22** “proving that this Jesus is the Christ” — God — His character & actions
- **v25** “lowering him in a large basket” — Time / place / contrast
- **v26** “they were all afraid of him” — Sin / warning
- **v27** “But Barnabas took hold of him” — Command / instruction
- **v31** “in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit” — Promise / blessing
- **v34** “Jesus Christ heals you” — God — His character & actions
- **v34** “get up and make your bed” — Command / instruction
- **v35** “turned to the Lord” — Promise / blessing
- **v36** “abounding with deeds of kindness and charity” — Command / instruction
- **v40** “knelt down and prayed” — Command / instruction
- **v40** “Tabitha, arise” — God — His character & actions
- **v42** “many believed in the Lord” — Promise / blessing
- **v43** “a tanner named Simon” — Time / place / contrast
- **v1** “Lord” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v14** “name” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

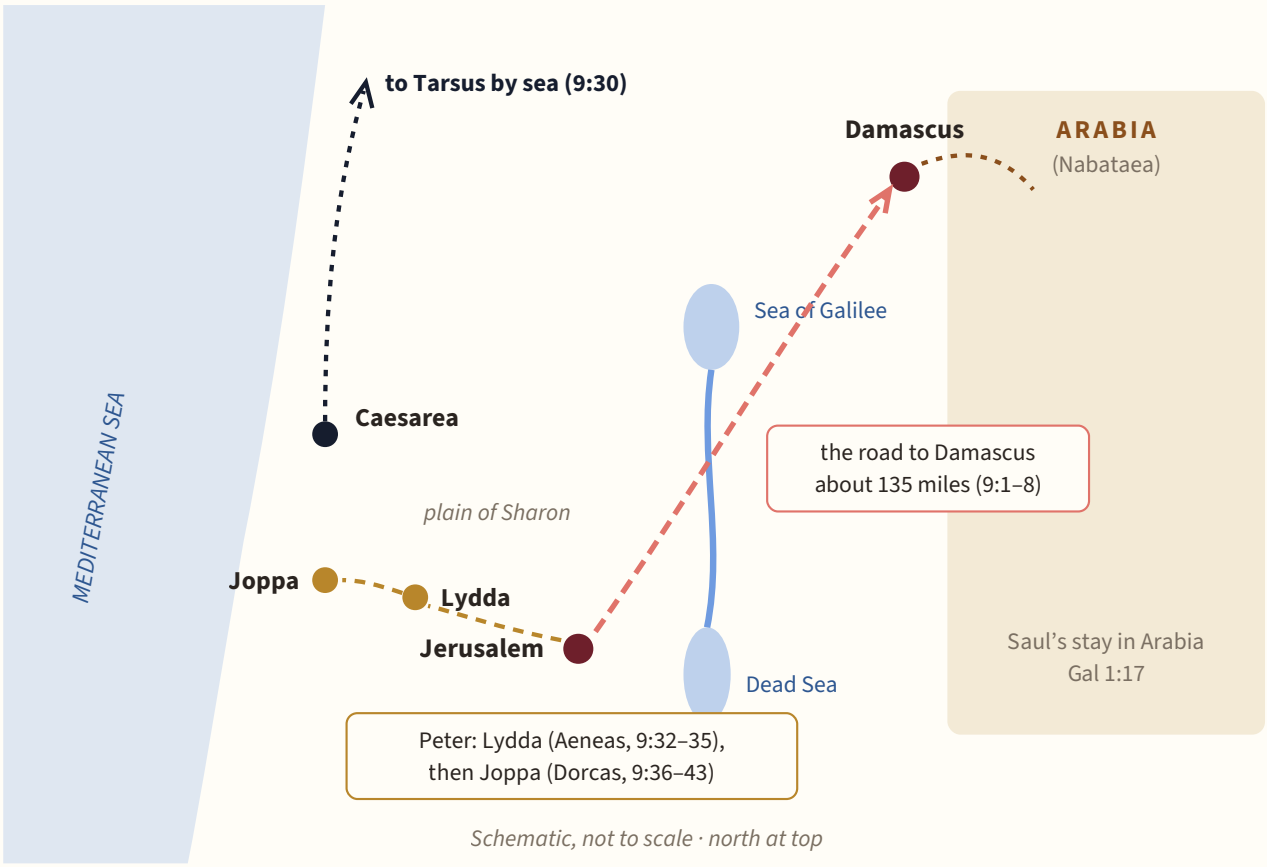
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 9:4

“and he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “⚠Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?””

FIGURE · JERUSALEM, DAMASCUS AND THE COAST



Follow the red road north-east from Jerusalem to Damascus, Saul’s later trip to Tarsus, and Peter’s gold route down to Lydda and Joppa on the coast.

Setting. Saul, still raging after Stephen’s death, gets letters from the high priest to arrest believers in the synagogues of Damascus (vv1–2). Near the city a light from heaven flashes around him (v3). He spends three days blind in Damascus, at the house of Judas on the street called Straight (vv9, 11). Later he preaches in Damascus, escapes over the wall, goes to Jerusalem, and is sent through Caesarea to Tarsus (vv20–30). The chapter ends with Peter on the coastal plain — at Lydda and then Joppa, lodging with Simon the tanner (vv32–43).

Structure:

- vv1–9 — **the Damascus road:** threats and murder; letters for "the Way" (vv1–2); the light and the fall (vv3–4); "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" — "Who are You, Lord?" — "I am Jesus" (vv4–6); speechless companions; three days blind, not eating or drinking (vv7–9).
- vv10–19 — **Ananias:** the vision — "Here I am, Lord" (v10); Straight Street, "for he is praying" (vv11–12); Ananias objects (vv13–14); "he is a chosen instrument of Mine" and must suffer (vv15–16); "Brother Saul" — sight, the Spirit, scales, baptism, food (vv17–19).
- vv20–31 — **Damascus to Jerusalem:** "He is the Son of God" (v20); amazement; proving Jesus is the Christ (vv21–22); the plot and the basket (vv23–25); the disciples afraid; Barnabas brings him to the apostles (vv26–27); bold in Jerusalem, sent to Tarsus (vv28–30); the church at peace and increasing (v31).
- vv32–43 — **Lydda and Joppa:** Aeneas, bedridden eight years — "Jesus Christ heals you" (vv32–34); Lydda and Sharon turn to the Lord (v35); Tabitha dies; the widows and the garments (vv36–39); Peter kneels and prays — "Tabitha, arise" (vv40–41); many believe; Simon the tanner (vv42–43).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "Lord" ×13 — vv1, 5, 10 (×2), 11, 13, 15, 17, 27, 28, 31, 35, 42.
- "see / saw / seen / sight / eyes" ×12 — vv8 (×2), 9, 12 (×2), 17, 18 (×2), 27, 35, 40 (×2).
- "Saul" ×8 — vv1, 4 (×2), 8, 11, 17, 22, 24.
- "disciple(s)" ×8 — vv1, 10, 19, 25, 26 (×2), 36, 38.
- "get up / got up / arise / arose / raised" ×8 — vv6, 8, 18, 34 (×2), 39, 40, 41.
- "Damascus" ×7 — vv2, 3, 8, 10, 19, 22, 27; "Peter" ×7 — vv32, 34, 38, 39, 40 (×2), 43.
- "Jesus" ×6 — vv5, 17, 20, 22, 27, 34; "name" ×6 — vv14, 15, 16, 21, 27, 28.
- "Jerusalem" ×5 — vv2, 13, 21, 26, 28; "heard / hearing" ×5 — vv4, 7, 13, 21, 38.
- "Joppa" ×4 — vv36, 38, 42, 43; "Lydda" ×3 — vv32, 35, 38.
- "bound / bind" ×3 — vv2, 14, 21; "saints" ×3 — vv13, 32, 41.
- "persecuting" ×2 — vv4, 5; "boldly" ×2 — vv27, 28; "Holy Spirit" ×2 — vv17, 31; "vision" ×2 — vv10, 12.

Contrasts: Breathing threats and murder ⟷ "he is praying" (vv1, 11). Bringing others bound ⟷ led by the hand himself (vv2, 8). Eyes open, seeing nothing ⟷ scales fall, sight regained (vv8, 18). "how much harm he did" ⟷ "a chosen instrument" (vv13, 15). He made others suffer ⟷ he must suffer (vv1, 16). Destroyer ⟷ preacher of the name (v21). Proving Jesus is the Christ ⟷ plotted against (vv22–23). All afraid ⟷ Barnabas took hold of him (vv26–27). Persecution ⟷ peace (vv1, 31). Bedridden eight years ⟷ "Immediately he got up" (vv33–34). Dead ⟷ presented alive (vv37, 41).

Shape of the chapter: two halves, two apostles. The long first half (1–31) is one man turned around — from the road to the basket to the church at peace. The short second half (32–43) returns to Peter and two quick miracles, and quietly moves him to a tanner's house by the sea, ready for Cornelius.

Chapter theme (my words): No one is too far gone for Jesus. He stops the persecutor, takes his sin personally, calls him by name and makes him a vessel for His name — and He keeps lifting the helpless and raising the dead through ordinary disciples who pray.

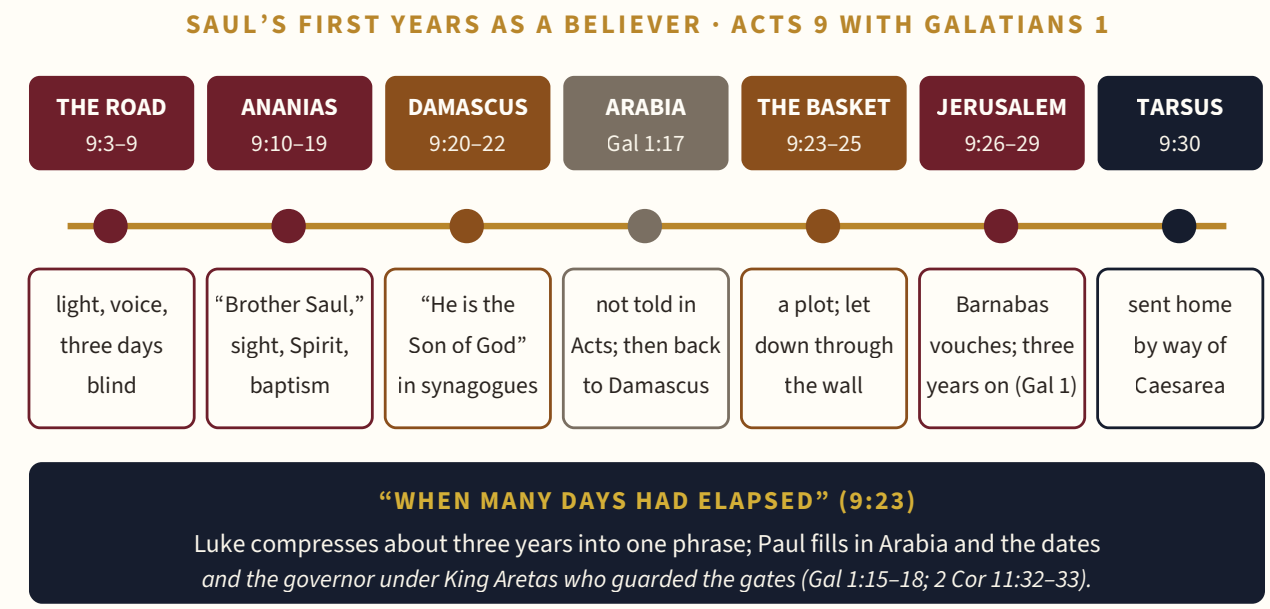
02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 9:20

"and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "△ He is the Son of God.""

FIGURE · SAUL'S FIRST YEARS



Read left to right: Acts 9 gives the events, and Paul's letters add the stay in Arabia and the three years before Jerusalem.

What happened on the road — vision or appearance? Paul counts it with the resurrection appearances: "last of all … He appeared to me also" (1 Cor 15:8), and Ananias says "the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road" (v17). Guzik cites Boice: "Unless Saul was hallucinating, the appearance of Jesus proved that Jesus was alive and that Jesus was God." It was not a dream; it changed the direction of a life.

Did the companions hear the voice or not? Here they are "hearing the voice but seeing no one" (v7); in 22:9 Paul says they "did not understand the voice." The Greek word for voice (*phōnē*) can mean a sound or intelligible speech. They heard something; only Saul heard words. Luke tells it three times and was not bothered by the difference.

Why "why are you persecuting Me?" Saul never touched Jesus. Sproul: "Jesus so identifies with His church, so identifies with His people," that persecuting them is persecuting Him. This is the seed of Paul's teaching about the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12, 27).

Was Saul converted on the road or in the house? Our teachers don't split hairs here. He calls Jesus "Lord" on the road, prays for three days (v11), and Ananias calls him "Brother" before he is baptized (v17). Then he is filled with

the Spirit and baptized (vv17–18). Guzik: baptism was Saul identifying "with Jesus and with the disciples of Jesus." I take it that the road was the turning, and the house was where the Lord confirmed it through His church.

Chosen — what does that mean? "he is a chosen instrument of Mine" (v15). Sproul hears election: "I did not elect him for his own sake; I elected him for My sake." Guzik: chosen "long before there appeared anything worthy in Saul to choose." Henry: "The vessel God uses he himself chooses." And the call includes suffering (v16) — no prosperity gospel here.

Where is Arabia? Acts moves from Damascus straight to "many days" later (v23). Paul fills it in: he went away to Arabia, came back to Damascus, and three years later went up to Jerusalem (Gal 1:17–18). Guzik places the Arabia stay in that gap. Luke compresses; Paul gives the calendar.

Why were the disciples afraid — and why Barnabas? They had good reason: Saul had been dragging believers to prison (8:3). Barnabas, "Son of Encouragement" (4:36), took the risk. Sproul: "Barnabas … interceded for Paul." Henry: introducing a young convert "is a very good work."

Why tell the stories of Aeneas and Dorcas here? They show Peter doing what Jesus did — "Jesus Christ heals you" (v34) — and they move him to Joppa and Simon the tanner, where chapter 10 begins. Guzik: Dorcas "wasn't raised for her own sake," and many believed (v42). Sproul notes the present tense: "Jesus the Christ is healing you"—that is, at that moment.

Word study (Greek):

- **the Way — *hodos* (G3598):** road, way; a name for the believers (9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22).
- **Lord — *kyrios* (G2962):** from "sir" to the LORD; "Who are You, Lord?" (v5); ×13 in the chapter.
- **instrument — *skeuos* (G4632):** vessel, tool; "a chosen instrument" only here in NASB (Rom 9:23; 2 Cor 4:7).
- **brother — *adelphos* (G80):** Ananias's first word to Saul (v17).
- **comfort — *paraklēsis* (G3874):** "Son of Encouragement" (4:36); "the comfort of the Holy Spirit" (v31).
- **disciple (woman) — *mathētria* (G3102):** only here in the New Testament, of Tabitha (v36).

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **Jesus takes persecution personally** — "why are you persecuting Me?" (v4).
2. **He wasn't seeking; he was sought** (Guzik).
3. **"The Way" is a road, not just an opinion** — *hodos* (v2).
4. **Three days in the dark** — dying to himself (Guzik; Henry).
5. **Prayer is the first sign of life** — "he is praying" (v11; Spurgeon).
6. **A vessel is chosen and filled** — *skeuos eklogēs*, with suffering (vv15–16).
7. **"Brother" before anything else** (v17).
8. **Every new believer needs a Barnabas** (vv26–27).
9. **Jesus Christ heals — Peter only speaks** (v34; Spurgeon).
10. **A tanner's house sets up chapter 10** (v43).

Cross-references: Acts 1:8; 4:36; 7:58–8:3; 13:47; 22:3–16; 26:9–19; Isa 49:6; Matt 25:40; Mark 5:37–43; John 11; 14:6; Rom 9:23; 1 Cor 12:27; 15:8–10; 2 Cor 4:7; 5:17; 11:32–33; Gal 1:13–24; Phil 3:4–8; 1 Tim 1:12–16; 2 Kings 4:32–37.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 9:17

"So Ananias departed and entered the house, and after laying his hands on him said, "☆ Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road by which you were coming, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and ☆ be filled with the Holy Spirit.""

FIGURE · PETER DOES WHAT HE SAW

PETER DOES WHAT HE SAW HIS LORD DO

	ELISHA · 2 Ki 4	JESUS · Mark 5	PETER · Acts 9
the room	shut the door (v33)	put them all out (v40)	sent them all out (v40)
before the word	prayed to the LORD	takes her hand	knelt down and prayed
the word	(stretched on the boy)	"Talitha kum!"	"Tabitha, arise"
the hand	—	by the hand (v41)	gave her his hand (v41)
the result	the lad opened his eyes	she got up	she opened her eyes

One letter apart: "Talitha" (little girl) and "Tabitha" (gazelle). The difference: Jesus speaks in His own name; Peter kneels first, and tells Aeneas, "Jesus Christ heals you" (v34).

Compare the columns: Peter had stood in the room when Jesus raised Jairus's daughter, and at Joppa he does the same things — but he prays first.

Truth to face — I can be sincere and wrong. Saul thought he was serving God. Guzik says he "discovered that he was fighting God." I have been that man — sure I was right, angry at the people God loved. I ask the Lord today the question Saul asked: "Who are You, Lord?" — and I mean it, ready for the answer.

Sin to confess — how I treat His people. Jesus said, "why are you persecuting Me?" about people Saul had hurt. When I gossip about a brother, write a man off, or hold a grudge against someone in my church, Jesus takes it personally. I name the brother I have wronged and I confess it to the Lord, then I make it right.

Command to obey — get up and go. Jesus told Saul, "get up and enter the city" (v6); He told Ananias, "Go" (v15). Ananias was afraid and went anyway. There is a man God wants me to visit — one I'm wary of, maybe one with a record or a reputation. I will go, and the first word out of my mouth will be "Brother."

Example to follow — Barnabas. The church was "all afraid" of Saul (v26). Barnabas took hold of him. The men I serve coming out of prison or out of addiction need someone to vouch for them and bring them in. This week I will be that man for someone.

Promise to trust — Jesus Christ heals you. Aeneas had been down eight years. Some of us have been down longer. Peter did not say "I heal you"; he said, "Jesus Christ heals you; get up." I believe Jesus can lift me, and lift the men I pray for, at once.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. Saul was sure he was serving God while fighting Him. Where could I be sincere and still be wrong — and how would I find out? (9:1–5; Phil 3:6) *He discovered that he was fighting God (Guzik).*
2. Jesus said, "why are you persecuting Me?" about people Saul had hurt. How does it change the way I treat other believers to know Jesus takes it personally? (9:4–5; Matt 25:40) *If you persecute My people, you persecute Me (Sproul).*
3. Ananias was afraid and told the Lord so — then went. Who is the "Saul" God might be sending me to, and what is my honest fear? (9:10–17) *Surely, You don't want me to go there (Sproul).*
4. God's proof to Ananias was "he is praying." What does my prayer life say about where I really am with God? (9:11; 1 Thess 5:17) *Prayer in the heart proves the reality of conversion (Spurgeon).*
5. The church was "all afraid" of Saul until Barnabas took hold of him. Who in my church or group needs someone to vouch for him? (9:26–28; 4:36) *A young convert needs introducing (Henry).*
6. Aeneas had been down eight years. What has kept me down so long that I have stopped expecting to get up — and what would it mean to hear "Jesus Christ heals you"? (9:33–35) *Jesus Christ can heal, and can heal at once (Spurgeon).*

Worship. The risen Lord Jesus, shining brighter than the noon sun, stopped His enemy on the road and called him by name. He chose a vessel nobody would have chosen, gave him a brother and an encourager, and sent him with His name to the nations. He is the Son of God, the One who heals the paralyzed and raises the dead.

Prayer. Lord Jesus, You found me when I wasn't looking for You. Forgive me for every way I have fought You by hurting Your people. Take the scales off my eyes. Make me a chosen vessel for Your name, even if it costs me. Give me the courage of Ananias to go where I'm afraid, and the heart of Barnabas to bring others in. And for every man I know who has been down for years — Jesus Christ, heal him; tell him to get up. Amen.

Scripture: New American Standard Bible® (NASB), © 1960–1995 The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. · Teacher material summarized from David Guzik (Enduring Word), R.C. Sproul (Ligonier), C.H. Spurgeon and Matthew Henry — see Acts-9-Deep-Dive-Four-Voices.pdf for sources. · Importable: the companion .md carries the berean-study block.

SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 10

What God Has Cleansed — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

God prepares a praying Gentile and a reluctant apostle at the same time, teaches Peter that He has cleansed what Peter called unholy, and brings them under one roof. Peter preaches Jesus — anointed, crucified, raised, Judge and Savior — and the Holy Spirit falls on the Gentiles just as on the Jews.

00 The Text

ACTS 10 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 Now there was a man at Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort,

2 a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the Jewish people and prayed to God continually.

3 About the ninth hour of the day he clearly saw in a vision an angel of God who had just come in and said to him, "Cornelius!"

4 And fixing his gaze on him and being much alarmed, he said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God.

5 "Now dispatch some men to Joppa and send for a man named Simon, who is also called Peter;

6 he is staying with a tanner named Simon, whose house is by the sea."

7 When the angel who was speaking to him had left, he summoned two of his servants and a devout soldier of those who were his personal attendants,

8 and after he had explained everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

9 On the next day, as they were on their way and approaching the city, Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray.

10 But he became hungry and was desiring to eat; but while they were making preparations, he fell into a trance;

11 and he saw the sky opened up, and an object like a great sheet coming down, lowered by four corners to the ground,

12 and there were in it all kinds of four-footed animals and crawling creatures of the earth and birds of the air.

13 A voice came to him, "Get up, Peter, kill and eat!"

14 But Peter said, "By no means, Lord, for I have never eaten anything unholy and unclean."

15 Again a voice came to him a second time, "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy."

16 This happened three times, and immediately the object was taken up into the sky.

17 Now while Peter was greatly perplexed in mind as to what the vision which he had seen might be, behold, the

men who had been sent by Cornelius, having asked directions for Simon's house, appeared at the gate;

18 and calling out, they were asking whether Simon, who was also called Peter, was staying there.

19 While Peter was reflecting on the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Behold, three men are looking for you.

20 "But get up, go downstairs and accompany them without misgivings, for I have sent them Myself."

21 Peter went down to the men and said, "Behold, I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for which you have come?"

22 They said, "Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous and God-fearing man well spoken of by the entire nation of the Jews, was divinely directed by a holy angel to send for you to come to his house and hear a message from you."

23 So he invited them in and gave them lodging. And on the next day he got up and went away with them, and some of the brethren from Joppa accompanied him.

24 On the following day he entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them and had called together his relatives and close friends.

25 When Peter entered, Cornelius met him, and fell at his feet and worshiped him.

26 But Peter raised him up, saying, "Stand up; I too am just a man."

27 As he talked with him, he entered and found many people assembled.

28 And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean.

29 "That is why I came without even raising any objection when I was sent for. So I ask for what reason you have sent for me."

30 Cornelius said, "Four days ago to this hour, I was praying in my house during the ninth hour; and behold, a man stood before me in shining garments,

31 and he said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God.

32 'Therefore send to Joppa and invite Simon, who is also called Peter, to come to you; he is staying at the house of Simon the tanner by the sea.'

33 "So I sent for you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord."

34 Opening his mouth, Peter said: "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality,

35 but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him.

36 "The word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)—

37 you yourselves know the thing which took place throughout all Judea, starting from Galilee, after the baptism which John proclaimed.

38 "You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him.

39 "We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem.
They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross.

40 "God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible,

41 not to all the people, but to witnesses who were chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.

42 "And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead.

43 "Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins."

44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message.

45 All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.

46 For they were hearing them speaking with tongues and exalting God. Then Peter answered,

47 “Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit ☆ just as we did, can he?”

48 And he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay on for a few days.

Marked in the text

- **v1** “a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort” — Time / place / contrast
- **v2** “a devout man and one who feared God with all his household” — Promise / blessing
- **v3** “About the ninth hour of the day” — Time / place / contrast
- **v4** “Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial before God” — God — His character & actions
- **v5** “send for a man named Simon, who is also called Peter” — Command / instruction
- **v9** “Peter went up on the housetop about the sixth hour to pray” — Time / place / contrast
- **v13** “Get up, Peter, kill and eat” — Command / instruction
- **v14** “By no means, Lord” — Sin / warning
- **v15** “What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy” — God — His character & actions
- **v16** “This happened three times” — Time / place / contrast
- **v20** “accompany them without misgivings, for I have sent them Myself” — Command / instruction
- **v25** “fell at his feet and worshiped him” — Sin / warning
- **v26** “Stand up; I too am just a man” — Command / instruction
- **v28** “God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean” — God — His character & actions
- **v33** “we are all here present before God” — Promise / blessing
- **v34** “God is not one to show partiality” — God — His character & actions
- **v35** “in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him” — Promise / blessing
- **v36** “He is Lord of all” — God — His character & actions
- **v38** “God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power” — God — His character & actions
- **v38** “He went about doing good” — God — His character & actions
- **v39** “They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross” — Sin / warning
- **v40** “God raised Him up on the third day” — God — His character & actions
- **v42** “Judge of the living and the dead” — Time / place / contrast
- **v43** “everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins” — Promise / blessing
- **v44** “the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message” — Promise / blessing
- **v45** “the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also” — Promise / blessing
- **v47** “just as we did” — Promise / blessing
- **v48** “he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” — Command / instruction
- **v14** “unholy” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v14** “unclean” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v5** “Joppa” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

01 Observation

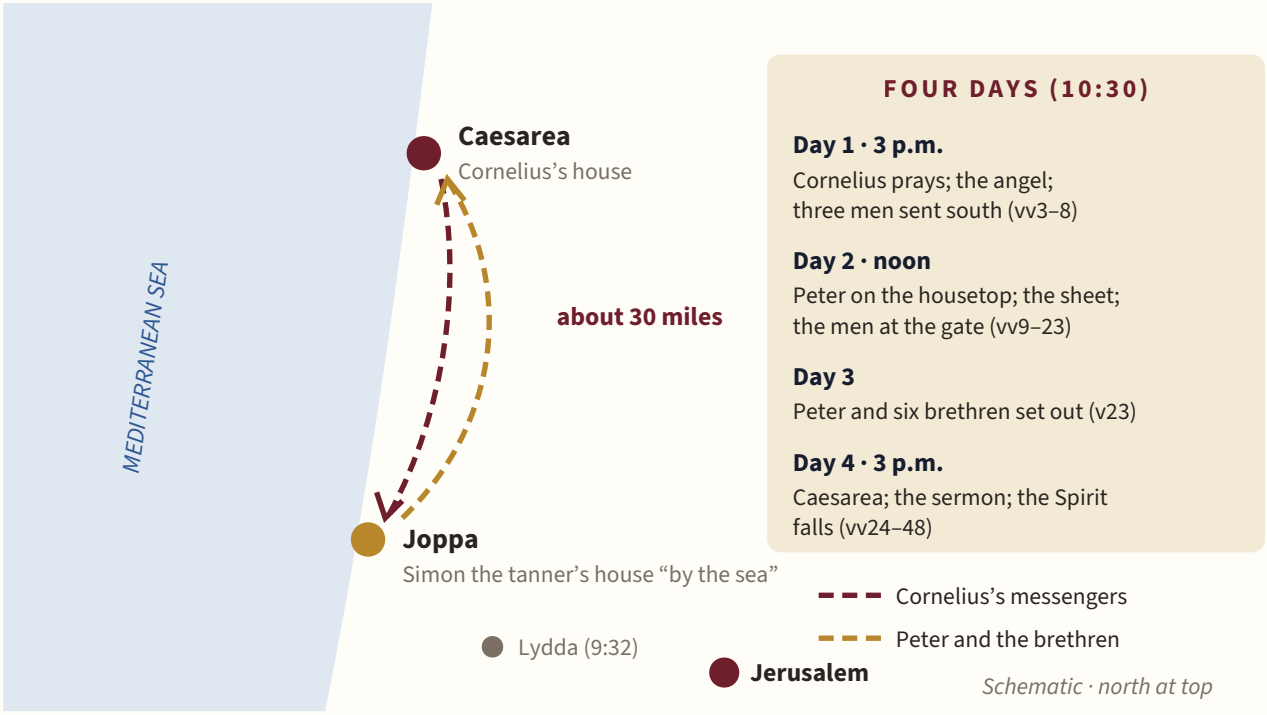
WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 10:15

"Again a voice came to him a second time,

"△What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy.""

FIGURE · CAESAREA AND JOPPA



Trace the two dashed routes along the coast and read the four days at right: Cornelius's men go south to Joppa, and Peter comes north with them to Caesarea.

Setting. Caesarea, the Roman capital on the coast, where Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian cohort, prays at the ninth hour (vv1–3). Joppa, about thirty miles south, where Peter is staying with Simon the tanner by the sea and prays on the housetop at the sixth hour (vv5–6, 9). The story covers four days (v30) and ends back in Cornelius's house, full of relatives and close friends (vv24, 27).

Structure:

- vv1–8 — **Cornelius:** a devout, God-fearing centurion who gives alms and prays (vv1–2); an angel at the ninth hour — "Your prayers and alms have ascended as a memorial" (vv3–4); "send for a man named Simon" (vv5–6); two servants and a devout soldier sent to Joppa (vv7–8).
- vv9–23 — **the sheet:** Peter on the housetop, hungry, in a trance (vv9–10); the sheet with all kinds of animals (vv11–12); "Get up, Peter, kill and eat!" — "By no means, Lord" (vv13–14); "What God has cleansed, no longer

consider unholy" — three times (vv15–16); the men at the gate; the Spirit: "I have sent them Myself" (vv17–20); Peter lodges them and goes (vv21–23).

- vv24–33 — **the house:** Cornelius has gathered his household (v24); he falls at Peter's feet — "Stand up; I too am just a man" (vv25–26); "God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean" (vv27–29); Cornelius retells the vision — "we are all here present before God" (vv30–33).
- vv34–43 — **the sermon:** God shows no partiality (vv34–35); peace through Jesus Christ, Lord of all (v36); anointed, doing good, healing (vv37–38); witnesses of His death on a cross and His resurrection the third day (vv39–41); appointed Judge of the living and the dead (v42); forgiveness through His name for everyone who believes (v43).
- vv44–48 — **the Spirit falls:** the Holy Spirit falls on all who hear (v44); the circumcised believers amazed (v45); tongues and exalting God (v46); "no one can refuse the water" (v47); baptized in the name of Jesus Christ; Peter stays a few days (v48).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "God" ×16 — vv2 (×2), 3, 4, 15, 22, 28, 31, 33, 34, 38 (×2), 40, 41, 42, 46.
- "Peter" ×15 — vv5, 9, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 21, 25, 26, 32, 34, 44, 45, 46.
- "all / every / everyone" ×13 — vv2, 12, 33 (×2), 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 41, 43 (×2), 44.
- "send / sent / dispatch" ×11 — vv5 (×2), 8, 17, 20, 22, 29 (×2), 32, 33, 36.
- "Cornelius" ×8 — vv1, 3, 17, 22, 24, 25, 30, 31.
- "house / household / housetop" ×7 — vv2, 6, 9, 17, 22, 30, 32.
- "Simon" ×6 — vv5, 6, 17, 18, 32 (×2).
- "unholy / unclean" ×5 — vv14 (×2), 15, 28 (×2).
- "pray / prayed / praying / prayers" ×5 — vv2, 4, 9, 30, 31; "Spirit" ×5 — vv19, 38, 44, 45, 47.
- "hour" ×4 — vv3, 9, 30 (×2); "Joppa" ×4 — vv5, 8, 23, 32.
- "witness(es) / testify" ×4 — vv39, 41, 42, 43; "Lord" ×4 — vv4, 14, 33, 36.
- "vision" ×3 — vv3, 17, 19; "alms" ×3 — vv2, 4, 31; "angel" ×3 — vv3, 7, 22.
- "feared / God-fearing / fears" ×3 — vv2, 22, 35; "baptism / baptized" ×3 — vv37, 47, 48.

Contrasts: Caesarea ⟷ Joppa; a Gentile soldier ⟷ a Jewish fisherman (vv1, 5). The ninth hour ⟷ the sixth hour (vv3, 9). "Get up, Peter, kill and eat!" ⟷ "By no means, Lord" (vv13–14). Unholy and unclean ⟷ what God has cleansed (vv14–15). Fell at his feet ⟷ "Stand up; I too am just a man" (vv25–26). Unlawful to associate ⟷ "God has shown me" (v28). Partiality ⟷ every nation welcome (vv34–35). Put to death on a cross ⟷ raised on the third day (vv39–40). Judge ⟷ forgiveness (vv42–43). The circumcised ⟷ the Gentiles also (v45). Water ⟷ the Spirit (v47).

Shape of the chapter: two scenes in two cities that God brings together. The first half (1–23) cuts back and forth between Caesarea and Joppa; the second half (24–48) is one room, where Peter speaks and then God speaks louder.

Chapter theme (my words): God shows no partiality. He seeks out a Gentile who is seeking Him, breaks down the wall in His own apostle's heart, and pours out His Spirit on anyone who believes in Jesus — the Lord of all, the Judge of all, and the Savior of whoever believes.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 10:43

"Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name ☆everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins."

FIGURE · TWO VISIONS, ONE PLAN

TWO VISIONS, ONE PLAN · GOD WORKS BOTH ENDS

CORNELIUS · CAESAREA	PETER · JOPPA
praying at the ninth hour (v3, 30)	praying at the sixth hour (v9)
an angel: "Cornelius!" (v3)	a trance: the sky opened (vv10–11)
"send for a man named Simon" (v5)	"kill and eat!" — "By no means, Lord" (vv13–14)
he obeys at once (vv7–8)	the Spirit: "I have sent them" (v20)
"we are all here present before God" (v33)	"God has shown me … any man" (v28)

The men knock at the gate "while Peter was greatly perplexed" (v17) — God's timing on both sides.

Read across each row: God prepared the Gentile and the apostle at the same time, so that each man's vision explained the other's.

Was Cornelius saved before Peter came? He was devout, God-fearing, generous and prayerful (v2), and his prayers rose "as a memorial before God" (v4). Guzik: "we see a man who obviously had a real relationship with God." Sproul only says, "God recognizes you. God notices you." Henry: God "never did, nor ever will, reject or refuse an honest Gentile." But the angel sends for Peter, and Peter later reports the angel's words: "he will speak words to you by which you will be saved" (11:14). I take it that Cornelius was a genuine seeker whom God was drawing, and that he was saved when he heard and believed the message about Jesus (v43). Good works prepared the ground; they did not save him.

Did God abolish the food laws? Sproul: "God changed the rules in the middle of the game, so to speak." Jesus had already taught that food does not defile a man (Mark 7:18–19), and Paul treats food as a matter of conscience (Rom 14). But Peter himself gives the main point in verse 28: the vision was about people. Sproul: "But you see this was not about food or animals. It was about people."

Why three times? "This happened three times" (v16). Henry notes it; Peter, who denied Jesus three times and was restored three times (John 21:15–17), needed it said more than once. The repetition sealed the lesson.

Was Simon the tanner a Gentile? Sproul thinks so: "In all probability, the Simon with whom Peter stayed in Joppa was a gentile." Guzik treats the tanner's trade, which handled dead animals, as the shocking detail. Either way, Peter was already lodging where a strict Jew would not.

What does "no partiality" mean? *Prosōpolēmptēs* is a "face-receiver." Verse 35 does not mean every sincere person is saved without Christ; the sermon goes straight to Jesus and ends with "everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins" (v43). It means nationality is no barrier. Guzik: "We often think God sees color; He only sees the heart."

What is the gospel Peter preached? Jesus' anointing and ministry, His death on a cross, His resurrection on the third day, His appearance to chosen witnesses, His appointment as Judge, and forgiveness through His name (vv37–43). Sproul: "if it does not include the cross, it is not evangelism, it is not the gospel." Spurgeon: the Judge is also the Savior.

Was this a "Gentile Pentecost," and are tongues normal for all? Sproul calls it "the gentile Pentecost" and places it with Samaria and Ephesus; he rejects the view that tongues are "the indispensable sign" and insists, "If you have Jesus, you have the Holy Ghost." Guzik sees the outward signs as necessary "on this occasion," to convince the Jewish believers. Spurgeon does not take up tongues in this sermon. Christians differ here; I read Acts 10 as a once-for-all marker that the Gentiles are in — "just as we did" (v47) — not as a pattern every believer must repeat.

Why baptism after the Spirit? The order differs from Acts 2:38, and our teachers see the reason: God settled the question before anyone could argue. Henry: "can we deny the sign to those who have received the thing signified?" Sproul makes the same argument.

Word study (Greek):

- **righteous — *dikaios* (G1342):** upright, just; of Cornelius (v22; Luke 1:6; 2:25).
- **unholy / common — *koinos* (G2839):** ceremonially profane; vv14, 15, 28; Mark 7:2.
- **worshiped — *proskyneō* (G4352):** to bow down; refused by Peter (vv25–26; Rev 19:10).
- **partiality — *prosōpolēmptēs* (G4381):** "face-receiver"; only Acts 10:34.
- **Lord of all — *kyrios pantōn* (G2962):** v36; Rom 10:12.
- **Holy Spirit — *pneuma hagion* (G4151):** fell, poured out, received (vv44–47; Joel 2:28).

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **God notices the seeker** (v4; Sproul).
2. **A good man still needs the gospel** (11:14).
3. **Hunger on the housetop** — God uses the ordinary (Guzik).
4. **"By no means, Lord" is a contradiction** (Sproul).
5. **Not about food — about people** (*koinos*; v28).
6. **God works both ends** — two visions, one plan (vv17, 20).
7. **"I too am just a man"** (v26; Guzik).
8. **God is no face-receiver** (v34).
9. **No cross, no gospel** (Sproul; Spurgeon).
10. **The Spirit falls on the preacher first** (Spurgeon).

Cross-references: Lev 11; 20:24–26; Isa 49:6; 56:7; Joel 2:28; Jonah 1:3; Mark 7:2, 19; Luke 6:46; John 21:15–17; Acts 1:8; 2:4, 38–39; 8:14–17; 11:1–18; 15:7–9; 19:1–7; Rom 2:11; 10:12; Gal 2:11–14; 3:28; Eph 2:11–22; James 2:1; Rev 19:10.

03 Application

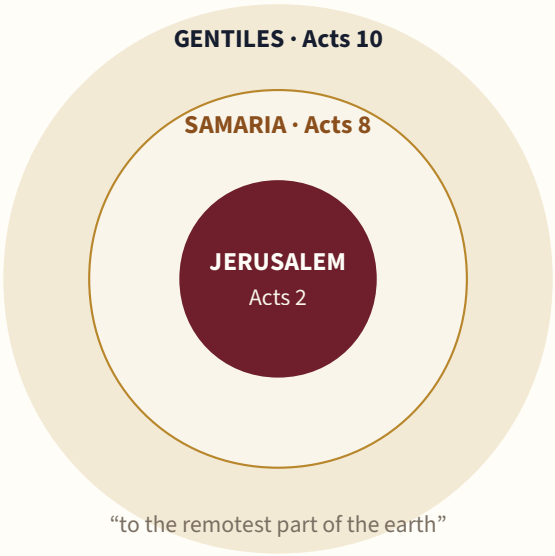
HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 10:28

"And he said to them, "You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet God has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean."

FIGURE · THE SPIRIT, RING BY RING

THE SPIRIT POURED OUT, RING BY RING · ACTS 1:8



Acts 2:4 · Jews in Jerusalem
"filled with the Holy Spirit … other tongues"

Acts 8:17 · Samaritans
apostles lay on hands; they receive the Spirit

Acts 10:44–46 · Gentiles at Caesarea
Spirit falls during the sermon; tongues

Acts 19:6 · John's disciples, Ephesus
hands laid on; tongues and prophesying

Peter: "just as we did" (10:47) — the same gift, one body.

The rings follow Acts 1:8; the panels list each time Acts describes the Spirit coming on a new group, with Caesarea as the first Gentile household.

Sin to confess — calling unclean what God has cleansed. I have my list of people I don't expect God to save: a certain kind of man, a certain neighborhood, a certain record. Peter had his list too. God told him three times, "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy." I confess my prejudice by name, and I ask God to change how I see the men He sends me.

Command to obey — get up and go without misgivings. The Spirit said, "get up, go downstairs and accompany them without misgivings, for I have sent them Myself" (v20). When someone unexpected shows up at my gate asking about God, I will not make excuses. I will go.

Truth to face — "By no means, Lord." I cannot keep saying "Lord" and "no" at the same time. Where I have told God no — about forgiving someone, about a habit, about a person He wants me to love — I will say yes today.

Example to follow — Cornelius and his household. He gathered his relatives and close friends and said, "we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord" (v33). I want to come to the Word like that, and bring my family and the men I serve with me.

Promise to trust — everyone who believes receives forgiveness. "through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins" (v43). Everyone — the Roman soldier, the Jewish fisherman, the man in the cell, me. Spurgeon said, "I am one of the "whoevers," for I believe in Jesus with all my heart!" So am I.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. Cornelius was devout, generous and prayerful — and still needed to hear about Jesus. Who do I know who is "a good person" but has never heard the gospel clearly from me? (10:1–6; 11:14) *He will speak words to you by which you will be saved (11:14).*
2. Peter said, "By no means, Lord." Where am I telling God "no" while still calling Him Lord? (10:13–16; Luke 6:46) *No, not me, I'm not going to do it (Sproul).*
3. God told Peter not to call any man unholy or unclean. What kind of person do I secretly write off — and what would change if I believed God could cleanse him? (10:15, 28) *It was about people (Sproul).*
4. Cornelius said, "we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord." How do I come to church or to our table — ready to hear, or ready to judge? (10:24, 33) *A whole household waiting for the word.*
5. Peter preached Jesus as both Judge and Savior. Which one do I tend to leave out — and why do I need both? (10:42–43) *If you do not believe in Christ as your Judge, you will never accept Him as your Savior (Spurgeon).*
6. The Holy Spirit interrupted Peter's sermon. Where do I need to stop talking and let God do what only He can do? (10:44–48; 11:15–17) *Peter allowed the Holy Spirit to interrupt his sermon (Guzik).*

Worship. The Lord of all heard a Gentile's prayers in Caesarea and a Jew's prayers in Joppa, and wove them into one answer. He is not one to show partiality. He anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and with power, raised Him on the third day, appointed Him Judge of the living and the dead, and pours out His Spirit on everyone who believes.

Prayer. Lord of all, forgive me for every time I have called someone unholy whom You have cleansed. Break down the walls in my heart the way You broke them in Peter's. When You send someone to my gate, help me go without misgivings. Thank You that through Jesus' name everyone who believes receives forgiveness — and that I am one of them. Pour out Your Spirit on our group while the Word is being spoken, and let us be amazed again at Your grace. Amen.

Scripture: New American Standard Bible® (NASB), © 1960–1995 The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. · Teacher material summarized from David Guzik (Enduring Word), R.C. Sproul (Ligonier), C.H. Spurgeon and Matthew Henry — see Acts-10-Deep-Dive-Four-Voices.pdf for sources. · Importable: the companion .md carries the berean-study block.

SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 11

To the Gentiles Also — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

God tears down the wall between Jew and Gentile, and the men who object to it end up praising Him. Then He builds a new kind of church in Antioch — started by nobodies, strengthened by an encourager, taught by a former persecutor, named "Christians" by its neighbors, and known first for its giving.

00 The Text

ACTS 11 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 Now the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God.

2 And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised took issue with him,

3 saying,
"You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them."

4 But Peter began speaking and proceeded to explain to them in orderly sequence, saying,

5 "I was in the city of Joppa praying; and in a trance I saw a vision, an object coming down like a great sheet lowered by four corners from the sky; and it came right down to me,

6 and when I had fixed my gaze on it and was observing it I saw the four-footed animals of the earth and the wild beasts and the crawling creatures and the birds of the air.

7 "I also heard a voice saying to me, 'Get up, Peter; kill and eat.'

8 "But I said, 'By no means, Lord, for nothing unholy or unclean has ever entered my mouth.'

9 "But a voice from heaven answered a second time, 'What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy.'

10 "This happened three times, and everything was drawn back up into the sky.

11 "And behold, at that moment three men appeared at the house in which we were staying, having been sent to me from Caesarea.

12 "The Spirit told me to go with them without misgivings. These six brethren also went with me and we entered the man's house.

13 "And he reported to us how he had seen the angel standing in his house, and saying, 'Send to Joppa and have Simon, who is also called Peter, brought here;

14 and he will speak words to you by which you will be saved, you and all your household.'

15 "And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning.

16 "And I remembered the word of the Lord, how He used to say, 'John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'

17 "Therefore if God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God's way?"

18 When they heard this, they quieted down and glorified God, saying, "Well then, God has granted to the Gentiles also the repentance that leads to life."

19 So then those who were scattered because of the persecution that occurred in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone.

20 But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who came to Antioch and began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus.

21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord.

22 The news about them reached the ears of the church at Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas off to Antioch.

23 Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord;

24 for he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And considerable numbers were brought to the Lord.

25 And he left for Tarsus to look for Saul;

26 and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And for an entire year they met with the church and taught considerable numbers; and the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.

27 Now at this time some prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch.

28 One of them named Agabus stood up and began to indicate by the Spirit that there would certainly be a great famine all over the world. And this took place in the reign of Claudius.

29 And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea.

30 And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.

Marked in the text

- **v1** "the Gentiles also had received the word of God" — Time / place / contrast
- **v3** "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them" — Sin / warning
- **v4** "in orderly sequence" — Time / place / contrast
- **v9** "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy" — God — His character & actions
- **v12** "The Spirit told me to go with them without misgivings" — Command / instruction
- **v14** "by which you will be saved, you and all your household" — Promise / blessing
- **v15** "the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as He did upon us at the beginning" — God — His character & actions
- **v16** "you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit" — Promise / blessing
- **v17** "who was I that I could stand in God's way" — Sin / warning
- **v18** "glorified God" — God — His character & actions
- **v18** "the repentance that leads to life" — Promise / blessing
- **v19** "speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone" — Time / place / contrast
- **v20** "began speaking to the Greeks also, preaching the Lord Jesus" — Command / instruction
- **v21** "the hand of the Lord was with them" — God — His character & actions
- **v21** "turned to the Lord" — Command / instruction
- **v23** "witnessed the grace of God" — God — His character & actions
- **v23** "remain true to the Lord" — Command / instruction
- **v24** "he was a good man, and full of the Holy Spirit and of faith" — Promise / blessing
- **v25** "to look for Saul" — Time / place / contrast
- **v26** "the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" — Time / place / contrast
- **v28** "a great famine all over the world" — Sin / warning
- **v29** "in the proportion that any of the disciples had means" — Command / instruction
- **v29** "a contribution for the relief of the brethren" — Promise / blessing
- **v19** "Antioch" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v8** "Lord" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

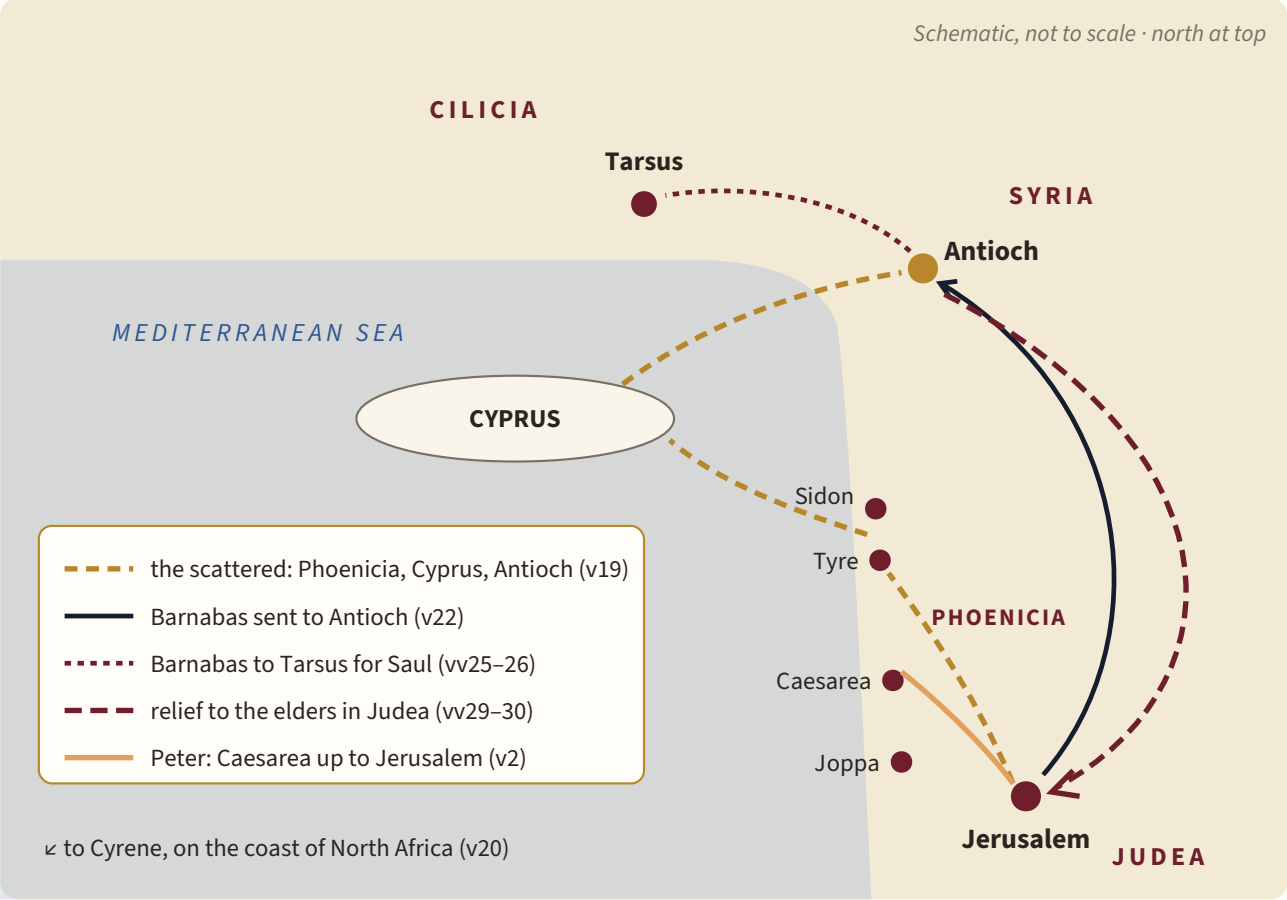
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 11:1

"Now the apostles and the brethren who were throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God."

FIGURE · FROM JERUSALEM TO ANTIOCH



Follow the gold dashes as the scattered believers go up the coast, over to Cyprus and on to Antioch; then see Barnabas sent north, his trip to Tarsus for Saul, and the relief carried back to Judea.

Setting. Word reaches the apostles and brethren in Judea that the Gentiles have received the word of God (v1). When Peter comes up to Jerusalem from Caesarea, the circumcised believers take issue with him (vv2–3). He tells them, in order, what happened at Joppa and Caesarea (vv4–17), and they glorify God (v18). Luke then picks up the believers scattered after Stephen's death, who reach Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch (v19). In Antioch the gospel goes to Greeks (vv20–21); Jerusalem sends Barnabas (vv22–24); he brings Saul from Tarsus (vv25–26); prophets come from Jerusalem, Agabus predicts a famine, and relief goes to the elders in Judea (vv27–30).

Structure:

- vv1–10 — **the charge and the vision:** the Gentiles also received the word (v1); "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them" (vv2–3); Peter explains "in orderly sequence" (v4); the sheet, the animals, "Get up, Peter; kill and eat," "By no means, Lord," "What God has cleansed, no longer consider unholy," three times (vv5–10).
- vv11–18 — **the same gift:** three men from Caesarea (v11); the Spirit says go "without misgivings," with six brethren (v12); the angel in Cornelius' house (vv13–14); the Holy Spirit fell "just as He did upon us at the beginning" (v15); the word of the Lord remembered (v16); "who was I that I could stand in God's way?" (v17); they quiet down and glorify God — "the repentance that leads to life" (v18).
- vv19–24 — **Antioch and Barnabas:** the scattered speak only to Jews (v19); men of Cyprus and Cyrene speak to Greeks (v20); the hand of the Lord, a large number turn (v21); Barnabas sent (v22); he sees the grace of God, rejoices, encourages (v23); a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith; considerable numbers added (v24).
- vv25–30 — **the name and the gift:** Barnabas fetches Saul from Tarsus (vv25–26a); a year of teaching; "first called Christians in Antioch" (v26b); prophets and Agabus — a great famine under Claudius (vv27–28); each according to his means sends relief (v29), carried by Barnabas and Saul to the elders (v30).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "Lord" ×8 — vv8, 16, 17, 20, 21 (×2), 23, 24.
- "God" ×8 — vv1, 9, 17 (×3), 18 (×2), 23.
- "Antioch" ×6 — vv19, 20, 22, 26 (×2), 27.
- "Spirit" ×5 — vv12, 15, 16, 24, 28 ("Holy Spirit" ×3 — vv15, 16, 24).
- "send / sent / sending" ×5 — vv11, 13, 22, 29, 30.
- "speak / speaking / spoke" ×5 — vv4, 14, 15, 19, 20.
- "house / household" ×4 — vv11, 12, 13, 14.
- "gift / gave / granted" ×4 — vv17 (×3), 18.
- "unholy / unclean" ×3 — vv8 (×2), 9; "cleansed" ×1 — v9.
- "brethren" ×3 — vv1, 12, 29; "Jerusalem" ×3 — vv2, 22, 27.
- "Gentiles" ×2 — vv1, 18; "Jews" ×1 — v19; "Greeks" ×1 — v20.
- "baptized" ×2 — v16 (×2); "believed / believing" ×2 — vv17, 21.
- "Barnabas" ×2 — vv22, 30; "Saul" ×2 — vv25, 30; "disciples" ×2 — vv26, 29.

Contrasts: Took issue (v2) ⟷ quieted down and glorified God (v18). Unholy and unclean ⟷ what God has cleansed (vv8–9). The brethren's distinction (v2) ⟷ "without misgivings" (v12). John's water ⟷ the Spirit's baptism (v16). To them ⟷ to us — "the same gift" (v17). Jews alone ⟷ the Greeks also (vv19–20). The gospel out from Jerusalem ⟷ relief back to Judea (vv22, 29–30). Disciples ⟷ Christians (v26).

Shape of the chapter: two halves that mirror each other. In the first, Jerusalem questions what God did among Gentiles and ends in praise. In the second, Jerusalem sends a good man to look at what God is doing among Gentiles, and he rejoices. The chapter starts with an argument about eating and ends with Gentile believers sending food to Jewish believers.

Chapter theme (my words): God gives the Gentiles the same Spirit and the same repentance that leads to life, and nobody — not even good men with good traditions — gets to stand in His way. The church that results is mixed, encouraged, taught, named for Christ, and generous.

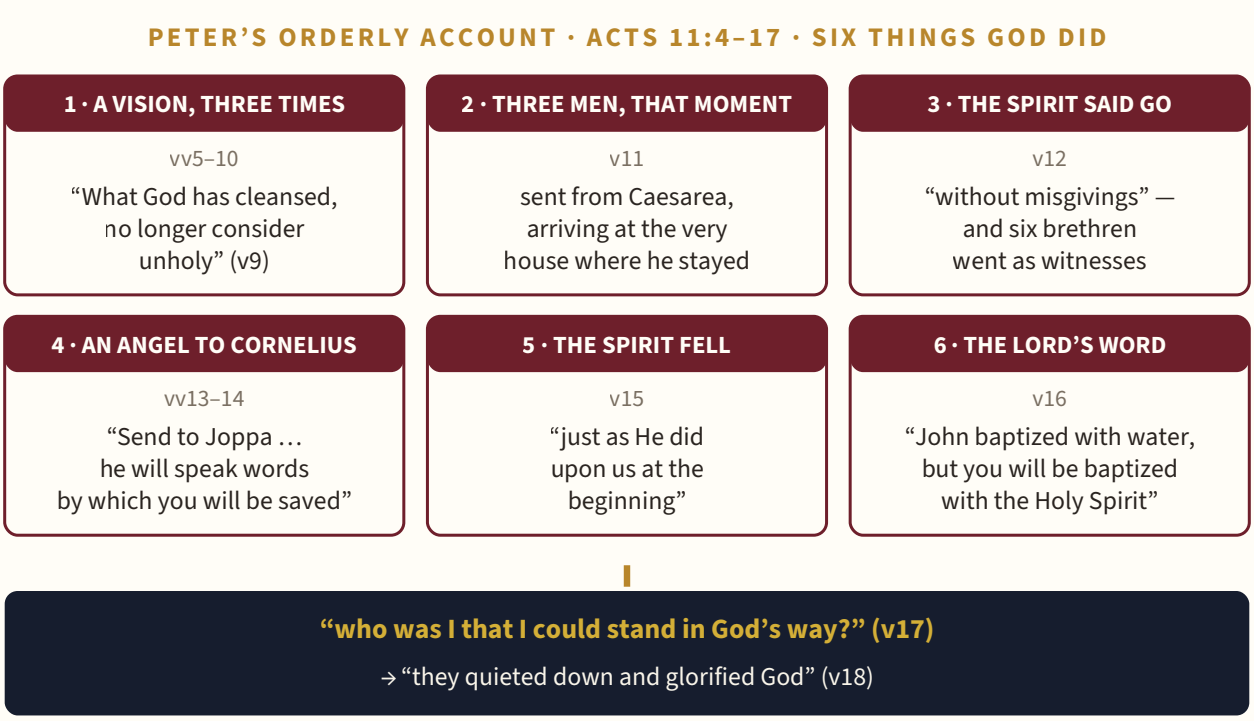
02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 11:17

"Therefore if ⚠ God gave to them the same gift as He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, ⚠ who was I that I could stand in God's way?"

FIGURE · PETER'S ORDERLY ACCOUNT



Peter does not argue; he lists, in order, six things God did — and lets the list ask the question in the dark bar.

What was the real objection? Not preaching but eating: "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them" (v3). Guzik: "At first, they were more concerned with what Peter did than with what God was doing with the Gentiles." Henry: "They charged it upon him as a crime." The table was where the wall between Jew and Gentile was most real — which is why Peter later failed at the same point in Antioch (Gal 2:11–12).

Why tell the story again? Luke gives Cornelius' conversion twice (chs. 10 and 11) and alludes to it a third time (15:7–9). Repetition is Luke's highlighter. Peter tells it *kathexēs*, "in orderly sequence" (v4), the word of Luke 1:3. Boice, in Guzik: "Peter did not flaunt his apostolic authority."

What settled it? Not Peter's opinion but God's actions: the vision three times, the timing of the messengers, the Spirit's command, the angel to Cornelius, the Spirit falling, and the Lord's own word (vv5–16). Guzik: "It showed that God's stamp of approval was on this work towards the Gentiles." Peter's question is the verdict: "who was I that I could stand in God's way?" (v17).

Is this a second blessing? Sproul reads the Gentile Pentecost as proof that every believer receives the Spirit: "All the believers at the household of Cornelius received the Spirit," and "Baptism of the Holy Spirit is not the same thing as regeneration" — distinct, but both given at conversion. Pentecostal and charismatic brothers read Acts as teaching a later baptism of the Spirit. Here, at least, the Spirit came while Peter was still preaching, on people who had just believed (v15; 10:44), and Peter calls it "the same gift … after believing" (v17).

Repentance as a gift (v18). The Gentiles did not earn it; God "granted" it, as He granted it to Israel (5:31). Spurgeon: "'Repentance,' my dear friends, is the gift of God," and true repentance is "a hatred of sin, and a forsaking it." Henry: "Repentance, if it be true, is unto life." The word is "also" — Gentiles are added; God has not cast away Israel (Rom 11:1–2). I read the church as Jew and Gentile together now, with a future still promised to national Israel.

"Greeks" or "Hellenists" (v20)? The manuscripts differ. Henry took the "Grecians" as Greek-speaking Jews; Guzik reads Gentiles, and so does the NASB, because v19 says the scattered spoke "to Jews alone" and v20 says "also." I follow the NASB.

The hand of the Lord (v21). Guzik: "A ministry can't turn people to the Lord unless the hand of the Lord is with them." Sproul: growth happens when God puts His hand on a work — but numbers alone prove nothing. Spurgeon: "There is a power abroad as potent as that by which the worlds were made." Henry: "These were not apostles, but ordinary ministers."

Barnabas. He saw grace before problems (v23), encouraged before he corrected, and went looking for Saul (v25). Sproul: "his goodness was a gift of the Holy Ghost." Henry: he brought Saul "though it might be the lessening of himself."

The name "Christian." Probably an outsiders' label, perhaps a jeer (Sproul: "Christian was a derisive term"; Gaebelein in Guzik on Antioch's "readiness to jeer and call names"). Henry: it came "not from the name of his person, Jesus, but of his office, Christ-anointed." Three New Testament uses — Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16.

Agabus and the famine. A prophet foretold it, and it came under Claudius (v28). Bruce, in Guzik: Claudius' reign "was marked by a succession of bad harvests." The church did not wait for the famine to arrive; they gave in advance, "in the proportion that any of the disciples had means" (v29).

Word study (Greek):

- **took issue / without misgivings — *diakrinō* (G1252):** to make a distinction, dispute, waver; vv2, 12; 15:9.
- **in orderly sequence — *kathexēs* (G2517):** one after another; only Luke (Luke 1:3; Acts 11:4).
- **stand in the way — *kōlyō* (G2967):** to hinder; 8:36; 10:47; 11:17.
- **repentance — *metanoia* (G3341):** a changed mind and life; granted by God (5:31; 11:18; 2 Tim 2:25).
- **Greeks — *Hellēnistas* (G1675) / *Hellēnas* (G1672):** a manuscript variant in v20.
- **grace — *charis* (G5485):** what Barnabas saw (v23).
- **encourage — *parakaleō* (G3870):** Barnabas' name and habit (4:36; 11:23).
- **remain true — *prosmenō* (G4357):** to stay with, continue (11:23; 13:43).
- **were called — *chrēmatizō* (G5537):** to bear a name publicly; usually "divinely warned."
- **Christian — *Christianos* (G5546):** 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet 4:16.
- **relief — *diakonia* (G1248):** ministry, service (11:29; 12:25).
- **elders — *presbyteros* (G4245):** first church elders in Acts (v30).

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **The complaint was about the table** (v3).
2. **Tell it in order** — *kathexēs* (v4).
3. **They made a distinction; the Spirit said not to** — *diakrinō* (vv2, 12).
4. **The same gift** — every believer receives the Spirit (Sproul).
5. **Repentance is a gift, not a fee** (Spurgeon, Henry).
6. **Silence, then praise** — good men changed their minds (v18).
7. **Persecution became a sowing** (Henry).
8. **Unnamed men changed history** (v20; Guzik).
9. **An encourager sees grace first** (v23).
10. **A nickname, a badge, a gift** (vv26–29).

Cross-references: Isa 49:6; Joel 2:28; Luke 1:3; 18:16; 24:47; Acts 1:5, 8; 4:36; 5:31; 6:1; 8:1–4, 36; 9:28–30; 10:1–48; 13:43; 15:7–9; 26:28; Rom 11:1–2; 2 Cor 8:9; Gal 2:10–12; Eph 2:14; 2 Tim 2:25; 1 Pet 4:16.

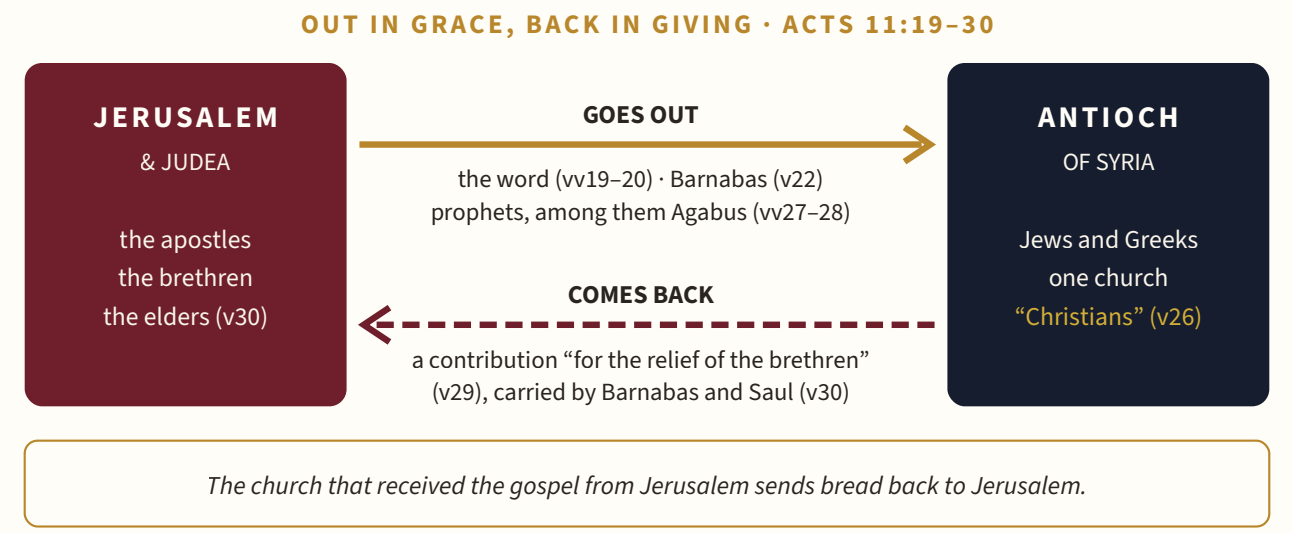
03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 11:23

"Then when he arrived and witnessed the grace of God, he rejoiced and began to encourage them all with resolute heart to remain true to the Lord;"

FIGURE · OUT IN GRACE, BACK IN GIVING



The top arrow carries the word and the teachers north; the bottom arrow carries the famine relief south — the young church gives back to the mother church.

Sin to confess — guarding the table. I have my own version of "You went to uncircumcised men and ate with them." There are men I am slow to sit with — the guy fresh out, the guy with the wrong past, the guy from the wrong church. Guzik says the Jerusalem believers cared more about what Peter did than about what God was doing. I confess that I have done the same, and I ask God to show me whose table He wants me at this week.

Truth to face — I don't get to stand in God's way. Peter asked, "who was I that I could stand in God's way?" If God is giving His Spirit and repentance to a man I have written off, my opinion does not get a vote. Henry: "Those who hinder the conversion of souls withstand God."

Promise to trust — repentance that leads to life is a gift. I cannot argue a man into repentance, and I could not argue myself into it. God grants it (v18). That changes how I pray for the men in my group and for my own family: I ask the Giver. Spurgeon: "Is it not a stupendous act of divine mercy that he actually makes them willing?"

Example to follow — Barnabas. He looked for grace first, rejoiced at it, encouraged men to stay with the Lord "with resolute heart," and then went and found Saul — a man others were still afraid of — and made room for him even if it cost him the spotlight. I want to be that kind of man in our group: look for grace, say so out loud, and go get the guy nobody else is calling.

Command to obey — give according to my means. The Antioch Christians heard of a coming famine and decided "in the proportion that any of the disciples had means" to send relief (v29). Not everyone gave the same; everyone gave. This week I will decide on something concrete to give to a brother in need, and actually carry it, not just commend the idea (Henry: "Many a good motion of that kind is made and commended, but is not prosecuted").

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. The Jerusalem believers objected to who Peter ate with. Whose table would I be uncomfortable sitting at — and what does that reveal about me? (11:2–3; Gal 2:11–12) *More concerned with what Peter did than with what God was doing (Guzik).*
2. Peter answered criticism with an orderly account of what God had done, not with his title. How do I usually respond when my walk with God is questioned? (11:4–17) *Peter did not flaunt his apostolic authority (Boice, in Guzik).*
3. "Who was I that I could stand in God's way?" Where might I be standing in the way of what God is doing in someone else? (11:17; 10:47) *Those who hinder the conversion of souls withstand God (Henry).*
4. If repentance is a gift God grants, how should that change the way I pray for the men I love who are still far from Him? (11:18; 2 Tim 2:25) *Repentance is God's gift (Henry; Spurgeon).*
5. Barnabas looked for the grace of God before he looked for problems. When I walk into a church, a group or a man's life, what do I look for first? (11:23–24) *Be glad to see the grace of God where we did not expect it (Henry).*
6. The name "Christian" started as an insult. What would people around me need to see for that name to fit me — and what did the Antioch church do first? (11:26–30; 1 Pet 4:16) *Live as becomes Christians (Henry).*

Worship. God cleanses what we called unclean, gives the same Spirit to Jew and Gentile, grants repentance that leads to life, puts His hand on ordinary men, and turns a persecution into a harvest. Christ, the Anointed One, gives His name to His people — and teaches them to give.

Prayer. Lord, forgive me for guarding tables You have opened. Thank You for granting me repentance that leads to life; grant it to the men I carry in prayer. Put Your hand on our small work, make me glad when I see Your grace in others, and give me the heart of Barnabas to go and find the brother everyone else has left in Tarsus. Make my life fit the name Christian, and make me generous with what You have given me. Amen.

Scripture: New American Standard Bible® (NASB), © 1960–1995 The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. · Teacher material summarized from David Guzik (Enduring Word), R.C. Sproul (Ligonier), C.H. Spurgeon and Matthew Henry — see Acts-11-Deep-Dive-Four-Voices.pdf for sources. · Importable: the companion .md carries the berean-study block.

SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 12

Prayer, a Prison and a Proud King — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

A proud king lays hands on the church, kills one apostle and chains another, and the church answers with prayer. God sets Peter free, strikes Herod down for taking His glory, and shows that kings come and go while the word of the Lord keeps growing.

00 The Text

ACTS 12 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them.

2 And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword.

3 When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread.

4 When he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people.

5 So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God.

6 On the very night when Herod was about to bring him forward, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and guards in front of the door were watching over the prison.

7 And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and woke him up, saying, "Get up quickly." And his chains fell off his hands.

8 And the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me."

9 And he went out and continued to follow, and he did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision.

10 When they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened for them by itself; and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel departed from him.

11 When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."

12 And when he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John who was also called Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying.

13 When he knocked at the door of the gate, a servant-girl named Rhoda came to answer.

14 When she recognized Peter's voice, ◷ because of her joy she did not open the gate, but ran in and announced that Peter was standing in front of the ⟳ gate.

15 They said to her, "⚠ You are out of your mind!" But she kept insisting that it was so. They kept saying, "It is his ⟳ angel."

16 But ◷ Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened the door, they saw him and were amazed.

17 But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them ⚠ how the Lord had led him out of the prison. And he said,
"🖹 Report these things to James and the brethren." Then he left and went to another place.

18 Now when day came, there was no small disturbance among the soldiers as to what could have become of Peter.

19 When Herod had searched for him and had not found him, he examined the guards and ⚠ ordered that they be led away to execution. Then he went down from Judea to Caesarea and was spending time there.

20 Now he was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; and with one accord they came to him, and having won over Blastus the king's chamberlain, they were asking for peace, because their country was fed by the king's country.

21 On an appointed day Herod, having put on his royal apparel, took his seat on the rostrum and began delivering an address to them.

22 The people kept crying out, "⚠ The voice of a god and not of a man!"

23 And immediately ⚠ an angel of the Lord struck him because ⚠ he did not give God the glory, and he was ⚠ eaten by worms and died.

24 But
☆ the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied.

25 And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, taking along with them John, who was also called Mark.

Marked in the text

- **v1** "Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church" — Sin / warning
- **v2** "James the brother of John put to death with a sword" — Sin / warning
- **v3** "it pleased the Jews" — Sin / warning
- **v3** "the days of Unleavened Bread" — Time / place / contrast
- **v5** "prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God" — Command / instruction
- **v6** "Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains" — Time / place / contrast
- **v7** "an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared" — God — His character & actions
- **v7** "Get up quickly" — Command / instruction
- **v7** "his chains fell off his hands" — God — His character & actions
- **v10** "which opened for them by itself" — God — His character & actions
- **v11** "the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me" — God — His character & actions
- **v12** "many were gathered together and were praying" — Command / instruction
- **v14** "because of her joy she did not open the gate" — Time / place / contrast
- **v15** "You are out of your mind" — Sin / warning
- **v16** "Peter continued knocking" — Time / place / contrast
- **v17** "how the Lord had led him out of the prison" — God — His character & actions
- **v17** "Report these things to James and the brethren" — Command / instruction
- **v19** "ordered that they be led away to execution" — Sin / warning
- **v22** "The voice of a god and not of a man" — Sin / warning
- **v23** "an angel of the Lord struck him" — God — His character & actions
- **v23** "he did not give God the glory" — Sin / warning
- **v23** "eaten by worms and died" — Sin / warning
- **v24** "the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied" — Promise / blessing
- **v7** "angel" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v4** "prison" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v10** "gate" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

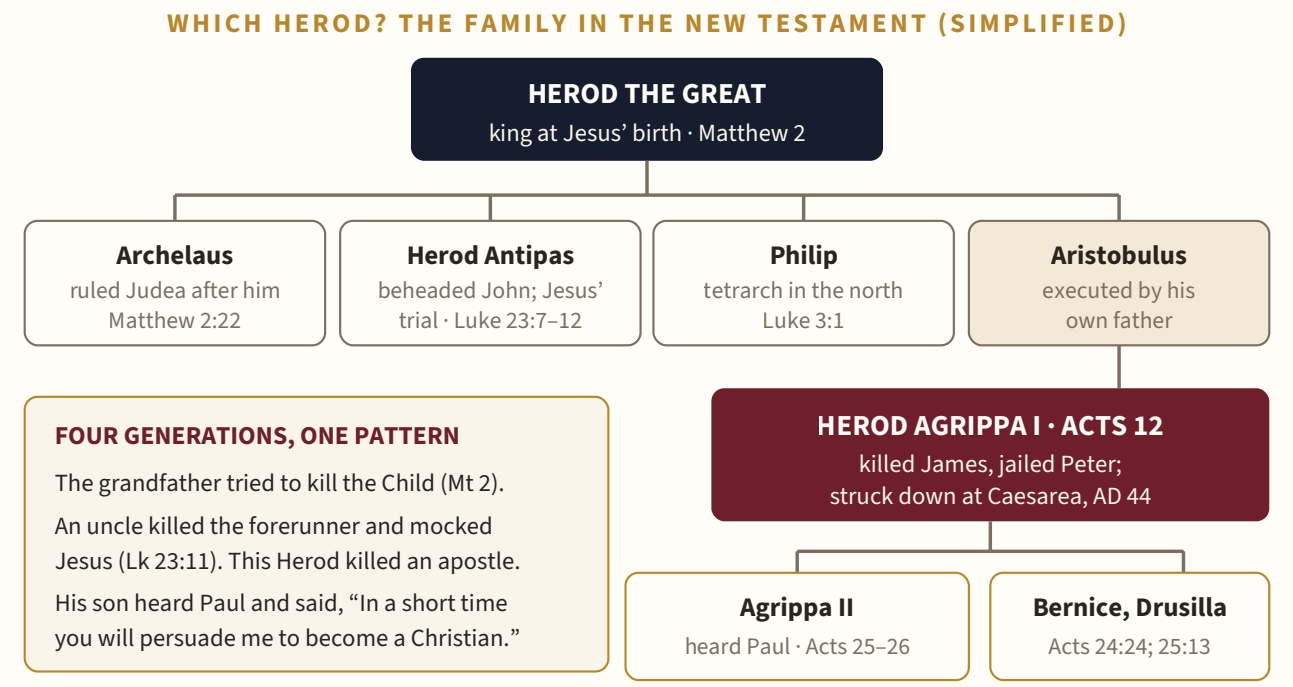
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 12:24

"But ☆ the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied."

FIGURE · WHICH HEROD?



Trace the line down the right side: the Herod of Acts 12 is Agrippa I, grandson of the Herod who hunted the infant Jesus and father of the Agrippa who heard Paul.

Setting. "About that time" (v1) — while Barnabas and Saul are on their relief trip (11:30; 12:25) — Herod Agrippa I turns on the church in Jerusalem. He kills James the brother of John and, seeing it pleases the Jews, arrests Peter during the days of Unleavened Bread (vv1–4). The church prays (v5). The night before Peter's trial an angel leads him out (vv6–11). He goes to Mary's house, where Rhoda answers his knock (vv12–17). Herod executes the guards and goes down to Caesarea (vv18–19), where, after a speech, he is struck by an angel and dies (vv20–23). The word grows, and Barnabas and Saul return with John Mark (vv24–25).

Structure:

- vv1–5 — **the sword and the prayer:** Herod lays hands on the church (v1); James put to death with a sword (v2); Peter arrested at Unleavened Bread (v3); four squads of soldiers, a trial planned after Passover (v4); Peter kept in prison, "but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God" (v5).
- vv6–11 — **the angel in the cell:** asleep between two soldiers, two chains, guards at the door (v6); the angel, the light, "Get up quickly," the chains fall off (v7); "Gird yourself … follow me" (v8); Peter thinks it is a vision (v9);

first guard, second guard, the iron gate opens by itself, one street, the angel leaves (v10); "Now I know for sure" (v11).

- vv12–19 — **the knock at the gate:** Mary's house, many praying (v12); Rhoda (v13); too glad to open (v14); "You are out of your mind … It is his angel" (v15); Peter keeps knocking; they are amazed (v16); "Report these things to James" — he leaves (v17); the soldiers' disturbance; the guards executed; Herod to Caesarea (vv18–19).
- vv20–25 — **the king and the word:** Tyre and Sidon seek peace through Blastus, for food (v20); royal apparel, the rostrum, an address (v21); "The voice of a god and not of a man!" (v22); struck by an angel, eaten by worms, dead (v23); "But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied" (v24); Barnabas, Saul and John Mark (v25).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "Peter / Peter's" ×9 — vv3, 5, 6, 7, 11, 14 (×2), 16, 18.
- "angel" ×7 — vv7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 15, 23.
- "Herod" ×5 — vv1, 6, 11, 19, 21.
- "Lord" ×5 — vv7, 11, 17, 23, 24.
- "prison" ×4 — vv4, 5, 6, 17.
- "guard(s)" ×4 — vv4, 6, 10, 19; "soldiers" ×3 — vv4, 6, 18.
- "gate" ×4 — vv10, 13, 14 (×2); "door" ×3 — vv6, 13, 16.
- "hand / hands" ×4 — vv1, 7, 11, 17.
- "people" ×4 — vv4, 11, 20, 22.
- "know / knew / realized / recognized" ×4 — vv9, 11, 12, 14.
- "king / king's" ×3 — vv1, 20 (×2); "royal" ×1 — v21.
- "prayer / praying" ×2 — vv5, 12; "chains" ×2 — vv6, 7; "struck" ×2 — vv7, 23; "James" ×2 — vv2, 17; "God" ×2 — vv5, 23.

Contrasts: Herod laid hands on the church (v1) ⟷ the word of the Lord grew (v24). James killed (v2) ⟷ Peter rescued (v11). Kept in prison (v5a) ⟷ prayer made to God (v5b). Chains and guards (v6) ⟷ chains fall off, gate opens by itself (vv7, 10). A vision ⟷ real (v9). "You are out of your mind" ⟷ "she kept insisting" (v15). Peter struck awake (v7) ⟷ Herod struck dead (v23). "The voice of a god" (v22) ⟷ "he did not give God the glory" (v23).

Shape of the chapter: it starts with Herod in power and the church in danger, and ends with Herod dead and the church growing. The middle is one long night: a prisoner asleep, a church awake, an angel at work.

Chapter theme (my words): No king can stop God's word. God may let one servant die and set another free, but He hears His praying people, opens the gates He chooses, and humbles every man who takes the glory that belongs to Him.

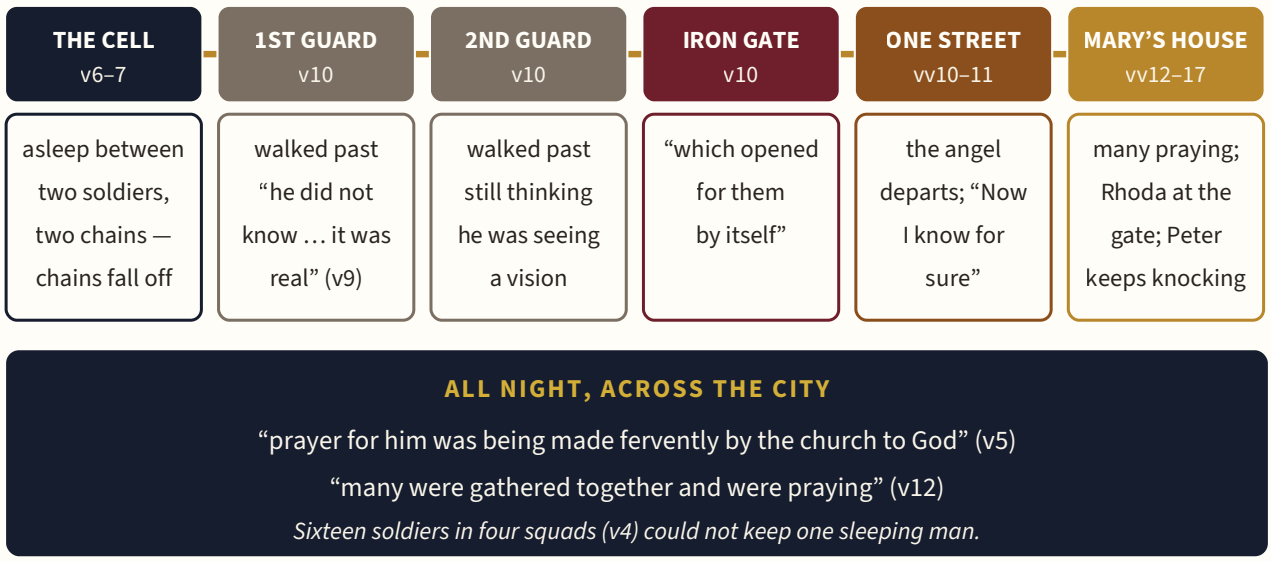
02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 12:11

"When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I know for sure that △the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.""

FIGURE · THE NIGHT BEFORE THE TRIAL



Read the boxes left to right — cell, two guards, the iron gate, one street, Mary's house — and remember the dark bar underneath: the church was praying the whole time.

Which Herod? Herod Agrippa I. Guzik: "the grandson of Herod the Great." Sproul agrees. He ruled from AD 41 and died in AD 44; Josephus tells of his death at Caesarea and, Sproul says, "At every point, he agrees with Luke's account."

Why James and not Peter? Luke gives no reason, only two lines (v2). Sproul: God always answers prayer, sometimes with no — "in God's providence, He was pleased to allow James to be martyred." Guzik: "Simply, it wasn't time for Peter to go to his heavenly home yet." Henry: "The apostle died a martyr, to show the rest of them what they must expect." Jesus had told James he would drink His cup (Mark 10:39). Faith does not get to demand an outcome.

What kind of prayer? *Ektenōs* — stretched out, earnest (v5). Henry: "The death of James alarmed them to a greater fervency in their prayer for Peter." They prayed "to God," and they prayed together, at night, in a home (v12). Spurgeon: "Better hold prayer meetings at midnight than not at all."

Why could Peter sleep? Jesus had told him he would live to be old (John 21:18), and Guzik notes, "Peter showed no signs of anxiety." Henry: "God gives him sleep, as he doth to his beloved." Spurgeon: "Sleep on, blessed slumberer!"

Why the Passover echoes? A night deliverance in Passover week, an angel, "Gird yourself and put on your sandals" (v8; Exod 12:11), and Peter's confession, "the Lord … rescued me" (v11) — the verb Stephen used of God rescuing Joseph and Israel (7:10, 34). Luke shows that the God of the exodus is the God of the church.

Did the church expect an answer? Guzik: "Even while they prayed for Peter, they found it hard to believe God actually answered their prayer." Sproul: "They could not believe that God had answered the very prayer they had prayed." Spurgeon pushes back: "It has sometimes been said that they did not really expect Peter to be set free. … Perhaps so, but I doubt it." Henry: "Sometimes that which we most earnestly wish for we are most backward to believe." I take it that weak faith still prays, and God still answers.

"It is his angel" (v15). Guzik: "The Jews believed in the idea of guardian angels." Henry will not build a doctrine on one remark: "this alone is too weak to bear the weight of such a doctrine." Scripture does teach that angels serve God's people (Ps 34:7); this verse tells us what the believers thought, not necessarily what is so.

Which James (v17)? Not the son of Zebedee, now dead, but James the Lord's brother (Guzik), who leads the Jerusalem church in 15:13 and 21:18.

Why was Herod struck? Luke gives the reason: "because he did not give God the glory" (v23). Sproul: the primary cause was God's judgment, not disease. Guzik: "he was corrupted from the inside out." Henry: "Thus great men are made an easy prey to flatterers." Isaiah 42:8 — God will not give His glory to another.

The word grew (v24). Sproul: "The worms did not eat the gospel; they ate the king—and the gospel flourished." Henry: "the more it was afflicted, the more it multiplied, like Israel in Egypt." As a futurist I also hear in the Herods a pattern: proud rulers rage against the Lord and His people, and the Lord laughs (Ps 2) — a pattern that runs on to the end of the age.

Word study (Greek):

- **Herod — *Hērōdēs* (G2264):** here Agrippa I.
- **mistreat — *kakoō* (G2559):** to do harm (v1).
- **squads — *tetradion* (G5069):** a squad of four; only here.
- **fervently — *ektenōs* (G1619):** stretched out (Luke 22:44; 1 Pet 1:22).
- **chains — *halysis* (G254):** vv6, 7.
- **angel — *angelos* (G32):** ×7 in the chapter.
- **by itself — *automatos* (G844):** only here and Mark 4:28.
- **rescued — *exaireō* (G1807):** 7:10, 34; 12:11.
- **Rhoda — *Rhodē* (G4498):** "Rose."
- **out of your mind — *mainomai* (G3105):** 12:15; 26:24–25.
- **kept insisting — *diischyrizomai* (G1340):** Luke 22:59; Acts 12:15.
- **rostrum — *bēma* (G968):** platform, judgment seat (2 Cor 5:10).
- **struck — *patassō* (G3960):** vv7, 23.
- **glory — *doxa* (G1391):** what Herod withheld.

- **eaten by worms — *skōlēkobrōtos* (G4662):** only here.
- **grew / multiplied — *auxanō* (G837) / *plēthynō* (G4129):** 6:7; 7:17; 12:24.

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **James died; Peter walked out** — God is good in both stories.
2. **Jesus' word to James came true** (Mark 10:39).
3. **Sixteen soldiers, one sleeping man** (vv4, 6).
4. **Prayer at full stretch** — *ektenōs* (v5).
5. **A second Passover rescue** (vv8, 11).
6. **The gate opened by itself** — *automatē* (v10).
7. **Answered prayer can be hard to believe** (vv15–16).
8. **A servant-girl again** — *diischyrizomai* (Luke 22:59; Acts 12:15).
9. **One angel, two strikes** — *patassō* (vv7, 23).
10. **The worms ate the king, not the gospel** (Sproul).

Cross-references: Exod 1:7; 12:11; Ps 2; 34:7; 107:14; 146:3–4; Isa 42:8; Dan 5; Mark 4:28; 10:39; Luke 22:31–33, 44, 54–62; John 21:18; Acts 5:19; 6:7; 7:10, 17, 34; 15:13; 26:24; 2 Cor 5:10; Heb 13:3; 1 Pet 5:5.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 12:5

"So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God."

FIGURE · TWO STRIKES OF THE SAME ANGEL

TWO STRIKES OF THE SAME ANGEL · πατάσσω (G3960) · vv7, 23

"he struck Peter's side" (v7)	"an angel of the Lord struck him" (v23)
in a prison cell, in chains	on the rostrum, in royal apparel
asleep the night before his trial	delivering an address to a crowd
a church praying for him	"The voice of a god" (v22)
"Get up quickly" — chains fall off	"he did not give God the glory"
"the Lord has … rescued me" (v11)	"eaten by worms and died"
struck — and set free	**struck — and brought down**

THE SHAPE OF THE CHAPTER

v1 "Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church"

v24 "But the word of the Lord continued to grow and to be multiplied"

Luke uses one verb for both strikes: the humble prisoner is struck awake and set free; the proud king is struck down. Then read the bottom box from v1 to v24.

Truth to face — God is good when He says no. James died and Peter lived, and the same church prayed. Some of the men I walk with have buried sons, lost marriages, done years inside while praying for a different outcome. Sproul says God was "pleased to allow James to be martyred." I don't have to explain God's no; I have to keep trusting the God who gave it.

Command to obey — pray at full stretch, and pray together. The church did not organize a protest or a jailbreak; it prayed "fervently … to God" (v5), late at night, packed into a house (v12). I want our group to pray like that, not just mention things. This week I will name one man in chains — literal or otherwise — and pray for him with others, out loud, and keep at it.

Promise to trust — no gate is too strong for God. Chains, sixteen soldiers and an iron gate meant nothing to the Lord (Guzik). The gate opened "by itself." Whatever has locked me in — an addiction, a sentence, a fear — God opens gates in His time. "God never is before His time; nor is He ever too late" (Spurgeon).

Example to follow — Peter asleep and Peter obeying. He slept between two soldiers because his life was in God's hands, and when the angel spoke he got up, dressed and followed, one step at a time, without understanding it. I can sleep tonight on the same hands, and I can take the next step God shows me even if I don't see the whole road.

Sin to confess — taking the glory, and doubting the answer. Herod took praise that belonged to God and died for it. I confess the ways I enjoy credit and flattery for what God did. And I confess that I sometimes pray like the people at Mary's house — and then call the answer a coincidence. Lord, let me recognize Your knock.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. God let James die and set Peter free, and the same church prayed for both. How do I keep trusting God when He answers one prayer with yes and another with no? (12:1–11; Mark 10:39) *He was pleased to allow James to be martyred (Sproul).*
2. Peter slept in chains the night before his trial. What is keeping me awake right now, and what would it look like to sleep like Peter? (12:6; Ps 4:8) *God gives him sleep, as he doth to his beloved (Henry).*
3. The church prayed "fervently" — stretched out — for Peter. What person or situation am I praying for that way, and what am I only mentioning to God? (12:5, 12; Luke 22:44) *Times of public distress and danger should be praying times (Henry).*
4. Peter obeyed one step at a time without knowing it was real. What is the next small step of obedience God has put in front of me? (12:7–10) *Peter obeyed without really knowing what was happening (Guzik).*
5. The praying church told Rhoda she was out of her mind. When God answers my prayers, do I recognize it — or explain it away? (12:13–16) *They could not believe that God had answered the very prayer they had prayed (Sproul).*
6. Herod took praise that belonged to God. Where am I tempted to take credit, or to enjoy flattery, that belongs to Him? (12:21–23; Isa 42:8; 1 Pet 5:5) *Great men are made an easy prey to flatterers (Henry).*

Worship. The Lord sends His angel into a locked cell, strikes a sleeping man awake, drops his chains, walks him past the guards and opens the iron gate by itself. He hears the prayers of a frightened church in a crowded house. He will not give His glory to another, and no king can stop His word.

Prayer. Lord, You are the God who brings Your people out. Teach me to pray at full stretch, with my brothers, for the men still in chains. Give me Peter's sleep when I am afraid and Peter's obedience when I don't understand. Forgive me for taking credit that is Yours and for doubting answers You have already sent. Open the gates only You can open, and let Your word keep growing in me and through me. Amen.

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SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 13

Sent Out: A Light for the Gentiles — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

The Holy Spirit sends ordinary men from a worshiping church, and the risen Jesus they preach frees everyone who believes from all the things the Law could never free him from. The same word that brings joy to some brings jealousy in others, and nothing — not sorcery, not quitting, not persecution — stops it from spreading.

00 The Text

ACTS 13 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul.

2 While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

3 Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

4 So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus.

5 When they reached Salamis, they began to proclaim the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews; and they also had John as their helper.

6 When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they found a magician, a Jewish false prophet whose name was Bar-Jesus,

7 who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, a man of intelligence. This man summoned Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God.

8 But Elymas the magician (for so his name is translated) was opposing them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the faith.

9 But Saul, who was also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, fixed his gaze on him,

10 and said, "You who are full of all deceit and fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease to make crooked the straight ways of the Lord?

11 "Now, behold, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you will be blind and not see the sun for a time." And immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he went about seeking those who would lead him by the hand.

12 Then the proconsul believed when he saw what had happened, being amazed at the teaching of the Lord.

13 Now Paul and his companions put out to sea from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia; but John left them and returned to Jerusalem.

14 But going on from Perga, they arrived at Pisidian
Antioch, and on the Sabbath day they went into the
synagogue and sat down.

15 After the reading of the Law and the Prophets the
synagogue officials sent to them, saying, "Brethren, if
you have any word of exhortation for the people, say it."

16 Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, "Men
of Israel, and you who fear God, listen:

17 "The God of this people Israel chose our fathers and
made the people great during their stay in the land of
Egypt, and with an uplifted arm He led them out from it.

18 "For a period of about forty years He put up with them
in the wilderness.

19 "When He had destroyed seven nations in the land of
Canaan, He distributed their land as an inheritance—all
of which took about four hundred and fifty years.

20 "After these things He gave them judges until Samuel
the prophet.

21 "Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul
the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty
years.

22 "After He had removed him, He raised up David to be
their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, 'I
HAVE FOUND DAVID the son of Jesse, △ A MAN AFTER MY
HEART, who will do all My will.'

23 "From the descendants of this man, according to
promise, △ God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus,

24 after John had proclaimed before His coming a
baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

25 "And while John was completing his course, he kept
saying, 'What do you suppose that I am? I am not He. But
behold, one is coming after me the sandals of whose feet
I am not worthy to untie.'

26 "Brethren, sons of Abraham's family, and those among
you who fear God, to us the message of this salvation has
been sent.

27 "For those who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers,
recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the
prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled these by
condemning Him.

28 "And though they found no ground for putting Him to
death, they asked Pilate that He be executed.

29 "When they had carried out all that was written
concerning Him, they took Him down from the cross and
laid Him in a tomb.

30 "△ But God raised Him from the dead;

31 and for many days He appeared to those who came up
with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who
are now His witnesses to the people.

32 "And we preach to you ☆ the good news of the promise
made to the fathers,

33 that God has fulfilled this promise to our children in
that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second
Psalm, 'YOU ARE MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU.'

34 "As for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead,
no longer to return to ⟲ decay, He has spoken in this
way: 'I WILL GIVE YOU THE HOLY and SURE blessings OF
DAVID.'

35 "Therefore He also says in another Psalm, 'YOU WILL
NOT ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO ⟲ DECAY.'

36 "For David, after he had served the purpose of God in
his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his
fathers and underwent ⟲ decay;

37 but △ He whom God raised did not undergo ⟲ decay.

38 "Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that
☆ through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you,

39 and through Him ☆ everyone who believes is freed
from all things, from which ◷ you could not be freed
through the Law of Moses.

40 "Therefore ▤ take heed, so that the thing spoken of in
the Prophets may not come upon you:

41 'BEHOLD, YOU SCOFFERS, AND MARVEL, AND PERISH;
FOR I AM ACCOMPLISHING A WORK IN YOUR DAYS, A WORK
WHICH YOU WILL NEVER BELIEVE, THOUGH SOMEONE
SHOULD DESCRIBE IT TO YOU.'"

42 As Paul and Barnabas were going out, the people kept
begging that these things might be spoken to them the
next Sabbath.

43 Now when the meeting of the synagogue had broken
up, many of the Jews and of the God-fearing proselytes

followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them, were urging them to continue in the grace of God.

44 The next Sabbath nearly the whole city assembled to hear the word of the Lord.

45 But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming.

46 Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.

47 "For so the Lord has commanded us, 'I HAVE PLACED YOU AS A LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES, THAT YOU MAY BRING SALVATION TO THE END OF THE EARTH.'"

48 When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

49 And the word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region.

50 But the Jews incited the devout women of prominence and the leading men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district.

51 But they shook off the dust of their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium.

52 And the disciples were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit.

Marked in the text

- **v2** "ministering to the Lord and fasting" — Command / instruction
- **v2** "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" — God — His character & actions
- **v4** "being sent out by the Holy Spirit" — God — His character & actions
- **v9** "filled with the Holy Spirit" — God — His character & actions
- **v10** "make crooked the straight ways of the Lord" — Sin / warning
- **v11** "the hand of the Lord is upon you" — God — His character & actions
- **v12** "the proconsul believed" — Promise / blessing
- **v13** "John left them and returned to Jerusalem" — Sin / warning
- **v22** "A MAN AFTER MY HEART" — God — His character & actions
- **v23** "God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus" — God — His character & actions
- **v30** "But God raised Him from the dead" — God — His character & actions
- **v32** "the good news of the promise made to the fathers" — Promise / blessing
- **v37** "He whom God raised" — God — His character & actions
- **v38** "through Him forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you" — Promise / blessing
- **v39** "everyone who believes is freed from all things" — Promise / blessing
- **v39** "you could not be freed through the Law of Moses" — Time / place / contrast
- **v40** "take heed" — Command / instruction
- **v45** "filled with jealousy" — Sin / warning
- **v46** "you repudiate it and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life" — Sin / warning
- **v46** "we are turning to the Gentiles" — Time / place / contrast
- **v47** "A LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES" — Promise / blessing
- **v48** "as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed" — God — His character & actions
- **v51** "shook off the dust of their feet" — Time / place / contrast
- **v52** "continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit" — Promise / blessing
- **v5** "word of God" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v44** "word of the Lord" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v34** "decay" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

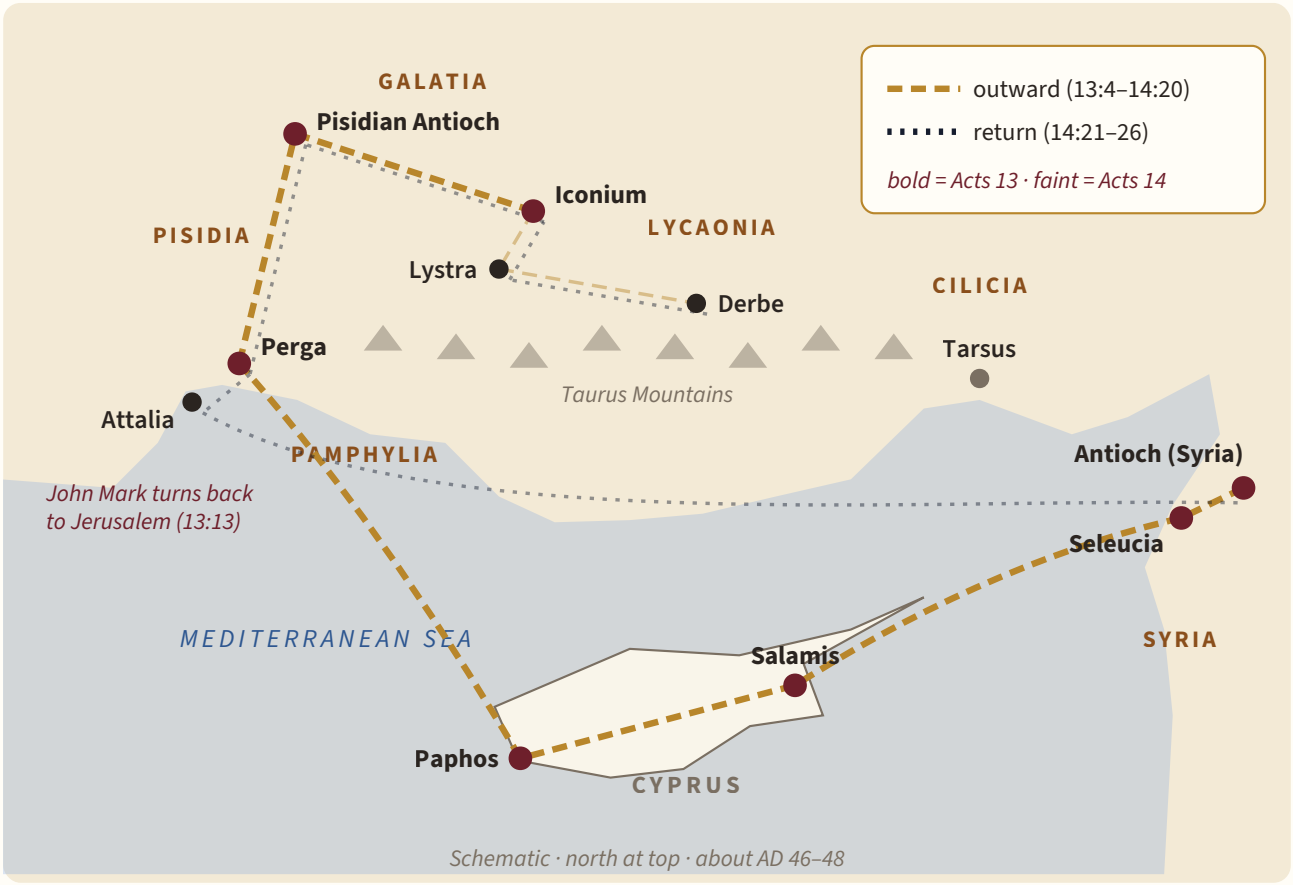
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 13:2

"While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.""

FIGURE · THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY



Follow the gold line from Antioch in Syria across Cyprus to Perga and up to Pisidian Antioch — the ground of Acts 13; the faint legs and the dark return line belong to chapter 14.

Setting. The church at Antioch in Syria, with five prophets and teachers (v1). The Holy Spirit sets apart Barnabas and Saul (vv2–3). They sail from Seleucia to Cyprus, preach in the synagogues at Salamis, and at Paphos meet the proconsul Sergius Paulus and the magician Bar-Jesus (vv4–12). From Paphos they sail to Perga in Pamphylia, where John Mark leaves (v13), then go up to Pisidian Antioch, preach in the synagogue on two Sabbaths, and are driven out to Iconium (vv14–52).

Structure:

- vv1–3 — **the church sends:** prophets and teachers at Antioch; ministering and fasting; "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul" (v2); fasting, prayer, hands laid on them (v3).
- vv4–12 — **Cyprus:** sent out by the Holy Spirit (v4); Salamis and the synagogues; John as helper (v5); Paphos, Bar-Jesus, Sergius Paulus (vv6–7); Elymas opposes (v8); Saul, also Paul, filled with the Spirit (v9); "son of the devil" — blindness (vv10–11); the proconsul believes (v12).
- vv13–25 — **Israel's story:** John leaves at Perga (v13); the synagogue at Pisidian Antioch; the reading; "any word of exhortation" (vv14–15); Paul stands — God chose the fathers, Egypt, the wilderness, Canaan, the judges, Saul, David (vv16–22); a Savior, Jesus, from David's line; John's witness (vv23–25).
- vv26–37 — **but God raised Him:** "to us the message of this salvation has been sent" (v26); the rulers condemned Him, Pilate, the cross and the tomb (vv27–29); "But God raised Him from the dead" and the witnesses (vv30–31); the promise fulfilled — Psalm 2, Isaiah 55, Psalm 16; David decayed, Jesus did not (vv32–37).
- vv38–41 — **freed from all things:** forgiveness of sins proclaimed (v38); freed from all things the Law could not (v39); "take heed" — Habakkuk's scoffers (vv40–41).
- vv42–52 — **jealousy and joy:** begging for the next Sabbath; many follow (vv42–43); nearly the whole city (v44); jealousy and blasphemy (v45); "we are turning to the Gentiles" — a light for the Gentiles (vv46–47); the Gentiles rejoice; as many as appointed believed; the word spreads (vv48–49); persecution, dust shaken off, Iconium (vv50–51); filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit (v52).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "God" ×14 — vv5, 7, 16, 17, 21, 23, 26, 30, 33, 36, 37, 43 (×2), 46.
- "Lord" ×8 — vv2, 10, 11, 12, 44, 47, 48, 49.
- "Paul" ×8 — vv9, 13, 16, 42, 43, 45, 46, 50; "Barnabas" ×7 — vv1, 2, 7, 42, 43, 46, 50; "Saul" ×5 — vv1, 2, 7, 9 (Saul of Tarsus), 21 (King Saul).
- "word" ×7 — vv5, 7, 15, 44, 46, 48, 49; "word of God" ×3 (vv5, 7, 46) and "word of the Lord" ×3 (vv44, 48, 49).
- "prophet(s) / Prophets" ×6 — vv1, 6, 15, 20, 27, 40.
- "raised / raise" ×5 — vv22, 30, 33, 34, 37 (of David in v22; of Jesus in the rest).
- "Holy Spirit" ×4 — vv2, 4, 9, 52; "filled" ×3 — v9 (with the Spirit), v45 (with jealousy), v52 (with joy and the Spirit).
- "Israel" ×4 — vv16, 17, 23, 24; "Jews" ×4 — vv5, 43, 45, 50; "Gentiles" ×2 — vv46, 48 (plus "GENTILES" in the quotation of v47).
- "Sabbath" ×4 — vv14, 27, 42, 44.
- "promise" ×3 — vv23, 32, 33; "fathers" ×3 — vv17, 32, 36.
- "decay" ×3 — vv34, 36, 37 (plus "DECAY" in the quotation of v35).
- "believe(s) / believed" ×3 — vv12, 39, 48; "brethren" ×3 — vv15, 26, 38.
- "fear God" ×2 — vv16, 26; "eternal life" ×2 — vv46, 48; "freed" ×2 — v39.

Contrasts: Saul ⟷ Paul (v9). The straight ways of the Lord ⟷ making them crooked (v10). A blinded sorcerer ⟷ a believing proconsul (vv11–12). A king removed ⟷ David raised up (v22). They condemned Him ⟷ God raised Him (vv28–30). David decayed ⟷ He did not (vv36–37). Freed through Him ⟷ could not be freed through the Law (v39). Marvel and perish ⟷ believe (vv39–41). Jealousy ⟷ rejoicing (vv45, 48). Judge yourselves unworthy ⟷ appointed to eternal life (vv46, 48). Driven out ⟷ filled with joy (vv50–52).

Shape of the chapter: a sending (1–3), a first contest (4–12), then a long sermon (16–41) framed by two Sabbaths (14, 44). The sermon moves from what God did for Israel to what God did in Jesus to what God offers "you" — and the chapter ends with the offer refused by some and received by others.

Chapter theme (my words): The Spirit sends the church's best men out from worship, and Christ's gospel goes to the synagogue first and then to the nations. It is news about a risen Savior through whom everyone who believes is freed from all things — and it brings joy even to men who are thrown out of town.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 13:48

"When the Gentiles heard this, they began rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord; and △as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed."

FIGURE · PAUL'S FIRST RECORDED SERMON

PAUL'S SERMON IN THE SYNAGOGUE · ACTS 13:16–41

vv16–22	**GOD'S STORY** — chose the fathers · Egypt · wilderness · Canaan · judges · Saul · David
vv23–25	**THE SAVIOR PROMISED** — from David's line, "a Savior, Jesus" · John: "I am not He"
vv26–31	**CROSS AND EMPTY TOMB** — rulers condemned Him · Pilate · the tomb · "But God raised Him"
vv32–37	**THE SCRIPTURES PROVE IT** — Psalm 2:7 · Isaiah 55:3 · Psalm 16:10 — David decayed; He did not
vv38–39	**THE OFFER** — forgiveness of sins · freed from all things the Law could not
vv40–41	**THE WARNING** — Habakkuk 1:5 — "Behold, you scoffers … and perish"

History leads to a Person; the Person leads to a choice — believe and be freed, or scoff and perish.

Read the bars from top to bottom: Paul walks the synagogue from Israel's history to David's Son, the empty tomb, three Old Testament texts, and then an offer and a warning.

Who sends missionaries — the Spirit or the church? Both, in that order. The Spirit speaks (v2), the church fasts, prays and lays on hands (v3), and Luke sums it up: "being sent out by the Holy Spirit" (v4). Sproul: "We can commission people, but we have no power." Henry: the laying on of hands set apart men God had already chosen.

Why was Paul so harsh with Elymas? Guzik: "because the eternal destiny of the proconsul was at stake." The blindness was "for a time" (v11), a judgment with mercy in it. Sproul notes the proconsul did not believe merely from the spectacle; he was "amazed at the teaching of the Lord" (v12). Henry: "Satan is in a special manner busy with great men and men of power."

Why does Saul become Paul here? Luke switches names the moment Saul faces a Roman named Paulus (v9) and puts Paul first from then on (v13, "Paul and his companions"). Henry: "Saul (who is here for the first time called

Paul).” The name was probably his Roman name all along; from here the mission to the Gentiles is under way, and Luke uses the name the Gentile world knew.

Why did John Mark leave? No one knows. Guzik lists guesses and adds, “Perhaps he was homesick.” Sproul: “he had signed up for the duration.” Henry: “It was his fault, and we shall hear of it again.” Paul took it seriously enough to refuse Mark on the next journey (15:38) — and later wrote, “he is useful to me for service” (2 Tim 4:11). Failure is not the last word.

What did Paul preach? History with a Person at the end of it (vv16–25), a cross and an empty tomb (vv26–31), and Scripture to prove it (vv32–37). Sproul: Paul “gave a capsule summation of the history of redemption,” and began with election — “The God of this people Israel chose our fathers.” Guzik: “Jesus is the goal of history.”

How do Psalm 2, Isaiah 55 and Psalm 16 prove the resurrection? Psalm 2:7 names the Son God installs as King; Isaiah 55:3 promises “the faithful mercies shown to David” — mercies that need a Son of David who lives forever; Psalm 16:10 promises that God’s Holy One will not see decay. David died and decayed (v36); so the promise is about Jesus (v37). Henry: it “could not have its accomplishment in David, but looked forward to Christ.” Peter made the same argument at Pentecost (2:25–32).

What does “freed from all things” mean? The NASB’s “freed” is *dikaioō*, Paul’s word for justification (KJV “justified”). The Law could show sin, but it could not declare a sinner righteous; faith in Christ does, completely. Guzik: “Forgiveness takes care of the debt of sin, but justification puts a positive credit on our account before God.” Sproul: Paul “teaches with it the doctrine of justification by faith alone.”

What does verse 48 teach about election? “As many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.” Sproul reads it as God’s election: “Election is not by faith; it is to faith and unto salvation.” Other careful readers stress that *tassō* can mean “disposed” or “lined up,” and that the people who believed were already seeking (v42–44). Either way the text holds two truths together: God appoints (v48), and those who refuse “judge yourselves unworthy” (v46). Sproul: election “does not in any way minimize the responsibility of those who rejected what they heard.” I will not pretend to resolve the mystery; I will preach to everyone, as Paul did, and trust God for the harvest.

Has God turned away from Israel? No. “It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first” (v46), and many Jews believed (v43). Paul turns to the Gentiles in this city, then walks into the next synagogue (14:1). He later writes that Israel did not “stumble so as to fall” (Rom 11:11). I believe God still has a future for national Israel (Rom 11:26).

Word study (Greek):

- **set apart — *aphorizō* (G873):** to mark off, separate; Rom 1:1; Gal 1:15.
- **ministering — *leitourgeō* (G3008):** public, priestly service; the root of “liturgy.”
- **magician — *magos* (G3097):** the word for the magi of Matt 2:1; here a sorcerer.
- **making crooked — *diastrephō* (G1294):** to twist, pervert (vv8, 10); mist — *achlys* (G887).
- **exhortation — *paraklēsis* (G3874):** encouragement, comfort; Barnabas the “Son of Encouragement” (4:36).
- **chose — *eklegomai* (G1586):** God picked out the fathers (v17).
- **raised up — *anistēmi* (G450):** vv33, 34; v30 uses *egeirō*.
- **decay — *diaphthora* (G1312):** only in Acts (2:27, 31; 13:34–37).
- **freed — *dikaioō* (G1344):** justified; NASB “freed” only 3 times (Acts 13:39 ×2; Rom 6:7).
- **scoffers — *kataphronētēs* (G2707):** despisers; Hab 1:5 in the Greek Old Testament.

- **appointed — *tassō* (G5021):** set in order, station, appoint (v48).
- **jealousy — *zēlos* (G2205):** heat — zeal or envy (v45).

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **The mission was born in worship** (v2; Guzik).
2. **The church sends, but the Spirit empowers** (vv3–4; Sproul).
3. **The man who twisted the way lost his sight** (vv8–11).
4. **A quitter is not finished** — Mark (v13; 15:38; 2 Tim 4:11).
5. **The gospel is news about what God did** (Sproul, Guzik).
6. **David decayed; Jesus did not** — *diaphthora* (vv34–37).
7. **Freed from all things** — justification (v39; Guzik).
8. **The pardon is full and free** (Spurgeon).
9. **God appoints, and men refuse** (vv46, 48; Sproul).
10. **Joy in a hard place** (v52).

Cross-references: Ps 2:7; 16:10; 89:20; 1 Sam 13:14; Isa 40:3; 42:6; 49:6; 55:3; Hab 1:5; Matt 10:14; Luke 2:32; Acts 1:8; 2:24–32; 4:36; 8:9–24; 9:8, 15; 11:19–26; 12:25; 15:37–39; 26:17–18; Rom 1:1–4; 5:1; 6:7; 11:11, 26; Gal 1:15; 2 Tim 3:11; 4:11.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 13:52

"And the disciples were ☆ continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit."

FIGURE · ONE WORD, TWO RESPONSES

ONE WORD, TWO RESPONSES · ACTS 13:42–52

THOSE WHO PUSHED IT AWAY		THOSE WHO RECEIVED IT	
v45	saw the crowds — filled with jealousy	v42	begging to hear it the next Sabbath
v45	contradicting, blaspheming	v43	many Jews and proselytes follow
v46	repudiate the word; judge themselves unworthy	v44	nearly the whole city assembles
v50	stir up prominent women and leading men	v48	Gentiles rejoice, glorify the word
v50	persecution — drove them out	v48–49	as many as appointed believed; word spreads

v51 they shook off the dust … v52 and the disciples
"were continually filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit"

The same word of the Lord met jealousy on one side and rejoicing on the other; notice that many Jews were among those who followed (v43).

Example to follow — the church at Antioch. They were worshiping and fasting when God spoke (v2). I want my group of men to be that kind of group: not a club that plans, but a few men who minister to the Lord first and are ready to let go of their best when He calls. This week I will fast one meal and spend that time ministering to the Lord, not asking Him for anything.

Sin to confess — making crooked the straight ways of the Lord. Elymas tried to keep a seeking man from the faith (v8). I have done smaller versions of that: a cynical word to a new believer, a bad example in front of a man watching me, a habit that gives someone an excuse. I name it and ask God to make me a straight path for others, not a crooked one.

Truth to face — quitting is not the end. John Mark went home at Perga (v13). Some of the men I serve have quit on everything — jobs, families, sobriety, God. So have I, in my own ways. Paul did not pretend it was fine (15:38), but years later Mark was "useful to me for service" (2 Tim 4:11). If I have quit, I can come back. If a brother has quit, I can go get him.

Promise to trust — freed from all things. "Through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses" (v39). I can't keep enough rules to be right with God. My record, my relapses, the things I did before Christ and since — through Him I am justified from all of it. Spurgeon: God "pardons them all; he makes a clean sweep of the whole." I will stop trying to pay off what Jesus already paid.

Command to obey — take heed, and keep going with joy. Paul's warning (vv40–41) is for me too: I can hear this so often that I stop marveling. And when doors close, I am to shake off the dust and go on (v51), filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit (v52) — not bitter, not quitting.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. The call came while the leaders were worshiping and fasting, not while they were planning (13:2). What would it look like for me to put ministering to the Lord ahead of my plans this week? (13:1–3) *This is the first job of any servant of God (Guzik).*
2. Elymas tried to keep a seeking man from the faith. Who in my life is standing between someone and Jesus — and could it ever be me? (13:6–12) *Satan is in a special manner busy with great men (Henry).*
3. John Mark quit at Perga, and Paul later called him "useful." Where have I quit, and what would it take to get back in the work? (13:13; 15:37–39; 2 Tim 4:11) *It was his fault, and we shall hear of it again (Henry).*
4. Paul told the gospel as history — what God did. If I had three minutes, how would I tell what God has done in history and in my life? (13:23–33) *The gospel is a proclamation of what happened (Sproul).*
5. Paul says believers are freed "from all things" the Law could not free them from. What am I still trying to fix by my own law-keeping instead of trusting Christ? (13:38–39; Rom 5:1) *We can never justify ourselves before God (Guzik).*
6. Some heard and were jealous; others heard and rejoiced. What does my response to God's word this week look like — and where do I find joy when things go hard? (13:44–52) *Joy that contradicted their circumstances (Guzik).*

Worship. The Holy Spirit calls and sends; the hand of the Lord blinds the deceiver and opens a governor's heart; the God who chose the fathers kept His promise to David and raised Jesus from the dead, so that His Holy One never saw decay. Through Him forgiveness is proclaimed, and everyone who believes is freed from all things. He makes His Servant a light for the Gentiles, to the end of the earth — and that light reached me.

Prayer. Holy Spirit, set me apart for the work You have called me to, and keep me ministering to You before I start planning for You. Make me a straight path, not a crooked one. If I have quit like Mark, bring me back and make me useful. Thank You, Lord Jesus, that through You I am forgiven and freed from all things I could never fix by keeping rules. When doors close, let me shake off the dust and keep going, filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 14

A Door of Faith Through Many Tribulations — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

The gospel splits cities, heals the lame, gets mistaken for a new religion, and gets a man stoned — and the man gets up and goes back. The kingdom is entered by a door of faith that God opens, and the road to it runs through many tribulations, so new believers need to be strengthened, warned, shepherded and handed to the Lord.

00 The Text

ACTS 14 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 In Iconium they entered the synagogue of the Jews
together, and spoke in such a manner that a large
number of people believed, both of Jews and of Greeks.

2 But the Jews who disbelieved stirred up the minds of
the Gentiles and embittered them against the
brethren.

3 Therefore they spent a long time there speaking
boldly with reliance upon the Lord, who was testifying
to the word of His grace, granting that signs and
wonders be done by their hands.

4 But the people of the city were divided; and some
sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles.

5 And when an attempt was made by both the Gentiles
and the Jews with their rulers, to mistreat and to stone
them,

6 they became aware of it and fled to the cities of
Lycaonia, Lystra and Derbe, and the surrounding region;

7 and there they continued to preach the gospel.

8 At Lystra a man was sitting who had no strength in his
feet, lame from his mother's womb, who had never
walked.

9 This man was listening to Paul as he spoke, who, when
he had fixed his gaze on him and had seen that he had
faith to be made well,

10 said with a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet."
And he leaped up and began to walk.

11 When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they raised
their voice, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The
gods have become like men and have come down to us."

12 And they began calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul,
Hermes, because he was the chief speaker.

13 The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the
city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and wanted
to offer sacrifice with the crowds.

14 But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it,
they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd,
crying out

15 and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things?
We are also men of the same nature as you, and
preach the gospel to you that you should turn from
these vain things to a living God, WHO MADE THE

HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM.

16 “In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways;

17 and yet △ He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and △ gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.”

18 Even saying these things, with difficulty they restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them.

19 But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having won over the crowds, ⚠ they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing him to be dead.

20 But while the disciples stood around him, ◷ he got up and entered the city. The next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe.

21 After they had preached the ⟲ gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch,

22 ▤ strengthening the souls of the disciples, ▤ encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, “☆ Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”

23 When they had ▤ appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they △ commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

24 They passed through Pisidia and came into Pamphylia.

25 When they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia.

26 From there they sailed to Antioch, from which they had been △ commended to the grace of God for the work that they had accomplished.

27 When they had arrived and gathered the church together, they began to report △ all things that God had done with them and how △ He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.

28 And they spent a long time with the disciples.

Marked in the text

- **v1** “a large number of people believed, both of Jews and of Greeks” — Promise / blessing
- **v2** “embittered them against the brethren” — Sin / warning
- **v3** “speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord” — Command / instruction
- **v3** “the word of His grace” — God — His character & actions
- **v4** “the people of the city were divided” — Time / place / contrast
- **v8** “lame from his mother’s womb, who had never walked” — Time / place / contrast
- **v9** “he had faith to be made well” — Promise / blessing
- **v10** “Stand upright on your feet” — Command / instruction
- **v10** “he leaped up and began to walk” — Promise / blessing
- **v11** “The gods have become like men and have come down to us” — Sin / warning
- **v14** “they tore their robes” — Time / place / contrast
- **v15** “We are also men of the same nature as you” — Time / place / contrast
- **v15** “turn from these vain things to a living God” — Command / instruction
- **v17** “He did not leave Himself without witness” — God — His character & actions
- **v17** “gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons” — God — His character & actions
- **v19** “they stoned Paul” — Sin / warning
- **v20** “he got up and entered the city” — Time / place / contrast
- **v22** “strengthening the souls of the disciples” — Command / instruction
- **v22** “encouraging them to continue in the faith” — Command / instruction
- **v22** “Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God” — Promise / blessing
- **v23** “appointed elders for them in every church” — Command / instruction
- **v23** “commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed” — God — His character & actions
- **v26** “commended to the grace of God” — God — His character & actions
- **v27** “all things that God had done with them” — God — His character & actions
- **v27** “He had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles” — God — His character & actions
- **v7** “gospel” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v11** “crowd” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

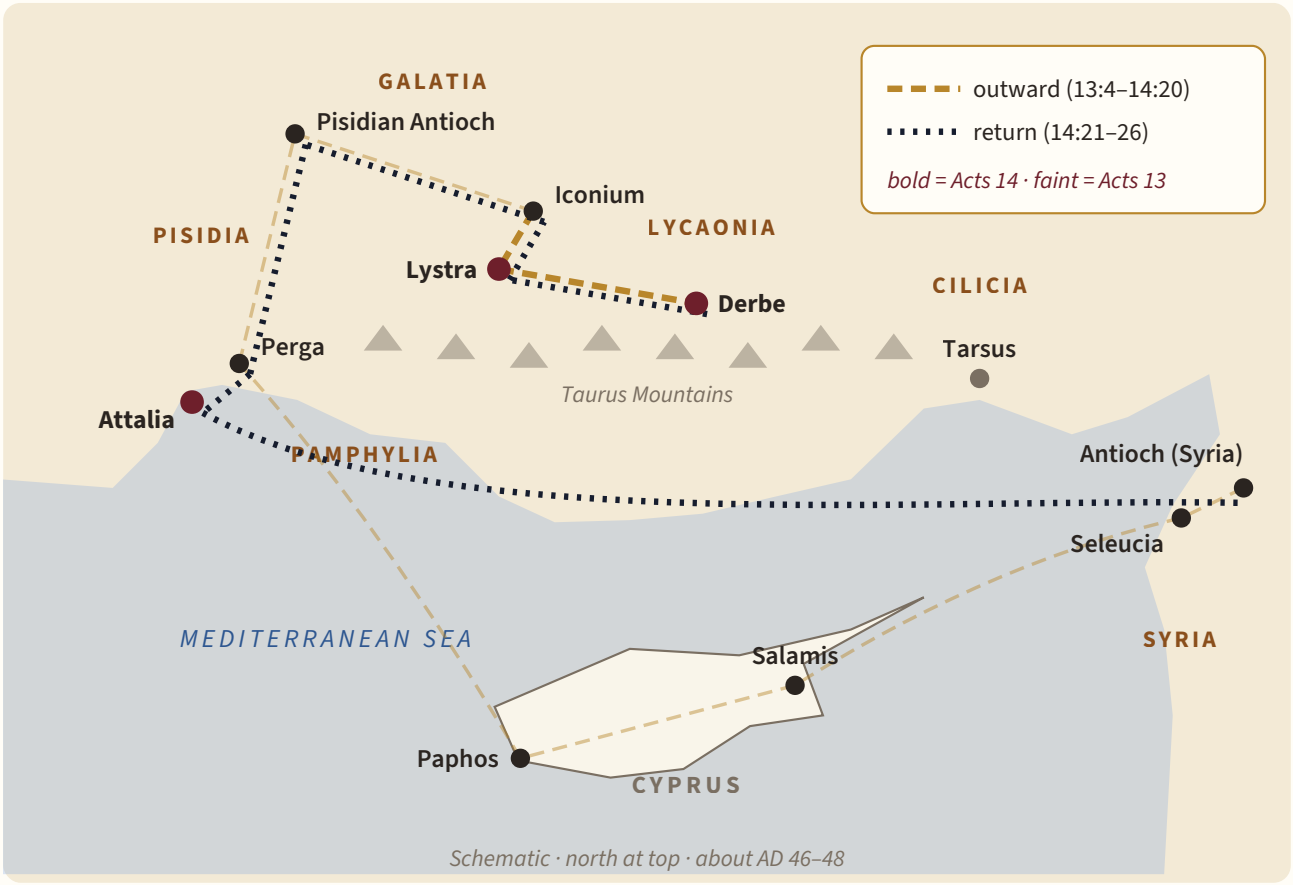
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 14:3

"Therefore they spent a long time there speaking boldly with reliance upon the Lord, who was testifying to the word of His grace, granting that signs and wonders be done by their hands."

FIGURE · THE FIRST MISSIONARY JOURNEY



Acts 14 is the bold part: on from Iconium to Lystra and Derbe, then the dark line back through the same cities to Perga, Attalia and home to Antioch in Syria.

Setting. Iconium, after Paul and Barnabas were driven out of Pisidian Antioch (13:51). From there they flee to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia (v6). At Lystra a man lame from birth is healed and the crowd tries to sacrifice to them as Zeus and Hermes (vv8–18); Jews from Antioch and Iconium turn the crowd and Paul is stoned (v19). After Derbe they retrace their steps through Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, appoint elders, and sail home from Attalia to Antioch in Syria (vv21–28).

Structure:

- vv1–7 — **a divided city:** the synagogue at Iconium; a large number believe, Jews and Greeks (v1); the disbelieving Jews embitter the Gentiles (v2); a long time, speaking boldly; signs and wonders confirm the word of His grace (v3); the city divided (v4); a plan to stone them; they flee to Lystra and Derbe and keep preaching (vv5–7).
- vv8–10 — **the lame man:** lame from his mother's womb (v8); he listens; Paul fixes his gaze and sees faith to be made well (v9); "Stand upright on your feet" — he leaps and walks (v10).
- vv11–18 — **Zeus and Hermes:** "The gods have become like men" (v11); Barnabas called Zeus, Paul Hermes (v12); the priest of Zeus with oxen and garlands (v13); they tear their robes and rush in (v14); "We are also men" — turn to a living God who made all things (v15); He let the nations go their own ways, yet left a witness — rain, seasons, food and gladness (vv16–17); barely restrained (v18).
- vv19–23 — **many tribulations:** Jews from Antioch and Iconium win the crowds; Paul stoned and dragged out, thought dead (v19); he gets up and enters the city; Derbe (v20); many disciples made; back to Lystra, Iconium, Antioch (v21); strengthening, encouraging, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (v22); elders appointed, prayer and fasting, commended to the Lord (v23).
- vv24–28 — **the door of faith:** Pisidia, Pamphylia, Perga, Attalia (vv24–25); sailing to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God (v26); the church gathered; all that God had done; a door of faith to the Gentiles (v27); a long time with the disciples (v28).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "Jews" ×6 — vv1 (×2), 2, 4, 5, 19; "Gentiles" ×3 — vv2, 5, 27.
- "city" ×5 — vv4, 13, 19, 20, 21; "crowd(s)" ×5 — vv11, 13, 14, 18, 19.
- "spoke / speaking / speaker / spoken" ×5 — vv1, 3, 9, 12, 25.
- "Paul" ×5 — vv9, 11, 12, 14, 19; "Barnabas" ×3 — vv12, 14, 20.
- "God" ×4 — vv15, 22, 26, 27 (plus "gods" in v11); "Lord" ×2 — vv3, 23.
- "disciples" ×4 — vv20, 21, 22, 28.
- "gospel" ×3 — vv7, 15, 21; "faith" ×3 — vv9, 22, 27; "believed" ×2 — vv1, 23.
- "Lystra" ×3 — vv6, 8, 21; "Iconium" ×3 — vv1, 19, 21; "Antioch" ×3 — vv19, 21, 26; "Derbe" ×2 — vv6, 20.
- "done" ×3 — vv3, 11, 27; "grace" ×2 — vv3, 26; "word" ×2 — vv3, 25.
- "stone(d)" ×2 — vv5, 19; "sacrifice" ×2 — vv13, 18; "Zeus" ×2 — vv12, 13; "men" ×2 — vv11, 15; "long time" ×2 — vv3, 28; "church" ×2 — vv23, 27.

Contrasts: Believed ⟷ disbelieved (vv1–2). Sided with the Jews ⟷ sided with the apostles (v4). Never walked ⟷ leaped up (vv8, 10). Gods come down ⟷ men of the same nature (vv11, 15). Vain things ⟷ a living God (v15). Their own ways ⟷ not without witness (vv16–17). Sacrifice to them ⟷ stones for them (vv18–19). Supposed dead ⟷ got up (vv19–20). Many tribulations ⟷ the kingdom of God (v22). What they did ⟷ what God had done (vv26–27).

Shape of the chapter: two cities of preaching and opposition (1–7, 8–20), with a healing and a short sermon to pagans at the centre, then the road home taken slowly (21–28). The first half is outward advance; the second half is shepherding what was planted. It ends where 13:1–3 began — in Antioch with the church that sent them.

Chapter theme (my words): The gospel goes forward through bold preaching, real miracles and real suffering. Crowds swing from worship to stones, but God never leaves Himself without witness, and He keeps the door of faith open. Those who walk through it need to be told the truth: the road into the kingdom runs through many tribulations — and they need elders and the Lord to keep them.

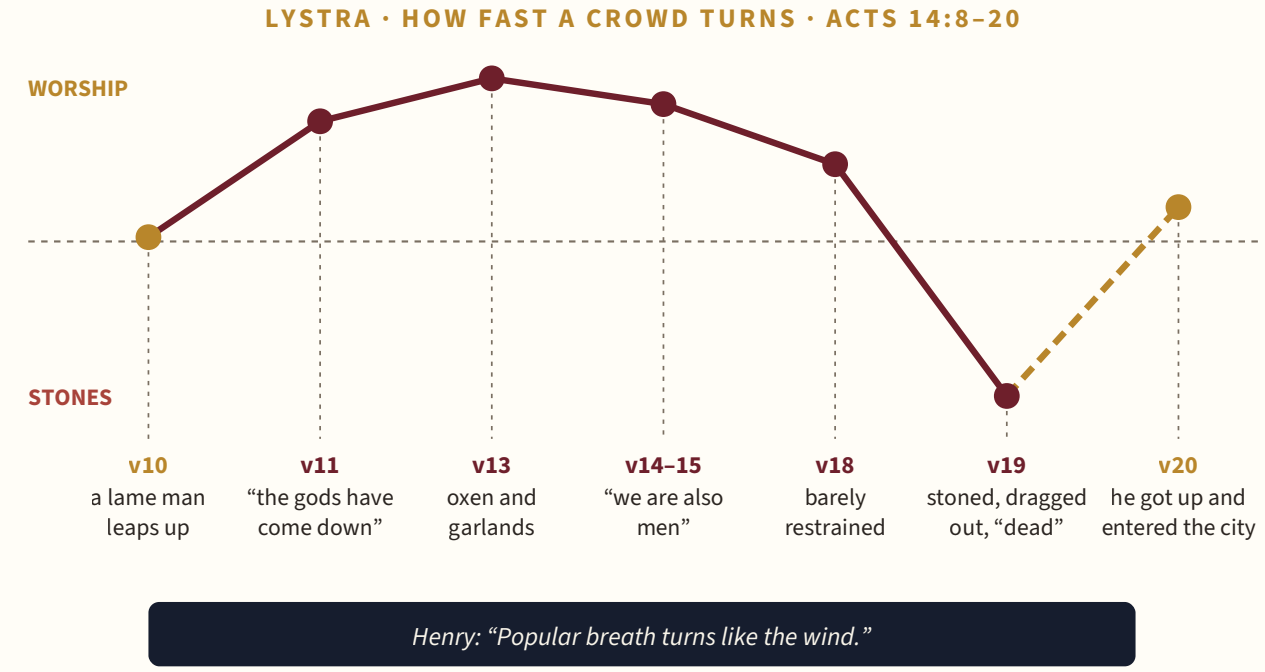
02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 14:17

"and yet △He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and △gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."

FIGURE · HOW FAST A CROWD TURNS



Follow the line from left to right: the same crowd that tried to sacrifice to Paul stoned him a few verses later — and then he got up.

Why did they flee Iconium — isn't that cowardice? No. They stayed "a long time" under opposition (v3), and left only when a plot to stone them came out (vv5–6). Guzik: "They stayed as long as they could … leaving only when it was absolutely necessary." Henry: they "quit the spot," not "the work" — and verse 7 proves it. Jesus told the Twelve the same (Matt 10:16, 23).

What are the "signs and wonders" for? The Lord was "testifying to the word of His grace" (v3). The signs were God's signature on the message, not the message itself. Henry: "The gospel is a word of grace, the assurance of God's good will to us." Guzik on Lystra: "The miracle itself saved no one."

What faith did the lame man have? "Faith to be made well" — literally "to be saved" (*sōzō*). He had been listening to Paul's gospel (v9). Guzik finds the proof in obedience: he stood when told to stand. Spurgeon applies it to every sinner who hears: "Sinner, stand upright on thy feet." Luke clearly sets this beside Peter's healing in Acts 3: the same Lord works through Paul among Gentiles.

Why did the crowd call them Zeus and Hermes? A local legend of the two gods visiting the region in disguise, told by Guzik. They had missed their gods once; they would not again. Paul was Hermes because he was "the chief speaker" (v12) — Henry: Mercury, "the messenger of the gods." The apostles' torn robes were horror at blasphemy: "more concerned for God's honour than their own" (Henry).

What did Paul preach to pagans who had no Bible? He started with the Creator (v15, echoing Exod 20:11 and Ps 146:6), God's patience with the nations (v16), and His kindness in rain and harvest (v17). This is what we call general revelation: creation and providence tell every man there is a good God (compare Rom 1:20). Henry: "The bounties of common providence witness to us that there is a God." It is not enough to save — the same speech had to call them to "turn … to a living God" — but it is enough to leave men without excuse. Paul uses the same approach at Athens (17:22–31).

Was Paul dead at Lystra? Luke says the crowd was "supposing him to be dead" (v19), not that he died. Henry: "Though he was not dead, yet he was ill crushed and bruised." Guzik: "Paul was miraculously preserved here," and notes the suggestion (not certain) that 2 Corinthians 12's vision belongs here. Paul later lists "once I was stoned" among his sufferings (2 Cor 11:25).

Is "many tribulations" the Great Tribulation? No. *Thlipsis* here is plural and general — the ordinary pressures of following Christ in a hostile world (John 16:33; 2 Tim 3:12). I hold that the church will be kept from the future seven-year Tribulation (1 Thess 1:10; Rev 3:10), but that is a different subject. Every believer, in every age, walks into the kingdom through troubles. Spurgeon: "Good men must never expect to escape troubles."

Who appointed the elders? Paul and Barnabas are the subject of "appointed" (*cheirotoneō*, originally "to vote by raising the hand"), and readers differ on how much the congregations took part. What is clear: every church got leaders, quickly, with prayer and fasting, and was "commended … to the Lord" (v23). Henry: "It is requisite that every particular church should have one or more such to preside in it."

What is the "door of faith"? God opened it (v27), and the way in is faith — Gentiles coming into God's people by believing in Jesus. Henry: "There is no entering into the kingdom of Christ but by the door of faith." That raises the question of Acts 15: must Gentile believers also be circumcised and keep the Law? The Jerusalem council answers no.

Word study (Greek):

- **speaking boldly — *parrēsiazomai* (G3955):** to speak freely and plainly (v3; 9:27–28; 13:46).
- **divided — *schizō* (G4977):** split, torn; NASB "divided" only here and 23:7.
- **made well — *sōzō* (G4982):** save, heal, rescue (v9).
- **leaped — *hallomai* (G242):** only John 4:14; Acts 3:8; 14:10.
- **same nature — *homoiopathēs* (G3663):** of like feelings and weakness; also James 5:17.
- **vain things — *mataios* (G3152):** empty, useless (v15).
- **without witness — *amartyros* (G267):** only here (v17).
- **tribulations — *thlipsis* (G2347):** pressure, affliction; "we must" — *dei* (G1163).
- **appointed — *cheirotoneō* (G5500):** to choose by show of hands; also 2 Cor 8:19.
- **elders — *presbyteros* (G4245); commended — *paratithēmi* (G3908):** entrusted for safekeeping.
- **door — *thyra* (G2374):** 1 Cor 16:9; 2 Cor 2:12; Col 4:3.

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **Fleeing is not quitting** (vv5–7; Henry).
2. **The Lord confirms the word of His grace** (v3).
3. **The gospel divides** — *schizō* (v4).
4. **Faith stands up on legs that never held weight** (v10; Guzik, Spurgeon).
5. **Peter's miracle, Paul's miracle** (3:8; 14:10).
6. **A miracle saves no one by itself** (Guzik).
7. **God has never left Himself without witness** (v17; Henry).
8. **Crowds turn; God does not** (vv13, 19).
9. **Tribulation is the road, not a detour** (v22; Spurgeon).
10. **God opened the door** (v27; Henry).

Cross-references: Exod 20:11; Ps 146:6; Matt 10:16, 23; John 4:14; 16:33; Acts 3:1–10; 7:58; 9:27–28; 13:46–52; 15:1–21; 16:1–2; 17:22–31; Rom 1:20; 8:17–18; 1 Cor 16:9; 2 Cor 2:12; 8:19; 11:25; 12:1–4; Gal 4:13–14; Col 4:3; 1 Thess 1:10; 2 Tim 2:2; 3:11–12; James 5:17; 1 Pet 4:12–13; Rev 3:10.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 14:22

"strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.""

FIGURE · BACK THE SAME ROAD

BACK THE SAME ROAD · WHAT THEY DID FOR THE NEW CHURCHES · 14:21–23

PREACHED v21	RETURNED v21	STRENGTHENED v22
the gospel in Derbe; made many disciples	to Lystra, Iconium, Antioch — the hard places	the souls of the disciples
ENCOURAGED v22	**TOLD THE TRUTH v22**	**ELDERS v23**
them to continue in the faith	"Through many tribulations we must enter …"	prayed with fasting; commended them to the Lord

They walked back into the cities that had stoned and expelled them — because new believers needed shepherds.

Read the six boxes in order: on the way home Paul and Barnabas did everything a young church needs — and none of it was easy or safe.

Example to follow — Paul and Barnabas going back. After Paul was stoned in Lystra, they went on to Derbe — and then turned around and walked back through Lystra, Iconium and Antioch (v21), the very cities that had plotted against them, because new believers needed strengthening. The men I serve in recovery and in prison ministry need the same: not one visit, but someone who comes back. This week I will go back to a man I have not followed up with.

Sin to confess — worshiping the messenger. The crowd wanted to sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas (v13). I have put men in God's place — a pastor, a sponsor, a strong brother — and I have liked it when men looked up to me more than they should. Paul and Barnabas tore their robes over it. I confess both, and I want to say with them, "We are also men of the same nature as you."

Truth to face — the road runs through tribulations. "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (v22). I have sometimes taken trouble as proof that God left me, or told new believers that following Jesus

would make life smooth. It won't. Spurgeon: "Good men must never expect to escape troubles." But Paul got up after the stones (v20), and the Lord rescued him out of them all (2 Tim 3:11).

Command to obey — strengthen, encourage, appoint, commend. Verses 22–23 are my job description with the men God gives me: strengthen their souls, encourage them to keep going in the faith, tell them the truth about hard times, help them find faithful leaders, pray (with fasting), and then hand them to the Lord "in whom they had believed." I cannot hold them up; He can.

Promise to trust — God has not left Himself without witness. Even with men who have never opened a Bible, God has been speaking — rain, food, a little gladness in a hard week (v17). He is already at work before I get there. And He is the One who opens the door of faith (v27).

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. They left Iconium when it became dangerous, but kept preaching in the next town (14:5–7). Where do I need wisdom to know the difference between running away and moving on in obedience? (14:5–7; Matt 10:16) *Quit the spot, but not the work (Henry).*
2. The lame man was listening, and Paul saw that he had faith (14:9). What would it look like for me to listen to God's word like that man listened to Paul? (14:8–10) *His ready obedience proved his faith (Guzik).*
3. The crowd wanted to worship the messengers (14:11–13). Where am I tempted to put a person — a pastor, a sponsor, a hero — in God's place, or to want that place for myself? (14:11–15) *More concerned for God's honour than their own (Henry).*
4. Paul says God "did not leave Himself without witness" — rain, food, gladness (14:17). Where have I seen God's kindness this week that I have not thanked Him for? (14:15–17; Ps 146:6) *The bounties of common providence witness to us that there is a God (Henry).*
5. Paul was stoned, got up, and walked back into the city (14:19–20), then went back to the towns that had hurt him (14:21). What hard place is God sending me back into? (14:19–22; 2 Tim 3:11) *Paul could preach that message because he had lived it (Guzik).*
6. "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (14:22). How does it change my troubles to see them as part of the road, not proof that God has left me? (14:22; Rom 8:17–18; 1 Pet 4:12–13) *Chosen in the furnace of affliction (Spurgeon).*

Worship. The living God made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them; He has never left Himself without witness; He gives rain and harvest and fills hearts with food and gladness. He confirms the word of His grace, makes the lame leap, raises up a stoned man to walk back into the city, keeps the churches He plants, and opens a door of faith to the nations.

Prayer. Living God, thank You for Your kindness I take for granted — rain, food, gladness. Keep me from worshiping men or wanting to be worshiped. Give me the boldness to speak with reliance on You, and the faith of that lame man to stand up when You say stand. When the stones come, help me get up and go back. Make me a man who strengthens other men, tells them the truth about the road, and hands them over to You in prayer. Thank You for opening the door of faith to me. Amen.

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SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 15

Saved Through Grace, Just Like Them — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

A man is saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus — not grace plus circumcision, not grace plus my rule-keeping — and Jew and Gentile are saved the same way. That grace then teaches very different men to give up small freedoms for one another, and even when good men fall out, God keeps His work moving.

00 The Text

ACTS 15 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren,
"Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved."

2 And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.

3 Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren.

4 When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them.

5 But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses."

6 The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter.

7 After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe.

8 "And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us;

9 and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith.

10 "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear?

11 "But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."

12 All the people kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

13 After they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me.

14 “Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name.

15 “With this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written,

16 ‘AFTER THESE THINGS I will return, AND I WILL REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID WHICH HAS FALLEN, AND I WILL REBUILD ITS RUINS, AND I WILL RESTORE IT,

17 SO THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD, AND ALL THE GENTILES WHO ARE CALLED BY MY NAME,’

18 SAYS THE LORD, WHO MAKES THESE THINGS KNOWN FROM LONG AGO.

19 “Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles,

20 but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood.

21 “For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath.”

22 Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas—Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren,

23 and they sent this letter by them, “The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings.

24 “Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with their words, unsettling your souls,

25 it seemed good to us, having become of one mind, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,

26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

27 “Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will also report the same things by word of mouth.

28 “For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials:

29 that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell.”

30 So when they were sent away, they went down to Antioch; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter.

31 When they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement.

32 Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message.

33 After they had spent time there, they were sent away from the brethren in peace to those who had sent them out.

34 [But it seemed good to Silas to remain there.]

35 But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching with many others also, the word of the Lord.

36 After some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.”

37 Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also.

38 But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work.

39 And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus.

40 But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord.

41 And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Marked in the text

- **v1** "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved" — Sin / warning
- **v2** "great dissension and debate" — Time / place / contrast
- **v3** "bringing great joy to all the brethren" — Promise / blessing
- **v4** "all that God had done with them" — God — His character & actions
- **v5** "It is necessary to circumcise them" — Sin / warning
- **v8** "God, who knows the heart" — God — His character & actions
- **v8** "giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us" — God — His character & actions
- **v9** "He made no distinction between us and them" — God — His character & actions
- **v9** "cleansing their hearts by faith" — Promise / blessing
- **v10** "a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear" — Sin / warning
- **v11** "we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus" — Promise / blessing
- **v14** "taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name" — God — His character & actions
- **v16** "AFTER THESE THINGS" — Time / place / contrast
- **v16** "I WILL REBUILD THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID WHICH HAS FALLEN" — Promise / blessing
- **v17** "SO THAT THE REST OF MANKIND MAY SEEK THE LORD" — Promise / blessing
- **v19** "we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles" — Command / instruction
- **v20** "abstain from things contaminated by idols" — Command / instruction
- **v26** "men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" — Time / place / contrast
- **v28** "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" — God — His character & actions
- **v28** "no greater burden than these essentials" — Command / instruction
- **v31** "they rejoiced because of its encouragement" — Promise / blessing
- **v38** "who had deserted them in Pamphylia" — Sin / warning
- **v39** "such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another" — Sin / warning
- **v40** "committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord" — Promise / blessing
- **v41** "strengthening the churches" — Command / instruction
- **v1** "brethren" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v3** "Gentiles" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v22** "seemed good" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

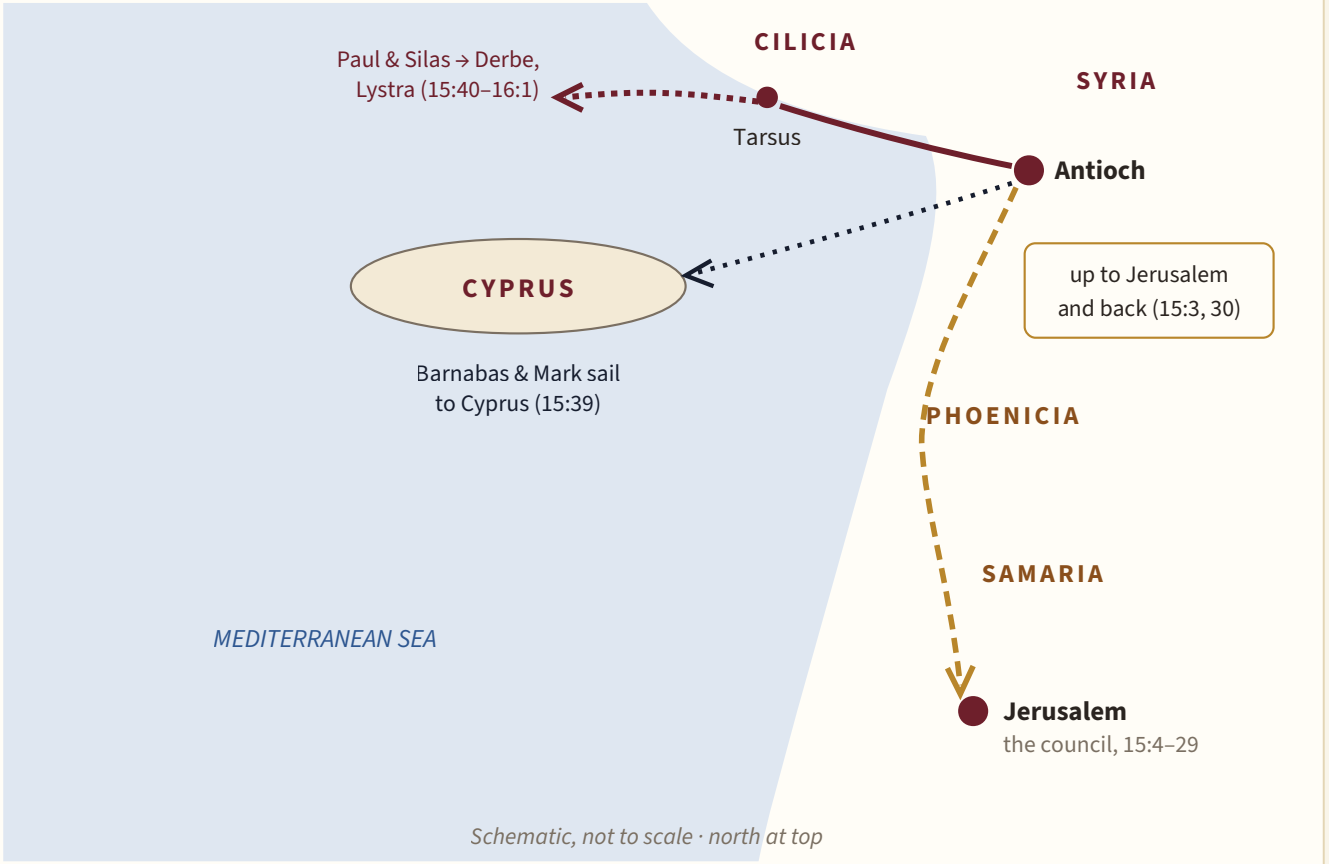
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 15:1

"Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "⚠Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.""

FIGURE · ANTIOCH, JERUSALEM AND THE PARTING



Follow the gold road down from Antioch through Phoenicia and Samaria to the council and back; then see the one team become two — Barnabas and Mark to Cyprus, Paul and Silas overland through Cilicia.

Setting. Antioch of Syria, after Paul and Barnabas's first missionary journey (14:26–28). Men from Judea teach that Gentile believers must be circumcised to be saved (v1). Paul and Barnabas are sent up to Jerusalem through Phoenicia and Samaria (vv2–3). The apostles and elders meet (vv4–29); a letter goes back to Antioch with Judas and Silas (vv22–35). Later Paul and Barnabas part: Barnabas and Mark sail to Cyprus, Paul and Silas go through Syria and Cilicia (vv36–41).

Structure:

- vv1–5 — **the question:** "Unless you are circumcised … you cannot be saved" (v1); great dissension and debate (v2); joy in Phoenicia and Samaria over the conversion of the Gentiles (v3); report in Jerusalem (v4); believing Pharisees: "It is necessary to circumcise them" (v5).
- vv6–11 — **Peter:** much debate (vv6–7); God chose Peter's mouth for the Gentiles (v7); God who knows the heart gave them the Spirit (v8); no distinction, hearts cleansed by faith (v9); why test God with a yoke? (v10); saved through grace, the same way (v11).
- vv12–21 — **Barnabas, Paul and James:** silence, and the report of signs and wonders (v12); "Brethren, listen to me" (v13); a people for His name from the Gentiles (v14); the Prophets agree — Amos 9 (vv15–18); "do not trouble" the Gentiles; four abstentions (vv19–20); Moses read every Sabbath (v21).
- vv22–35 — **the letter:** Judas and Silas chosen (v22); the letter: no instruction given to the troublers (vv23–24); one mind; men who risked their lives (vv25–27); "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" — no greater burden (vv28–29); joy at the encouragement; Judas and Silas strengthen the brethren (vv30–33); teaching in Antioch (vv34–35).
- vv36–41 — **the parting:** "Let us return and visit the brethren" (v36); Barnabas wants Mark, Paul refuses (vv37–38); a sharp disagreement, two teams (vv39–40); Paul strengthening the churches (v41).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "brethren" ×10 — vv1, 2, 3, 22, 23 (×2), 32, 33, 36, 40.
- "Paul" ×9 and "Barnabas" ×9 — vv2 (×2), 12, 22, 25, 35, 36, plus 38, 40 (Paul) and 37, 39 (Barnabas).
- "send / sent" ×8 — vv3, 22, 23, 25, 27, 30, 33 (×2).
- "God" ×7 — vv4, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14, 19.
- "Gentiles" ×6 — vv3, 7, 12, 14, 19, 23.
- "apostles" ×5 and "elders" ×5 — vv2, 4, 6, 22, 23.
- "Lord" ×5 — vv11, 26, 35, 36, 40; "Silas" ×5 — vv22, 27, 32, 34, 40.
- "seemed good" ×4 — vv22, 25, 28, 34; "church(es)" ×4 — vv3, 4, 22, 41; "Antioch" ×4 — vv22, 23, 30, 35.
- "dissension / debate / disagreement" ×4 — vv2 (×2), 7, 39.
- "encouragement / encouraged / strengthened / strengthening" ×4 — vv31, 32 (×2), 41.
- "word" ×4 — vv7, 27, 35, 36; "believe(d)" ×3 — vv5, 7, 11; "Moses" ×3 — vv1, 5, 21.
- "saved" ×2 — vv1, 11 (the question and the answer); "grace" ×2 — vv11, 40; "heart(s)" ×2 — vv8, 9; "Holy Spirit" ×2 — vv8, 28; "circumcised / circumcise" ×2 — vv1, 5.

Contrasts: "Unless you are circumcised … you cannot be saved" (v1) ⟷ "we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus" (v11). "It is necessary" (v5) ⟷ "these essentials" (v28). A yoke no one could bear (v10) ⟷ no greater burden (v28). Us ⟷ them — and "no distinction" (v9). Men "to whom we gave no instruction" (v24) ⟷ men "who have risked their lives" (v26). Great dissension (v2) ⟷ "of one mind" (v25) ⟷ a sharp disagreement (v39). One team (v35) ⟷ two teams (vv39–40).

Shape of the chapter: a problem in Antioch (1–5), a hearing in Jerusalem with three speakers (6–21), a letter carried back to Antioch (22–35), and a parting at Antioch (36–41). It begins and ends with a sharp argument — the first about the gospel, the second about a man.

Chapter theme (my words): God saves Jews and Gentiles the same way — through the grace of the Lord Jesus, by faith — and the church must not add a yoke He did not lay. Grace then asks the free to love the weak, and even the quarrels of good men cannot stop the word of the Lord.

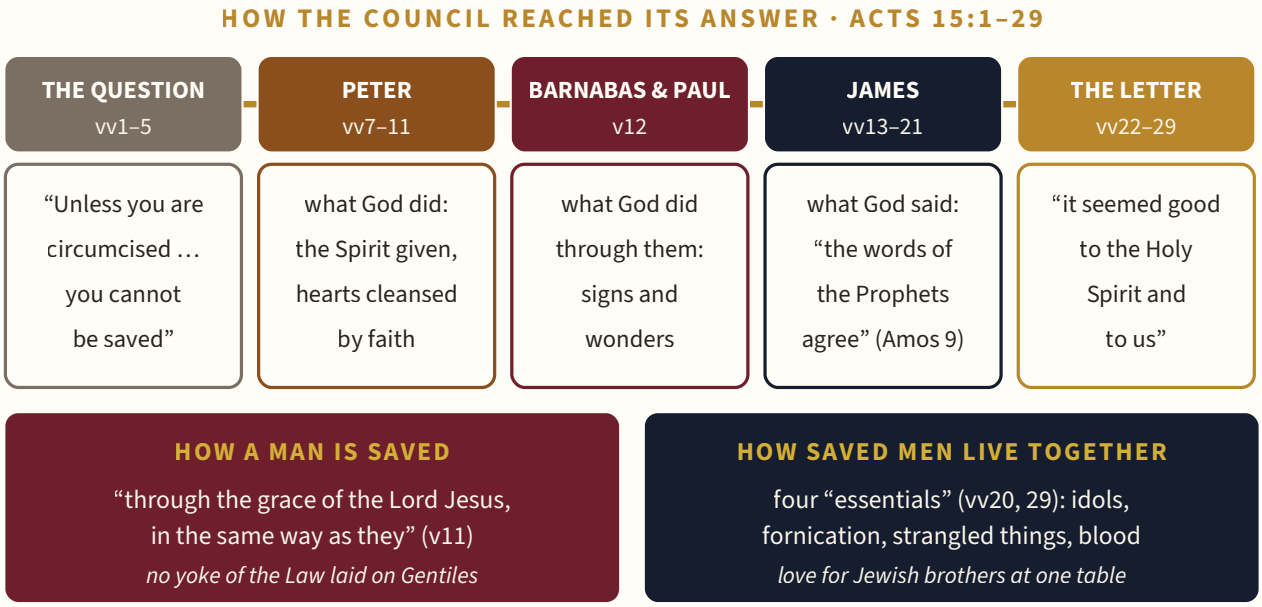
02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 15:9

"and △ He made no distinction between us and them, ☆ cleansing their hearts by faith."

FIGURE · HOW THE COUNCIL DECIDED



Read left to right: a question, two reports of what God had done, and the Scripture that agrees with it — then notice the two separate answers, one about salvation and one about fellowship.

Was this really about salvation? Yes. Verse 1 states it plainly: "you cannot be saved." Guzik: "This was not a side issue; it had to do with salvation itself." Sproul's sermon on these verses, as Ligonier summarizes it, treats the Judaizers as the first of many who would "add or take away from the truth that we are justified by faith alone in Christ alone." Henry calls it enforcing "their own inventions under pain of damnation."

What did Peter mean by "in the same way as they" (v11)? A Jew would expect to say Gentiles are saved like Jews. Peter says the opposite — we Jews are saved the way the Gentiles are, by grace (Guzik, with Boice). Henry: "There is not one way of salvation for the Jews and another for the Gentiles." Spurgeon: "Faith alone did it."

What is the "yoke" (v10)? The Law of Moses taken as the condition of acceptance with God. Peter says Israel never carried it (Guzik; Henry: "a heavy yoke"). This is not contempt for the Law — Moses is still read every Sabbath (v21) — but a refusal to make it the ladder to God (Galatians 5:1).

How should I read James's use of Amos (vv16–18)? Guzik and Henry read the rebuilt "tabernacle of David" as the church of Jew and Gentile; Henry: "The church of Christ may be called the tabernacle of David." I read it a little

differently, and I want to be fair about that. James says the prophets "agree" with Gentile salvation (v15) — he does not say Amos is finished. "After these things I will return" fits the order Paul gives in Romans 11:25–26: first the Gentiles are gathered as "a people for His name" (v14), then the Lord restores David's house for Israel. Either way, all agree on James's point: Gentiles coming to God as Gentiles is what the prophets expected.

Why the four abstentions (v20, 29)? Not to earn salvation — that was already settled in v11. Guzik and Stott tie them to the laws for foreigners living among Israel (Leviticus 17–18): idols, sexual immorality, strangled meat and blood. They let Jewish and Gentile believers eat together. Guzik calls it "The Law of Love." Henry: "meet them halfway." Fornication is not just a cultural courtesy; it is sin everywhere in the New Testament (1 Thessalonians 4:3).

What does "it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us" mean (v28)? The church prayed, listened to what God had done, tested it by Scripture and came to "one mind" (v25). Guzik, with Pierson, notes the Spirit treated as a fellow-counselor. The Spirit is named first.

Who was right, Paul or Barnabas? Luke does not say (Guzik). Guzik: "probably both" had to make it right. Henry: "a fault on both sides" — kinship moved Barnabas; "perhaps Paul was too severe." The rest of the New Testament shows reconciliation: Mark is with Paul in Colossians 4:10 and "useful" in 2 Timothy 4:11.

Word study (Greek):

- **dissension — *stasis* (G4714):** a standing apart, commotion; with *zētēsis* (G2214), debate (v2).
- **conversion — *epistrophē* (G1995):** a turning around; only here in the NT (v3).
- **cleansing — *katharizō* (G2511):** to purify (v9; cf. 10:15).
- **yoke — *zygos* (G2218):** the Law's bar (v10); Christ's (Matt 11:30); slavery (Gal 5:1).
- **grace — *charis* (G5485); saved — *sōzō* (G4982):** v11.
- **concerned Himself — *episkeptomai* (G1980):** to visit (v14; Luke 1:68); **people — *laos* (G2992).**
- **tabernacle — *skēnē* (G4633):** David's fallen booth (v16; Amos 9:11).
- **it seemed good — *dokeō* (G1380):** vv22, 25, 28.
- **burden — *baros* (G922); essentials — *epanankes* (G1876):** v28.
- **encouragement — *paraklēsis* (G3874):** v31.
- **deserted — *aphistēmi* (G868):** withdrew (v38).
- **sharp disagreement — *paroxysmos* (G3948):** v39; Heb 10:24.
- **strengthening — *epistērizō* (G1991):** vv32, 41; 14:22; 18:23.

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **Some questions are worth a fight** — salvation itself (Guzik).
2. **Saved Pharisees can still think like Pharisees** (v5; Henry).
3. **God has already shown His hand** — the Spirit given, no distinction (vv8–9).
4. **Jews are saved like Gentiles** (v11).
5. **The question is whose yoke** — the Law's, or Christ's (v10).
6. **Faith cleans the heart** — it changes what I love (Spurgeon).
7. **Experience must be tested by Scripture** (v15).
8. **Necessary is smaller than we think** — essentials for fellowship, not salvation (v28).
9. **Good men can disagree badly** — a fault on both sides (Henry).

10. **A quitter can become useful** — Mark (2 Tim 4:11).

Cross-references: Gen 17:9–14; Lev 17:10–14; 18:6–30; Amos 9:11–12; Matt 11:28–30; Luke 1:68; Acts 10:15, 44–48; 11:1–18; 12:25; 13:13; 14:22, 26–28; Rom 3:28–30; 10:12; 11:25–26; 1 Cor 8:9; Gal 2:1–16; 3:28; 5:1; Eph 2:8–9; Col 4:10; 1 Thess 4:3; 2 Tim 4:11; Heb 10:24.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 15:19

"Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles,"

FIGURE · JOHN MARK'S STORY

JOHN MARK: FROM "DESERTED" TO "USEFUL"

Acts 12:25	Acts 13:13	Acts 15:37–39	Colossians 4:10	2 Timothy 4:11
Barnabas and Saul take Mark along	Mark leaves them returns to Jerusalem	sharp disagreement; Barnabas takes Mark	Mark is with Paul, "cousin of Barnabas"	"he is useful to me for service"

Luke does not say who was right (Guzik) · "a fault on both sides" (Henry)

Two teams went out instead of one — Barnabas to Cyprus, Paul and Silas overland — *and the young man who quit became, years later, a man Paul asked for by name.*

The quarrel of 15:39 is not the end of Mark's story; follow him forward to Paul's last letter, where the man who deserted is "useful."

Truth to hold — saved through grace, nothing added. I have watched men in recovery and in the facility try to earn their way back to God: ninety days clean, a better record, more chapel. Those are good things, but they are not the price of salvation. Peter says we are saved "through the grace of the Lord Jesus" (v11), the same way as anyone else. This week I will stop adding to Jesus in my own head, and I will tell one man plainly that God already accepts those who trust His Son.

Sin to confess — laying yokes on other men. I have been the man "from Judea" (v1). I have made my own habits — how I pray, what I don't do, how long I've been clean — into a test for whether another man is really saved. Peter calls that putting God to the test (v10). I confess it, and I will look for the brother I have been measuring and treat him as one whose heart God cleansed by faith (v9).

Command to obey — give up a freedom for a brother. The Gentiles kept their freedom from the Law, and still gave up some things for the sake of Jewish brothers (vv20, 29). There are freedoms I can lay down for a weaker brother — what I drink around a man fighting alcohol, what I joke about, what I watch with others (1 Cor 8:9). Love asks for that.

Example to follow — the council. They argued hard, listened in silence (v12), tested what God had done by what God had said (v15), and came to one mind (v25). When our group hits a hard question, I want us to do the same: tell what God has done, open the Book, pray, and wait for what seems good to the Holy Spirit.

Example to weigh — Paul, Barnabas and Mark. Two good men fell out over a young man who had quit. I have written men off like Paul did, and I have defended men out of loyalty like Barnabas. Mark became "useful" in the end (2 Tim 4:11). I will reach out this week to one man I gave up on, and to one man I fell out with.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. What do I add to Jesus — a habit, a rule, a performance — and quietly treat as necessary for being right with God? (15:1, 5; Gal 2:16) *Unless you are circumcised … you cannot be saved.*
2. Peter said God "made no distinction between us and them." Whom do I treat as a second-class believer because of his past or his background? (15:8–9; Rom 10:12) *God, who knows the heart, gave them the Spirit too.*
3. Where am I still carrying a yoke "which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear"? What would it mean to put it down and take Christ's? (15:10–11; Gal 5:1; Matt 11:29–30) *We refuse to be entangled again with the yoke of bondage (Spurgeon).*
4. The council tested experience by Scripture. When I make a big decision, how do I make sure the Word, not just my feelings, has the last say? (15:12–18) *With this the words of the Prophets agree.*
5. The Gentiles gave up some freedoms for the sake of Jewish brothers. What liberty might I need to lay down so that a weaker brother is not tripped up? (15:20, 28–29; 1 Cor 8:9) *Church-rulers should impose only necessary things (Henry).*
6. Is there a Paul–Barnabas split in my life — a broken partnership or a man I wrote off like Mark? What step toward peace can I take? (15:37–39; 2 Tim 4:11) *He is useful to me for service.*

Worship. The Lord Jesus saves by grace, the same way, for every man who believes. God knows the heart, gives His Spirit without favoritism, and cleanses hearts by faith. He made His plans known from long ago, He is gathering a people for His name from every nation, and He has not forgotten the fallen house of David.

Prayer. Lord Jesus, thank You that I am saved through Your grace and nothing I add. Forgive me for the yokes I have laid on other men and the ones I still try to carry myself. Cleanse my heart by faith, make me willing to give up my freedoms for a weaker brother, and give our group one mind under Your Word. Heal the splits I have caused, and make the men I gave up on useful for Your service. Amen.

Scripture: New American Standard Bible® (NASB), © 1960–1995 The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. · Teacher material summarized from David Guzik (Enduring Word), R.C. Sproul (Ligonier), C.H. Spurgeon and Matthew Henry — see Acts-15-Deep-Dive-Four-Voices.pdf for sources. · Importable: the companion .md carries the berean-study block.

SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 16

Come Over to Macedonia and Help Us — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

The Holy Spirit steers the gospel by closing doors and opening hearts, and He carries it into Europe through a merchant, a slave-girl and a jailer. Whoever I am and wherever I am locked up, the answer to "What must I do to be saved?" is the same: believe in the Lord Jesus.

00 The Text

ACTS 16 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions; Command / instruction; Key repeated word; Sin / warning; Promise / blessing; Time / place / contrast

1 Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek,

2 and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium.

3 Paul wanted this man to go with him; and he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in those parts, for they all knew that his father was a Greek.

4 Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe.

5 So the churches were being strengthened in the faith, and were increasing in number daily.

6 They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia;

7 and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them;

8 and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.

9 A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

10 When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

11 So putting out to sea from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis;

12 and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we were staying in this city for some days.

13 And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled.

14 A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.

15 And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to

be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

16 It happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling.

17 Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation."

18 She continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment.

19 But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities,

20 and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, "These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews,

21 and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans."

22 The crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods.

23 When they had struck them with many blows, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely;

24 and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

25 But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;

26 and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened.

27 When the jailer awoke and saw the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.

28 But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here!"

29 And he called for lights and rushed in, and trembling with fear he fell down before Paul and Silas,

30 and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

31 They said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household."

32 And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house.

33 And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household.

34 And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.

35 Now when day came, the chief magistrates sent their policemen, saying, "Release those men."

36 And the jailer reported these words to Paul, saying, "The chief magistrates have sent to release you. Therefore come out now and go in peace."

37 But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans, and have thrown us into prison; and now are they sending us away secretly? No indeed! But let them come themselves and bring us out."

38 The policemen reported these words to the chief magistrates. They were afraid when they heard that they were Romans,

39 and they came and appealed to them, and when they had brought them out, they kept begging them to leave the city.

40 They went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia, and when they saw the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.

Marked in the text

- **v1** "a disciple was there, named Timothy" — Time / place / contrast
- **v2** "well spoken of by the brethren" — Promise / blessing
- **v3** "because of the Jews who were in those parts" — Time / place / contrast
- **v5** "the churches were being strengthened in the faith" — Promise / blessing
- **v5** "increasing in number daily" — Promise / blessing
- **v6** "forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia" — God — His character & actions
- **v7** "the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them" — God — His character & actions
- **v9** "Come over to Macedonia and help us" — Command / instruction
- **v10** "God had called us to preach the gospel to them" — God — His character & actions
- **v13** "a place of prayer" — Time / place / contrast
- **v14** "the Lord opened her heart" — God — His character & actions
- **v15** "come into my house and stay" — Command / instruction
- **v16** "a spirit of divination" — Sin / warning
- **v16** "bringing her masters much profit by fortune-telling" — Sin / warning
- **v17** "bond-servants of the Most High God" — God — His character & actions
- **v18** "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her" — Command / instruction
- **v19** "their hope of profit was gone" — Sin / warning
- **v22** "beaten with rods" — Sin / warning
- **v24** "fastened their feet in the stocks" — Sin / warning
- **v25** "about midnight" — Time / place / contrast
- **v25** "praying and singing hymns of praise to God" — Command / instruction
- **v26** "all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened" — God — His character & actions
- **v28** "Do not harm yourself" — Command / instruction
- **v30** "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" — Time / place / contrast
- **v31** "Believe in the Lord Jesus" — Command / instruction
- **v31** "you will be saved, you and your household" — Promise / blessing
- **v33** "washed their wounds" — Time / place / contrast
- **v34** "rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household" — Promise / blessing
- **v37** "They have beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans" — Sin / warning
- **v40** "they encouraged them and departed" — Command / instruction
- **v15** "household" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v15** "house" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v23** "prison" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

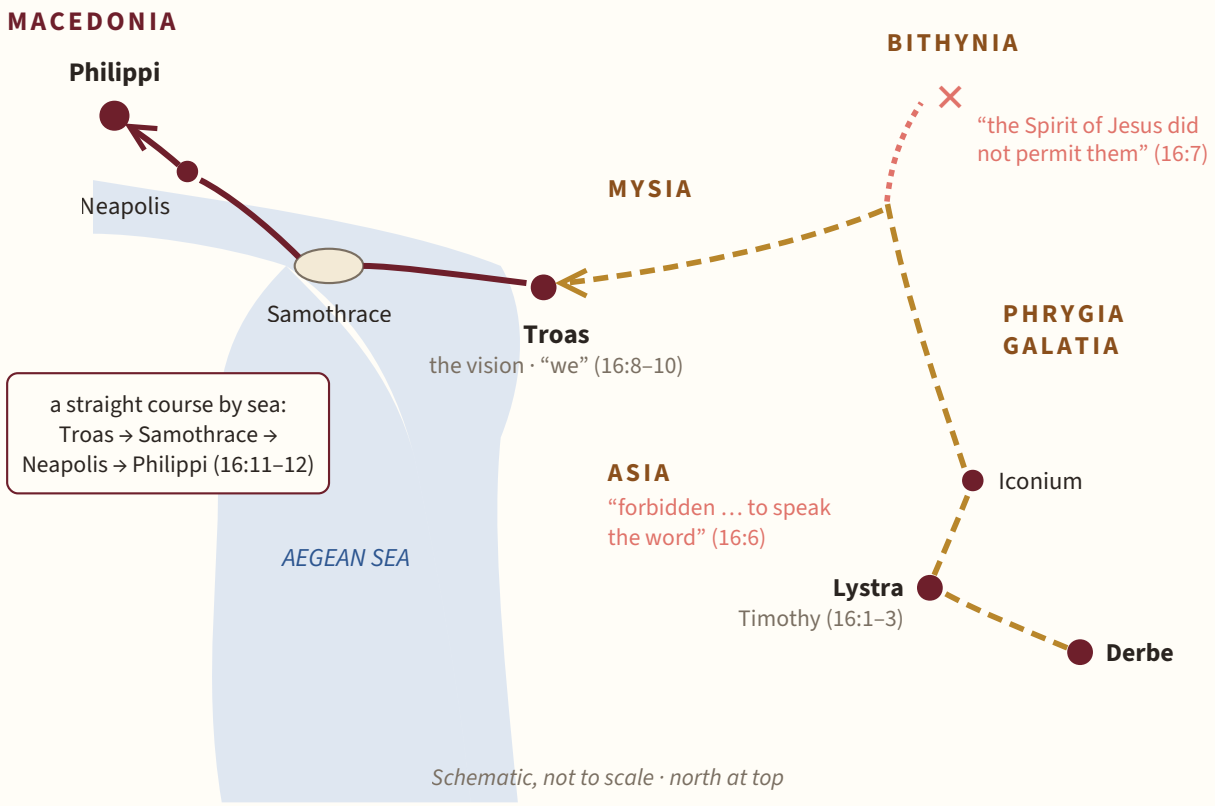
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 16:9

"A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us.""

FIGURE · FROM LYSTRA TO PHILIPPI



Trace the gold line from Derbe and Lystra north toward Bithynia, see the door shut twice, then follow the team west to Troas and across the sea to Philippi.

Setting. Derbe and Lystra, where Paul takes Timothy (vv1–5); through Phrygia and Galatia, blocked from Asia and Bithynia, down to Troas on the Aegean coast (vv6–8); the vision of the man of Macedonia (vv9–10). By sea to Neapolis and Philippi, a Roman colony (vv11–12). At the river, Lydia (vv13–15); on the way to prayer, the slave-girl (vv16–18); the market place, the magistrates, the prison (vv19–34); the release and Lydia's house (vv35–40).

Structure:

- vv1–5 — **Timothy:** a disciple, son of a Jewish believer and a Greek father (v1); well spoken of (v2); circumcised because of the Jews (v3); the decrees delivered (v4); churches strengthened and growing daily (v5).

- vv6–10 — **guidance:** forbidden by the Holy Spirit in Asia (v6); the Spirit of Jesus does not permit Bithynia (v7); Troas (v8); "Come over to Macedonia and help us" (v9); "we" — God had called us (v10).
- vv11–15 — **Lydia:** a straight course to Philippi (vv11–12); a place of prayer by the river (v13); the Lord opened her heart (v14); she and her household baptized; "come into my house" (v15).
- vv16–24 — **the slave-girl and the stocks:** a spirit of divination, profit for her masters (v16); "bond-servants of the Most High God" (v17); "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ" (v18); hope of profit gone — dragged to the magistrates (vv19–21); beaten with rods, the inner prison, the stocks (vv22–24).
- vv25–34 — **the jailer:** praying and singing at midnight (v25); earthquake, doors open, chains loose (v26); the sword (v27); "we are all here!" (v28); "what must I do to be saved?" (vv29–30); "Believe in the Lord Jesus" (v31); the word spoken, wounds washed, baptized, food, rejoicing (vv32–34).
- vv35–40 — **Roman citizens:** "Release those men" (vv35–36); "beaten us in public without trial, men who are Romans … let them come themselves" (v37); the magistrates afraid, begging (vv38–39); Lydia's house, the brethren encouraged (v40).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "we / us" ×19 — vv9, 10 (×2), 11, 12, 13 (×3), 15 (×2), 16 (×2), 17, 21, 28, 37 (×4) — Luke is now in the story.
- "Paul" ×12 — vv1, 3, 9, 14, 17, 18, 19, 25, 28, 29, 36, 37.
- "house / household" ×9 — vv15 (×2), 26, 31, 32, 33, 34 (×2), 40.
- "prison / prison house" ×8 — vv23, 24, 25, 26, 27 (×2), 37, 40.
- "city / cities" ×6 — vv4, 12 (×2), 14, 20, 39.
- "God" ×5 — vv10, 14, 17, 25, 34; "chief magistrates" ×5 — vv20, 22, 35, 36, 38.
- "Spirit / spirit" ×4 — vv6, 7 (the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus), 16, 18 (the spirit of divination).
- "Lord" ×4 — vv14, 15, 31, 32; "Macedonia" ×4 — vv9 (×2), 10, 12; "Roman(s)" ×4 — vv12, 21, 37, 38.
- "saved / salvation" ×3 — vv17, 30, 31; "believer / believe / believed" ×3 — vv1, 31, 34.
- "open(ed)" ×3 — vv14, 26, 27; "prayer / praying" ×3 — vv13, 16, 25; "command(ing)" ×3 — vv18, 23, 24.
- "Silas" ×3 — vv19, 25, 29; "jailer" ×3 — vv23, 27, 36; "Jesus" ×3 — vv7, 18, 31.
- "immediately / suddenly / at that very moment / that very hour" ×6 — vv10, 18, 26 (×2), 33 (×2).

Contrasts: Forbidden (vv6–7) ⟷ called (v10). Lydia's open heart (v14) ⟷ the masters' closed fists (v19). A spirit of divination (v16) ⟷ the Holy Spirit and the Spirit of Jesus (vv6–7). Profit (vv16, 19) ⟷ salvation (vv17, 30–31). Feet fastened in the stocks (v24) ⟷ chains unfastened (v26). The jailer's sword at his own throat (v27) ⟷ "Do not harm yourself" (v28). Midnight (v25) ⟷ "when day came" (v35). Beaten in public (v37) ⟷ sent away secretly (v37). Roman pride (v21) ⟷ Roman fear (v38).

Shape of the chapter: two short movements of preparation (a partner, then a direction), then three people in Philippi — each freed in a different way — and a closing scene where the beaten missionaries leave on their own terms. Luke's "we" runs through the Philippi story and then stops at the prison door.

Chapter theme (my words): God guides His servants by shutting doors and opening hearts, and in Philippi He frees a merchant, a slave and a jailer. Singing in the dark, Paul and Silas preach the shortest gospel: believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 16:14

"A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and △the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul."

FIGURE · THREE SET FREE IN PHILIPPI

THREE PEOPLE SET FREE IN PHILIPPI · ACTS 16:13–34

	LYDIA vv13–15	THE SLAVE-GIRL vv16–18	THE JAILER vv23–34
WHO	a seller of purple from Thyatira; free, well-off, devout	owned by masters; a spirit of divination made them money	a Roman officer under orders; his life for the prisoners
HOW REACHED	"the Lord opened her heart" while she listened	"I command you in the name of Jesus Christ"	songs at midnight, an earthquake, and his question
WHAT FOLLOWED	baptized with her household; opens her home	the spirit leaves at once; Luke tells us nothing more	believes, is baptized with his household, and rejoices

A businesswoman, a slave and a jailer — rich, owned and official — and one Lord for them all.

Read each column down: three very different people, three different ways Jesus reached them — and Luke tells us how each story ended, or that he does not.

Why did Paul circumcise Timothy after Acts 15? Because of "the Jews who were in those parts" (v3), not for salvation. Guzik (with Bruce): a Jewish mother made him a Jew in the synagogue's eyes; uncircumcised, he would have closed every synagogue door. Guzik: "Paul did things for the sake of love that he would not do for the sake of trying to please God through legalism." Henry adds that it was no precedent. Compare Titus, a Gentile, whom Paul refused to circumcise when the gospel itself was at stake (Galatians 2:3).

How did the Spirit forbid them (vv6–7)? Luke does not say — perhaps a prophetic word, sickness, or circumstances. He tells us who, not how. Guzik: "Paul was guided by hindrance." Henry: "We must now follow providence." I take from this that a closed door is not always the devil; sometimes it is the Spirit of Jesus.

Who is "we" (v10)? The writer joins the team at Troas. Guzik reads it as Luke, the doctor, and thanks God for His "no": without it, no Gospel of Luke or Book of Acts as we have them.

What does "the Lord opened her heart" teach (v14)? That conversion is God's work first. Sproul: "regeneration precedes faith." Henry: "Conversion-work is heart-work." Spurgeon: her heart was opened "to attend to the gospel, that is, to desire it." Guzik draws the practical point: pray for God to open hearts. Lydia still listened, believed and was baptized — God's opening does not make a man passive; it makes him able.

What about "household" baptism (vv15, 33)? Here my teachers differ, and I want to be fair. Sproul and Henry stood in the Reformed tradition that baptizes the children of believers, and Sproul's Acts series includes a sermon titled "The Doctrine of Baptism." Spurgeon and Guzik baptized believers only; Spurgeon notes, "Her household believed, and were baptized with her." Luke says the word was spoken to all in the jailer's house (v32) and that he rejoiced "having believed in God with his whole household" (v34). What no one teaches is that a man's faith saves his family automatically; each one must believe.

Why was Paul annoyed with a girl who told the truth (vv17–18)? Guzik: "he didn't need demonic approval of his work." Henry: the devil was using truth "to deceive people." Paul cast the spirit out "in the name of Jesus Christ" — the authority was Christ's, not Paul's.

What must I do to be saved (vv30–31)? "Believe in the Lord Jesus." Guzik: "This is salvation by grace alone, received by faith alone." Sproul's sermon, as Ligonier describes it, shows how God "brings people to the end of themselves" to lead them to Christ. Spurgeon: by morning "He had passed from death unto life!" Faith shows itself at once in washing wounds, baptism and joy.

Why did Paul claim citizenship only after the beating (v37)? Henry: "It was not a point of honour that Paul stood thus stiffly upon, but a point of justice." A public release cleared the young church's name. Guzik: God may ask us to lay rights down — or, as here, to use them for others.

Word study (Greek):

- **well spoken of — *martyreō* (G3140):** attested, a good report (v2).
- **decrees — *dogma* (G1378):** the Jerusalem letter (v4).
- **forbidden — *kōlyō* (G2967); permit — *eaō* (G1439):** vv6–7.
- **vision — *horama* (G3705); help — *boētheō* (G997); concluding — *symbibazō* (G4822):** vv9–10.
- **place of prayer — *proseuchē* (G4335):** v13.
- **worshiper — *sebomai* (G4576); opened — *dianoigō* (G1272); respond — *prosechō* (G4337):** v14.
- **divination — *Pythōn* (G4436):** "a spirit of Python" (v16).
- **beaten with rods — *rhabdizō* (G4463):** v22; 2 Cor 11:25.
- **stocks — *xylon* (G3586):** wood; the "tree" of 1 Pet 2:24.
- **singing hymns — *hymneō* (G5214); listening — *epakroaomai* (G1874):** v25.
- **earthquake — *seismos* (G4578):** v26.
- **saved — *sōzō* (G4982); believe — *pisteuō* (G4100):** vv30–31, 34.
- **rejoiced greatly — *agalliaō* (G21):** v34.

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **Love bends where the gospel cannot** — Timothy circumcised (Guzik).
2. **A good report from two churches** (v2).
3. **Guided by hindrance** (Guzik; Henry).

4. **The Lord opened; she responded** (Sproul; Henry).
5. **Pray before you speak** (Guzik).
6. **True words from a wrong source** (v17).
7. **Follow the money** (Henry).
8. **Midnight songs reach prisoners** (v25).
9. **The shortest gospel in the Bible** (v31).
10. **The same hands, one night apart** — stocks, then washing (Spurgeon).

Cross-references: Ps 107:10–16; 146:7; Isa 42:7; Matt 26:30; Luke 24:31, 45; John 6:44; Acts 1:8; 6:3; 8:36; 14:19; 19:10; Rom 10:9; 2 Cor 11:25; Gal 2:3; Eph 2:8–9; Phil 1:1–7; 3:20; 1 Thess 2:2; 2 Tim 3:11, 15; 1 Pet 2:24.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 16:25

"But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;"

FIGURE · ONE NIGHT IN THE PRISON



Follow the six panels across one night, then look at the bottom band: the same hands that fastened the stocks wash the wounds.

Promise to trust — believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved. I have sat across from men in orange who think they are too far gone, and men in recovery who think they have to clean up first. The jailer had a sword at his own throat, and Paul gave him one command: believe (v31). This week I will say that sentence, plainly, to at least one man who needs to hear it.

Example to follow — Paul and Silas at midnight. Bleeding, in the stocks, in the dark — and they prayed and sang, and "the prisoners were listening" (v25). Somebody is always listening to how I handle my midnight. When the bad news comes this week, I will pray out loud and choose a song of praise before I choose a complaint.

Command to obey — follow the closed doors. I have pushed on doors God shut and resented Him for it. Paul let the Spirit say no twice and ended up where God wanted him (vv6–10). I will name one closed door in my life and thank God for it, and ask Him where He is calling me instead.

Truth to hold — the Lord opens hearts. I cannot argue anyone into the kingdom. Lydia listened because "the Lord opened her heart" (v14). Before I speak to the man I am burdened for, I will pray for him by name and ask God to open his heart — and then I will still speak.

Sin to confess — using people for profit. The slave-girl's masters cared about her only for what she earned them (vv16, 19). I confess the ways I have used people — for money, for comfort, for status — and I ask God to let me see them as souls Christ came to free.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. Timothy was "well spoken of by the brethren" in two towns. What would the men who know me best say about my walk with Christ? (16:1–3; Acts 6:3) *Character is seen by others before it is used by God.*
2. Where has God shut a door on me lately? How might that "no" be guiding me toward something He has prepared? (16:6–10) *Paul was guided by hindrance (Guzik).*
3. The Lord opened Lydia's heart while Paul spoke. Whose heart am I praying for God to open — and am I speaking to him? (16:13–15; John 6:44) *Conversion-work is heart-work (Henry).*
4. The slave-girl's masters cared about profit, not her freedom. Where do I treat people as useful to me rather than as souls Christ wants to free? (16:16–19) *Their hope of profit was gone.*
5. Paul and Silas sang in the stocks at midnight. What is my "midnight" right now, and what would praise in it look like? (16:23–25; Ps 107:14) *No place, no time, amiss for prayer (Henry).*
6. The jailer asked, "What must I do to be saved?" and got one answer. How would I answer that question for a man in my group, in one sentence? (16:30–34; Rom 10:9) *Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.*

Worship. The Spirit of Jesus leads His servants, even by saying no. The Lord opens hearts that no preacher can open, casts out spirits by the name of Jesus Christ, shakes prison foundations at midnight, and saves a frightened man in one hour. He sets the prisoners free.

Prayer. Lord Jesus, You are the One who opens and shuts. Thank You for the doors You closed on me and the heart You opened in me. Give me a song at midnight, so the men around me hear what You can do in the dark. Open the hearts of the men I pray for, and give me the courage to tell them plainly: believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved. Make my home, like Lydia's and the jailer's, a place where Your people are welcome. Amen.

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SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 17

Noble Bereans and an Unknown God — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

Paul opens the Scriptures in Thessalonica and Berea and names the living God in Athens, and everywhere the message lands on Jesus raised from the dead. The Bereans show me how to hear it: eager to receive the word, and careful to check it in the Book every day.

00 The Text

ACTS 17 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and
Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a
synagogue of the Jews.

2 And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and
for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the
Scriptures,

3 explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to
suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, "This
Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ."

4 And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and
Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing
Greeks and a number of the leading women.

5 But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along
some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob
and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of
Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people.

6 When they did not find them, they began dragging
Jason and some brethren before the city authorities,
shouting, "These men who have upset the world have
come here also;

7 and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary
to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another
king, Jesus."

8 They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who
heard these things.

9 And when they had received a pledge from Jason and
the others, they released them.

10 The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by
night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the
synagogue of the Jews.

11 Now these were more noble-minded than those in
Thessalonica, for they received the word with great
eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see
whether these things were so.

12 Therefore many of them believed, along with a
number of prominent Greek women and men.

13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that the
word of God had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also,
they came there as well, agitating and stirring up the
crowds.

14 Then immediately the brethren sent Paul out to go as
far as the sea; and Silas and Timothy remained there.

15 Now those who escorted Paul brought him as far as Athens; and receiving a command for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible, they left.

16 Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols.

17 So he was reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present.

18 And also some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers were conversing with him. Some were saying, "What would this idle babbler wish to say?" Others, "He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities,"—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection.

19 And they took him and brought him to the Areopagus, saying, "May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming?

20 "For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean."

21 (Now all the Athenians and the strangers visiting there used to spend their time in nothing other than telling or hearing something new.)

22 So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects.

23 "For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.

24 "The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands;

25 nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things;

26 and He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,

27 that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;

28 for in Him we live and move and exist, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we also are His children.'

29 "Being then the children of God, we ought not to think that the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and thought of man.

30 "Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent,

31 because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead."

32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some began to sneer, but others said, "We shall hear you again concerning this."

33 So Paul went out of their midst.

34 But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

Marked in the text

- **v2** "reasoned with them from the Scriptures" — Command / instruction
- **v3** "the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead" — God — His character & actions
- **v3** "This Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you is the Christ" — God — His character & actions
- **v5** "becoming jealous" — Sin / warning
- **v6** "These men who have upset the world have come here also" — Time / place / contrast
- **v7** "there is another king, Jesus" — God — His character & actions
- **v11** "more noble-minded" — Promise / blessing
- **v11** "more noble" — Promise / blessing
- **v11** "they received the word with great eagerness" — Command / instruction
- **v11** "examining the Scriptures daily" — Command / instruction
- **v12** "Therefore many of them believed" — Promise / blessing
- **v16** "his spirit was being provoked within him" — Sin / warning

- **v16** "the city full of idols" — Sin / warning
- **v18** "he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection" — God — His character & actions
- **v21** "telling or hearing something new" — Time / place / contrast
- **v23** "TO AN UNKNOWN GOD" — Time / place / contrast
- **v24** "The God who made the world and all things in it" — God — His character & actions
- **v25** "He Himself gives to all people life and breath and all things" — God — His character & actions
- **v26** "He made from one man every nation of mankind" — God — His character & actions
- **v27** "He is not far from each one of us" — Promise / blessing
- **v28** "in Him we live and move and exist" — God — His character & actions
- **v30** "all people everywhere should repent" — Command / instruction
- **v31** "He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness" — Time / place / contrast
- **v31** "by raising Him from the dead" — God — His character & actions
- **v32** "some began to sneer" — Sin / warning
- **v34** "some men joined him and believed" — Promise / blessing
- **v2** "Scriptures" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v2** "scriptures" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v18** "resurrection" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v23** "ignorance" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

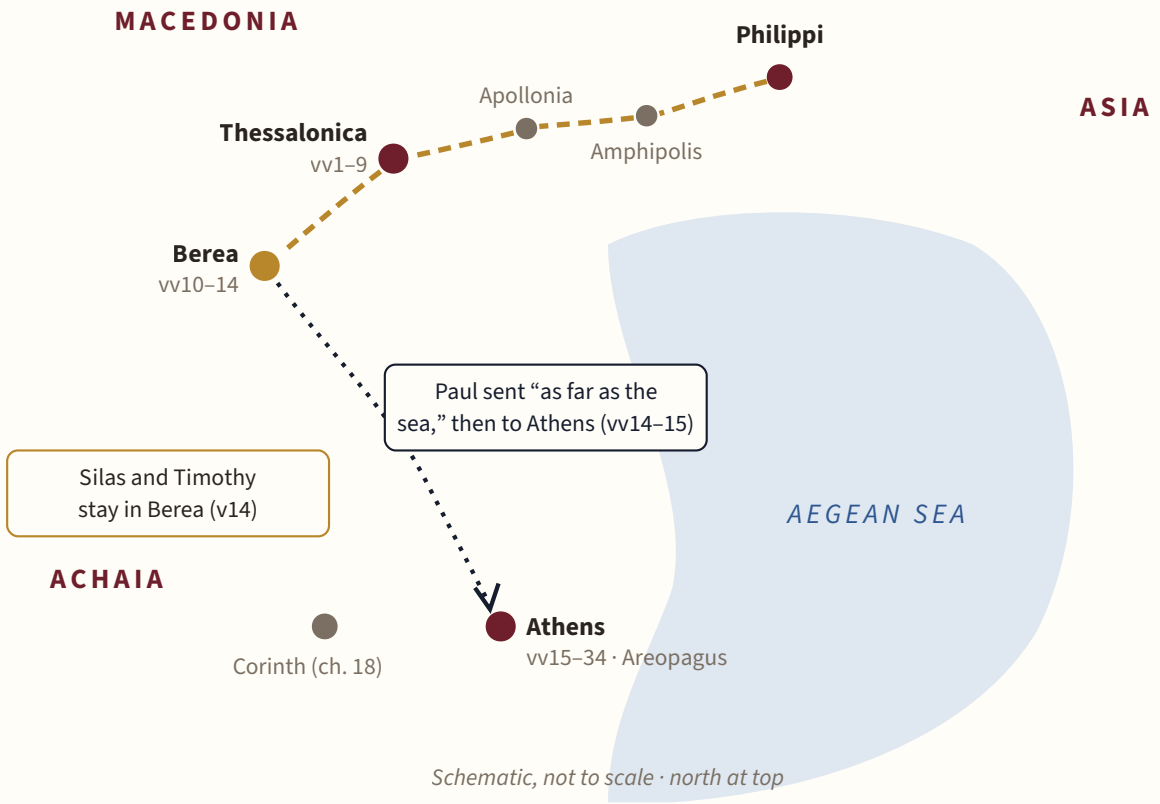
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 17:2

"And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,"

FIGURE · MACEDONIA TO ACHAIA



Follow the gold road west from Philippi to Thessalonica and Berea, then the dark line by sea to Athens, where Paul waits for Silas and Timothy.

Setting. Paul, Silas and Timothy leave Philippi (ch. 16) and travel west through Amphipolis and Apollonia to Thessalonica (v1). After three Sabbaths in the synagogue and a riot, the brethren send Paul and Silas by night to Berea (vv1–10). When Jews from Thessalonica follow, Paul is escorted to Athens while Silas and Timothy stay (vv13–15). In Athens he reasons in the synagogue and the market place, and is brought to the Areopagus (vv16–21), where he preaches (vv22–31). Some sneer, some delay, some believe (vv32–34).

Structure:

- vv1–9 — **Thessalonica:** Paul's custom — the synagogue, three Sabbaths, reasoning from the Scriptures (v2); the Christ had to suffer and rise; "This Jesus … is the Christ" (v3); some persuaded, many God-fearing Greeks and

leading women (v4); the jealous mob attacks Jason's house (v5); "These men who have upset the world" — "another king, Jesus" (vv6–7); a pledge, and release (vv8–9).

- vv10–15 — **Berea:** sent by night; the synagogue (v10); "more noble-minded … examining the Scriptures daily" (v11); many believed, Jews and prominent Greeks (v12); agitators from Thessalonica (v13); Paul sent to the sea and on to Athens; Silas and Timothy remain (vv14–15).
- vv16–21 — **Athens:** his spirit provoked by a city full of idols (v16); reasoning in synagogue and market place every day (v17); Epicurean and Stoic philosophers — "idle babbler," "strange deities" (v18); the Areopagus — "May we know what this new teaching is?" (vv19–20); the Athenians' love of something new (v21).
- vv22–31 — **the sermon:** "very religious" — an altar "TO AN UNKNOWN GOD" (vv22–23); the God who made the world, Lord of heaven and earth, needs nothing, gives all (vv24–25); one man, every nation, appointed times and boundaries (v26); that they would seek God — He is not far (v27); in Him we live and move and exist — His children (v28); no idols of gold, silver or stone (v29); repent (v30); a fixed day, a Man appointed, proof by resurrection (v31).
- vv32–34 — **responses:** some sneer, others "We shall hear you again" (v32); Paul leaves (v33); some join him and believe — Dionysius the Areopagite, Damaris, and others (v34).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "man / men / Man" ×9 — vv5, 6, 12, 26, 29, 30, 31 (×2), 34.
- "all" ×9 — vv7, 21, 22, 24, 25 (×2), 26, 30, 31.
- "God" ×5 — vv13, 24, 27, 29, 30 (plus "God-fearing" vv4, 17, and "UNKNOWN GOD" v23).
- "proclaiming / proclaimed / proclaimer / proclaim" ×5 — vv3, 13, 18, 19, 23.
- "Jews" ×5 — vv1, 5, 10, 13, 17.
- "resurrection / rise / raising" ×4 — vv3, 18, 31, 32.
- "city" ×4 — vv5, 6, 8, 16; "Athens / Athenians" ×4 — vv15, 16, 21, 22.
- "Silas" ×4 — vv4, 10, 14, 15; "brethren" ×3 — vv6, 10, 14.
- "Jesus" ×3 — vv3, 7, 18; "world" ×3 — vv6, 24, 31; "Thessalonica" ×3 — vv1, 11, 13.
- "Scriptures" ×2 — vv2, 11; "reasoned / reasoning" ×2 — vv2, 17; "daily / every day" ×2 — vv11, 17.
- "ignorance" ×2 — vv23, 30; "worship" ×2 — v23 (×2); "new" ×2 — vv19, 21; "strange" ×2 — vv18, 20; "children" ×2 — vv28, 29; "believed" ×2 — vv12, 34.

Contrasts: Thessalonica's jealous mob ⟷ Berea's eager examiners (vv5, 11). Caesar's decrees ⟷ "another king, Jesus" (v7). The city full of idols ⟷ the God who made the world (vv16, 24). Temples made with hands ⟷ the Lord of heaven and earth (v24). Served by human hands ⟷ He gives to all (v25). Groping in the dark ⟷ He is not far (v27). Gold, silver, stone ⟷ the Divine Nature (v29). Times of ignorance ⟷ now (v30). Sneer ⟷ hear again ⟷ believe (vv32–34).

Shape of the chapter: three cities and three receptions, each shorter or longer as the hearers allow: a riot (1–9), a Bible study (10–15), and a sermon to philosophers (16–34). The method changes — Scripture to Jews, creation to Greeks — but every scene reaches the same center: the Christ who suffered and rose (vv3, 18, 31).

Chapter theme (my words): The gospel is reasonable, public and unsettling. It can be checked against the Scriptures, it confronts every idol, and it tells all people everywhere to repent because God has fixed a day and raised the Judge from the dead.

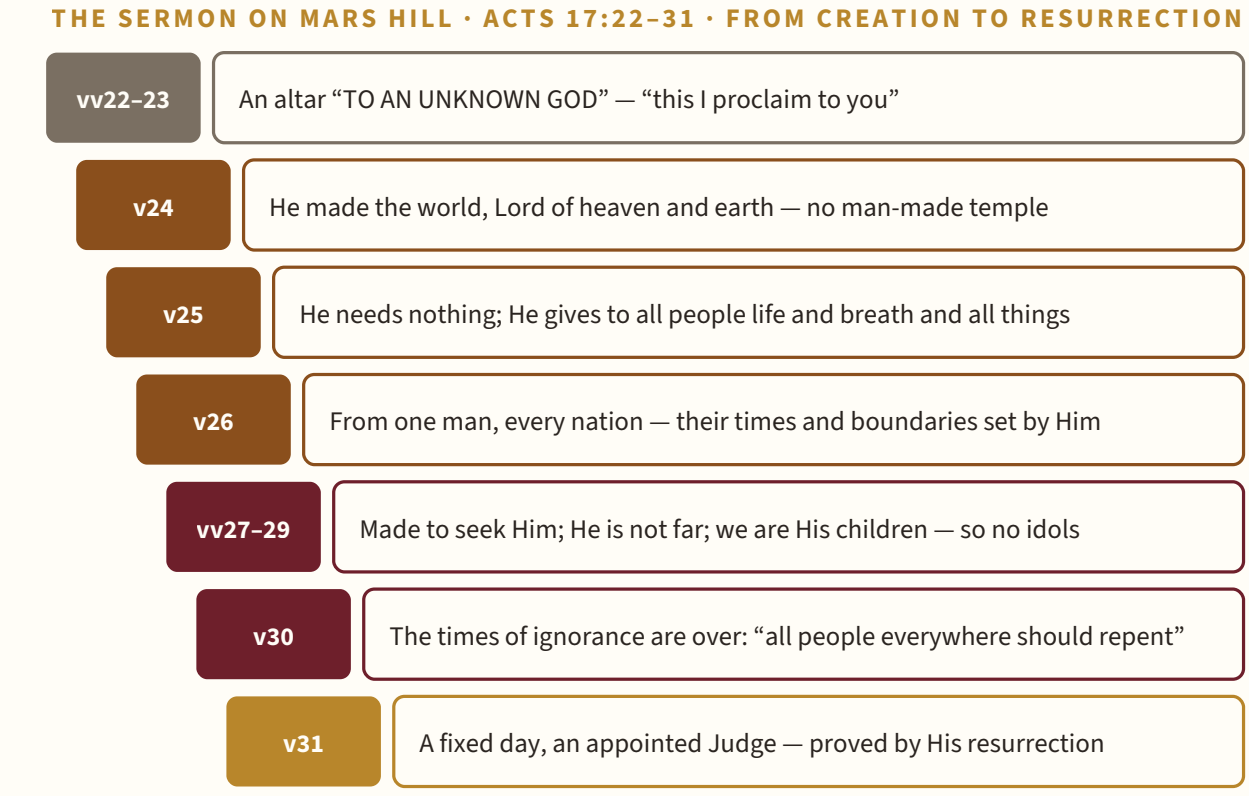
02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 17:31

"because ◷ He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men △ by raising Him from the dead."

FIGURE · THE SERMON ON MARS HILL



Paul's Areopagus sermon steps down from the Creator to the coming Judge; notice that it ends, like his synagogue preaching, at the resurrection.

What did Paul prove from the Scriptures? That "the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead" (v3), and that Jesus is that Christ. The stumbling block for the synagogue was a suffering Messiah. Henry: "He must needs have suffered for us, because he could not otherwise purchase redemption for us." Jesus had taught the same thing from Moses and the prophets (Luke 24:26–27, 46).

Why did the charge "upset the world" matter? It was meant as sedition — "they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus" (v7). Guzik calls it "an unintended compliment." Henry: "Their

enemies set the city in an uproar, and then laid the blame upon them;" yet "Christ's kingdom was not of this world." The church did not riot; it was rioted against.

What made the Bereans "more noble-minded"? Not birth (*eugenēs* first meant "well-born") but how they treated the word: eagerly received, daily examined (v11). Guzik: "They would not accept Paul's teaching without checking for themselves, so they could know if these things were so." "When Paul preached, they had open hearts; but also clear heads." Henry: "Searching the scriptures must be our daily work." Notice the Bible they checked was the Old Testament, and it confirmed the gospel.

Why was Paul provoked in Athens? Because God's glory was being given to idols (v16; Rom 1:23). Guzik: "he was only depressed by the magnitude of the idolatry he saw all around." Henry: "the greatest pretenders to reason were the greatest slaves to idols." And Paul did something with the grief — he reasoned in the synagogue and the market place every day. Sproul: "The cradle of the church was the marketplace."

Did Paul compromise on Mars Hill? No. He began with creation because his hearers had no Bible, and he quoted their poets as a bridge, not an authority (Guzik). But every line of the sermon is biblical — Creator (Isa 42:5), needs nothing, one man, appointed times — and it ends with repentance, judgment and the resurrection. Guzik rejects the theory that Paul was disappointed in Athens and changed his message in Corinth.

What does "He is not far from each one of us" mean? God is present to every person as Creator and Sustainer — "in Him we live and move and exist" (v28). Spurgeon: "The living God is not far from any one of us," and "When the sinner seeks God and God seeks the sinner they will soon meet." But nearness is also solemn: He sees "the secret intents of our hearts."

What did God "overlook"? Not sin itself, but the full judgment due to the times of ignorance (v30; Acts 14:16). Stott (cited by Guzik): God "now declares such ignorance to be culpable." Sproul's sermon summary asks: "Will we be able to plead ignorance about God's identity when we come to His appointed day of judgment?" I believe that day is fixed on God's calendar and that the risen Jesus is the Judge (John 5:22).

Why did the resurrection divide the hill? Guzik: "The Greeks were fond of the idea of the immortality of the soul, but not of the idea of the resurrection of the body." Some sneered, some delayed, and some believed (vv32–34). Henry: some "adhered to him, and believed."

Word study (Greek):

- **reasoned — *dialegomai* (G1256):** dialogue, discussion; 17:2, 17; 18:4, 19.
- **giving evidence — *paratithēmi* (G3908):** to set beside, lay out the proof (v3).
- **upset — *anastatoō* (G387):** to stir up, overturn; 17:6; 21:38; Gal 5:12.
- **more noble-minded — *eugenēs* (G2104):** well-born, noble; Luke 19:12; 1 Cor 1:26.
- **eagerness — *prothymia* (G4288):** readiness of mind (v11).
- **examining — *anakrinō* (G350):** to sift, to examine as a judge; Luke 23:14; 1 Cor 2:15.
- **provoked — *paroxynō* (G3947):** stirred, sharpened; 17:16; 1 Cor 13:5.
- **full of idols — *kateidōlos* (G2712):** only here.
- **idle babbler — *spermologos* (G4691):** "seed-picker"; only here.
- **very religious — *deisidaimōn* (G1174):** fearing the gods; only here.
- **unknown — *agnōstos* (G57):** only here.
- **grope — *psēlaphaō* (G5584):** to feel for; Luke 24:39; 1 John 1:1.

- **repent — *metanoeō* (G3340):** change of mind and direction (v30).
- **fixed / appointed — *horizō* (G3724):** set a boundary; vv26, 31.
- **resurrection — *anastasis* (G386):** vv18, 32.

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **Paul reasoned; he did not just announce** — *dialegomai* (vv2, 17).
2. **A suffering Messiah was the sticking point** (v3; Luke 24:26).
3. **Upside down is right side up** — "another king, Jesus" (vv6–7).
4. **Noble is a word about the Book, not the bloodline** (v11).
5. **Open hearts, clear heads** (Guzik).
6. **Searching the Scriptures is daily work** (Henry).
7. **Provoked, not impressed** — Athens' idols (v16).
8. **The church belongs in the marketplace** (Sproul).
9. **God needs nothing and gives everything** (v25).
10. **He is not far — and He has fixed a day** (vv27, 31).

Cross-references: Gen 2:7; Eccl 12:14; Isa 40:18; 42:5; 45:22; 66:1; Luke 24:26–27, 39, 46; John 5:22, 39; Acts 14:15–17; 16:9, 37–40; 18:4; Rom 1:20–23; 1 Cor 1:26; 2:15; 13:5; Gal 5:12; 1 Thess 1:9; 3:6; 5:21; 2 Tim 3:16–17; 1 John 1:1.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 17:30

"Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent,"

FIGURE · TWO SYNAGOGUES, TWO RESPONSES

TWO SYNAGOGUES, TWO RESPONSES · ACTS 17:1–13

	THESSALONICA (vv1–9)	BEREA (vv10–13)
What Paul did	reasoned from the Scriptures, three Sabbaths (v2)	the same: into the synagogue of the Jews (v10)
How the word was met	some persuaded (v4); others "becoming jealous" (v5)	"received the word with great eagerness" (v11)
What they did next	formed a mob, dragged Jason to the rulers (vv5–6)	"examining the Scriptures daily" (v11)
The outcome	a pledge taken; Paul sent away by night (vv9–10)	"many of them believed" (v12)

Open hearts and clear heads: eager to receive, careful to check — and "therefore" many believed (vv11–12).

Read across each row: Paul did the same thing in both towns; the difference was how the hearers met the word and what they did with their Bibles.

Example to follow — the Bereans. They did two things I need to do together: they "received the word with great eagerness," and they kept "examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so" (v11). This is the verse our Berean Dashboard is named for. When I hear a teacher — even a good one, even me — I want the men I serve to open the Book and check. This week I will read the chapter every day and write down one thing I checked for myself.

Sin to confess — clear head, closed heart (or the reverse). Guzik says, "Many people have clear heads but closed hearts." Some days I study to win an argument, not to obey. Other days I swallow whatever sounds spiritual without checking it. I confess both, and ask God for the Berean balance: open heart, clear head.

Truth to face — the idols of my town. Paul was provoked by a city full of idols (v16). Mine are not marble; they are money, approval, comfort, the screen, the bottle. Some of the men I sit with have bowed to the worst of them. God

"does not dwell in temples made with hands" and "is not served by human hands" (vv24–25) — He gives me life and breath and everything. I don't have to feed an idol to get what only God gives.

Command to obey — repent. "God is now declaring to men that all people everywhere should repent" (v30). Not some people; all people, everywhere — the professor on the hill and the man in the cell. I will name one thing I need to turn from this week, and turn.

Promise to trust — He is not far. "He is not far from each one of us" (v27). For the man who feels he is groping in the dark, this is good news: God is near enough to find. Spurgeon: "If I seek God, and he is not far from me, I shall surely find him." And He has proved His word by raising Jesus from the dead (v31).

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. Paul reasoned "from the Scriptures" that the Christ had to suffer and rise. If someone asked me to show them Jesus from the Old Testament, where would I start? (17:2–3; Luke 24:26–27) *Beginning with Moses and with all the prophets (Luke 24:27).*
2. The mob said the gospel had "upset the world." What has Jesus turned upside down in my life — and what still needs turning? (17:6–7) *Jesus turns the thinking and the power structures of this world around (Guzik).*
3. The Bereans had open hearts and clear heads. Which am I weaker in — eagerness to receive the word, or care to examine it? (17:11–12; 1 Thess 5:21) *Many people have clear heads but closed hearts (Guzik).*
4. When I hear a sermon, a podcast or a friend's advice about God, how do I check it against the Scriptures? What does my daily habit actually look like? (17:11; 2 Tim 3:16–17) *Searching the scriptures must be our daily work (Henry).*
5. Paul's spirit was provoked by a city full of idols. What are the idols of my town — and do they still bother me? (17:16, 29) *The greatest pretenders to reason were the greatest slaves to idols (Henry).*
6. God "is not far from each one of us," and He "has fixed a day." How do both truths — nearness and judgment — change how I talk to a lost friend? (17:27, 30–31) *When the sinner seeks God and God seeks the sinner they will soon meet (Spurgeon).*

Worship. The God who made the world and all things in it, Lord of heaven and earth, needs nothing from me and gives me life and breath and all things. He made every nation from one man, set our times and our boundaries, and is not far from any of us. He has fixed a day, appointed a Man, and proved it by raising Jesus from the dead.

Prayer. Lord God, You are not an unknown God to me anymore — You have made Yourself known in Jesus. Give me a Berean heart: eager for Your word and careful to search it every day. Break my heart over the idols around me and in me, and make me willing to speak about Jesus and the resurrection in the market place. I repent today of what I have been holding onto. Thank You that You are not far. Amen.

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SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 18

Do Not Be Afraid; Go On Speaking — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

In a hard city Paul works with his hands, keeps speaking when he is afraid, and stays to make disciples, because the Lord is with him and has many people there. Then two tentmakers show me what it looks like to take a gifted brother aside and help him know Jesus more accurately.

00 The Text

ACTS 18 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 After these things he left Athens and went to Corinth.

2 And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, having recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. He came to them,

3 and because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and they were working, for by trade they were tent-makers.

4 And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

5 But when Silas and Timothy came down from Macedonia, Paul began devoting himself completely to the word, solemnly testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ.

6 But when they resisted and blasphemed, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

7 Then he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God, whose house was next to the synagogue.

8 Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with all his household, and many of the Corinthians when they heard were believing and being baptized.

9 And the Lord said to Paul in the night by a vision, "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent;

10 for I am with you, and no man will attack you in order to harm you, for I have many people in this city."

11 And he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

12 But while Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews with one accord rose up against Paul and brought him before the judgment seat,

13 saying, "This man persuades men to worship God contrary to the law."

14 But when Paul was about to open his mouth, Gallio said to the Jews, "If it were a matter of wrong or of vicious crime, O Jews, it would be reasonable for me to put up with you;

15 but if there are questions about words and names and your own law, look after it yourselves;
I am unwilling to be a judge of these matters."

16 And he drove them away from the judgment seat.

17 And they all took hold of Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and began beating him in front of the judgment seat. But Gallio was not concerned about any of these things.

18 Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren and put out to sea for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila. In Cenchrea he had his hair cut, for he was keeping a vow.

19 They came to Ephesus, and he left them there. Now he himself entered the synagogue and reasoned with the Jews.

20 When they asked him to stay for a longer time, he did not consent,

21 but taking leave of them and saying, "I will return to you again if God wills," he set sail from Ephesus.

22 When he had landed at Caesarea, he went up and greeted the church, and went down to Antioch.

23 And having spent some time there, he left and passed successively through the Galatian region and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples.

24 Now a Jew named Apollos, an Alexandrian by birth, an eloquent man, came to Ephesus; and he was mighty in the Scriptures.

25 This man had been instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in spirit, he was speaking and teaching accurately the things concerning Jesus, being acquainted only with the baptism of John;

26 and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.

27 And when he wanted to go across to Achaia, the brethren encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him; and when he had arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace,

28 for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ.

Marked in the text

- **v2** "because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome" — Time / place / contrast
- **v3** "by trade they were tent-makers" — Time / place / contrast
- **v5** "Paul began devoting himself completely to the word" — Command / instruction
- **v5** "Jesus was the Christ" — God — His character & actions
- **v6** "they resisted and blasphemed" — Sin / warning
- **v6** "Your blood be on your own heads" — Sin / warning
- **v6** "From now on I will go to the Gentiles" — Time / place / contrast
- **v8** "believed in the Lord with all his household" — Promise / blessing
- **v9** "Do not be afraid any longer" — Command / instruction
- **v9** "go on speaking and do not be silent" — Command / instruction
- **v10** "I am with you" — Promise / blessing
- **v10** "I have many people in this city" — Promise / blessing
- **v11** "a year and six months" — Time / place / contrast
- **v11** "teaching the word of God among them" — Command / instruction
- **v13** "contrary to the law" — Sin / warning
- **v15** "I am unwilling to be a judge of these matters" — Time / place / contrast
- **v17** "Gallio was not concerned about any of these things" — Sin / warning
- **v18** "he was keeping a vow" — Time / place / contrast
- **v21** "I will return to you again if God wills" — God — His character & actions
- **v23** "strengthening all the disciples" — Command / instruction
- **v24** "he was mighty in the Scriptures" — Promise / blessing
- **v25** "being fervent in spirit" — Command / instruction
- **v25** "being acquainted only with the baptism of John" — Time / place / contrast
- **v26** "explained to him the way of God more accurately" — Command / instruction
- **v27** "those who had believed through grace" — God — His character & actions
- **v27** "believed through grace" — God — His character & actions
- **v28** "demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ" — God — His character & actions
- **v4** "synagogue" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v12** "judgment seat" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

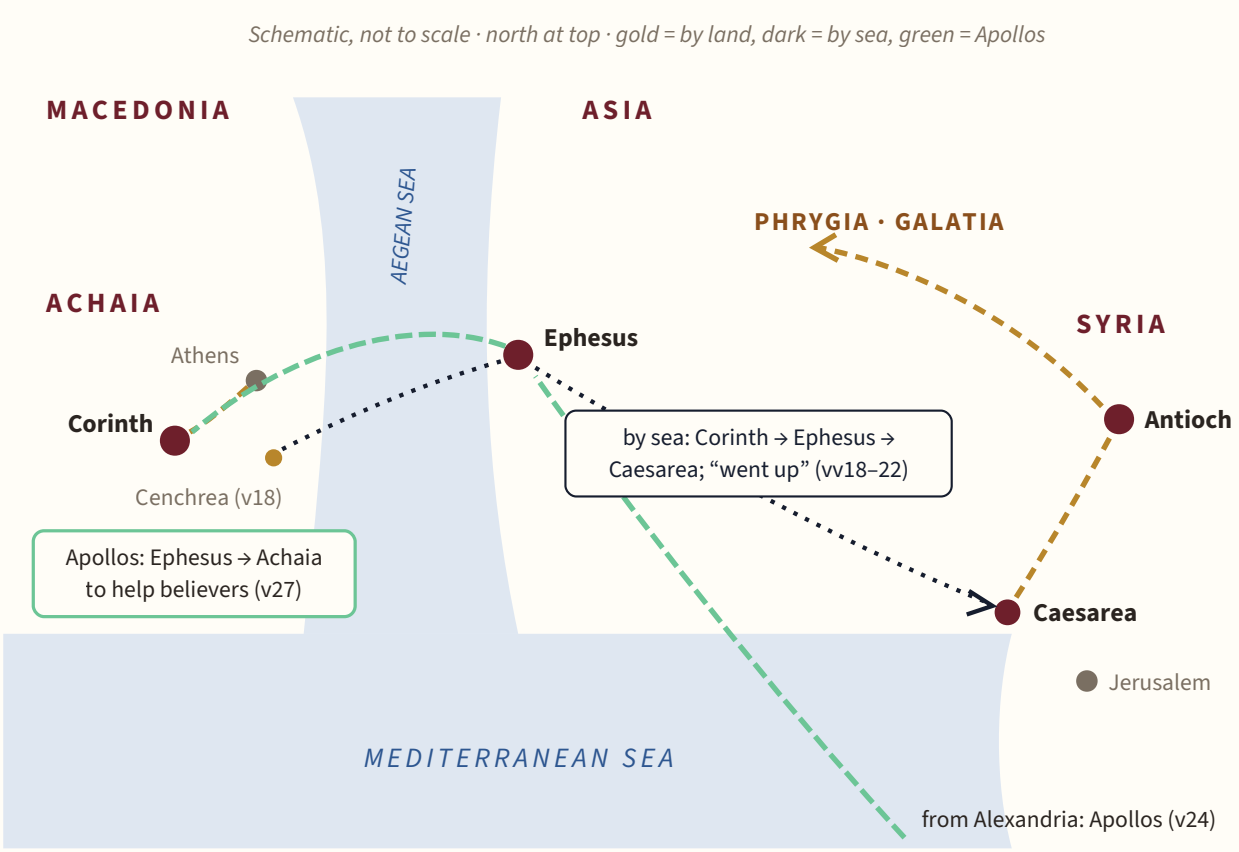
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 18:4

"And he was reasoning in the synagogue every Sabbath and trying to persuade Jews and Greeks."

FIGURE · CORINTH TO ANTIOCH AND BACK



Trace Paul from Athens to Corinth, by sea to Ephesus and Caesarea, by land to Antioch and out to Galatia and Phrygia; the green line follows Apollos from Alexandria to Ephesus and on to Achaia.

Setting. Paul leaves Athens for Corinth (v1), finds Aquila and Priscilla, newly expelled from Rome under Claudius, and works with them as a tentmaker (vv2–3). He reasons in the synagogue every Sabbath (v4). After Silas and Timothy arrive from Macedonia, the synagogue resists, and Paul moves next door to the house of Titius Justus (vv5–7). Crispus believes (v8); the Lord speaks in a night vision (vv9–10); Paul stays eighteen months (v11). The Jews bring him before Gallio, who dismisses the case (vv12–17). Paul sails with Priscilla and Aquila to Ephesus, then on to Caesarea and Antioch, and sets out through Galatia and Phrygia (vv18–23). Apollos arrives in Ephesus, is taught by Priscilla and Aquila, and goes to Achaia (vv24–28).

Structure:

- vv1–4 — **tentmakers:** Athens to Corinth (v1); Aquila of Pontus and Priscilla, from Italy — Claudius's edict (v2); the same trade, staying and working together (v3); reasoning every Sabbath, persuading Jews and Greeks (v4).
- vv5–8 — **the break:** Silas and Timothy come; Paul devotes himself to the word, testifying that Jesus was the Christ (v5); they resist and blaspheme — "Your blood be on your own heads! … I will go to the Gentiles" (v6); the house of Titius Justus, next to the synagogue (v7); Crispus and his household believe; many Corinthians believe and are baptized (v8).
- vv9–11 — **the vision:** "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking" (v9); "I am with you … I have many people in this city" (v10); a year and six months, teaching the word of God (v11).
- vv12–17 — **Gallio:** the Jews rise up and bring Paul to the judgment seat (v12); "contrary to the law" (v13); Gallio: not a matter of wrong or crime but of "words and names and your own law" (vv14–15); driven from the judgment seat (v16); Sosthenes beaten; "Gallio was not concerned about any of these things" (v17).
- vv18–23 — **the loop:** many days more; sails for Syria with Priscilla and Aquila; hair cut at Cenchrea, a vow (v18); Ephesus — the synagogue; asked to stay, he declines (vv19–20); "I will return to you again if God wills" (v21); Caesarea, the church, Antioch (v22); Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the disciples (v23).
- vv24–28 — **Apollos:** an Alexandrian Jew, eloquent, mighty in the Scriptures (v24); instructed, fervent, accurate, knowing only John's baptism (v25); bold in the synagogue; Priscilla and Aquila take him aside and explain the way of God more accurately (v26); the brethren write; he greatly helps those who believed through grace (v27); he powerfully refutes the Jews, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ (v28).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "Jews / Jew" ×10 — vv2 (×2), 4, 5, 12, 14 (×2), 19, 24, 28.
- "synagogue" ×6 — vv4, 7, 8, 17, 19, 26; "leader of the synagogue" ×2 — vv8, 17.
- "God" ×5 — vv7, 11, 13, 21, 26; "Lord" ×3 — vv8, 9, 25.
- "came / come" ×5 — vv2 (×2), 5, 19, 24; "left" ×4 — vv1, 7, 19, 23; "went" ×4 — vv1, 7, 22 (×2).
- "Paul" ×5 — vv5, 9, 12, 14, 18.
- "judgment seat" ×3 — vv12, 16, 17; "Gallio" ×3 — vv12, 14, 17.
- "Priscilla" ×3 and "Aquila" ×3 — vv2, 18, 26.
- "Ephesus" ×3 — vv19, 21, 24.
- "believed / believing" ×3 — vv8 (×2), 27.
- "Jesus" ×3 — vv5, 25, 28; "Christ" ×2 — vv5, 28 ("Jesus was the Christ" both times).
- "house / household" ×3 — vv7 (×2), 8.
- "speaking / speak" ×3 — vv9, 25, 26.
- "Scriptures" ×2 — vv24, 28; "word" ×2 — vv5, 11; "teaching" ×2 — vv11, 25.
- "accurately" ×2 — vv25, 26; "law" ×2 — vv13, 15; "Achaia" ×2 — vv12, 27; "brethren" ×2 — vv18, 27; "disciples" ×2 — vv23, 27; "persuade(s)" ×2 — vv4, 13.

Contrasts: Rome expelling Jews ⟷ God placing them where Paul needs them (v2). Resisted and blasphemed ⟷ believed with all his household (vv6, 8). Afraid and silent ⟷ go on speaking (v9). No man will harm you ⟷ Sosthenes beaten (vv10, 17). Gallio's judgment seat refusing to judge ⟷ the judgment seat of Christ (vv12–16; 2 Cor 5:10). "Accurately" ⟷ "more accurately" (vv25–26). Eloquent man ⟷ two tentmakers teaching him (vv24, 26).

Shape of the chapter: a long stay (vv1–17) and a quick tour (vv18–23), then a new man on the stage (vv24–28). The center is the Lord's word in the night (vv9–10). Scripture brackets the chapter: Paul reasoning every Sabbath (v4) and Apollos "demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ" (v28).

Chapter theme (my words): The Lord keeps His frightened servants speaking by His presence and His purpose, protects His word through unlikely means, and spreads it through ordinary people — tentmakers, households, and one teachable preacher.

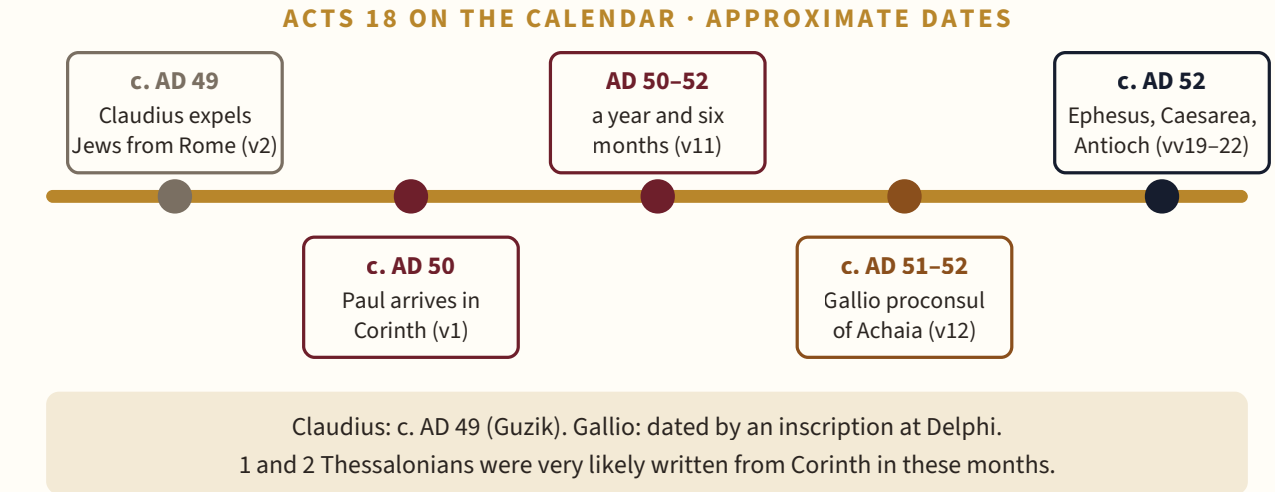
02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 18:26

"and he began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately."

FIGURE · ACTS 18 ON THE CALENDAR



Two outside facts — Claudius's edict and Gallio's term — pin Paul's Corinth years to about AD 50–52; the dates are approximate.

Why did Paul make tents? So no one could say he preached for money (Guzik: "Paul's tentmaking was an important part of his ministry"). Henry: "he therefore maintained himself with his own labour that he might not make the gospel of Christ burdensome." The workbench also gave him Priscilla and Aquila — co-workers for life (Rom 16:3–4).

What changed when Silas and Timothy came? They brought news that the Thessalonians stood firm (Guzik), and very likely gifts from Macedonia (2 Cor 11:9). Paul "began devoting himself completely to the word" (v5). Henry: "more than before pressed in spirit, which made him more than ever pressing in his preaching."

Was "Your blood be on your own heads" harsh? It is Ezekiel's watchman language (Ezek 33:4): Paul had warned them, so he was clean. But it was not hatred. He moved next door, and the synagogue ruler believed (vv7–8). Henry: "Having given them over, yet he does not give over his work." Paul never stopped going "to the Jew first" in the next city (v19; Rom 1:16). God is not finished with Israel.

Why the vision? Because Paul was afraid (1 Cor 2:3). Spurgeon: "Even Paul was not without his tendency to fear." The Lord gave His presence ("I am with you"), His protection ("no man will attack you in order to harm you"), and

His purpose ("I have many people in this city"). Guzik: "This promise was the basis for God's command to not be afraid and to keep preaching."

Does election make evangelism pointless? The opposite. God's "many people" in Corinth were His before they believed, and they would be gathered by Paul's preaching. Spurgeon: "The purpose embraces the means for the carrying out of the purpose." Henry: they "must be called in by degrees, some by one sermon, others by another." The doctrine kept Paul in Corinth eighteen months (v11; Rom 10:14–15).

Was Gallio right or wrong? Both. Guzik: "He correctly saw that the government has no role in attempting to decide religious matters," and his ruling protected the gospel. Henry: he "would not meddle in it" — good; but letting Sosthenes be beaten "carries his indifference too far." Paul later wrote to this city that every man will stand before a judgment seat that is not indifferent (2 Cor 5:10).

What was the vow at Cenchrea? Most likely a Nazirite-type vow (Num 6). Guzik: "By tradition, a Nazirite vow could only be fulfilled in Judea." Paul kept Jewish customs freely; they were not a way of earning grace (compare 21:23–26).

Who was Apollos, and what did he lack? A learned Alexandrian Jew, eloquent and "mighty in the Scriptures," teaching "accurately the things concerning Jesus," but "acquainted only with the baptism of John" (vv24–25). Guzik: Apollos "didn't know much about Jesus, but what he did know genuinely excited him." Henry: "instructed in the gospel of Christ as far as John's ministry would carry him, and no further." What he needed was fuller teaching about what Jesus had finished and sent — compare the disciples in 19:1–7.

How did Priscilla and Aquila correct him? Privately and humbly: "they took him aside" (v26). Henry: Apollos "was glad to receive instructions from them, to be shown by them his defects and mistakes." The result was a stronger church in Corinth (v27; 1 Cor 3:6).

What does "believed through grace" teach? That faith itself is God's gift. Spurgeon: "'Through grace' is the hallmark upon the precious metal of believing," and "Salvation is all of grace from first to last." Henry: "Those who believe in Christ, it is through grace that they believe."

Word study (Greek):

- **tent-makers — *skēnopoios* (G4635):** only here.
- **reasoning — *dialegomai* (G1256):** 17:2, 17; 18:4, 19; **persuade — *peithō* (G3982).**
- **devoting himself completely — *synechō* (G4912):** gripped, pressed; Luke 12:50; 2 Cor 5:14.
- **shook out — *ektinassō* (G1621):** Matt 10:14; Acts 13:51; 18:6.
- **do not be afraid — *phobeomai* (G5399):** present imperative, "stop being afraid."
- **people — *laos* (G2992):** "I have many people in this city."
- **proconsul — *anthypatos* (G446):** Acts 13:7; 18:12.
- **judgment seat — *bēma* (G968):** vv12, 16, 17; Rom 14:10; 2 Cor 5:10.
- **vow — *euchē* (G2171):** vow or prayer; Jas 5:15.
- **wills — *thelō* (G2309):** "if God wills" (v21; Jas 4:15).
- **eloquent — *logios* (G3052):** only here; **mighty — *dynatos* (G1415).**
- **fervent — *zeō* (G2204):** to boil; Rom 12:11.
- **accurately — *akribōs* (G199):** vv25, 26.
- **grace — *charis* (G5485):** "believed through grace" (v27).

- **powerfully refuted — *diakatelenchomai* (G1246):** only here.

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **God's man had a day job** — tentmaking (Henry).
2. **Encouragement fuels the work** — Timothy's news (v5).
3. **A warned man is responsible for himself** — Ezekiel 33 (v6).
4. **Even Paul was afraid** (Spurgeon; 1 Cor 2:3).
5. **Election is a reason to preach** (v10).
6. **Stay long enough to make disciples** (Guzik; v11).
7. **Gallio's bēma and Christ's** (2 Cor 5:10).
8. **We purpose, but He disposes** (Henry; v21).
9. **Zeal needs accuracy** (vv25–26).
10. **Take him aside** — Priscilla and Aquila (v26).

Cross-references: Num 6:1–21; Isa 43:2; Ezek 33:4; Matt 10:14; Luke 12:50; John 10:16; Acts 13:7, 51; 15:36; 19:1–10; 20:34; 21:23–26; Rom 1:16; 10:14–15; 12:11; 14:10; 16:3–4; 1 Cor 1:12, 14; 2:3; 3:6; 16:19; 2 Cor 5:10, 14; 11:9; Jas 4:15; 5:15; 2 Tim 2:2; 4:19.

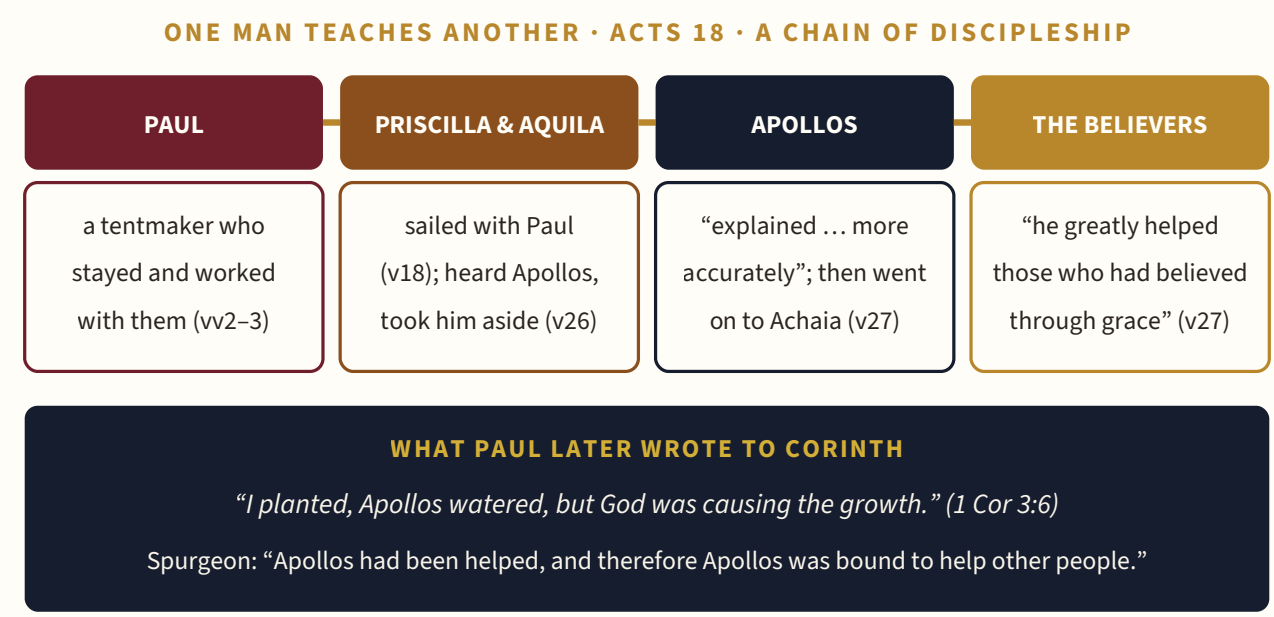
03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 18:11

"And he settled there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them."

FIGURE · ONE MAN TEACHES ANOTHER



Read left to right: Paul worked beside Priscilla and Aquila, they took Apollos aside, and Apollos went on to help the believers Paul had left in Achaia.

Example to follow — Priscilla and Aquila. They worked with their hands, opened their home, traveled with Paul, and when they heard a gifted preacher who was missing something, "they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately" (v26). Not in public. Not to win. Some of the best men I know learned more of Jesus at a kitchen table or across a cell than from a pulpit. This week I want to be that kind of friend to one man.

Sin to confess — silence from fear. The Lord said, "Do not be afraid any longer, but go on speaking and do not be silent" (v9). I have kept quiet when I should have spoken — at work, in my family, in the group when a man needed truth. I confess the fear, and I take hold of the promise: "I am with you."

Truth to face — Gallio in me. Gallio was fair and reasonable and "not concerned about any of these things" (v17). I can be polite and indifferent about the very things that will matter at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor 5:10). I don't want to be a man who looks the other way while someone gets hurt.

Command to obey — keep working, keep speaking, keep teaching. Paul made tents, reasoned every Sabbath, and stayed "a year and six months, teaching the word of God" (v11). Faithfulness is not flashy. I will show up at my job and my group this week as if both are ministry — because they are.

Promise to trust — "I have many people in this city." God has people in my city, in the facility, on my street, who are His and do not know it yet. That is why I keep speaking. Spurgeon: "If there are so many fish to be taken in the net, I will go and catch some of them." And when I make plans, I make them the way Paul did: "if God wills" (v21).

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. Paul worked a trade and preached on the Sabbath. How does my ordinary job — or my daily routine — become part of my ministry rather than a break from it? (18:1–4; Acts 20:34) *Paul's tentmaking was an important part of his ministry (Guzik).*
2. When the synagogue rejected him, Paul moved next door and kept going. When people reject my witness, do I quit, get bitter, or move next door? (18:5–8; Ezek 33:4) *Having given them over, yet he does not give over his work (Henry).*
3. The Lord told a frightened apostle, "Do not be afraid any longer … I am with you." What fear keeps me silent about Jesus, and what would change if I believed He is with me? (18:9–10; Isa 43:2) *Even Paul was not without his tendency to fear (Spurgeon).*
4. "I have many people in this city." Who in my city, my facility or my family might be one of God's people not yet called — and what is my part in calling him? (18:10; John 10:16; Rom 10:14–15) *The purpose embraces the means (Spurgeon).*
5. Gallio "was not concerned about any of these things." Where am I tempted to be fair-minded but indifferent about the things of God? (18:14–17; 2 Cor 5:10) *We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.*
6. Priscilla and Aquila took Apollos aside and taught him. Who has done that for me — and whom could I take aside, humbly and privately, this month? (18:24–28; 2 Tim 2:2) *Apollos had been helped, and therefore Apollos was bound to help other people (Spurgeon).*

Worship. The Lord stood by a tired, frightened tentmaker in the night and said, "I am with you." He had His people in Corinth before they knew His name, and He gathered them one sermon at a time. He used a Roman proconsul to keep the door open, and two humble tentmakers to sharpen a great preacher. Every man who believes, believes through grace.

Prayer. Lord Jesus, You are with me. Take away the fear that keeps me quiet, and make me go on speaking. Thank You that You have many people in this city — let me be part of how You call them. Keep me from Gallio's indifference. Make me a Priscilla-and-Aquila kind of man: hard-working, open-handed, and humble enough to take a brother aside and help him know You more accurately. I make my plans this week if You will. Amen.

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SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 19

The Word Grew Mightily in Ephesus — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

Patient teaching of the word in a dark city brings the Spirit, exposes the occult and empties the idol shops, until the name of the Lord Jesus is magnified. The name is not a charm I borrow but a Lord I belong to, and belonging to Him means burning my own books.

00 The Text

ACTS 19 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 It happened that while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul passed through the upper country and came to Ephesus, and found some disciples.

2 He said to them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And they said to him, "No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit."

3 And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" And they said, "Into John's baptism."

4 Paul said, "John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus."

5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they began speaking with tongues and prophesying.

7 There were in all about twelve men.

8 And he entered the synagogue and continued speaking out boldly for three months, reasoning and persuading them about the kingdom of God.

9 But when some were becoming hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of the Way before the people, he withdrew from them and took away the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus.

10 This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks.

11 God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul,

12 so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out.

13 But also some of the Jewish exorcists, who went from place to place, attempted to name over those who had the evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, "I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches."

14 Seven sons of one Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this.

15 And the evil spirit answered and said to them, "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?"

16 And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them and subdued all of them and overpowered them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded.

17 This became known to all, both Jews and Greeks, who lived in Ephesus; and fear fell upon them all and the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified.

18 Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices.

19 And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.

20 So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.

21 Now after these things were finished, Paul purposed in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem after he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."

22 And having sent into Macedonia two of those who ministered to him, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.

23 About that time there occurred no small disturbance concerning the Way.

24 For a man named Demetrius, a silversmith, who made silver shrines of Artemis, was bringing no little business to the craftsmen;

25 these he gathered together with the workmen of similar trades, and said, "Men, you know that our prosperity depends upon this business.

26 "You see and hear that not only in Ephesus, but in almost all of Asia, this Paul has persuaded and turned away a considerable number of people, saying that gods made with hands are no gods at all.

27 "Not only is there danger that this trade of ours fall into disrepute, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis be regarded as worthless and that she whom all of Asia and the world worship will even be dethroned from her magnificence."

28 When they heard this and were filled with rage, they began crying out, saying, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

29 The city was filled with the confusion, and they rushed with one accord into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia.

30 And when Paul wanted to go into the assembly, the disciples would not let him.

31 Also some of the Asiarchs who were friends of his sent to him and repeatedly urged him not to venture into the theater.

32 So then, some were shouting one thing and some another, for the assembly was in confusion and the majority did not know for what reason they had come together.

33 Some of the crowd concluded it was Alexander, since the Jews had put him forward; and having motioned with his hand, Alexander was intending to make a defense to the assembly.

34 But when they recognized that he was a Jew, a single outcry arose from them all as they shouted for about two hours, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

35 After quieting the crowd, the town clerk said, "Men of Ephesus, what man is there after all who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of the image which fell down from heaven?

36 "So, since these are undeniable facts, you ought to keep calm and to do nothing rash.

37 "For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess.

38 "So then, if Demetrius and the craftsmen who are with him have a complaint against any man, the courts are in session and proconsuls are available; let them bring charges against one another.

39 "But if you want anything beyond this, it shall be settled in the lawful assembly.

40 "For indeed we are in danger of being accused of a riot in connection with today's events, since there is no real cause for it, and in this connection we will be unable to account for this disorderly gathering."

41 After saying this he dismissed the assembly.

Marked in the text

- **v2** “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed” — Promise / blessing
- **v4** “the baptism of repentance” — Time / place / contrast
- **v4** “believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus” — Command / instruction
- **v5** “baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” — Command / instruction
- **v6** “the Holy Spirit came on them” — God — His character & actions
- **v8** “speaking out boldly for three months” — Time / place / contrast
- **v8** “the kingdom of God” — Promise / blessing
- **v9** “hardened and disobedient” — Sin / warning
- **v9** “reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus” — Time / place / contrast
- **v10** “all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord” — Promise / blessing
- **v11** “God was performing extraordinary miracles” — God — His character & actions
- **v13** “I adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches” — Sin / warning
- **v15** “I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?” — Sin / warning
- **v17** “the name of the Lord Jesus was being magnified” — God — His character & actions
- **v18** “confessing and disclosing their practices” — Command / instruction
- **v19** “began burning them in the sight of everyone” — Command / instruction
- **v19** “fifty thousand pieces of silver” — Time / place / contrast
- **v20** “the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing” — Promise / blessing
- **v21** “I must also see Rome” — Time / place / contrast
- **v25** “our prosperity depends upon this business” — Sin / warning
- **v26** “gods made with hands are no gods at all” — God — His character & actions
- **v32** “the majority did not know for what reason they had come together” — Sin / warning
- **v36** “you ought to keep calm and to do nothing rash” — Command / instruction
- **v28** “Great is Artemis of the Ephesians” — Sin / warning (every occurrence)
- **v12** “evil spirit” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v32** “assembly” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

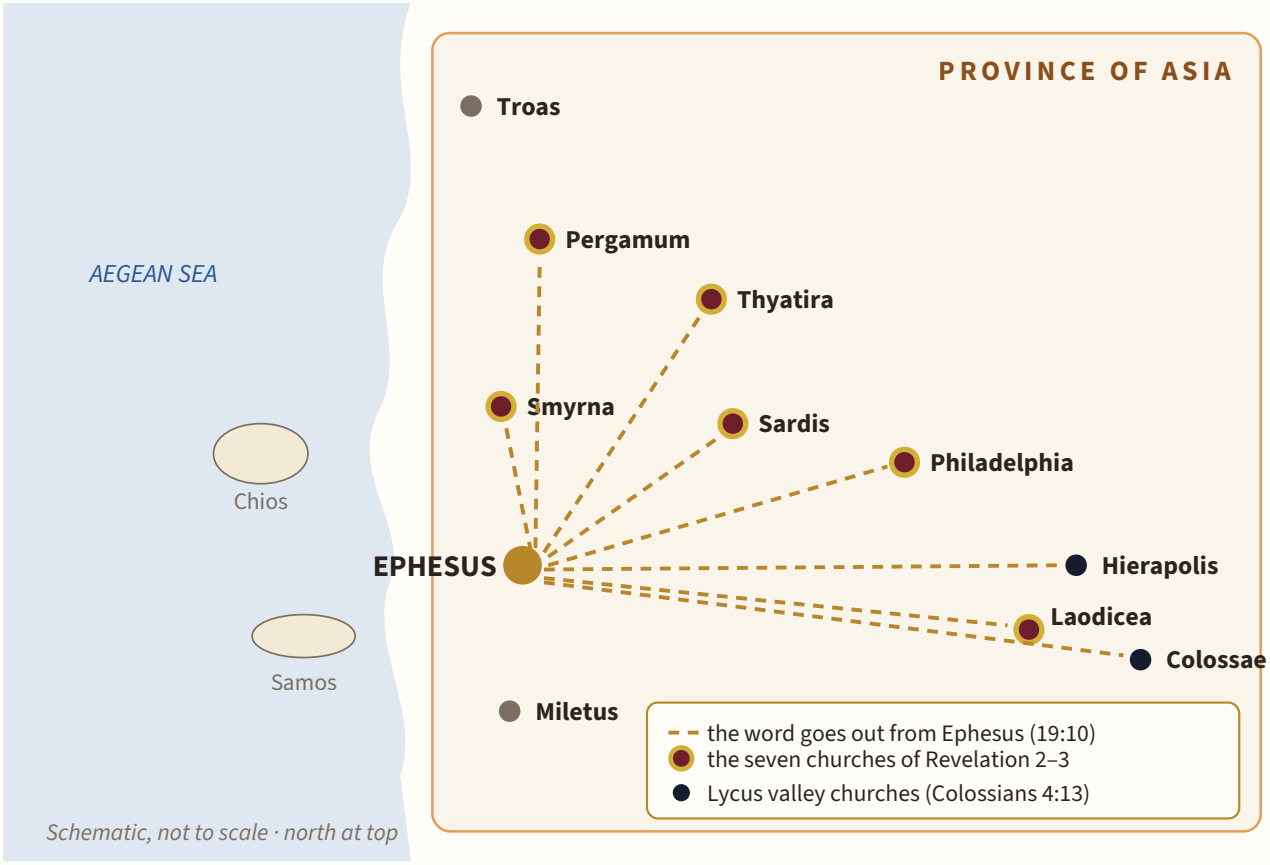
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 19:10

"This took place for two years, so that all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks."

FIGURE · EPHESUS AND THE PROVINCE OF ASIA



From the hall of Tyrannus "all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord" (19:10); the dashed lines show how the message could reach the cities later addressed in Revelation 2–3 and the Lycus valley.

Setting. While Apollos is in Corinth, Paul comes overland to Ephesus, the chief city of the province of Asia (v1). He spends three months in the synagogue (v8) and two years in the school of Tyrannus (v10). After the bonfire of magic books he plans to go through Macedonia and Achaia to Jerusalem and then Rome (v21), and sends Timothy and Erastus ahead (v22). The chapter ends in the city's theater, with a riot over Artemis and a town clerk who sends everyone home (vv23–41).

Structure:

- vv1–7 — **John's disciples:** "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" (v2); "Into John's baptism" (v3); John pointed to Jesus (v4); baptized in Jesus' name, hands laid on them, the Spirit comes — tongues and prophesying (vv5–6); about twelve men (v7).
- vv8–12 — **the hall of Tyrannus:** three months in the synagogue, the kingdom of God (v8); some harden and speak evil of the Way; Paul withdraws to the school of Tyrannus (v9); two years — all Asia hears (v10); extraordinary miracles, handkerchiefs and aprons (vv11–12).
- vv13–20 — **the name and the books:** Jewish exorcists try the name of Jesus (v13); the seven sons of Sceva (v14); "I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?" (v15); beaten and fleeing naked (v16); fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus magnified (v17); believers confess (v18); magic books burned — fifty thousand pieces of silver (v19); the word grows and prevails (v20).
- vv21–34 — **the riot:** Paul purposes in the Spirit to go to Jerusalem and Rome (vv21–22); "no small disturbance concerning the Way" (v23); Demetrius and the silversmiths (vv24–27); "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" (v28); the theater, Gaius and Aristarchus seized; Paul held back by the disciples and the Asiarchs (vv29–31); confusion (v32); Alexander shouted down; two hours of chanting (vv33–34).
- vv35–41 — **the town clerk:** the city is guardian of the temple and the image from heaven (v35); keep calm (v36); these men are not temple robbers (v37); use the courts (vv38–39); the danger of being charged with a riot (v40); he dismisses the assembly (v41).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "Paul" ×10 — vv1, 4, 6, 11, 13, 15, 21, 26, 29, 30.
- "Lord" ×5 — vv5, 10, 13, 17, 20 — always the Lord Jesus or "the word of the Lord."
- "Ephesus / Ephesians" ×7 — vv1, 17, 26, 28, 34, 35 (×2).
- "Jesus" ×6 — vv4, 5, 13 (×2), 15, 17.
- "baptized / baptism" ×5 — vv3 (×2), 4 (×2), 5.
- "Artemis" ×5 — vv24, 27, 28, 34, 35; "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" ×2 — vv28, 34.
- "assembly" ×5 — vv30, 32, 33, 39, 41.
- "know / knows / known / recognize" ×6 — vv15 (×2), 17, 25, 32, 35.
- "name" ×4 — vv5, 13 (×2), 17; "evil spirit(s)" ×4 — vv12, 13, 15, 16.
- "Asia" ×4 — vv10, 22, 26, 27; "Jews" ×4 — vv10, 17, 33, 34.
- "gods / goddess" ×4 — vv26 (×2), 27, 37; "business / trade / prosperity" ×4 — vv24, 25 (×2), 27.
- "reasoning / persuading / persuaded" ×4 — vv8 (×2), 9, 26.
- "Holy Spirit" ×3 — vv2 (×2), 6; plus "in the Spirit" (v21).
- "the Way" ×2 — vv9, 23; "the word of the Lord" ×2 — vv10, 20; "theater" ×2 — vv29, 31; "confusion" ×2 — vv29, 32.

Contrasts: John's baptism of repentance ⟷ baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus (vv3–5). The synagogue ⟷ the school of Tyrannus (vv8–9). Paul's hands ⟷ the exorcists' borrowed formula (vv11–13). "Jesus I know, and Paul I know" ⟷ "but who are you?" (v15). Hidden practices ⟷ confessed and burned in the sight of everyone (vv18–19). The word that grows and prevails (v20) ⟷ the shout that lasts two hours and changes nothing (v34). Gods made with hands ⟷ the living God (v26). The disciples' gathering ⟷ the theater's "assembly" that did not know why it had come together (v32).

Shape of the chapter: two halves. In vv1–20 the word goes on the offensive — twelve men, a lecture hall, a province, the occult broken — and ends in a summary: "the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing." In vv21–41 the world pushes back — trade, temple and mob — and God quiets it through a pagan official. The hinge is v21: Paul looks past Ephesus to Jerusalem and Rome.

Chapter theme (my words): The name of the Lord Jesus is not a spell; it is a Person who sends His Spirit, breaks the grip of darkness and empties the idol shops. When the word is taught patiently, sins come into the light, costly things get burned, and a whole region hears.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 19:15

"And the evil spirit answered and said to them,

"⚠ I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?""

FIGURE · THE SPIRIT COMES IN ACTS

THE SPIRIT COMES IN ACTS · FOUR SCENES, FOUR KINDS OF PEOPLE

	JERUSALEM Acts 2:1–4	SAMARIA Acts 8:14–17	CAESAREA Acts 10:44–46	EPHESUS Acts 19:1–7
WHO	Jews gathered at Pentecost	Samaritans baptized by Philip	Gentiles in Cornelius' house	about twelve men who knew John's
HOW	suddenly, from heaven, on all	Peter and John lay on hands	"while Peter was still speaking"	baptized in Jesus' name; Paul's hands
SIGN	"other tongues" (2:4)	no sign named by Luke	"speaking with tongues" (10:46)	tongues and prophesying (19:6)

Acts 1:8 — "in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth"
Each new circle receives the same Spirit, with the apostles there to witness it.

Read across: Luke shows the Spirit coming to Jews, Samaritans, Gentiles and John's disciples — the widening circles of Acts 1:8, with an apostle present each time.

Who were the "disciples" of verse 1? They knew John's baptism of repentance but had not heard that the Spirit had been given (v2). Guzik: "Paul points out that John's baptism was one of repentance, not necessarily faith unto salvation" — he sees a partial faith not yet resting on Jesus. Henry treats them as untaught disciples to be instructed patiently. Either way, Paul did what Priscilla and Aquila had done for Apollos (18:26): he explained the way of God more accurately and pointed them to Jesus.

Is this a "second blessing" after salvation? Pentecostal and charismatic friends often read v2 (especially the KJV "since ye believed") as a second experience after conversion. The NASB's "when you believed" and Paul's follow-up question (v3) point the other way: these men had not yet believed in Jesus at all, only in the One John said was coming. When they believed and were baptized in His name, the Spirit came. Spurgeon applies the question to believers in a different sense — not a second experience, but continual receiving: "we are not fountains but reservoirs, not creators but receivers." I hold that every believer receives the Spirit at faith (Ephesians 1:13), and every believer needs to keep being filled (Ephesians 5:18).

Why tongues here? Luke shows the Spirit's coming at each new frontier of Acts 1:8 — Jews (2:4), Samaritans (8:17), Gentiles (10:46), and here a group still tied to John — with an apostle present to witness it. Guzik says simply that "they were filled with the Holy Spirit, and received His gifts." Teachers differ on whether tongues continue today; this text does not settle that question, and it does not make tongues the test of every believer.

Why handkerchiefs and aprons? Luke calls these "extraordinary" miracles (v11) — not the normal pattern. Guzik (with Bruce) thinks they were Paul's work rags, and says "God will stoop down to meet us even in our crude superstitions." Henry insists "It was not Paul that wrought them." This is not a model for selling prayer cloths; it is God confirming His word in a city soaked in magic.

What went wrong with the sons of Sceva? They had the right name and no relationship. Guzik: "The Jewish exorcists failed because they had no personal relationship with Jesus." Sproul's sermon (as Ligonier summarizes it): "attempting to manipulate the power of God will be met with disastrous consequences." The demon knew Jesus and knew Paul. The question "but who are you?" is the one every religious man must answer.

Why burn the books instead of selling them? Selling them would have passed the poison on and kept the profit. Henry: "Those that truly repent of sin will keep themselves as far as possible from the occasions of it." Guzik: the spells' power "was in their secrecy, which was renounced in the telling." Spurgeon: the gospel "finds out the particular sin of that place, and it is quite sure to expose it."

What drove the riot? Money first, religion second. Demetrius says it plainly: "our prosperity depends upon this business" (v25), and only then mentions the goddess (v27). Henry: "It is natural for men to be jealous for that, whether right or wrong, by which they get their wealth." Sproul's sermon starts further down: "As fallen sinners, we are predisposed to idolatry." Every culture has its Artemis, and every Artemis has a trade around it.

Why does Luke tell us about the town clerk? To show that the gospel broke no law. Guzik: "Luke wanted to show that rational people saw nothing to fear or oppose in Christianity." The theater "assembly" (*ekklēsia*) was confused; the church is the assembly that knows why it has come together.

Word study (Greek):

- **receive / believed — *lambanō* (G2983) / *pisteuō* (G4100):** "did you receive … when you believed" (v2).
- **repentance — *metanoia* (G3341):** John's baptism of repentance (v4; compare 20:21).
- **hardened — *sklērynō* (G4645):** an ongoing hardening that turns to slander (v9).
- **the Way — *hodos* (G3598):** the church's name for the faith (vv9, 23).
- **school — *scholē* (G4981):** a lecture hall; its only New Testament use (v9).
- **handkerchiefs — *soudarion* (G4676) / aprons — *simikinthion* (G4612):** sweat-cloths and work aprons (v12).
- **exorcists — *exorkistēs* (G1845) / adjure — *horkizō* (G3726):** binding spirits by oath (v13).
- **confessing — *exomologeō* (G1843):** to acknowledge openly (v18).
- **magic — *periergos* (G4021):** "curious arts" (KJV); "busybodies" in 1 Tim 5:13.
- **growing / prevailing — *auxanō* (G837) / *ischyō* (G2480):** the word keeps growing and winning (v20; compare v16).
- **shrines — *naos* (G3485) / Artemis (G735):** silver models of the goddess's temple (v24).
- **assembly — *ekklēsia* (G1577):** used of the theater crowd (vv32, 39, 41).
- **temple guardian — *neōkoros* (G3511):** Ephesus's proud title (v35).
- **town clerk — *grammateus* (G1122):** the city's chief officer (v35).

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **The question was about the first blessing, not a second** (vv2–3).
2. **We are reservoirs, not fountains** (Spurgeon).
3. **The Spirit's coming widens like Acts 1:8** — Jews, Samaritans, Gentiles, John's disciples.
4. **When the door closes, rent a hall** (vv9–10).
5. **God gets the glory for the cloths** (Henry, Guzik).
6. **A borrowed name will not save you** — "but who are you?" (v15).
7. **Secrets lose their power when spoken** (v18).
8. **Real repentance burns the books** (v19).
9. **The word grows like a living thing** — growing and prevailing (v20).
10. **The gospel touches the economy** (v25).

Cross-references: Exod 20:3–4; Deut 18:10–12; Isa 40:18–20; Matt 6:24; Acts 1:5, 8; 2:4; 8:14–20; 10:44–46; 18:19–28; 20:21, 31; 1 Cor 8:4–6; 16:8–9; 2 Cor 1:8–9; Eph 1:13–14; 5:11, 18; 1 Tim 1:3; 1 John 5:21; Rev 2:4.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 19:18

"Many also of those who had believed kept coming,
confessing and disclosing their practices."

FIGURE · TWO ASSEMBLIES IN EPHESUS

TWO ASSEMBLIES IN ONE CITY · BOTH CALLED ἐκκλησία

THE DISCIPLES (vv8–20)	THE THEATER (vv23–41)
gathered by the word of the Lord (v10)	gathered by a silversmith's speech (v25)
reasoning daily, two years (vv9–10)	shouting for about two hours (v34)
"the name of the Lord Jesus" magnified (v17)	"Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" (vv28, 34)
burn their own costly books (v19)	fear for their prosperity (vv25–27)
know whom they have believed (v18)	most "did not know" why they came (v32)
the word keeps growing (v20)	the assembly is dismissed (v41)

Luke calls the mob an ekklēsia in vv32, 39 and 41 — the word the New Testament uses for the church.

Compare the two gatherings line by line: one grows around the word and the name of Jesus, the other shouts for an idol and goes home.

Example to follow — Paul in the hall of Tyrannus. When some hardened and spoke evil of the Way, Paul didn't argue forever and didn't quit. He moved next door and taught every day for two years. Most of the good I have seen in the men I serve came the same way — not from one big moment, but from showing up week after week with the Book open. I will keep my table going this week, even if only two show up.

Sin to confess — borrowing a name I don't live under. The sons of Sceva knew the right words: "by Jesus whom Paul preaches." I can talk like a Christian, pray like a Christian and teach like a Christian while trying to use God instead of obey Him. Sproul's warning lands on me: "Jesus is not a force to be controlled but a Savior whom we must receive and to whom we must submit." I confess the places where I have used His name to get my way.

Command to obey — confess and burn. The new believers came "confessing and disclosing their practices" and burned their books "in the sight of everyone." For the men I walk with — and for me — the "books" might be a phone number, an app, a stash, a hidden account, a set of old letters. Secret things keep their power in secret. This week I will bring one hidden thing into the light with a brother I trust, and get rid of it, even if it costs me.

Truth to face — my Demetrius. “Our prosperity depends upon this business.” There is always a trade built around an idol, and sometimes I am in it. If following Jesus would cost me money, comfort or reputation, I need to know which god I really serve (Matthew 6:24).

Promise to trust — the word prevails. “So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.” Not my cleverness, not my program. The same word that broke the magic of Ephesus can break the chains in a cell block, a halfway house or my own living room.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. The twelve men had a real start — repentance — but did not yet know Jesus or His Spirit. Where might my faith be sincere but incomplete? (19:1–7; 18:24–26) *Into what then were you baptized?*
2. Paul left the synagogue when hearts hardened and found another door. When a door closes in my ministry or my family, do I quit or look for the next hall? (19:8–10; 1 Cor 16:8–9) *A wide door … and many adversaries.*
3. The sons of Sceva used Jesus’ name without knowing Him. In what ways do I use Christian words or habits as a charm instead of trusting a Person? (19:13–17) *Jesus is not a force to be controlled (Sproul).*
4. What are my “magic books” — the things I keep in secret, or keep around “just in case,” that I need to confess and burn? (19:18–19; Deut 18:10–12) *True repentance cuts off the occasions of sin (Henry).*
5. Demetrius said, “our prosperity depends upon this business.” Where would obeying Jesus cost me money, and what am I doing about it? (19:24–27; Matt 6:24) *Men are jealous for what gives them their wealth (Henry).*
6. The crowd shouted for two hours and most did not know why they had come. What crowd or cause do I get swept into without thinking? (19:28–34) *Noise and clamour and popular fury (Henry).*

Worship. The Lord Jesus sends His Spirit to men who had not even heard there was a Holy Spirit. His name is magnified in a city of magic; demons know Him; idols fall before Him without a sermon against them. His word grows like a living thing and prevails, and He guards His servants even through a pagan clerk.

Prayer. Lord Jesus, I don’t want to know about You the way the sons of Sceva did; I want to belong to You. Fill me with Your Spirit again today — I am a reservoir, not a fountain. Show me my magic books, and give me the courage to confess them and burn them in the light. Break the hold of whatever Artemis I have been shouting for. Let Your word grow mightily and prevail in me, in my home, and in the men You have given me. Amen.

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SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 20

The Whole Purpose of God — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

A pastor who held nothing back hands his people to God and to the word of His grace, and charges their shepherds to guard a flock that God bought with His own blood. Whatever my life costs, the point is to finish the course Jesus gave me — awake, humble, generous and faithful.

00 The Text

ACTS 20 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 After the uproar had ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and when he had exhorted them and taken his leave of them, he left to go to Macedonia.

2 When he had gone through those districts and had given them much exhortation, he came to Greece.

3 And there he spent three months, and when a plot was formed against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia.

4 And he was accompanied by Sopater of Berea, the son of Pyrrhus, and by Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia.

5 But these had gone on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas.

6 We sailed from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and came to them at Troas within five days; and there we stayed seven days.

7 On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight.

8 There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together.

9 And there was a young man named Eutychus sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep; and as Paul kept on talking, he was overcome by sleep and fell down from the third floor and was picked up dead.

10 But Paul went down and fell upon him, and after embracing him, he said, "Do not be troubled, for his life is in him."

11 When he had gone back up and had broken the bread and eaten, he talked with them a long while until daybreak, and then left.

12 They took away the boy alive, and were greatly comforted.

13 But we, going ahead to the ship, set sail for Assos, intending from there to take Paul on board; for so he had arranged it, intending himself to go by land.

14 And when he met us at Assos, we took him on board and came to Mitylene.

15 Sailing from there, we arrived the following day opposite Chios; and the next day we crossed over to Samos; and the day following we came to Miletus.

16 For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost.

17 From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church.

18 And when they had come to him, he said to them, "You yourselves know, from the first day that I set foot in Asia, how I was with you the whole time,

19 serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews;

20 how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you publicly and from house to house,

21 solemnly testifying to both Jews and Greeks of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

22 "And now, behold, bound by the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there,

23 except that the Holy Spirit solemnly testifies to me in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions await me.

24 "But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God.

25 "And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about preaching the kingdom, will no longer see my face.

26 "Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.

27 "For I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God.

28 "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

29 "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;

30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

31 "Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears.

32 "And now I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

33 "I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothes.

34 "You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my own needs and to the men who were with me.

35 "In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

36 When he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all.

37 And they began to weep aloud and embraced Paul, and repeatedly kissed him,

38 grieving especially over the word which he had spoken, that they would not see his face again. And they were accompanying him to the ship.

Marked in the text

- **v7** "On the first day of the week" — Time / place / contrast
- **v7** "gathered together to break bread" — Command / instruction
- **v7** "until midnight" — Time / place / contrast
- **v9** "fell down from the third floor and was picked up dead" — Sin / warning
- **v10** "his life is in him" — Promise / blessing
- **v12** "They took away the boy alive" — Promise / blessing
- **v16** "he was hurrying to be in Jerusalem" — Time / place / contrast
- **v19** "serving the Lord with all humility and with tears" — Command / instruction
- **v20** "publicly and from house to house" — Time / place / contrast
- **v21** "repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ" — Command / instruction
- **v22** "bound by the Spirit" — God — His character & actions

- **v23** “bonds and afflictions await me” — Sin / warning
- **v24** “I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself” — Command / instruction
- **v24** “finish my course” — Time / place / contrast
- **v24** “the gospel of the grace of God” — God — His character & actions
- **v26** “I am innocent of the blood of all men” — Sin / warning
- **v27** “the whole purpose of God” — God — His character & actions
- **v28** “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock” — Command / instruction
- **v28** “the Holy Spirit has made you overseers” — God — His character & actions
- **v28** “which He purchased with His own blood” — God — His character & actions
- **v29** “savage wolves will come in among you” — Sin / warning
- **v30** “speaking perverse things” — Sin / warning
- **v31** “be on the alert” — Command / instruction
- **v32** “I commend you to God and to the word of His grace” — Promise / blessing
- **v32** “able to build you up and to give you the inheritance” — Promise / blessing
- **v35** “It is more blessed to give than to receive” — Promise / blessing
- **v36** “he knelt down and prayed with them all” — Command / instruction
- **v19** “tears” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v28** “flock” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

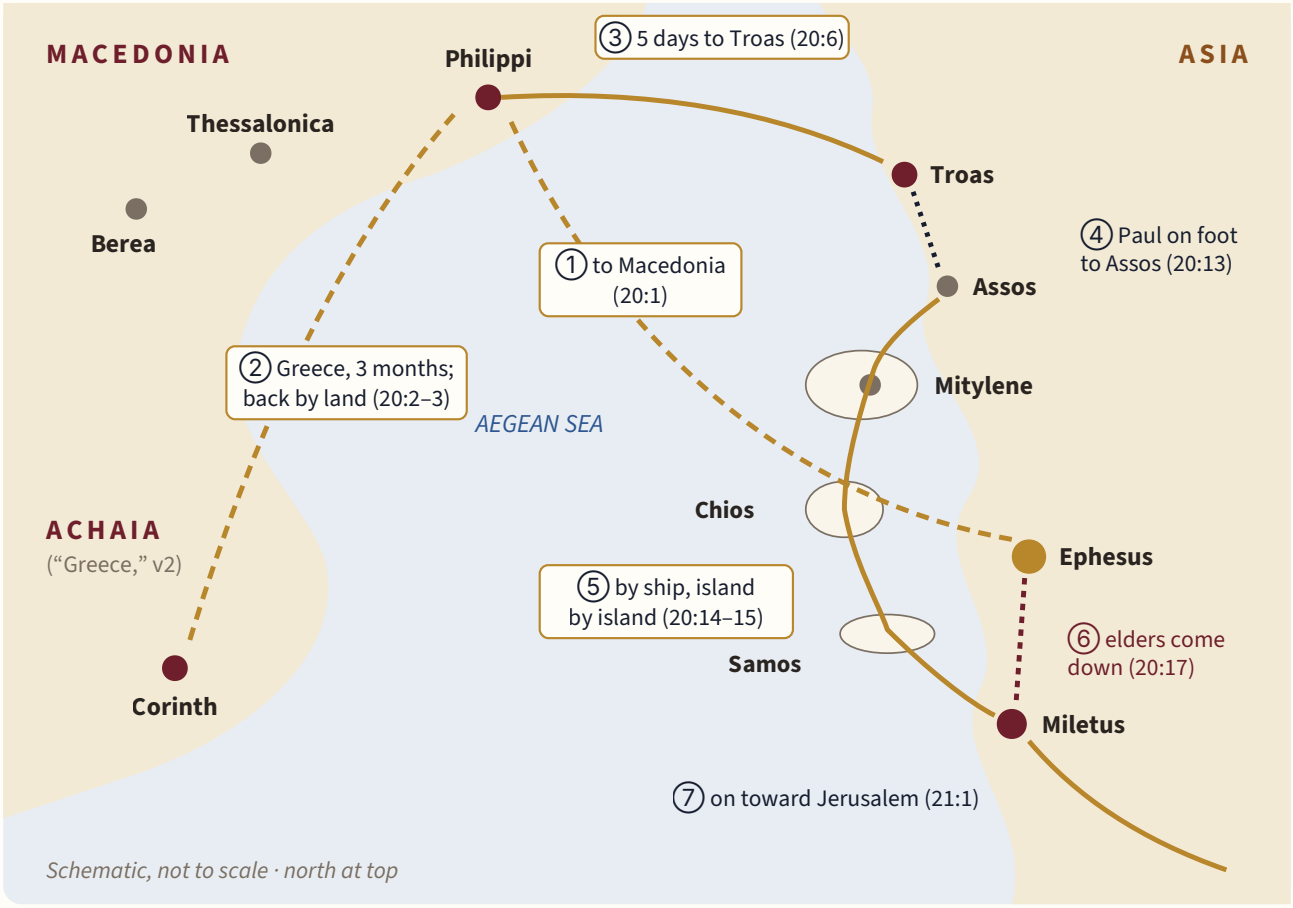
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 20:7

"On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight."

FIGURE · PAUL'S ROUTE, ACTS 20



Follow the numbers: from Ephesus to Macedonia and Greece, back by land, across to Troas, then island by island down the coast to Miletus, where the Ephesian elders come to meet him.

Setting. After the riot, Paul says goodbye to the disciples in Ephesus and goes to Macedonia and Greece, where he spends three months (vv1–3). A plot changes his route; he goes back through Macedonia with seven companions from the churches (vv3–4). Luke rejoins him ("we," v5) at Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread; they reach Troas in five days and stay seven (v6). On the first day of the week Paul preaches until midnight and Eutychus falls and is raised (vv7–12). Then Assos, Mitylene, Chios, Samos and Miletus (vv13–15), where Paul calls the Ephesian elders and gives his farewell (vv16–38).

Structure:

- vv1–6 — **the journey:** Macedonia, much exhortation, Greece three months (vv1–3); a plot; the companions listed (vv3–4); Troas (vv5–6).
- vv7–12 — **Troas:** the first day of the week, breaking bread, Paul talks until midnight (v7); many lamps in the upper room (v8); Eutychus sinks into sleep and falls from the third floor — picked up dead (v9); "his life is in him" (v10); bread broken, talk till daybreak (v11); the boy alive, all comforted (v12).
- vv13–21 — **looking back:** Paul goes by land to Assos (vv13–14); island by island to Miletus (v15); hurrying for Pentecost (v16); the elders called (v17); "You yourselves know … how I was with you" — humility, tears, trials (vv18–19); nothing held back, publicly and house to house (v20); repentance toward God and faith in Christ (v21).
- vv22–24 — **looking ahead:** bound by the Spirit, not knowing what awaits (v22); bonds and afflictions (v23); "I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself" — finish my course (v24).
- vv25–31 — **the charge:** you will not see my face again (v25); innocent of the blood of all men (v26); the whole purpose of God (v27); be on guard — overseers, shepherd the church bought with His own blood (v28); savage wolves and perverse men (vv29–30); be on the alert — three years of tears (v31).
- vv32–38 — **the commendation:** to God and the word of His grace (v32); no one's silver or gold (v33); these hands (v34); help the weak — "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (v35); prayer, weeping, embraces, the ship (vv36–38).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "day / days" ×12 — vv6 (×3), 7 (×2), 15 (×3), 16, 18, 26, 31 — Luke's careful travel log.
- "Paul" ×7 — vv1, 7, 9, 10, 13, 16, 37.
- "know / knowing" ×5 — vv18, 22, 25, 29, 34; "You yourselves know" ×2 — vv18, 34.
- "God" ×5 — vv21, 24, 27, 28, 32.
- "Lord" ×4 — vv19, 21, 24, 35 — three times "the Lord Jesus."
- "testify / testifying / testifies" ×4 — vv21, 23, 24, 26.
- "Spirit" ×3 — vv22, 23, 28.
- "Jews" ×3 — vv3, 19, 21; "Asia" ×3 — vv4, 16, 18; "bread" ×3 — vv6, 7, 11.
- "talking / talked" ×3 — vv7, 9, 11.
- "shrink" ×2 — vv20, 27; "blood" ×2 — vv26, 28; "grace" ×2 — vv24, 32.
- "flock" ×2 — vv28, 29; "tears" ×2 — vv19, 31; "house" ×2 — v20.
- "see my face / his face" ×2 — vv25, 38; "Jerusalem" ×2 — vv16, 22; "church" ×2 — vv17, 28.

Contrasts: Midnight ⟷ daybreak (vv7, 11). Picked up dead ⟷ taken away alive (vv9, 12). Publicly ⟷ house to house (v20). Jews ⟷ Greeks (v21). Not knowing what will happen ⟷ knowing that bonds await (vv22–23). My life ⟷ my course (v24). Innocent of blood (v26) ⟷ purchased with His own blood (v28). Wolves from outside ⟷ men from among your own selves (vv29–30). Coveting silver ⟷ working with these hands (vv33–34). Giving ⟷ receiving (v35).

Shape of the chapter: a travel log (1–16) wrapped around one night at Troas, then one long speech (18–35) that moves from past to future to charge to commendation, and a short, tearful ending (36–38). The two scenes mirror

each other: at Troas a young man falls asleep and dies under the word; at Miletus Paul tells the elders to stay awake (“be on the alert,” v31) or the flock will be torn.

Chapter theme (my words): Paul finishes his work in Asia the way he did it — holding nothing back, at any cost, for a church that belongs to God. He hands the shepherds a charge and hands the church to the word of grace, and he goes toward chains with his eyes open.

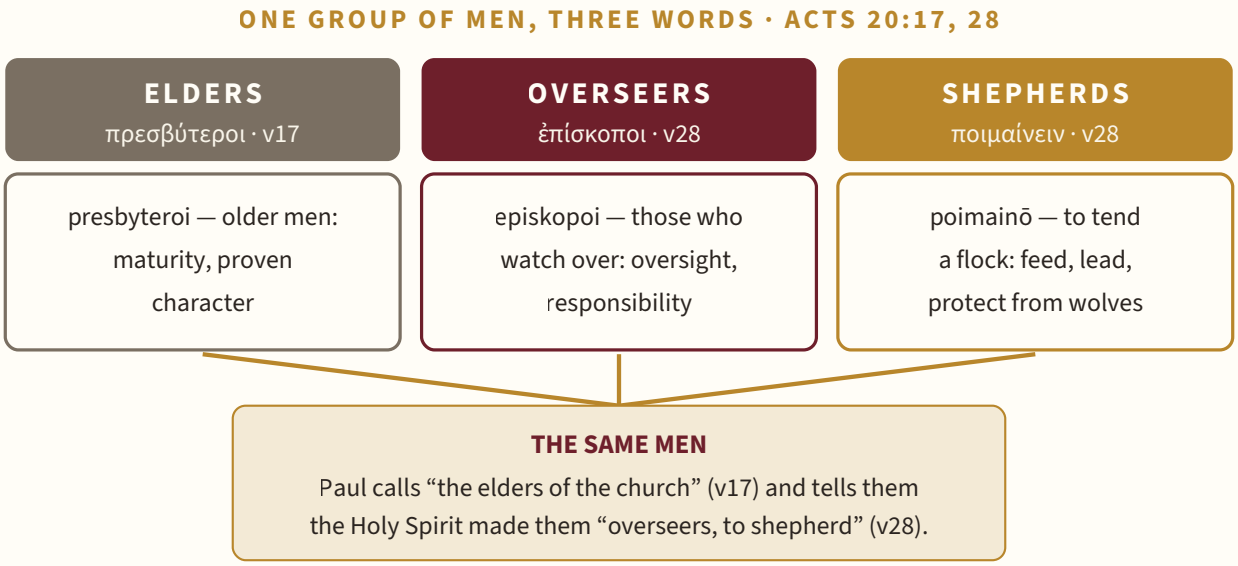
02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 20:27

"For I did not shrink from declaring to you △the whole purpose of God."

FIGURE · ELDERS, OVERSEERS, SHEPHERDS



Notice that the men Paul calls "elders" in verse 17 are the same men he calls "overseers" and tells to "shepherd" in verse 28.

Why list the seven companions (v4)? They come from churches across Macedonia, Galatia and Asia. Guzik (with Longenecker) sees them as delegates carrying the collection for Jerusalem — "a symbol of unity that would help his Gentile converts realize their debt." Paul's letters confirm the collection (1 Corinthians 16:1–3; Romans 15:25–26), though Luke only hints at it here (see 24:17).

What was the gathering at Troas? "On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread" (v7). Guzik's commentary calls it "the first certain example we have of Christians making a practice to gather together on the first day of the week." Henry speaks of believers meeting on the Lord's day to break bread. Luke does not stop to define "break bread," but it names the reason the church gathered.

Did Eutychus really die? Luke says he "was picked up dead" (v9), not "as if dead." Paul's "his life is in him" (v10) is the word of a man who has just seen life return, as when Elisha stretched himself on the Shunammite's son (2 Kings 4:34). Henry and Sproul both draw the lesson for hearers: stay awake to the word. Henry: "Let the punishment of Eutychus strike an awe upon us." But the story ends in comfort, not scolding: "They took away the boy alive, and were greatly comforted."

Why the long speech at Miletus? It is Paul's only address in Acts to Christian leaders, and it sounds like Paul's letters to Timothy. He defends his ministry (vv18–21), faces his future (vv22–24), charges the elders (vv25–31) and commends them (vv32–35). Guzik takes "from house to house" to show that the Ephesian church met in homes.

What is "the whole purpose of God"? Not every fact in Scripture but God's whole saving plan, told without trimming. Spurgeon: "That is no gospel which has not Christ in it," and "Holy living must be preached, as well as happy living." Henry: "The gospel is the counsel of God." Paul's word "shrink" (*hypostellō*) twice (vv20, 27) shows the danger: leaving out the hard parts.

Why "innocent of the blood of all men"? It is Ezekiel's watchman language (Ezekiel 33:6): the watchman who warns is clear; the one who keeps silent is guilty. Guzik: "Paul could leave them with a clear conscience because he knew that he taught them the whole counsel of God." Spurgeon took the same words for a farewell sermon of his own in 1859.

Elders, overseers, shepherds. Paul calls "the elders" (v17) and tells them the Holy Spirit made them "overseers" to "shepherd" (v28). In this text the three words describe the same men. Churches organize leadership differently, but every pattern has to answer to this: they are made by the Holy Spirit, they watch over themselves first (Henry: "take heed to themselves in the first place"), and the flock is not theirs.

"Purchased with His own blood." The text the interlinear shows reads "the church of God," and so the blood is God's own — a strong statement that Jesus is God. Some manuscripts read "the church of the Lord," and some scholars translate "with the blood of His own [Son]." Either way, Guzik is right: "the church doesn't belong to them, it belongs to Jesus who purchased it with His own blood."

Who are the wolves? False teachers from outside (v29) and from inside (v30). Guzik: "These wolves would be vicious." Henry: "these he calls grievous wolves." History bears Paul out: in 1 Timothy 1:3 Paul has to leave Timothy at Ephesus to stop "strange doctrines," and by Revelation 2:4 the church had resisted false apostles but "left your first love."

The saying of Jesus (v35). "It is more blessed to give than to receive" appears in no Gospel; Paul preserved it. He lived it — working with his own hands (v34) — and Guzik draws the rule for leaders: "Without a heart of sacrifice there can be no real effective, eternal ministry."

Word study (Greek):

- **first day of the week — *mia tōn sabbatōn* (G1520, G4521):** the resurrection day (v7).
- **break — *klaō* (G2806) / bread — *artos* (G740):** used only of breaking bread (vv7, 11; 2:46).
- **Eutychus — *Eutychos* (G2161):** "fortunate"; window — *thyris* (G2376); embracing — *symperilambanō* (G4843).
- **elders — *presbyteros* (G4245):** the men Paul calls to Miletus (v17).
- **humility — *tapeinophrosynē* (G5012):** lowliness of mind (v19; Phil 2:3).
- **shrink from — *hypostellō* (G5288):** to hold back (vv20, 27).
- **solemnly testify — *diamartyromai* (G1263):** earnest witness (vv21, 23, 24).
- **bound — *deō* (G1210):** bound in spirit before bound in chains (v22; 21:11, 13).
- **course — *dromos* (G1408):** a race to finish (v24; 2 Tim 4:7).
- **purpose — *boulē* (G1012):** God's resolved plan (v27; 2:23).
- **be on guard — *prosechō* (G4337):** take heed (v28).
- **overseers — *episkopos* (G1985) / shepherd — *poimainō* (G4165) / flock — *poimnion* (G4168):** one office, pastoral work (v28).
- **purchased — *peripoieō* (G4046) / blood — *haima* (G129):** acquired for Himself at the price of blood (v28).
- **savage — *barys* (G926) / wolves — *lykos* (G3074):** heavy, fierce (v29).

- **be on the alert — *grēgoreō* (G1127) / admonish — *noutheteō* (G3560):** stay awake; warn with tears (v31).
- **commend — *paratithēmi* (G3908) / build up — *oikodomeō* (G3618) / inheritance — *klēronomia* (G2817):** entrusted to God and His word (v32).

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **The church met on the day the Lord rose** (v7).
2. **Lucky had nothing to do with it** — "his life is in him" (vv9–10).
3. **Stay awake for the word** (Henry, Sproul).
4. **Public and house to house** (v20).
5. **Not shrinking is the test** — *hypostellō* twice (vv20, 27).
6. **Finish well, not long** (v24).
7. **The whole counsel includes duty** (Spurgeon).
8. **Elders, overseers, shepherds — one office** (vv17, 28).
9. **The flock has an Owner** — bought with His own blood (v28).
10. **Giving is the Lord's own word** (v35).

Cross-references: 2 Kings 4:32–35; Ezek 33:1–9; Matt 7:15; Luke 22:19; 23:46; John 10:11–12; Acts 2:23, 42; 14:23; 19:21; 21:11–13; 24:17; Rom 15:25–26; 1 Cor 16:1–3; 2 Cor 1:8–9; Eph 1:7; 4:28; Phil 2:3; 3:13–14; 1 Tim 1:3; 2 Tim 4:6–7; 1 Pet 5:2–4; Rev 2:4.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 20:24

"But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the gospel of the grace of God."

FIGURE · THE FAREWELL AT MILETUS

PAUL'S FAREWELL AT MILETUS · ACTS 20:18–35 IN FOUR PARTS

LOOKING BACK vv18–21	LOOKING AHEAD vv22–27	THE CHARGE vv28–31	THE COMMENDATION vv32–35
"how I was with you"	bound by the Spirit	be on guard	to God and the word
humility, tears, trials	bonds await me	shepherd the church	of His grace
nothing held back	finish my course	bought with blood	no one's silver
public, house to house	innocent of blood	wolves from outside,	these hands worked
repentance and faith	the whole purpose	men from inside	more blessed to give

THE SAME VOICE AS THE PASTORAL LETTERS

"I have finished the course" (2 Tim 4:7) · "shepherd the flock of God among you" (1 Pet 5:2)

He opens and closes with "You yourselves know" (vv18, 34).

Read the four panels left to right — Paul's past, his future, his charge to the elders and his commendation of them to God.

Example to follow — Paul with the elders. "You yourselves know … how I was with you the whole time." He could point to his life, not just his teaching: humility, tears, hard work, nothing held back, house to house. The men I serve don't need a perfect leader; they need one they can watch up close who keeps showing up honest. I want to be able to say, "You know how I was with you."

Sin to confess — shrinking back. Twice Paul says, "I did not shrink from declaring." I have shrunk. I have skipped the hard verse, softened the warning, kept quiet when a brother was heading for the cliff because I didn't want the awkwardness. Ezekiel's watchman stands over that silence. I confess it, and I ask God for the courage to say the whole thing in love.

Command to obey — be on guard and be on the alert. "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock." Henry is right: "take heed to themselves in the first place." I can't guard anybody if I am asleep in the window. This week I will guard my own heart first — the Word every morning, honesty with my accountability partner — and then check on the men God has put in front of me, by name.

Promise to trust — the word of His grace is able. Paul couldn't stay, so he commended them "to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance." When I have to leave a man — at the end of a group, at the gate of a facility, at a hospital bed — I don't leave him alone. I leave him with God and His Word, and that Word is able.

Example to follow — the Lord Jesus. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Jesus said it, Paul lived it with calloused hands. I will give something this week that costs me — time, money or work — to help someone weaker than me.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. Eutychus sat in the window and drifted off while the word was taught. Where am I sitting "in the window" — half in, half out — and what keeps me from being fully awake to God's Word? (20:7–12) *Remain alert and engaged with God's Word (Sproul).*
2. Paul says he served "with all humility and with tears." What does humble, costly service look like in my home or my group this month? (20:18–21; Phil 2:3) *Humility of mind, many tears (Henry).*
3. What would it mean for me to say, "I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself"? What am I protecting that keeps me from finishing my course? (20:22–24; 2 Tim 4:7) *A runner who had a race to finish (Guzik).*
4. Paul "did not shrink from declaring" the whole purpose of God. What part of God's Word do I tend to skip — in my own reading or when I talk with other men? (20:20, 26–27) *Holy living must be preached, as well as happy living (Spurgeon).*
5. Paul warned of wolves from outside and men from inside. How do I watch over the men God has given me without becoming suspicious or controlling? (20:28–31; 1 Pet 5:2–3) *Take heed to yourselves in the first place (Henry).*
6. "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Where is God asking me to work with my own hands so I can help the weak? (20:33–35; Eph 4:28) *Without a heart of sacrifice there can be no real effective, eternal ministry (Guzik).*

Worship. The Lord Jesus gives life back to a young man picked up dead. He is the Chief Shepherd who bought His church with His own blood. His Spirit makes overseers and warns of chains, and His word of grace is able to build up and bring home every one of His people. He said it Himself: it is more blessed to give — and no one ever gave as He gave.

Prayer. Lord Jesus, wake me up — I don't want to sleep in the window while You are speaking. Forgive me for shrinking back from the hard parts of Your Word. Make me humble enough to serve with tears and brave enough to say the whole truth in love. Guard my own heart first, and then help me guard the men You have given me. I don't count my life dear; let me finish my course with joy. I commend myself and every one of these men to You and to the word of Your grace. Amen.

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SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 21

Ready to Die for the Name — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

Paul walks toward Jerusalem with his eyes open — the Spirit has told him chains are waiting, his friends beg him to stop, and he goes anyway for the name of the Lord Jesus. Doing the right thing gets him beaten and arrested, and God uses even that to keep him alive and carry the gospel further.

00 The Text

ACTS 21 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 When we had parted from them and had set sail, we
ran a straight course to Cos and the next day to Rhodes
and from there to Patara;

2 and having found a ship crossing over to Phoenicia, we
went aboard and set sail.

3 When we came in sight of Cyprus, leaving it on the left,
we kept sailing to Syria and landed at Tyre; for there the
ship was to unload its cargo.

4 After looking up the disciples, we stayed there seven
days; and they kept telling Paul ⚠ through the Spirit not
to set foot in Jerusalem.

5 When our days there were ended, we left and started on
our journey, while they all, with wives and children,
escorted us until we were out of the city.
After kneeling down on the beach and praying, we
said farewell to one another.

6 Then we went on board the ship, and they returned
home again.

7 When we had finished the voyage from Tyre, we arrived
at Ptolemais, and after greeting the brethren, we stayed
with them for a day.

8 On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and
entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one
of the seven, we stayed with him.

9 Now this man had ☆ four virgin daughters who were
prophetesses.

10 As we were staying there for some days, a prophet
named Agabus came down from Judea.

11 And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and ⟲ bound his
own feet and hands, and said, "△ This is what the Holy
Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews at ⟲ Jerusalem will
⟲ bind the man who owns this belt and ⚠ deliver him
into the hands of the Gentiles.'"

12 When we had heard this, we as well as the local
residents began begging him not to go up to
⟲ Jerusalem.

13 Then Paul answered, "What are you doing, weeping
and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be
bound, but even to die at Jerusalem △ for the name of
the Lord Jesus."

14 And since he would not be persuaded, we fell silent,
remarking, "△ The will of the Lord be done!"

15 After these days we got ready and started on our way up to Jerusalem.

16 Some of the disciples from Caesarea also came with us, taking us to Mnason of Cyprus, a disciple of long standing with whom we were to lodge.

17 After we arrived in Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

18 And the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present.

19 After he had greeted them, he began to relate one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.

20 And when they heard it they began glorifying God; and they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law;

21 and they have been told about you, that you are teaching all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs.

22 "What, then, is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come.

23 "Therefore do this that we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow;

24 take them and purify yourself along with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads; and all will know that there is nothing to the things which they have been told about you, but that you yourself also walk orderly, keeping the Law.

25 "But concerning the Gentiles who have believed, we wrote, having decided that they should abstain from meat sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication."

26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself along with them, went into the temple giving notice of the completion of the days of purification, until the sacrifice was offered for each one of them.

27 When the seven days were almost over, the Jews from Asia, upon seeing him in the temple, began to stir up all the crowd and laid hands on him,

28 crying out, "Men of Israel, come to our aid! This is the man who preaches to all men everywhere against our people and the Law and this place; and besides he has even brought Greeks into the temple and has defiled this holy place."

29 For they had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with him, and they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple.

30 Then all the city was provoked, and the people rushed together, and taking hold of Paul they dragged him out of the temple, and immediately the doors were shut.

31 While they were seeking to kill him, a report came up to the commander of the Roman cohort that all Jerusalem was in confusion.

32 At once he took along some soldiers and centurions and ran down to them; and when they saw the commander and the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul.

33 Then the commander came up and took hold of him, and ordered him to be bound with two chains; and he began asking who he was and what he had done.

34 But among the crowd some were shouting one thing and some another, and when he could not find out the facts because of the uproar, he ordered him to be brought into the barracks.

35 When he got to the stairs, he was carried by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob;

36 for the multitude of the people kept following them, shouting, "Away with him!"

37 As Paul was about to be brought into the barracks, he said to the commander, "May I say something to you?" And he said, "Do you know Greek?

38 "Then you are not the Egyptian who some time ago stirred up a revolt and led the four thousand men of the Assassins out into the wilderness?"

39 But Paul said, "I am a Jew of Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant city; and I beg you, allow me to speak to the people."

40 When he had given him permission, Paul, standing on the stairs, motioned to the people with his hand; and when there was a great hush, he spoke to them in the Hebrew dialect, saying,

Marked in the text

- **v4** “through the Spirit not to set foot in Jerusalem” — Sin / warning
- **v5** “After kneeling down on the beach and praying” — Command / instruction
- **v9** “four virgin daughters who were prophetesses” — Promise / blessing
- **v11** “This is what the Holy Spirit says” — God — His character & actions
- **v11** “deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles” — Sin / warning
- **v13** “I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die at Jerusalem” — Command / instruction
- **v13** “for the name of the Lord Jesus” — God — His character & actions
- **v14** “The will of the Lord be done” — God — His character & actions
- **v16** “a disciple of long standing” — Promise / blessing
- **v19** “the things which God had done among the Gentiles” — God — His character & actions
- **v20** “they began glorifying God” — God — His character & actions
- **v20** “they are all zealous for the Law” — Time / place / contrast
- **v21** “to forsake Moses” — Sin / warning
- **v24** “purify yourself along with them” — Command / instruction
- **v28** “has defiled this holy place” — Sin / warning
- **v29** “they supposed that Paul had brought him into the temple” — Sin / warning
- **v31** “While they were seeking to kill him” — Sin / warning
- **v33** “ordered him to be bound with two chains” — Time / place / contrast
- **v36** “Away with him” — Sin / warning
- **v39** “a Jew of Tarsus” — Time / place / contrast
- **v40** “standing on the stairs” — Time / place / contrast
- **v40** “he spoke to them in the Hebrew dialect” — Time / place / contrast
- **v4** “Jerusalem” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v11** “bind” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v13** “bound” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v26** “temple” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

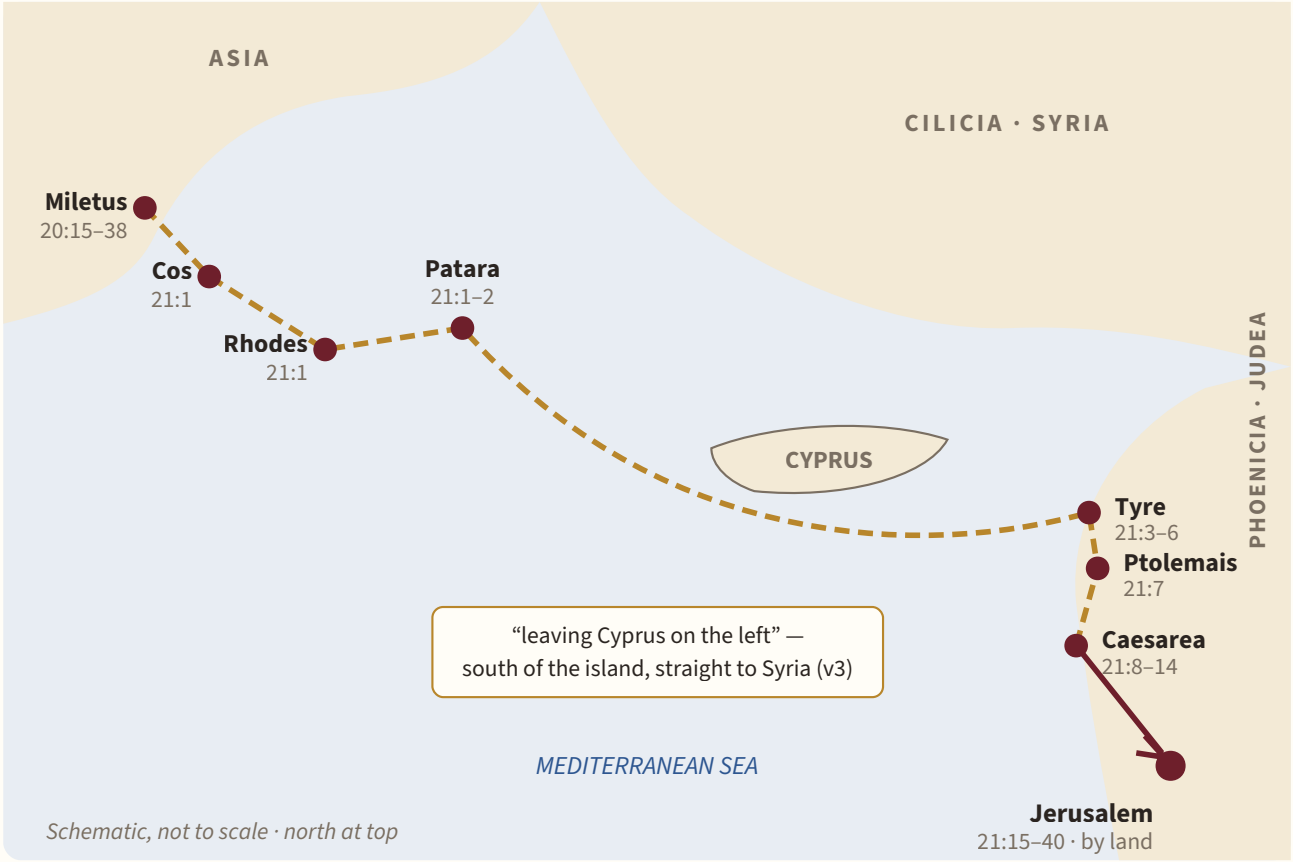
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 21:11

"And coming to us, he took Paul's belt and bound his own feet and hands, and said, "⚠ This is what the Holy Spirit says: 'In this way the Jews at Jerusalem will bind the man who owns this belt and ⚠ deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles.'""

FIGURE · FROM MILETUS TO JERUSALEM



Follow the dotted line: island-hopping down the coast of Asia, a straight run past Cyprus to Tyre, short hops to Caesarea, then the road up to Jerusalem.

Setting. Paul, Luke ("we") and their companions sail from Miletus down the coast — Cos, Rhodes, Patara — then straight past Cyprus to Tyre, where the ship unloads (vv1–3). After seven days at Tyre and a day at Ptolemais, they come to Caesarea and stay with Philip the evangelist (vv4–14), then go up to Jerusalem (vv15–17). There Paul meets James and the elders (vv18–26), and near the end of a seven-day purification he is seized in the temple and arrested by the Roman commander (vv27–40).

Structure:

- vv1–6 — **the warning at Tyre:** the voyage (vv1–3); disciples at Tyre keep telling Paul "through the Spirit" not to set foot in Jerusalem (v4); whole families escort them; kneeling and praying on the beach (vv5–6).
- vv7–16 — **Agabus and the belt:** Ptolemais (v7); Philip the evangelist and his four prophesying daughters (vv8–9); Agabus binds himself with Paul's belt — "This is what the Holy Spirit says" (vv10–11); everyone begs Paul not to go (v12); "I am ready not only to be bound, but even to die" (v13); "The will of the Lord be done!" (v14); up to Jerusalem, lodging with Mnason (vv15–16).
- vv17–26 — **James and the vow:** a glad welcome; Paul reports what God has done among the Gentiles (vv17–19); thousands of Jewish believers "zealous for the Law" have heard Paul teaches Jews to forsake Moses (vv20–21); the elders' plan — join four men under a vow and pay their expenses (vv22–24); the Gentile decree restated (v25); Paul purifies himself and enters the temple (v26).
- vv27–40 — **the riot and the stairs:** Jews from Asia stir up the crowd — "against our people and the Law and this place" (vv27–28); the Trophimus rumor (v29); Paul dragged out, the doors shut (v30); the commander runs down; the beating stops; two chains (vv31–33); confusion, the barracks, the stairs, "Away with him!" (vv34–36); "Do you know Greek?" — not the Egyptian; "a Jew of Tarsus" (vv37–39); a great hush, and Paul speaks in the Hebrew dialect (v40).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "Paul / Paul's" ×12 — vv4, 11 (×2), 13, 18, 26, 29, 30, 32, 37, 39, 40.
- "day / days" ×11 — vv1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 15, 18, 26 (×2), 27.
- "came / come / arrived" ×10 — vv3, 7, 8, 10, 16, 17, 22, 28, 31, 33.
- "crowd / multitude / people / mob" ×9 — vv27, 28, 30, 34, 35, 36 (×2), 39, 40.
- "Jerusalem" ×7 — vv4, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17, 31.
- "ship / sail / sailing" ×6 — vv1, 2 (×2), 3 (×2), 6.
- "temple" ×5 — vv26, 27, 28, 29, 30.
- "bind / bound" ×4 — vv11 (×2), 13, 33 (plus "two chains," v33).
- "Jews" ×4 — vv11, 20, 21, 27; "Gentiles" ×4 — vv11, 19, 21, 25.
- "commander" ×4 — vv31, 32, 33, 37.
- "Law" ×3 — vv20, 24, 28 (and "Moses," v21).
- "seven" ×3 — vv4, 8, 27; "purify / purifying / purification" ×3 — vv24, 26 (×2).
- "disciple(s)" ×3 — vv4, 16 (×2); "brethren / brother" ×3 — vv7, 17, 20.
- "Spirit" ×2 — vv4, 11; "Away with him" — v36 (and again 22:22).

Contrasts: Friends who say "don't go" ⟷ Paul who says "I am ready" (vv12–13). Tears ⟷ "The will of the Lord be done!" (vv13–14). Glorifying God for the Gentiles ⟷ worry over the Jews (vv19–21). Rumor ⟷ fact: "they supposed" (v29). A holy place defiled ⟷ a man beaten inside it (vv28–32). The mob that wants him dead ⟷ the pagan soldiers who carry him to safety (vv31–35). "The Egyptian" ⟷ "a Jew of Tarsus" (vv38–39). An uproar ⟷ a great hush (vv34, 40).

Shape of the chapter: it moves like a funnel — open sea, coastal towns, the city, the temple, the stairs. Each stop narrows the road and raises the warnings, until the prophecy of verse 11 comes true almost word for word in verse 33.

Chapter theme (my words): Paul goes to Jerusalem knowing chains are waiting, because the will of the Lord is worth more than his own safety. He bends over backward to keep peace with his Jewish brothers, gets slandered and beaten anyway, and God rescues him with Roman soldiers so he can testify to the very crowd that wanted him dead.

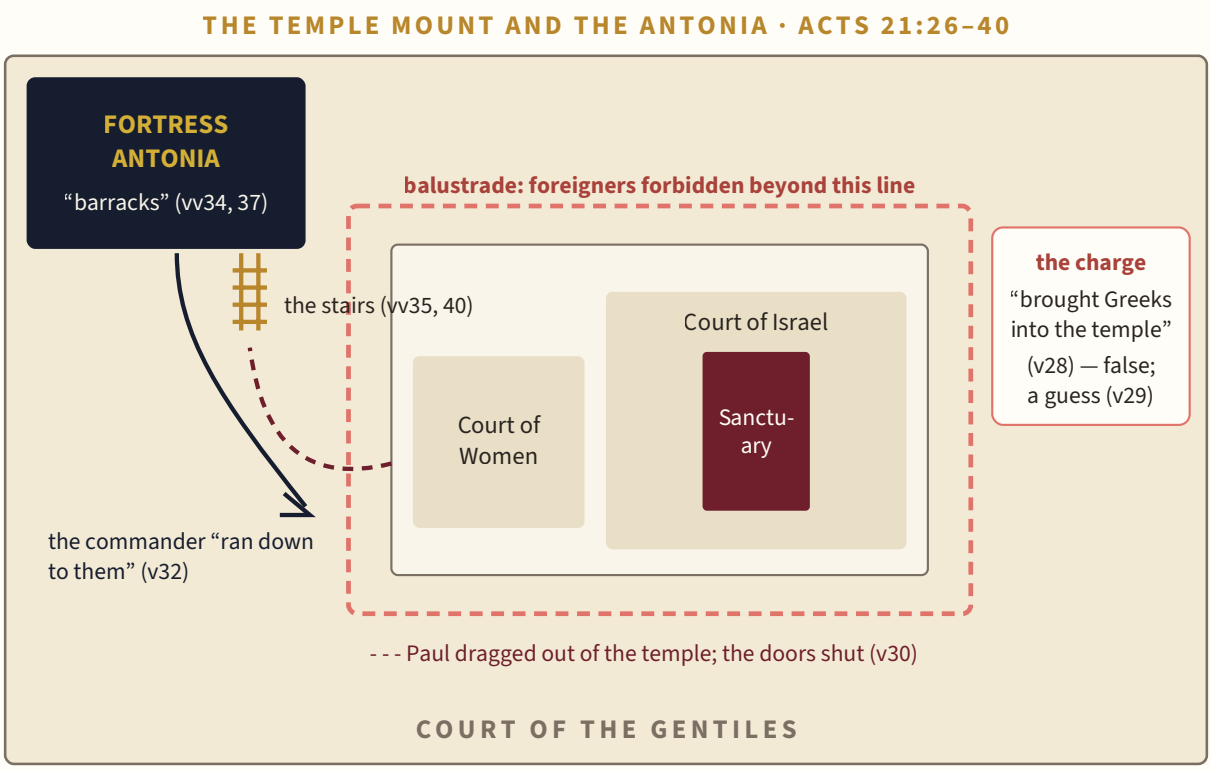
02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 21:20

"And when they heard it △they began glorifying God; and they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands there are among the Jews of those who have believed, and ◷they are all zealous for the Law;"

FIGURE · THE TEMPLE COURTS AND THE ANTONIA



Schematic of the Herodian temple courts, not to scale

The mob's charge was that Paul took a Gentile past the red line; see how close the Roman fortress stood, and the stairs from which Paul spoke.

Did Paul disobey the Spirit? Verse 4 says the disciples told him "through the Spirit" not to go; 20:22 says he went "bound by the Spirit." Guzik: the "do not go" was "a human interpretation of the Holy Spirit's prophecy of the danger that awaited Paul" — otherwise Paul would be going against the Spirit's direction. Agabus, in v11, says only what will happen, not "don't go." I land with Guzik: the Spirit revealed suffering; love drew the conclusion.

Why the belt? Agabus acts the message out like the old prophets (Jer 13; Ezek 4). Henry: "that which we see usually makes a greater impression upon us than that which we only hear of." And it came true: the Jews seized Paul and he ended up "in the hands of the Gentiles" — bound with two chains (v33).

What does "The will of the Lord be done" mean here? Not giving up, but giving over. Sproul separates God's hidden, "decretive" will — "that will of God by which God sovereignly brings to pass whatsoever He wills" — from His revealed will in Scripture: "All I can do is read God's Word." The friends could not see the plan, so they bowed to it. Henry: "it becomes us to say, The will of the Lord be done." It is Gethsemane's prayer on the lips of the church (Luke 22:42).

Was Paul wrong to take the vow? Here the teachers differ, and I want to be fair. Many commentators call it "a terrible compromise on Paul's part" (as Guzik reports). Henry records the view that it had "more in it of fleshly wisdom than of the grace of God," though he leans toward Paul's liberty. Guzik defends Paul from 1 Corinthians 9:20 — to the Jews he became as a Jew — and stresses the offering "was not in any way for the purpose of atonement or forgiveness." I agree with Guzik: Paul never taught that the Law saves, and he never told Jewish believers to throw away their customs. He laid down a freedom for love, not the gospel.

What did the rumor get wrong? It said Paul taught Jews *apostasia* from Moses (v21). Paul circumcised Timothy (16:3) and had kept a vow himself (18:18). What he refused was to put the Law on Gentiles (v25; 15:28–29) or to make it a condition of salvation for anyone. Clarke (via Guzik): such customs "were only dangerous when they depended on them for salvation."

Why did the crowd explode? Jews from Asia who knew Paul from Ephesus assumed he had brought Trophimus past the barrier into the inner courts — a capital offense (vv28–29). Henry: "Innocency is no fence against calumny and false accusation." "Away with him!" (v36) is the same cry raised against Jesus (Luke 23:18); Bruce, through Guzik, notes it was shouted "not far from that spot."

Why do the Romans matter? The commander thought he had caught a famous revolutionary, "the Egyptian," and the dagger-men (*sikarioi*). Instead he found an educated "Jew of Tarsus" who asked permission to speak (vv37–39). God used a pagan army to keep His witness alive — and the promise of 23:11 shows where it was leading: Rome. I believe God keeps His promises to Israel and His plan for the nations; this chapter shows both, side by side, in one city.

Word study (Greek):

- **Spirit — *pneuma* (G4151):** "through the Spirit" (v4); the same Spirit who bound Paul to go (20:22).
- **set foot — *epibainō* (G1910):** to step on, go aboard; vv2, 4; 25:1.
- **belt — *zōnē* (G2223):** a sash or girdle; Agabus' object lesson (v11).
- **ready — *hetoimōs* (G2093):** "I hold readily" — ready to be bound and to die (v13).
- **will — *thelēma* (G2307):** "The will of the Lord be done!" (v14).
- **zealous — *zēlōtēs* (G2207):** zealots for the Law (v20); Paul himself, 22:3.
- **forsake — *apostasia* (G646):** apostasy; only here and 2 Thess 2:3.
- **purify — *hagnizō* (G48):** ceremonial cleansing; vv24, 26; 24:18.
- **defiled — *koinoō* (G2840):** to make common (v28); compare 10:15.
- **barracks — *parembolē* (G3925):** the Roman camp in the Antonia (vv34, 37).
- **away with — *airō* (G142):** *aire*, only Luke 23:18; Acts 21:36; 22:22.

- **Assassins — *sikarios* (G4607):** dagger-men; only v38.
- **Hebrew — *Hebraïs* (G1446):** the Hebrew (Aramaic) dialect; 21:40; 22:2; 26:14.

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **A true warning, a wrong conclusion** — the Spirit revealed suffering; friends said "don't go" (Guzik).
2. **Warnings prepare; they don't always stop** (Guzik).
3. **Prayer on a beach** — the church's goodbye was a prayer meeting (Henry).
4. **Ready to suffer is more than ready to serve** (Spurgeon).
5. **"The will of the Lord be done"** — Gethsemane on the church's lips; hidden will and revealed will (Sproul).
6. **An old disciple** — Mnason's open home (Henry).
7. **Apostasy from Moses?** — a false rumor (*apostasia*).
8. **Doing right does not guarantee safety** — "Paul might do well, and yet suffer for it" (Henry).
9. **The cry of the Passion** — *aire*, against Jesus and against Paul.
10. **God used Rome to rescue His man** (23:11).

Cross-references: Num 6:1–21; Jer 13:1–11; Ezek 4; Joel 2:28; Luke 9:51; 22:42; 23:18; John 19:15; Acts 6:13–14; 9:15–16; 11:28; 15:28–29; 16:3; 18:18; 20:22–24; 23:11; 24:17–18; Rom 15:25–26; 1 Cor 9:20; 10:32–33; Phil 1:20–21; 2 Thess 2:3; 2 Tim 4:6–7.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 21:14

"And since he would not be persuaded, we fell silent, remarking, "△ The will of the Lord be done!""

Example to follow — Paul's "I am ready." Paul did not go looking for chains, but he would not run from them either. Some of the men I sit with have done hard time for their own sins; Paul is ready to be bound for the name of Jesus. I want that kind of readiness — to be laughed at, misunderstood, inconvenienced, even hurt — if that is where faithfulness leads. Spurgeon: "ready for whatever the will of God may appoint for you."

Sin to confess — taking my fear for God's voice. The disciples at Tyre heard something true and decided it meant "stay safe." I have done that. I have taken a real warning, or a real fear, and dressed it up as God telling me not to do the hard thing He already told me to do. I confess that, and ask Him to separate my fears from His word.

Command to obey — lay down a freedom for love. James asked Paul to do something he did not have to do, so that Jewish brothers would not stumble. Paul did it. There are things I am free to do that cost my brothers something — at the table, in the dayroom, in what I post. I will give one up this week, not to earn anything, but for their sake.

Promise to trust — the will of the Lord will be done. The friends stopped arguing and said, "The will of the Lord be done!" That is not giving up; it is resting in a God whose plan is bigger than mine. Paul did right and got arrested anyway, and God was still on the throne — He used Roman soldiers to save him (v32) and later told him, "Take courage" (23:11).

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. The believers at Tyre heard a true warning and drew the wrong conclusion. When have I taken something true about God and drawn a conclusion He never said? (21:4; 20:22–23) *A human interpretation of the Holy Spirit's prophecy (Guzik).*
2. Paul's friends loved him and begged him to play it safe. Who in my life loves me enough to cry over me — and how do I tell love from God's leading? (21:12–14) *What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart?*
3. "I am ready … even to die … for the name of the Lord Jesus." What am I ready for this week, and what am I not ready for yet? (21:13; 2 Tim 4:6) *Ready to suffer is more than ready to serve (Spurgeon).*
4. The elders asked Paul to give up something he was free to keep, for the sake of Jewish brothers. Where might I lay down a freedom to keep the peace without giving up the gospel? (21:20–26; 1 Cor 10:32–33) *Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks.*
5. Paul did the right thing and got arrested anyway. How do I keep trusting God when obedience makes things worse before it makes them better? (21:26–33) *Paul might do well, and yet suffer for it (Henry).*
6. Bloody, chained and slandered, Paul asked to speak to the crowd that had just beaten him. Who is the "crowd" in my life I would rather walk away from than talk to? (21:37–40; 22:1) *Paul, standing on the stairs, motioned to the people.*

Worship. The Lord Jesus walked this road first — He set His face to go to Jerusalem, heard the crowd shout "Away with Him," and prayed, "not My will, but Yours be done." He is the Lord whose name is worth chains, the God who speaks by His Spirit, and the King who rules even Roman cohorts for the good of His servants.

Prayer. Lord Jesus, make me ready — not reckless, but ready — to be bound, misunderstood or hurt for Your name. Teach me to tell my fears from Your voice. Give me friends who weep and pray for me, and give me the grace to say with them, "The will of the Lord be done." When I do right and it goes wrong, hold me steady; and when I stand bruised in front of the crowd, give me a word for them. Amen.

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SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 22

Far Away to the Gentiles — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

Chained and bruised, Paul answers a lying mob with the story of how Jesus arrested him — a zealous persecutor met by the risen Lord, washed, and sent to the nations. The crowd can stand everything but the last word, "Gentiles," and God uses a Roman citizenship to keep His witness alive.

00 The Text

ACTS 22 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 "Brethren and fathers, hear my defense which I now offer to you."

2 And when they heard that he was addressing them in the Hebrew dialect, they became even more quiet; and he said,

3 "I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today.

4 "I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons,

5 as also the high priest and all the Council of the elders can testify. From them I also received letters to the brethren, and started off for Damascus in order to bring even those who were there to Jerusalem as prisoners to be punished.

6 "But it happened that as I was on my way, approaching Damascus about noontime,
a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me,

7 and I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'

8 "And I answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' And He said to me, 'I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting.'

9 "And those who were with me saw the light, to be sure, but did not understand the voice of the One who was speaking to me.

10 "And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Get up and go on into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.'

11 "But since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, I was led by the hand by those who were with me and came into Damascus.

12 "A certain Ananias, a man who was devout by the standard of the Law, and well spoken of by all the Jews who lived there,

13 came to me, and standing near said to me, 'Brother Saul, receive your sight!' And at that very time I looked up at him.

14 "And he said, 'The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth.

15 'For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard.

16 'Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'

17 "It happened when I returned to Jerusalem and was praying in the temple, that I fell into a trance,

18 and I saw Him saying to me, 'Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about Me.'

19 "And I said, 'Lord, they themselves understand that in one synagogue after another I used to imprison and beat those who believed in You.

20 'And when the blood of Your witness Stephen was being shed, I also was standing by approving, and watching out for the coats of those who were slaying him.'

21 "And He said to me, 'Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles.'"

22 They listened to him up to this statement, and then they raised their voices and said, "Away with such a fellow from the earth, for he should not be allowed to live!"

23 And as they were crying out and throwing off their cloaks and tossing dust into the air,

24 the commander ordered him to be brought into the barracks, stating that he should be examined by scourging so that he might find out the reason why they were shouting against him that way.

25 But when they stretched him out with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man who is a Roman and uncondemned?"

26 When the centurion heard this, he went to the commander and told him, saying, "What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman."

27 The commander came and said to him, "Tell me, are you a Roman?" And he said, "Yes."

28 The commander answered, "I acquired this citizenship with a large sum of money." And Paul said, "But I was actually born a citizen."

29 Therefore those who were about to examine him immediately let go of him; and the commander also was afraid when he found out that he was a Roman, and because he had put him in chains.

30 But on the next day, wishing to know for certain why he had been accused by the Jews, he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the Council to assemble, and brought Paul down and set him before them.

Marked in the text

- **v1** "hear my defense" — Command / instruction
- **v3** "educated under Gamaliel" — Time / place / contrast
- **v3** "being zealous for God just as you all are today" — Sin / warning
- **v4** "I persecuted this Way to the death" — Sin / warning
- **v6** "a very bright light suddenly flashed from heaven all around me" — God — His character & actions
- **v7** "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" — God — His character & actions
- **v8** "Who are You, Lord?" — Time / place / contrast
- **v8** "I am Jesus the Nazarene, whom you are persecuting" — God — His character & actions
- **v10** "What shall I do, Lord?" — Command / instruction
- **v13** "Brother Saul, receive your sight!" — Promise / blessing
- **v14** "The God of our fathers has appointed you" — God — His character & actions
- **v14** "to see the Righteous One" — God — His character & actions
- **v15** "you will be a witness for Him to all men" — Command / instruction
- **v16** "Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name" — Command / instruction
- **v18** "they will not accept your testimony about Me" — Sin / warning
- **v20** "the blood of Your witness Stephen" — Sin / warning
- **v21** "I will send you far away to the Gentiles" — Promise / blessing
- **v22** "Away with such a fellow from the earth" — Sin / warning
- **v25** "a man who is a Roman and uncondemned" — Time / place / contrast
- **v28** "But I was actually born a citizen" — Time / place / contrast
- **v4** "persecuted" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v7** "persecuting" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v15** "witness" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v25** "Roman" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

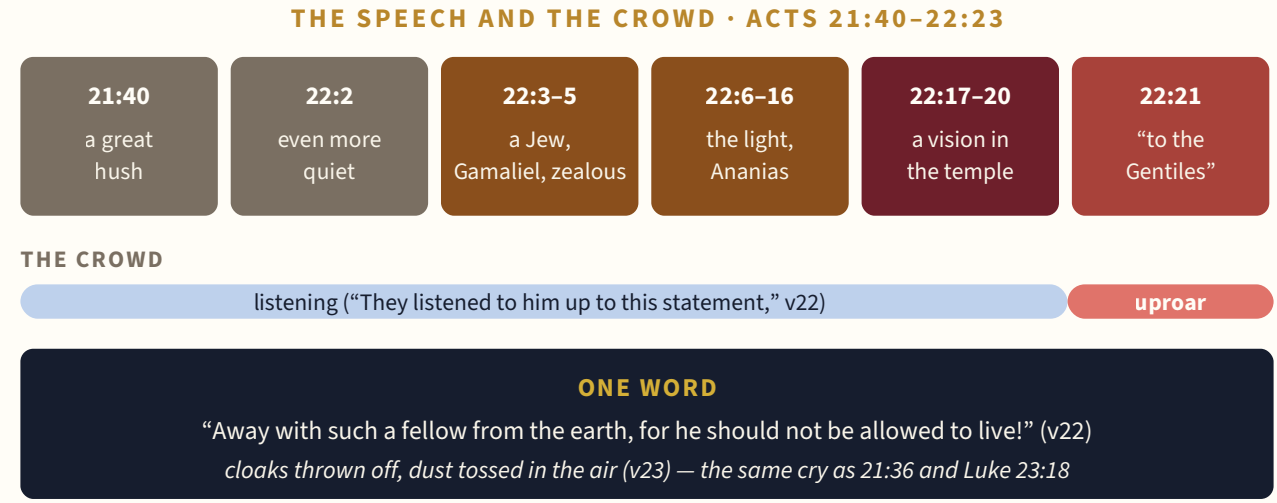
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 22:3

"I am a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated under Gamaliel, strictly according to the law of our fathers, being zealous for God just as you all are today."

FIGURE · THE SPEECH AND THE CROWD



The crowd stays quiet through Paul's whole story; watch what happens at the last box, when he says "Gentiles."

Setting. The stairs of the Roman barracks (the Fortress Antonia) above the temple court, the same day as the riot of 21:27–40. Paul, in chains, speaks to the crowd in the Hebrew (Aramaic) dialect (21:40; 22:2). After the uproar the commander takes him inside to be examined by scourging (vv22–29), and the next day sets him before the chief priests and the Council (v30).

Structure:

- vv1–5 — **I was one of you:** "hear my defense" (v1); the crowd goes even quieter at the Hebrew (v2); born in Tarsus, brought up in Jerusalem, educated under Gamaliel, zealous for God (v3); persecuted "this Way" to the death, with letters from the high priest to Damascus (vv4–5).
- vv6–11 — **the light at noon:** a very bright light (v6); "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" (v7); "Who are You, Lord?" — "I am Jesus the Nazarene" (v8); the companions saw the light but did not understand the voice (v9); "What shall I do, Lord?" (v10); led blind into Damascus (v11).
- vv12–16 — **Ananias and baptism:** a devout Jew, well spoken of (v12); "Brother Saul, receive your sight!" (v13); appointed to know His will, see the Righteous One, hear His voice (v14); a witness to all men (v15); "Why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name" (v16).

- vv17–21 — **the vision in the temple:** praying in the temple, a trance (v17); "get out of Jerusalem quickly" (v18); Paul argues from his past — the synagogues, Stephen's blood (vv19–20); "Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles" (v21).
- vv22–30 — **the scourge and the citizen:** "Away with such a fellow from the earth" (v22); cloaks and dust (v23); ordered examined by scourging (v24); "Is it lawful … a Roman and uncondemned?" (v25); bought citizenship vs. born a citizen (vv26–28); the examiners let go; the commander afraid (v29); Paul brought before the Council (v30).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "said / saying" ×16 — vv2, 7, 8, 10 (×2), 13, 14, 18, 19, 21, 22, 25, 26, 27 (×2), 28.
- "heard / hear / listened" ×7 — vv1, 2, 7, 14, 15, 22, 26.
- "saw / see / seen / sight" ×6 — vv9, 11, 13, 14, 15, 18.
- "Roman / citizen / citizenship" ×6 — vv25, 26, 27, 28 (×2), 29.
- "commander" ×5 — vv24, 26, 27, 28, 29.
- "Lord" ×4 — vv8, 10 (×2), 19.
- "Damascus" ×4 — vv5, 6, 10, 11.
- "witness / testify / testimony" ×4 — vv5, 15, 18, 20.
- "scourging / scourge / examine(d)" ×4 — vv24 (×2), 25, 29.
- "persecuted / persecuting" ×3 — vv4, 7, 8.
- "light" ×3 — vv6, 9, 11; "voice(s)" ×3 — vv7, 9, 22.
- "Jerusalem" ×3 — vv5, 17, 18; "fathers" ×3 — vv1, 3, 14.
- "prisons / prisoners / imprison" ×3 — vv4, 5, 19.
- "Jew / Jews" ×3 — vv3, 12, 30; "Law" ×2 — vv3, 12.
- "Gentiles" ×1 — v21: the one word that ends the speech.

Contrasts: Zealous for God ⟷ persecuting God's Son (vv3–8). Saul binding others (v4) ⟷ Saul led by the hand (v11) ⟷ Paul bound with thongs (v25). Saw the light ⟷ did not understand the voice (v9). Jerusalem ⟷ far away to the Gentiles (vv18–21). Great hush ⟷ "Away with such a fellow" (21:40; 22:22). Bought citizenship ⟷ born a citizen (v28). Ready to scourge ⟷ afraid (vv24, 29).

Shape of the chapter: a speech in three panels — before, the turning point, after — that climbs from common ground to a single offensive word, then a sudden fall into violence that is stopped by one quiet legal question.

Chapter theme (my words): Paul tells the truth about who he was and what Jesus did to him, and he does it to the people who just tried to kill him. Grace that reaches a murderer, a persecutor and the Gentiles is still the thing religious people cannot stand to hear — and God keeps His messenger alive to keep saying it.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 22:16

"'Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.'"

FIGURE · THREE TELLINGS OF THE DAMASCUS ROAD

ONE CONVERSION, THREE TELLINGS IN ACTS

	ACTS 9	ACTS 22	ACTS 26
WHO TELLS IT TO WHOM	Luke narrates	Paul · the Jerusalem crowd	Paul · King Agrippa
THE LIGHT	"a light from heaven" (9:3)	"about noontime, a very bright light" (22:6)	"at midday … brighter than the sun" (26:13)
THE COMPANIONS	"hearing the voice but seeing no one" (9:7)	saw the light, did not understand the voice (22:9)	"we had all fallen to the ground" (26:14)
ANANIAS	a disciple, sent by a vision (9:10–17)	"devout by the standard of the Law" (22:12)	not named
THE COMMISSION	"a chosen instrument … before the Gentiles" (9:15)	"I will send you far away to the Gentiles" (22:21)	"to open their eyes" (26:18)

Same event, different audiences: Acts 22 stresses the Law, the temple and a devout Jew.

Read across each row: the event is the same, but in Acts 22 (middle column) Paul stresses what a Jerusalem crowd would honor.

Why tell his story instead of answering the charge? The charge was that Paul attacked the Law and the temple (21:28). His answer is a life: a zealous Jew, trained under Gamaliel, devout Ananias, a vision while praying in the temple. Guzik: "Paul did his work of persecution with the official approval of the religious leaders" — he was the system's own man until Jesus stopped him. Henry: "There appears no passion."

Did the companions hear the voice or not? Acts 9:7 says they were "hearing the voice but seeing no one"; 22:9 says they "saw the light … but did not understand the voice." Many explain the difference from the Greek: *akouō* can mean to hear a sound or to understand speech, and the NASB's "did not understand" in 22:9 reflects that. They heard a noise; only Saul heard a message. Spurgeon: they "could not help sensing that extraordinary light." Guzik does not take up the question; the three tellings simply fit their audiences (see the figure).

What does "why are you persecuting Me?" teach? That Jesus counts what is done to His people as done to Him. Guzik: Paul "came to understand he was persecuting Jesus Himself, the shining Lord of glory." Sproul's sermon

summary: “he himself was arrested by the risen Lord Jesus.” Henry: “Paul, being a Pharisee, was proud of his spiritual eyesight” — and he was struck blind.

Does verse 16 teach that baptism washes away sin? This is a place where Christians differ, so I want to be careful. The verse joins three things: be baptized, wash away your sins, calling on His name. Spurgeon is plain: “This was not baptismal regeneration, for he was already regenerate” — Saul had already met and obeyed the Lord (v10). The washing comes by calling on the name of the Lord (Rom 10:13; 1 Cor 6:11), and baptism is its public, obedient sign. Henry presses the urgency: “Why should not that be done at the present time that must be done some time, or we are undone?” I hold with Spurgeon: faith in Christ saves; baptism is the first step of obedience and should not be delayed.

Why did God send Paul away from Jerusalem? Paul thought his history would make Jerusalem listen (vv19–20). The Lord knew better: “they will not accept your testimony about Me” (v18). Henry: “As God knows before who will receive the gospel, so he knows who will reject it,” and “It is God that appoints his labourers both their day and their place.” Guzik: “Jesus didn’t agree with Paul’s response.” Going to the Gentiles was not God giving up on Israel — Isaiah 49:6 says the Servant restores Israel *and* is a light to the nations. I believe God still has a future for national Israel (Rom 11:25–26); Paul himself kept going “to the Jew first.”

Why did one word set them off? Guzik: “This outraged, violent response was over one word: Gentiles.” The temple riot began over a Gentile supposedly in the holy place (21:28–29); now Paul says the God of their fathers sent him to Gentiles. Henry: “Galled consciences kick at the least touch.” The cry “Away with such a fellow” is the cry of 21:36 and Luke 23:18.

Was it right for Paul to claim his rights? Yes. Henry: “It is indeed the privilege of every man not to have wrong done him, except it be proved he has done wrong.” Guzik: “It was a serious violation of Roman rights to even bind a Roman citizen without due process.” Paul did not claim it at Philippi until after the beating (16:37); here he claims it before, and the whip stops. Using lawful protection is not a lack of faith — it kept him alive for Rome (23:11).

Word study (Greek):

- **defense — *apologia* (G627):** a speech answering a charge (v1); Phil 1:7; 1 Pet 3:15.
- **zealous — *zēlōtēs* (G2207):** as the crowd was zealous (v3; 21:20).
- **Way — *hodos* (G3598):** the early name for the faith (v4; 9:2; 24:14).
- **persecute — *diōkō* (G1377):** to hunt down (vv4, 7, 8).
- **flash around — *periastraptō* (G4015):** only 9:3; 22:6.
- **appoint — *procheirizomai* (G4400):** chosen beforehand (v14; 3:20; 26:16).
- **Righteous One — *dikaios* (G1342):** a title of Messiah (3:14; 7:52; 22:14).
- **witness — *martys* (G3144):** Paul (v15) and Stephen (v20).
- **wash away — *apolouō* (G628):** only 22:16; 1 Cor 6:11.
- **calling on — *epikaleō* (G1941):** calling on His name (v16; Rom 10:13).
- **trance — *ekstasis* (G1611):** as Peter’s (10:10; 11:5).
- **away with — *airō* (G142):** v22; 21:36; Luke 23:18.
- **scourge — *mastix* (G3148):** the Roman whip (v24).
- **uncondemned — *akatakritos* (G178):** without trial (v25; 16:37).

- **citizenship — *politeia* (G4174):** v28; Eph 2:12.

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **The defense is a testimony** — *apologia* is a story.
2. **Common ground first** — Hebrew, Gamaliel, the Law (Guzik).
3. **Zeal is not enough** — "as much a zealot as a rabbi" (Henry).
4. **To strike His people is to strike Him** (v7).
5. **The arrester arrested** (Sproul's sermon summary).
6. **"What shall I do, Lord?"** — the first question of a new man (Henry).
7. **"Brother Saul"** — a devout Jew's welcome.
8. **Washed — but not by water alone** (Spurgeon).
9. **God picks the place** (Henry).
10. **One word — Gentiles** (Guzik).

Cross-references: Isa 49:6; Luke 23:18; John 12:29; Acts 5:34–39; 7:52, 58; 8:1–3; 9:1–19; 16:37; 21:28–29, 36, 40; 23:11; 26:12–18; Rom 10:13; 11:25–26; 1 Cor 6:11; 9:1; 15:8–9; Gal 1:13–16; Eph 2:12–13; Phil 3:5–6, 20; 1 Tim 1:13–15; 1 Pet 3:15.

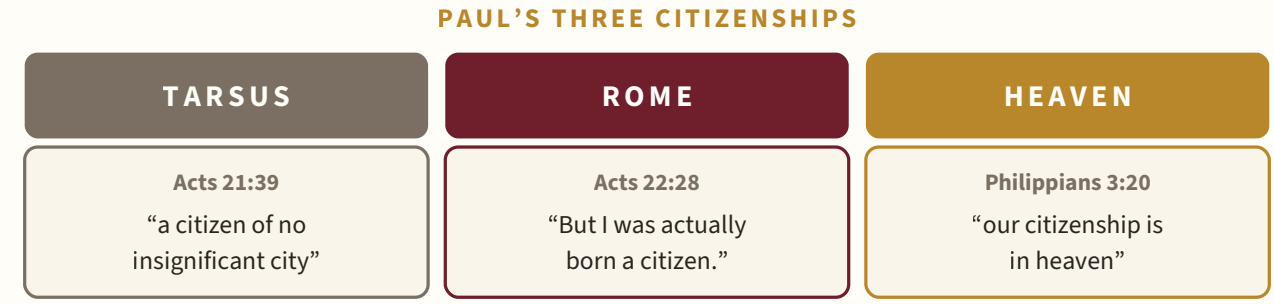
03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 22:10

"And I said, 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord said to me, 'Get up and go on into Damascus, and there you will be told of all that has been appointed for you to do.'"

FIGURE · PAUL'S THREE CITIZENSHIPS



Paul used his earthly rights without shame — and lived for the citizenship that cannot be bought.

Tarsus, Rome and heaven: Paul claims the first two when they serve the gospel, and lives for the third.

Example to follow — tell your story. Paul did not argue the charges; he told what Jesus did to him. A lot of the men I work with think they have nothing to say for God because of their past. Paul's past is exactly what he talked about — the prisons, the beatings, Stephen's blood. This week I will tell one man, plainly, who I was, how Jesus met me, and what He is doing now.

Sin to confess — sincere and wrong. Saul was zealous for God and was hunting God's Son. I have been sure I was right and been wrong — about people, about God, about myself. I confess that my sincerity is not the same as truth, and I ask the Lord to show me where I am still persecuting Him in the way I treat His people.

Command to obey — "Why do you delay?" Ananias did not let Saul sit on it: get up, be baptized, call on His name. Some of what God has shown me I have put off — a step of obedience, a call I owe, a confession. "What shall I do, Lord?" is a dangerous prayer, because He answers. I will do the thing I already know, today.

Promise to trust — "I will send you." Paul wanted to stay where his story made sense; the Lord said, "Go! For I will send you far away to the Gentiles." He decides where I am useful. For a man inside a facility or starting over in a new town, that is a promise: the Lord who sends is the Lord who goes with me — and He can use even Roman law to protect His work.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. Paul answered a false charge by telling his story. If someone asked me to "make a defense" of my faith, what would my honest story be — before Christ, meeting Christ, since Christ? (22:1–16; 1 Pet 3:15) *A changed life is the first apology for the gospel.*
2. Paul was sincere and zealous — and dead wrong. Where have I been sincerely wrong, and what did it take for God to show me? (22:3–5; Phil 3:5–6) *Paul was as much a zealot as a rabbi (Henry).*
3. Jesus said, "why are you persecuting Me?" about Christians Saul had never met as Jesus. How does it change the way I treat other believers to know Jesus takes it personally? (22:7–8; Matt 25:40) *He was persecuting Jesus Himself (Guzik).*
4. "What shall I do, Lord?" When did I last ask that and mean it — and what is He telling me to do that I keep delaying? (22:10, 16) *Why do you delay? (v16)*
5. Paul argued with Jesus about where he would be most useful. Where am I arguing with God about my "Jerusalem" — the place or people I think I should reach? (22:17–21) *God appoints his labourers both their day and their place (Henry).*
6. The crowd listened until Paul said "Gentiles." Who are the people I quietly think God's grace should not reach? (22:21–22; Eph 2:12–13) *This outraged, violent response was over one word (Guzik).*

Worship. The risen Jesus shines brighter than the noon sun and still stops a persecutor on the road by name — "Saul, Saul." He is the Righteous One who calls His enemies "brother," washes them when they call on His name, and sends them to the ends of the earth. He holds the whip and the hand of the commander, and He keeps His witnesses alive until their work is done.

Prayer. Lord Jesus, You knew everything I was, and You still met me. Thank You for not leaving me in my zeal and my blindness. Teach me to ask, "What shall I do, Lord?" and then to stop delaying. Give me courage to tell my story to the people who are hardest to face, and love for the ones I think are outside Your reach. Send me wherever You want, and let me go gladly. Amen.

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SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 23

The Lord Stood at His Side — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

Paul stands before the highest court in Israel with a clean conscience and the hope of the resurrection, and the court comes apart. That night Jesus stands beside him and promises Rome — and every plot, soldier and letter that follows only carries that promise out.

00 The Text

ACTS 23 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, "Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day."

2 The high priest Ananias commanded those standing beside him to strike him on the mouth.

3 Then Paul said to him, "God is going to strike you, you whitewashed wall! Do you sit to try me according to the Law, and in violation of the Law order me to be struck?"

4 But the bystanders said, "Do you revile God's high priest?"

5 And Paul said,
"I was not aware, brethren, that he was high priest; for it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT SPEAK EVIL OF A RULER OF YOUR PEOPLE.'"

6 But perceiving that one group were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul began crying out in the Council, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!"

7 As he said this, there occurred a dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees, and the assembly was divided.

8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit, but the Pharisees acknowledge them all.

9 And there occurred a great uproar; and some of the scribes of the Pharisaic party stood up and began to argue heatedly, saying, "We find nothing wrong with this man; suppose a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?"

10 And as a great dissension was developing, the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them and ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force, and bring him into the barracks.

11 But on the night immediately following, the Lord stood at his side and said, "Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also."

12 When it was day, the Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves under an oath, saying that they would neither eat nor drink until they had killed Paul.

13 There were more than forty who formed this plot.

14 They came to the chief priests and the elders and said,
“We have bound ourselves under a solemn oath to taste
nothing until we have killed Paul.

15 “Now therefore, you and the Council notify the
commander to bring him down to you, as though you
were going to determine his case by a more thorough
investigation; and we for our part are ready to slay him
before he comes near the place.”

16 But the son of Paul’s sister heard of their ambush,
and he came and entered the barracks and told Paul.

17 Paul called one of the centurions to him and said,
“Lead this young man to the commander, for he has
something to report to him.”

18 So he took him and led him to the commander and
said, “Paul the prisoner called me to him and asked me
to lead this young man to you since he has something to
tell you.”

19 The commander took him by the hand and stepping
aside, began to inquire of him privately, “What is it that
you have to report to me?”

20 And he said, “The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring
Paul down tomorrow to the Council, as though they
were going to inquire somewhat more thoroughly about
him.

21 “So do not listen to them, for more than forty of
them are lying in wait for him who have bound
themselves under a curse not to eat or drink until they
slay him; and now they are ready and waiting for the
promise from you.”

22 So the commander let the young man go, instructing
him, “Tell no one that you have notified me of these
things.”

23 And he called to him two of the centurions and said,
“Get two hundred soldiers ready by the third hour of
the night to proceed to Caesarea, with seventy horsemen
and two hundred spearmen.”

24 They were also to provide mounts to put Paul on and
bring him safely to Felix the governor.

25 And he wrote a letter having this form:

26 “Claudius Lysias, to the most excellent governor Felix,
greetings.

27 “When this man was arrested by the Jews and was
about to be slain by them, I came up to them with the
troops and rescued him, having learned that he was a
Roman.

28 “And wanting to ascertain the charge for which they
were accusing him, I brought him down to their
Council;

29 and I found him to be accused over questions about
their Law, but under no accusation deserving death or
imprisonment.

30 “When I was informed that there would be a plot
against the man, I sent him to you at once, also
instructing his accusers to bring charges against him
before you.”

31 So the soldiers, in accordance with their orders, took
Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris.

32 But the next day, leaving the horsemen to go on with
him, they returned to the barracks.

33 When these had come to Caesarea and delivered the
letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him.

34 When he had read it, he asked from what province he
was, and when he learned that he was from Cilicia,

35 he said, “I will give you a hearing after your accusers
arrive also,” giving orders for him to be kept in Herod’s
Praetorium.

Marked in the text

- **v2** “commanded those standing beside him to strike him on the mouth” — Sin / warning
- **v3** “God is going to strike you” — God — His character & actions
- **v3** “you whitewashed wall” — Sin / warning
- **v3** “in violation of the Law” — Sin / warning
- **v5** “I was not aware, brethren, that he was high priest” — Time / place / contrast
- **v5** “YOU SHALL NOT SPEAK EVIL OF A RULER OF YOUR PEOPLE” — Command / instruction
- **v6** “I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees” — Time / place / contrast
- **v6** “I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead” — Promise / blessing

- **v8** “the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection” — Sin / warning
- **v9** “We find nothing wrong with this man” — Time / place / contrast
- **v11** “the Lord stood at his side” — God — His character & actions
- **v11** “Take courage” — Command / instruction
- **v11** “so you must witness at Rome also” — Promise / blessing
- **v12** “bound themselves under an oath” — Sin / warning
- **v16** “the son of Paul’s sister heard of their ambush” — Time / place / contrast
- **v21** “So do not listen to them” — Command / instruction
- **v23** “two hundred soldiers” — Time / place / contrast
- **v24** “bring him safely to Felix the governor” — Time / place / contrast
- **v27** “having learned that he was a Roman” — Sin / warning
- **v29** “under no accusation deserving death or imprisonment” — Time / place / contrast
- **v31** “by night to Antipatris” — Time / place / contrast
- **v35** “Herod’s Praetorium” — Time / place / contrast
- **v1** “conscience” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v6** “resurrection” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v1** “Council” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v13** “forty” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

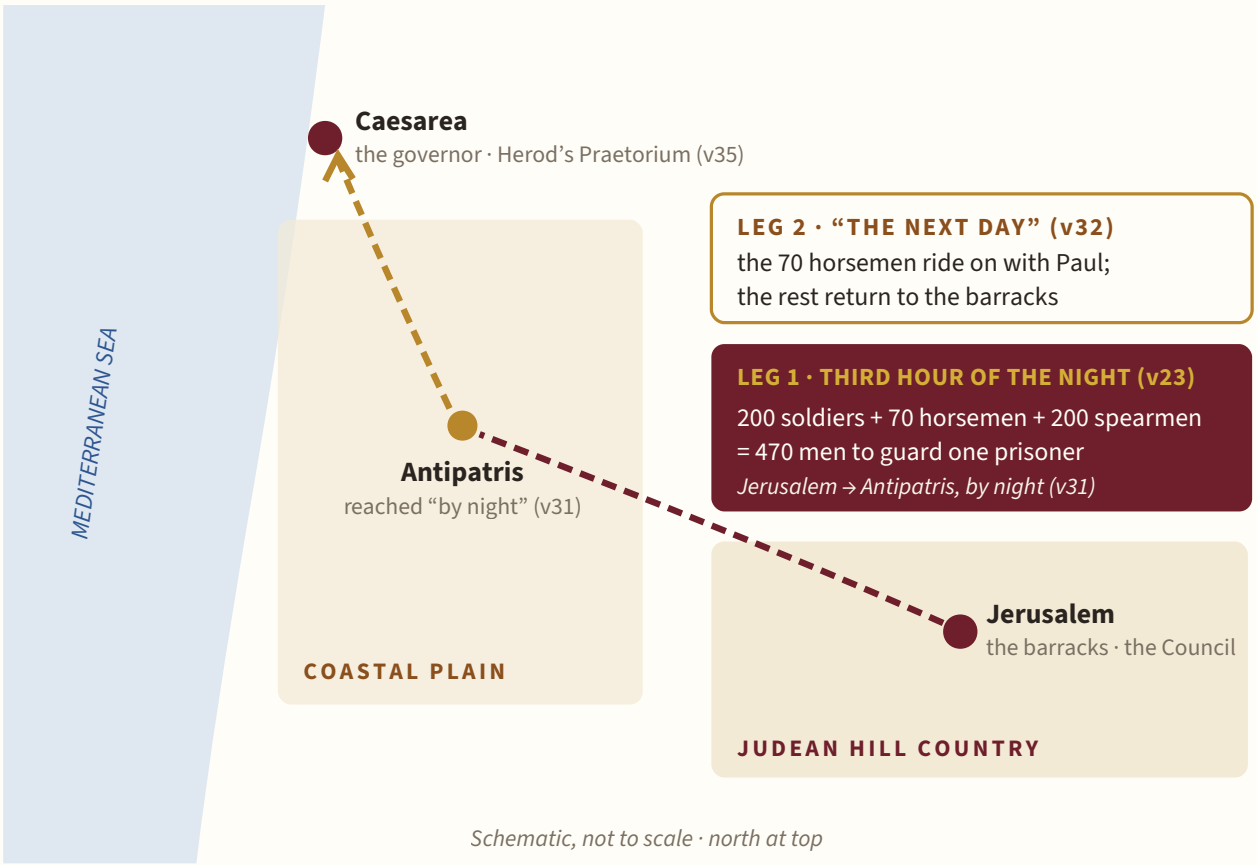
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 23:1

"Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, "Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day.""

FIGURE · JERUSALEM TO CAESAREA BY NIGHT



Follow the dashed line: the whole escort marches through the night to Antipatris, and the next day the horsemen alone bring Paul up the coast to the governor at Caesarea.

Setting. Jerusalem, the day after the temple riot. The Roman commander (named in v26 as Claudius Lysias) has brought Paul before the Council to learn why he is accused (22:30). Paul speaks, is struck, divides the Council over the resurrection, and is taken back to the barracks (vv1–10). That night the Lord appears to him (v11). The next day more than forty men swear to kill him; his nephew warns him; the commander sends him by night under heavy guard to Felix the governor at Caesarea (vv12–35).

Structure:

- vv1–5 — **the blow and the wall:** "a perfectly good conscience before God" (v1); Ananias orders him struck (v2); "you whitewashed wall!" (v3); "Do you revile God's high priest?" (v4); "I was not aware … that he was high priest" — Exodus 22:28 (v5).
- vv6–10 — **the resurrection:** "I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!" (v6); dissension (v7); what each party believes (v8); "We find nothing wrong with this man" (v9); the commander takes him by force (v10).
- v11 — **the Lord at his side:** "Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also."
- vv12–22 — **the plot:** more than forty men under an oath (vv12–13); the plan with the chief priests (vv14–15); Paul's sister's son (v16); the centurion and the commander (vv17–21); "Tell no one" (v22).
- vv23–35 — **the escort:** 200 soldiers, 70 horsemen, 200 spearmen at the third hour of the night (vv23–24); Lysias' letter (vv25–30); Antipatris, then Caesarea (vv31–33); "from what province?" — Cilicia (v34); a hearing promised; Herod's Praetorium (v35).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "Paul" ×15 — vv1, 3, 5, 6, 10, 12, 14, 16 (×2), 17, 18, 20, 24, 31, 33.
- "commander" ×6 — vv10, 15, 17, 18, 19, 22.
- "Pharisee(s) / Pharisaic" ×6 — vv6 (×3), 7, 8, 9; "Sadducees" ×3 — vv6, 7, 8.
- "Council" ×5 — vv1, 6, 15, 20, 28.
- "kill / slay / slain" ×5 — vv12, 14, 15, 21, 27; "eat / drink / taste" ×5 — vv12 (×2), 14, 21 (×2).
- "plot / conspiracy / ambush / lying in wait" ×5 — vv12, 13, 16, 21, 30.
- "accuse(d) / accusation / accusers" ×5 — vv28, 29 (×2), 30, 35.
- "spirit / angel" ×4 — vv8 (×2), 9 (×2).
- "strike / struck" ×3 — vv2, 3 (×2); "high priest" ×3 — vv2, 4, 5; "brethren" ×3 — vv1, 5, 6.
- "oath / curse" ×3 — vv12, 14, 21; "forty" ×2 — vv13, 21; "ready" ×3 — vv15, 21, 23.
- "young man" ×3 — vv17, 18, 22; "barracks" ×3 — vv10, 16, 32.
- "night" ×3 — vv11, 23, 31; "governor" ×3 — vv24, 26, 33.
- "Law" ×3 — vv3 (×2), 29; "resurrection" ×2 — vv6, 8; "witness(ed)" ×2 — v11 (×2).

Contrasts: A good conscience (v1) ⟷ a whitewashed wall (v3). Judging by the Law ⟷ in violation of the Law (v3). Sadducees ⟷ Pharisees (vv6–8). A great dissension (v10) ⟷ the Lord standing quietly at Paul's side (v11). Jerusalem ⟷ Rome (v11). Forty men under an oath ⟷ one young man with the truth (vv13, 16). Their lie — "as though … a more thorough investigation" (v15) ⟷ his report (v20). Night escort (vv23, 31) ⟷ "the next day" (v32).

Shape of the chapter: two scenes of chaos (the Council, the plot) on either side of one quiet verse (v11), then a long, orderly Roman procedure (vv23–35). The noise is all human; the one word that matters is the Lord's.

Chapter theme (my words): Men strike, scheme and swear oaths, but the Lord stands beside His servant and says "you must witness at Rome." After that, even His enemies and the Roman army can only move Paul one step closer to the place Jesus named.

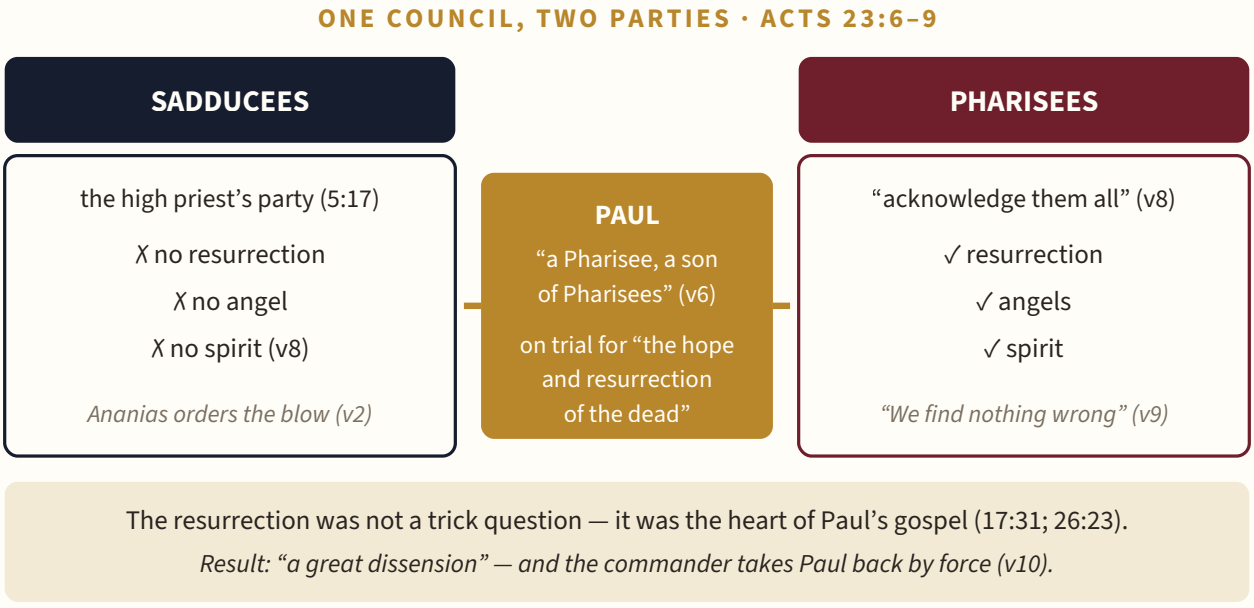
02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 23:6

"But perceiving that one group were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul began crying out in the Council, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; ☆ I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!""

FIGURE · ONE COUNCIL, TWO PARTIES



Paul stands between the two parties of the Council and names the doctrine that divides them — the resurrection of the dead.

What did Paul mean by "a perfectly good conscience" (v1)? Not sinlessness. Guzik: "He didn't mean that he was sinlessly perfect and that his conscience had never told him he was wrong." Henry: "He had aimed at nothing but to please God and do his duty." Paul's verb, *pepoliteumai*, is a citizen's word — he had lived his public life under God. He knew he had once persecuted the church (22:4); a good conscience is a forgiven and honest one.

Was Paul wrong to call Ananias a "whitewashed wall" (v3)? The charge was true — Ananias ordered a blow "in violation of the Law" while sitting to judge by it — and Guzik does not fault Paul: "The man who commanded that a defenseless man be punched in the face indeed was a whitewashed wall." But when told it was the high priest, Paul at once quoted Exodus 22:28 against himself (v5).

Did Paul really not know he was the high priest (v5)? Readers have suggested poor eyesight, irony, or that the meeting was informal and Ananias not in his robes. Guzik takes the plain sense: "Probably, he simply didn't recognize the man who gave the command to strike him as the high priest." Henry takes Paul at his word as well. So do I.

Was "I am a Pharisee" a trick (v6)? Guzik calls it strategy — "Paul's course was to divide the Sanhedrin among their party lines" — but not a dodge: the resurrection was the real issue, and "Paul picked the right issue." Henry: "Paul owns himself a Pharisee, so far as the Pharisees were in the right." He never called himself a Pharisee on the question of how a man is justified (Philippians 3:5–9).

What did the Lord's visit mean (v11)? Four things, following Spurgeon: the Master was present; He knew where Paul was; Paul's witness in Jerusalem was accepted ("as you have solemnly witnessed"); and there was more work ahead ("so you must witness at Rome also"). Guzik: "Jesus would not have said be of good cheer unless Paul needed to hear those words." Henry: what disheartened Paul was not death but "being taken off from doing service to Christ."

How did God protect Paul from the forty (vv12–22)? Not by an angel but by a nephew, a centurion, a commander and a cavalry escort. Guzik: "It was no accident that this happened." Henry: "God has many ways of bringing to light the hidden works of darkness." This is providence — God ruling ordinary events to keep His word.

Was Lysias' letter honest (vv26–30)? Mostly. It correctly reports that Paul was charged only "over questions about their Law" and with nothing "deserving death or imprisonment" (v29). But "having learned that he was a Roman" (v27) puts the rescue in a better light than Acts 22:24–29 does: he learned it only after ordering Paul scourged.

Word study (Greek):

- **conscience — *syneidēsis* (G4893):** "knowing-with"; 30 uses; Acts 23:1; 24:16.
- **lived my life — *politeuomai* (G4176):** to live as a citizen.
- **wall — *toichos* (G5109); whitewashed — *koniaō* (G2867):** compare "whitewashed tombs," Matthew 23:27.
- **hope — *elpis* (G1680):** confident expectation; 23:6; 24:15; 28:20.
- **resurrection — *anastasis* (G386):** "a standing up again"; 23:6, 8; 24:15, 21.
- **take courage — *tharseō* (G2293):** Jesus' word (Matt 9:2; 14:27; John 16:33).
- **must — *dei* (G1163):** divine necessity; 19:21; 23:11; 27:24.
- **bound under an oath — *anathematizō* (G332), *anathema* (G331):** to curse oneself; compare Mark 14:71.
- **spearmen — *dexiolabos* (G1187):** a soldier of uncertain kind; only here.
- **Praetorium — *praitōrion* (G4232):** the governor's headquarters; compare John 18:28; Philippians 1:13.

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **A good conscience is not a sinless record** (Guzik).
2. **A painted wall still falls** — *koniaō*, Matthew 23:27.
3. **Respect the office, name the sin** — Exodus 22:28 (v5).
4. **The resurrection is the dividing line** — "Paul picked the right issue."
5. **The Lord comes at night** (v11).
6. **"Take courage" is Jesus' word** — *tharsei*.
7. **Immortal till your work is done** (Spurgeon).
8. **Providence uses a nephew** (Henry).
9. **Lysias polished his story** (v27; 22:25–29).
10. **Rome carried the promise** — 470 soldiers to Caesarea.

Cross-references: Exod 22:28; Ps 34:7; Isa 54:17; Ezek 13:10–11; Matt 10:18–20; 23:27; 27:27; Mark 14:71; John 16:33; 18:28; Acts 5:17; 9:15; 17:31; 19:21; 21:13, 27–29; 22:25–30; 24:15–16; 26:6–8; 27:23–24; 28:20; Rom 8:28; Phil 1:13; 3:5–9; 2 Tim 4:16–17.

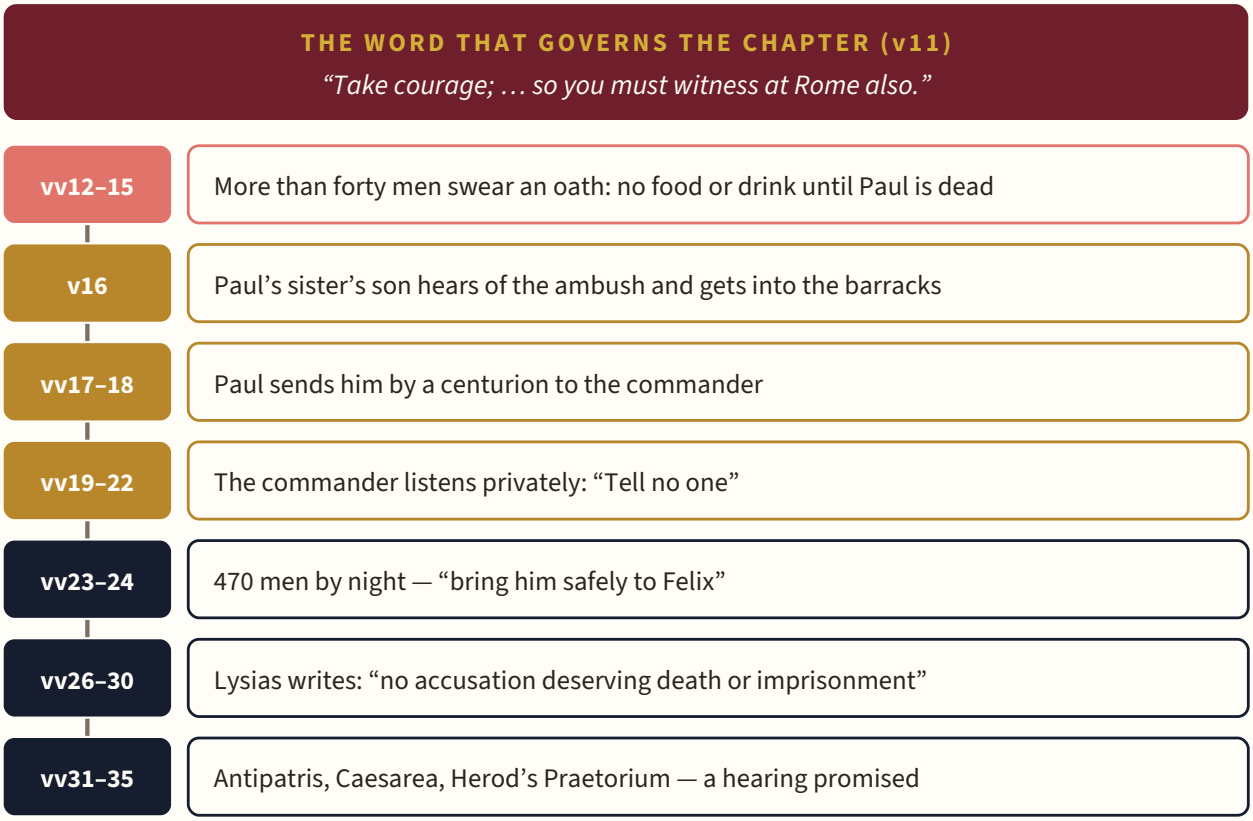
03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 23:11

"But on the night immediately following, the Lord stood at his side and said, "Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also.""

FIGURE · HOW THE PROMISE WAS KEPT



Red: the plot · gold: ordinary people doing ordinary things · navy: Rome, unknowingly carrying out the promise

Read down the chain: no angel and no miracle appear after verse 11, yet every link — a plot, a nephew, a soldier, a letter — moves Paul one step nearer Rome.

Example to follow — Paul's conscience. Paul could stand in front of the men who wanted him dead and say he had lived "with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day." Not because he had never sinned — he had persecuted the church — but because he had brought all of it to Christ and kept short accounts since. That is possible for me, and for the men I sit with who carry a record. This week I will make one thing right that I have been leaving undone.

Sin to confess — the quick tongue. Paul was right about Ananias, and still he said it in the heat of the moment and had to take a step back (vv3–5). I know that pattern — a sharp word, true enough, said the wrong way to the wrong person. I confess it, and I ask for grace to honor people in authority even when I have to tell them the truth.

Promise to trust — "Take courage." The Lord stood at Paul's side in a barracks at night, after the worst day of his ministry, and told him the work wasn't over. Jesus says the same word to me (John 16:33). Some of the men I serve are in cells tonight. The Lord is not locked out; Spurgeon says He asks no warder's leave to enter. I am immortal till my work is done.

Command to obey — speak up. Paul's nephew heard something and told it to the right people, carefully and privately (vv16–22). Sometimes obedience is that simple: say what you know to the person who can act on it. If I know of someone in danger — from others or from himself — I will not keep it to myself.

Truth to rest in — God works through ordinary things. After verse 11 there are no more visions. Just a boy, a centurion, a commander, a letter and a long road. God kept His promise through all of it. I can stop demanding a sign and start watching for His hand in the ordinary.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. Paul could say he had lived "with a perfectly good conscience before God up to this day." What would have to be made right for me to say that honestly? (23:1; 24:16; 1 John 1:9) *A good conscience is not a sinless record but a clean account with God.*
2. When Paul was struck, he answered sharply — then apologized when he learned who it was. How do I handle it when I have said the right thing the wrong way? (23:2–5; Exod 22:28) *Respect the office, name the sin.*
3. Paul was on trial "for the hope and resurrection of the dead." How does the resurrection change the way I face my own trouble today? (23:6; 24:15; 1 Cor 15:58) *Paul picked the right issue (Guzik).*
4. The Lord stood by Paul at night, after the worst day of his ministry. Where do I most need to hear Jesus say "Take courage" right now? (23:11; John 16:33) *Jesus would not have said it unless Paul needed it (Guzik).*
5. A young man overheard a plot and was brave enough to speak up. What do I know that I should be telling the right person? (23:16–22) *God has many ways of bringing to light the hidden works of darkness (Henry).*
6. No miracle happens after verse 11, yet every event moves Paul toward Rome. Where can I see God's hand in the ordinary events of this past year? (23:11, 23–35; Rom 8:28) *You are immortal till your work is done (Spurgeon).*

Worship. The risen Lord Jesus, who has all authority, came quietly into a Roman barracks to stand beside one tired prisoner. He knew the oath of the forty before Paul did, and He ruled a nephew's ears, a commander's pen and an army's road to keep His word. His "must" cannot be broken.

Prayer. Lord Jesus, stand at my side tonight as You stood by Paul. Give me a good conscience before You — cleanse what I have hidden and help me make right what I can. Guard my tongue when I am struck. Thank You that no plot against Your people can outlast Your word. Take courage into my heart, and keep me at the work You have given me until it is done. Amen.

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SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 24

Go Away for the Present — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

Before a corrupt governor Paul answers lies with facts and confesses the Way, the resurrection and a clear conscience. Felix hears the gospel aimed straight at his own sins, trembles — and chooses delay, the most comfortable way of saying no.

00 The Text

ACTS 24 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 After five days the high priest Ananias came down with some elders, with an attorney named Tertullus, and they brought charges to the governor against Paul.

2 After Paul had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying to the governor, "Since we have through you attained much peace, and since by your providence reforms are being carried out for this nation,

3 we acknowledge this in every way and everywhere, most excellent Felix, with all thankfulness.

4 "But, that I may not weary you any further, I beg you to grant us, by your kindness, a brief hearing.

5 "For we have found this man a real pest and a fellow who stirs up dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes.

6 "And he even tried to desecrate the temple; and then we arrested him. [We wanted to judge him according to our own Law.

7 "But Lysias the commander came along, and with much violence took him out of our hands,

8 ordering his accusers to come before you.] By examining him yourself concerning all these matters you will be able to ascertain the things of which we accuse him."

9 The Jews also joined in the attack, asserting that these things were so.

10 When the governor had nodded for him to speak, Paul responded: "Knowing that for many years you have been a judge to this nation, I cheerfully make my defense,

11 since you can take note of the fact that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship.

12 "Neither in the temple, nor in the synagogues, nor in the city itself did they find me carrying on a discussion with anyone or causing a riot.

13 "Nor can they prove to you the charges of which they now accuse me.

14 "But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets;

15 having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.

16 “In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men.

17 “Now after several years I came to bring alms to my nation and to present offerings;

18 in which they found me occupied in the temple, having been purified, without any crowd or uproar. But there were some Jews from Asia—

19 who ought to have been present before you and to make accusation, if they should have anything against me.

20 “Or else let these men themselves tell what misdeed they found when I stood before the Council,

21 other than for this one statement which I shouted out while standing among them, ‘For the resurrection of the dead I am on trial before you today.’”

22 But Felix, having a more exact knowledge about the Way, put them off, saying, “When Lysias the commander comes down, I will decide your case.”

23 Then he gave orders to the centurion for him to be kept in custody and yet have some freedom, and not to prevent any of his friends from ministering to him.

24 But some days later Felix arrived with Drusilla, his wife who was a Jewess, and sent for Paul and heard him speak about faith in Christ Jesus.

25 But as he was discussing righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix became frightened and said, “Go away for the present, and when I find time I will summon you.”

26 At the same time too, he was hoping that money would be given him by Paul; therefore he also used to send for him quite often and converse with him.

27 But after two years had passed, Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus, and wishing to do the Jews a favor, Felix left Paul imprisoned.

Marked in the text

- **v2** “Since we have through you attained much peace” — Sin / warning
- **v5** “a real pest” — Sin / warning
- **v5** “a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes” — Sin / warning
- **v6** “he even tried to desecrate the temple” — Sin / warning
- **v10** “I cheerfully make my defense” — Time / place / contrast
- **v11** “no more than twelve days ago” — Time / place / contrast
- **v13** “Nor can they prove to you the charges” — Time / place / contrast
- **v14** “I do serve the God of our fathers” — God — His character & actions
- **v14** “believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets” — Command / instruction
- **v15** “having a hope in God” — Promise / blessing
- **v15** “a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked” — Promise / blessing
- **v16** “to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men” — Command / instruction
- **v17** “I came to bring alms to my nation” — Time / place / contrast
- **v22** “put them off” — Sin / warning
- **v24** “faith in Christ Jesus” — God — His character & actions
- **v25** “righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come” — God — His character & actions
- **v25** “Felix became frightened” — Sin / warning
- **v25** “Go away for the present” — Sin / warning
- **v25** “when I find time I will summon you” — Time / place / contrast
- **v26** “he was hoping that money would be given him” — Sin / warning
- **v27** “after two years had passed” — Time / place / contrast
- **v27** “after two years” — Time / place / contrast
- **v27** “Felix left Paul imprisoned” — Sin / warning
- **v14** “the Way” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v15** “resurrection” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v16** “conscience” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

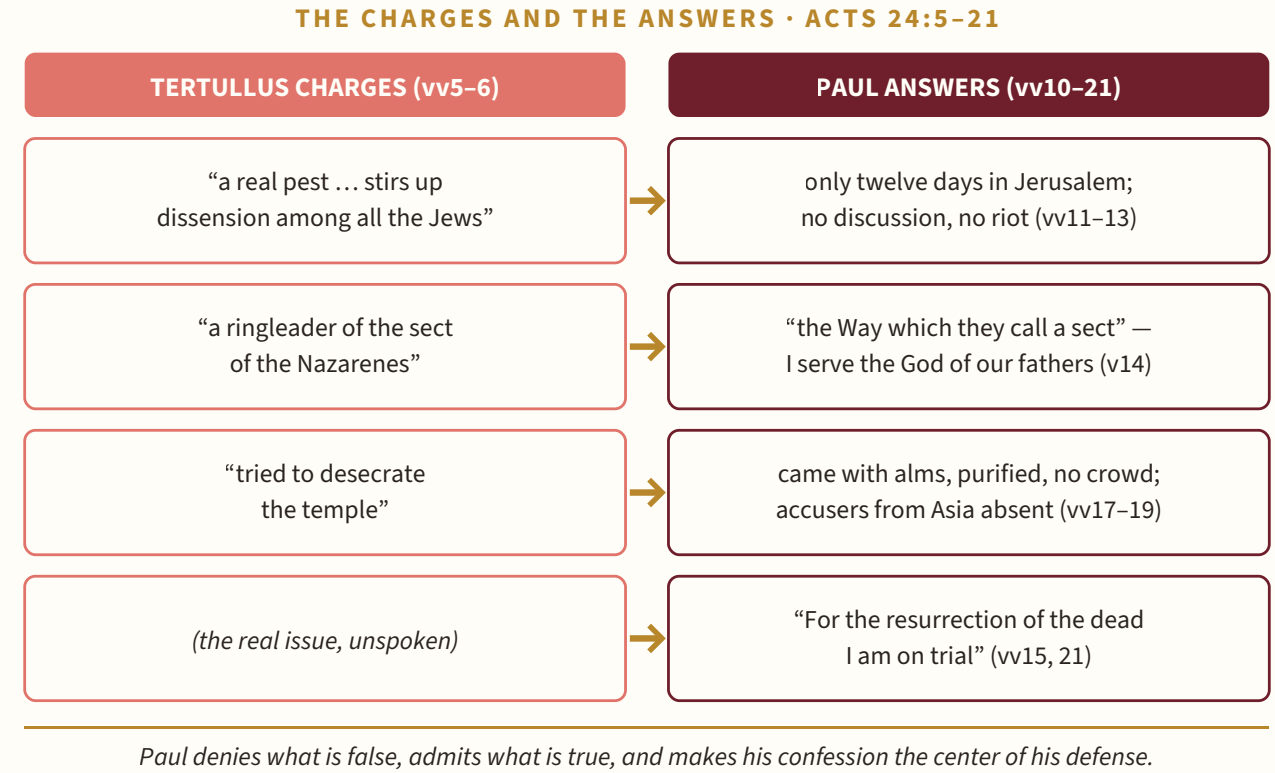
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 24:14

"But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the God of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets;"

FIGURE · THE CHARGES AND THE ANSWERS



Read across each row: every accusation of Tertullus meets a checkable fact or an honest confession in Paul's reply.

Setting. Caesarea, the governor's court, five days after Paul's arrival (v1). The high priest Ananias comes with elders and a hired orator, Tertullus (vv1–9). Paul answers (vv10–21). Felix adjourns the case (vv22–23), later hears Paul privately with his wife Drusilla (vv24–25), sends for him often hoping for a bribe (v26), and after two years leaves him in prison for his successor, Porcius Festus (v27).

Structure:

- vv1–9 — **the accusation:** Ananias, elders and Tertullus (v1); flattery of Felix (vv2–4); "a real pest," "a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes," "tried to desecrate the temple" (vv5–6); [bracketed words about Lysias, vv6b–8a]; "examining him yourself" (v8); the Jews join in (v9).

- vv10–21 — **the defense:** "I cheerfully make my defense" (v10); twelve days, no riot, no proof (vv11–13); "the Way which they call a sect" — the God of our fathers, the Law and the Prophets (v14); hope of a resurrection of righteous and wicked (v15); a blameless conscience (v16); alms and offerings, purified, no crowd (vv17–18); the absent Jews from Asia (v19); "For the resurrection of the dead I am on trial" (vv20–21).
- vv22–27 — **the delay:** Felix, knowing about the Way, puts them off until Lysias comes (v22); custody with some freedom (v23); Felix and Drusilla hear about faith in Christ Jesus (v24); righteousness, self-control, judgment to come; "Go away for the present" (v25); hoping for money (v26); two years; Festus; "Felix left Paul imprisoned" (v27).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "accuse / charges" ×7 — vv1, 2, 8 (×2), 13 (×2), 19 (one of the v8 uses is inside the brackets).
- "Paul" ×6 — vv1, 2, 10, 24, 26, 27; "Felix" ×6 — vv3, 22, 24, 25, 27 (×2).
- "before" ×6 — vv8, 16 (×2), 19, 20, 21.
- "judge / judgment / decide / trial" ×5 — vv6, 10, 21, 22, 25.
- "found / find" ×5 — vv5, 12, 18, 20, 25.
- "Jews" ×4 — vv5, 9, 18, 27; "sect / the Way" ×4 — vv5, 14 (×2), 22.
- "crowd / riot / uproar / dissension" ×4 — vv5, 12, 18 (×2).
- "God" ×3 — vv14, 15, 16; "temple" ×3 — vv6, 12, 18; "nation" ×3 — vv2, 10, 17; "years" ×3 — vv10, 17, 27.
- "summon(ed)" ×2 — vv2, 25; with "sent for" (v24) ×3.
- "money / alms / offerings" ×3 — vv17 (×2), 26.
- "resurrection" ×2 — vv15, 21; "hope / hoping" ×2 — vv15, 26; "Lysias" ×2 — vv7 (bracketed), 22.

Contrasts: Tertullus' flattery (vv2–4) ⟷ Paul's plain words (v10). "A sect" (v5) ⟷ "the Way" (v14). Charges ⟷ proof (v13). Riot and crowd (v12) ⟷ purified, "without any crowd or uproar" (v18). Paul's hope in God (v15) ⟷ Felix's hope for money (v26). A blameless conscience (v16) ⟷ a frightened one (v25). Paul ready to speak "today" (v21) ⟷ Felix's "for the present … when I find time" (v25). Two years of custody (v27) ⟷ the freedom of a clear conscience.

Shape of the chapter: a formal trial (1–21) that ends in no verdict, then a private hearing (24–25) where the judge becomes the one on trial. The case against Paul fades; the case against Felix grows.

Chapter theme (my words): The man in chains is free and the man on the bench is bound. Paul tells the truth, confesses Christ and keeps his conscience clean; Felix hears the truth, feels it, and puts it off — and the convenient time never comes.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 24:15

"☆having a hope in God, which these men cherish themselves, that there shall certainly be ☆a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked."

FIGURE · ACTS 24:6–8 IN TWO FORMS

ACTS 24:6–8 · TWO FORMS OF THE TEXT

SHORTER TEXT oldest Greek manuscripts	LONGER TEXT many later manuscripts · KJV
v6 "… and then we arrested him." *(no verse 7)* v8 "By examining him yourself …"	v6 adds "We wanted to judge him according to our own Law." v7 Lysias "with much violence took him out of our hands"
"him" in v8 = PAUL Felix may question the prisoner	**"him" in v8 = likely LYSIAS** Felix may question the commander

NASB 1995 keeps the longer words in [brackets] — words probably not in the original writings.

No doctrine turns on it — only the question of whom Felix should examine.

Compare the columns: the bracketed words decide whom Felix is told to examine in verse 8 — Paul in the shorter text, probably Lysias in the longer.

What about the bracketed words in verses 6–8? The NASB 1995 prints "We wanted to judge him according to our own Law. But Lysias the commander came along, and with much violence took him out of our hands, ordering his accusers to come before you" in brackets, which in the NASB marks words probably not in the original writings. They are absent from the oldest Greek manuscripts and present in many later ones; the KJV includes them, and Henry and Guzik both comment on verse 7 as part of the speech. The practical difference is in verse 8: in the shorter text "examining him" means examining Paul; in the longer, probably Lysias. I keep the NASB as printed, read the brackets honestly, and notice that no doctrine depends on it. If the longer words are original, the accusers even blamed the Roman who had saved them from committing murder (Henry).

Why did Tertullus flatter Felix? It was standard courtroom rhetoric, and it was false. Guzik: "These were lies presented as flattery," for "Felix did not bring peace or prosperity to those he governed." Henry: "One of the worst of men is here applauded as one of the best of benefactors, only because he was the judge."

What were the charges, and how did Paul answer? Troublemaker, sect leader, temple defiler (vv5–6). Paul answered with checkable facts — twelve days, no riot, no proof (vv11–13), no witnesses from Asia present (v19) — and with a confession (vv14–16). Guzik: the temple charge was "a fabricated charge based on rumor only."

Is Christianity a "sect"? Tertullus said so; Paul said "the Way" — the faith of "the God of our fathers," believing everything in the Law and the Prophets (v14). Guzik: "Paul called it the Way." Henry: "in the way which they call heresy—or a sect, so worship I the God of my fathers." The gospel is the fulfillment of Israel's Scriptures and Israel's hope, not a break from them — and God is not finished with Israel (Romans 11:1–2, 26).

What resurrection did Paul hope for? "A resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked" (v15) — the hope of Daniel 12:2 and of Jesus in John 5:28–29. Guzik: "Paul clearly believed in a resurrection for both the righteous and the unrighteous," and soul-sleep or annihilation is "not accurate according to New Testament teaching." Henry: "both of the just and of the unjust, the sanctified and the unsanctified."

What does a "blameless conscience" take (v16)? Work. *Askō* means to exercise or train. Paul says the same as he said before the Council (23:1). A conscience is kept clean by daily confession and by making things right with God and with people.

Why did Felix become frightened (v25)? Because Paul's topics were aimed at his life. Spurgeon: "Felix had been an unjust extortioner, and the apostle purposely selected righteousness to be a topic of his discourse." Henry: "Felix for the present could fasten upon nothing to pacify his conscience, and therefore trembled." But fear is not repentance. Guzik: "Felix was unwilling to declare his decision against Jesus," so he delayed — and "It is foolish to trust in a convenient time to repent and believe."

Why did Felix keep Paul two years (vv26–27)? Money and politics. He hoped for a bribe (v26) and wanted "to do the Jews a favor" (v27). Henry: "It is a wrong not only to deny justice, but to delay it," and "he would continue him a prisoner rather than offend them." Guzik notes that under Roman law this kind of custody could only last two years.

Word study (Greek):

- **attorney — *rhētōr* (G4489):** a trained orator; only here in the New Testament.
- **pest — *loimos* (G3061):** plague, pestilence (Luke 21:11).
- **sect — *hairesis* (G139):** a chosen party; source of "heresy" (5:17; 15:5; 24:5, 14).
- **Way — *hodos* (G3598):** Luke's name for the faith (9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22).
- **hope — *elpis* (G1680)** and **resurrection — *anastasis* (G386):** vv15, 21.
- **righteous — *dikaios* (G1342); wicked — *adikos* (G94):** v15.
- **do my best — *askeō* (G778):** to exercise, train; only here.
- **blameless — *aproskopos* (G677):** without offense (1 Cor 10:32; Phil 1:10).
- **conscience — *syneidēsis* (G4893):** 23:1; 24:16.
- **righteousness — *dikaiosynē* (G1343); self-control — *enkrateia* (G1466); judgment — *krima* (G2917):** v25.
- **frightened — *emphobos* (G1719):** in fear; KJV "trembled."
- **time — *kairos* (G2540):** the opportune moment; "convenient season."

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **Flattery is not loyalty** (Henry).

2. **Accusation is not evidence** (Guzik).
3. **An honest bracket** — vv6b–8a.
4. **Not a sect but the Way** — *hodos*.
5. **Two resurrections, one hope** — Dan 12:2; John 5:28–29.
6. **A conscience is trained** — *askō*.
7. **The sermon fit the sinner** (Spurgeon).
8. **Fear is not faith** — Felix trembled and delayed.
9. **The convenient season never came** (Henry).
10. **Right now counts forever** (Sproul, via Tabletalk).

Cross-references: Prov 29:5; Isa 55:6; Dan 12:2; Luke 21:11; John 5:28–29; Acts 5:17; 9:2; 17:30–31; 19:9, 23; 21:26–29; 22:4; 23:1, 29, 35; 25:13; Rom 11:1–2, 26; 1 Cor 10:32; 2 Cor 5:10; 6:2; Gal 5:23; Phil 1:10; 1 Tim 1:19; Heb 4:7; 13:18; 2 Pet 1:6.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 24:16

"In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men."

FIGURE · THREE TOPICS FOR ONE GOVERNOR

THREE TOPICS FOR ONE GOVERNOR · ACTS 24:24–27

RIGHTEOUSNESS dikaiosynē · G1343	SELF-CONTROL enkrateia · G1466	JUDGMENT TO COME krima · G2917
a judge known for cruelty and a hand out for money (v26)	a wife taken from another man — Drusilla beside him (v24)	the judge of Judea standing before the Judge of all

FELIX'S RESPONSE

"became frightened" → "Go away for the present" → "when I find time I will summon you"

sent for him "quite often," hoping for money (v26) → two years → "left Paul imprisoned" (v27)

Henry: "we do not find that this more convenient season ever came"

Paul's three subjects each pressed on Felix's own life; read the bottom panel left to right to see how fear turned into delay.

Example to follow — Paul under accusation. Paul didn't flatter, didn't panic and didn't lie. He denied what was false, admitted what was true ("this I admit to you," v14), and turned his defense into a confession of Christ. Many of the men I serve have stood before judges. Some charges were true and some weren't. The way of Christ is the same in both cases: tell the truth, all of it, and let your hope in God be the center of what you say.

Command to obey — exercise your conscience. Paul said, "I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men" (v16). That is daily work. This week I will end each day by asking two questions: Is anything between me and God? Is anything between me and another man? And I will deal with it before I sleep.

Sin to confess — "when I find time." I have said Felix's words to God more than once. I felt the weight of His Word, I knew what He was asking, and I said, "Not now." Fear without repentance is just a feeling. I confess the specific thing I have been putting off, and I do it today, because the convenient season never comes.

Promise to trust — the resurrection. Paul could wait two years in custody because he had "a hope in God" that the dead will rise (v15). My release date, my court date, my family's choices — none of them is my final hope. The resurrection is. Christ is risen, and I will stand before Him.

Warning to heed — the judgment to come. Felix was a judge who forgot he would be judged. Every man will stand before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor 5:10). That is not a threat to the man in Christ; it is a reason to live clean and to tell others while there is time.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. Tertullus flattered Felix to get what he wanted. Where am I tempted to flatter people in authority — or to be flattered — instead of telling and hearing the truth? (24:2–4; Prov 29:5) *Flattery is one thing, and true loyalty is another (Henry).*
2. Paul admitted what was true ("this I admit to you," v14) and denied only what was false. When I am accused, how do I separate the two honestly? (24:10–16) *Paul answered with facts and with a confession.*
3. Paul said he worked at keeping "a blameless conscience both before God and before men." What would that daily exercise look like in my life this week? (24:16; 23:1; 1 Tim 1:19) *Askō — I exercise myself (v16).*
4. Paul preached righteousness, self-control and judgment to a man who needed exactly those words. Which of the three does God keep pressing on me? (24:24–25) *The sermon fit the sinner (Spurgeon).*
5. Felix felt the fear of God and said, "Go away for the present." What have I been putting off with God, telling myself I will deal with it "when I find time"? (24:25; 2 Cor 6:2; Heb 4:7) *It is foolish to trust in a convenient time to repent and believe (Guzik).*
6. Paul spent two years in custody waiting on a governor who wanted a bribe. How do I stay faithful when I am stuck waiting on people who are not acting in good faith? (24:23, 26–27; Phil 4:11–13) *Paul kept preaching to the man who kept him there.*

Worship. God of our fathers, You are righteous, and You have fixed a day when You will judge the world in righteousness through the Man You raised from the dead. You are the God of the Way, the hope of Israel, and the One who raises both the righteous and the wicked. You kept Your servant faithful through two years of waiting, and You still speak to governors and prisoners alike.

Prayer. Father, I don't want to be Felix. When Your Word presses on my life, give me the grace to say "yes" today, not "when I find time." Train my conscience to stay clean before You and before men. Teach me to answer accusation with truth and with Christ. Keep my hope fixed on the resurrection, not on my circumstances. And give me the courage to speak of righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come to men who need to hear it — with love, and while there is still time. Amen.

Scripture: New American Standard Bible® (NASB), © 1960–1995 The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. · Teacher material summarized from David Guzik (Enduring Word), R.C. Sproul (Ligonier), C.H. Spurgeon and Matthew Henry — see Acts-24-Deep-Dive-Four-Voices.pdf for sources. · Importable: the companion .md carries the berean-study block.

SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 25

I Appeal to Caesar — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

Paul's enemies have not given up, a new governor wants to keep the peace, and an innocent man is about to be traded as a favor — so Paul uses the law God gave him and appeals to Caesar. Under all the politics God is keeping His promise to bring Paul to Rome, and the whole case turns out to be about one thing: Jesus died, and He is alive.

00 The Text

ACTS 25 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 Festus then, having arrived in the province, three days later went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea.

2 And the chief priests and the leading men of the Jews brought charges against Paul, and they were urging him,

3 requesting a concession against Paul, that he might have him brought to Jerusalem (at the same time, setting an ambush to kill him on the way).

4 Festus then answered that Paul was being kept in custody at Caesarea and that he himself was about to leave shortly.

5 "Therefore," he said, "let the influential men among you go there with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, let them prosecute him."

6 After he had spent not more than eight or ten days among them, he went down to Caesarea, and on the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought.

7 After Paul arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him which they could not prove,

8 while Paul said in his own defense, "I have committed no offense either against the Law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar."

9 But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, answered Paul and said, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me on these charges?"

10 But Paul said, "I am standing before Caesar's tribunal, where I ought to be tried. I have done no wrong to the Jews, as you also very well know.

11 "If, then, I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die; but if none of those things is true of which these men accuse me, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar."

12 Then when Festus had conferred with his council, he answered, "You have appealed to Caesar, to Caesar you shall go."

13 Now when several days had elapsed, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea and paid their respects to Festus.

14 While they were spending many days there, Festus laid Paul's case before the king, saying, "There is a man who was left as a prisoner by Felix;

15 and when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews brought charges against him, asking for a sentence of condemnation against him.

16 "I answered them that it is not the custom of the Romans to hand over any man before the accused meets his accusers face to face and has an opportunity to make his defense against the charges.

17 "So after they had assembled here, I did not delay, but on the next day took my seat on the tribunal and ordered the man to be brought before me.

18 "When the accusers stood up, they began bringing charges against him not of such crimes as I was expecting,

19 but they simply had some points of disagreement with him about their own religion and about a dead man, Jesus, whom Paul asserted to be alive.

20 "Being at a loss how to investigate such matters, I asked whether he was willing to go to Jerusalem and there stand trial on these matters.

21 "But when Paul appealed to be held in custody for the Emperor's decision, I ordered him to be kept in custody until I send him to Caesar."

22 Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I also would like to hear the man myself." "Tomorrow," he said, "you shall hear him."

23 So, on the next day when Agrippa came together with Bernice amid great pomp, and entered the auditorium accompanied by the commanders and the prominent men of the city, at the command of Festus, Paul was brought in.

24 Festus said, "King Agrippa, and all you gentlemen here present with us, you see this man about whom all the people of the Jews appealed to me, both at Jerusalem and here, loudly declaring that he ought not to live any longer.

25 "But I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death; and since he himself appealed to the Emperor, I decided to send him.

26 "Yet I have nothing definite about him to write to my lord. Therefore I have brought him before you all and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that after the investigation has taken place, I may have something to write.

27 "For it seems absurd to me in sending a prisoner, not to indicate also the charges against him."

Marked in the text

- **v1** "three days later went up to Jerusalem" — Time / place / contrast
- **v3** "setting an ambush to kill him on the way" — Sin / warning
- **v7** "which they could not prove" — Sin / warning
- **v8** "I have committed no offense" — Time / place / contrast
- **v9** "wishing to do the Jews a favor" — Sin / warning
- **v10** "I have done no wrong to the Jews, as you also very well know" — Time / place / contrast
- **v11** "I do not refuse to die" — Command / instruction
- **v12** "to Caesar you shall go" — God — His character & actions
- **v16** "it is not the custom of the Romans to hand over any man" — Time / place / contrast
- **v16** "meets his accusers face to face" — Time / place / contrast
- **v19** "their own religion" — Time / place / contrast
- **v19** "a dead man, Jesus, whom Paul asserted to be alive" — God — His character & actions
- **v20** "Being at a loss how to investigate such matters" — Sin / warning
- **v22** "I also would like to hear the man myself" — Command / instruction
- **v23** "amid great pomp" — Time / place / contrast
- **v24** "he ought not to live any longer" — Sin / warning
- **v25** "he had committed nothing worthy of death" — Promise / blessing
- **v26** "I have nothing definite about him to write to my lord" — Time / place / contrast
- **v27** "it seems absurd to me" — Sin / warning
- **v8** "Caesar" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v11** "appeal" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v12** "appealed" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v6** "tribunal" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v2** "charges" — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

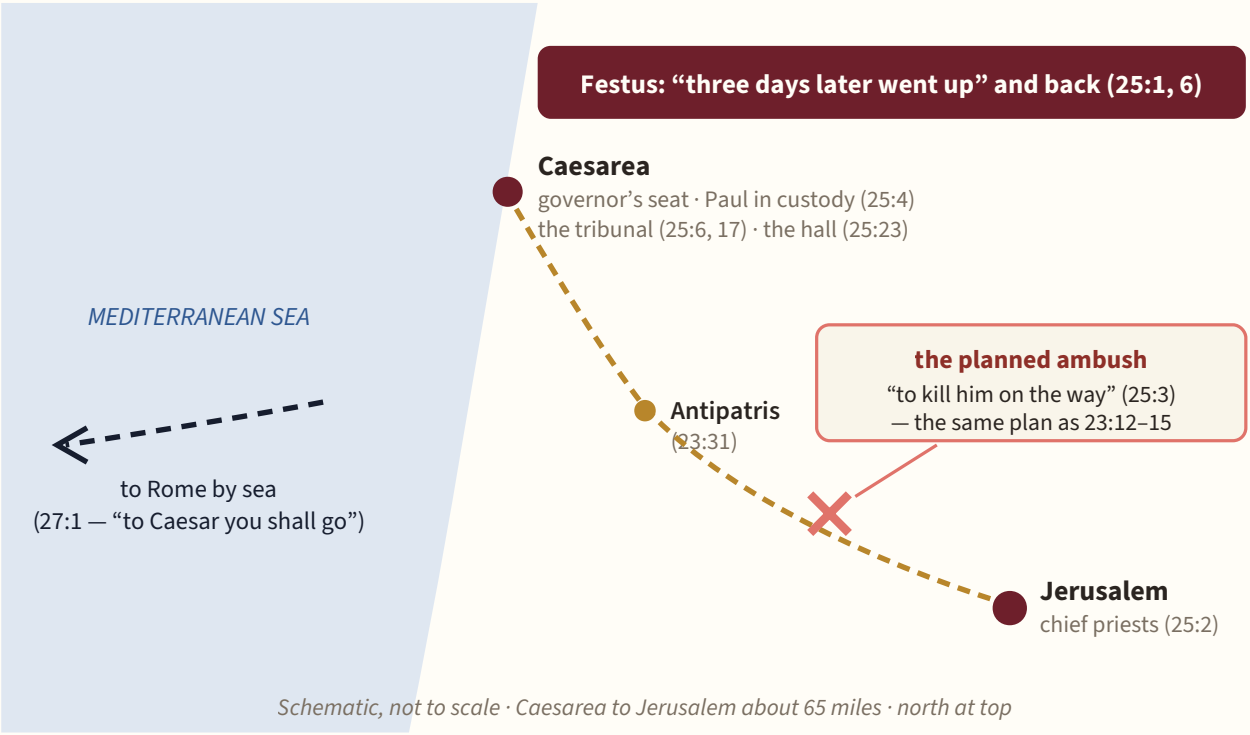
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 25:7

"After Paul arrived, the Jews who had come down from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many and serious charges against him ⚠which they could not prove,"

FIGURE · CAESAREA AND JERUSALEM



Festus goes up to Jerusalem and back; the priests want Paul on that same road so they can kill him, and Paul's appeal sends him west across the sea instead.

Setting. Caesarea, the Roman capital on the coast, and Jerusalem, two days up in the hills, about AD 59–60. Paul has been in custody two years (24:27). Porcius Festus replaces Felix; three days after arriving he goes up to Jerusalem (v1), stays eight or ten days (v6), and hears Paul at Caesarea. Several days later King Agrippa II and his sister Bernice arrive (v13), and Paul is brought before them in the auditorium (v23).

Structure:

- vv1–5 — **the plot revived:** Festus goes up to Jerusalem; the chief priests ask that Paul be brought there, "setting an ambush to kill him on the way" (v3); Festus says Paul stays at Caesarea — "let the influential men among you go there with me" (vv4–5).

- vv6–12 — **the appeal:** Festus takes his seat on the tribunal; many serious charges "which they could not prove" (v7); "I have committed no offense" (v8); Festus, "wishing to do the Jews a favor," proposes Jerusalem (v9); "I am standing before Caesar's tribunal … I appeal to Caesar" (vv10–11); "to Caesar you shall go" (v12).
- vv13–22 — **the question of Jesus:** Agrippa and Bernice pay their respects (v13); Festus lays out the case — the Roman custom of meeting accusers face to face (v16), charges not such as he expected (v18), "a dead man, Jesus, whom Paul asserted to be alive" (v19), "at a loss" (v20), the appeal to the Emperor (v21); "I also would like to hear the man myself" (v22).
- vv23–27 — **the great hall:** Agrippa and Bernice "amid great pomp," with commanders and prominent men (v23); Festus presents the prisoner — the Jews cry he ought not to live (v24), he found nothing worthy of death (v25), nothing definite to write to "my lord" (v26), absurd to send a prisoner without charges (v27).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "Festus" ×9 — vv1, 4, 9, 12, 13, 14, 22, 23, 24.
- "Caesar" ×6 — vv8, 10, 11, 12 (×2), 21; "Emperor" ×2 — vv21, 25.
- "charge / charges" ×7 — vv2, 7, 9, 15, 16, 18, 27; "accuse / accused / accusers" ×4 — vv11, 16 (×2), 18.
- "Jerusalem" ×7 — vv1, 3, 7, 9, 15, 20, 24; "Caesarea" ×4 — vv1, 4, 6, 13.
- "Jews" ×7 — vv2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 15, 24.
- "appeal / appealed" ×5 — vv11, 12, 21, 24, 25 (four times Paul's appeal; once the Jews' appeal to Festus, v24).
- "Agrippa" ×5 — vv13, 22, 23, 24, 26; "king" ×4 — vv13, 14, 24, 26.
- "tribunal" ×3 — vv6, 10, 17; "custody" ×3 — vv4, 21 (×2).
- "wrong / wrongdoer" ×3 — vv5, 10, 11; "worthy of death" ×2 — vv11, 25.
- "next day / tomorrow" ×4 — vv6, 17, 22, 23.

Contrasts: Jerusalem, where the ambush waits ⟷ Caesarea, where the law sits (vv3–6). Many serious charges ⟷ nothing proved (v7). A favor to the Jews ⟷ what is right (vv9–10). "I do not refuse to die" ⟷ "no one can hand me over to them" (v11). What Festus expected ⟷ a question about religion and a dead man (vv18–19). A dead man ⟷ asserted to be alive (v19). Great pomp ⟷ a prisoner (v23). "He ought not to live" ⟷ "nothing worthy of death" (vv24–25).

Shape of the chapter: two scenes and a speech. Scene one is a trial that goes nowhere (vv1–12); scene two is a conversation that repeats it for a king (vv13–22); and Festus's speech in the great hall sets the stage for Paul's defense in chapter 26 (vv23–27). The governor tells the story twice — and both times the only thing he cannot explain is Jesus.

Chapter theme (my words): Men keep handling Paul's case for their own advantage — the priests for revenge, Festus for goodwill, Agrippa for curiosity — and God keeps using all of it to get His witness to Rome. And when the case is stripped down, it is about one Man who died and is alive.

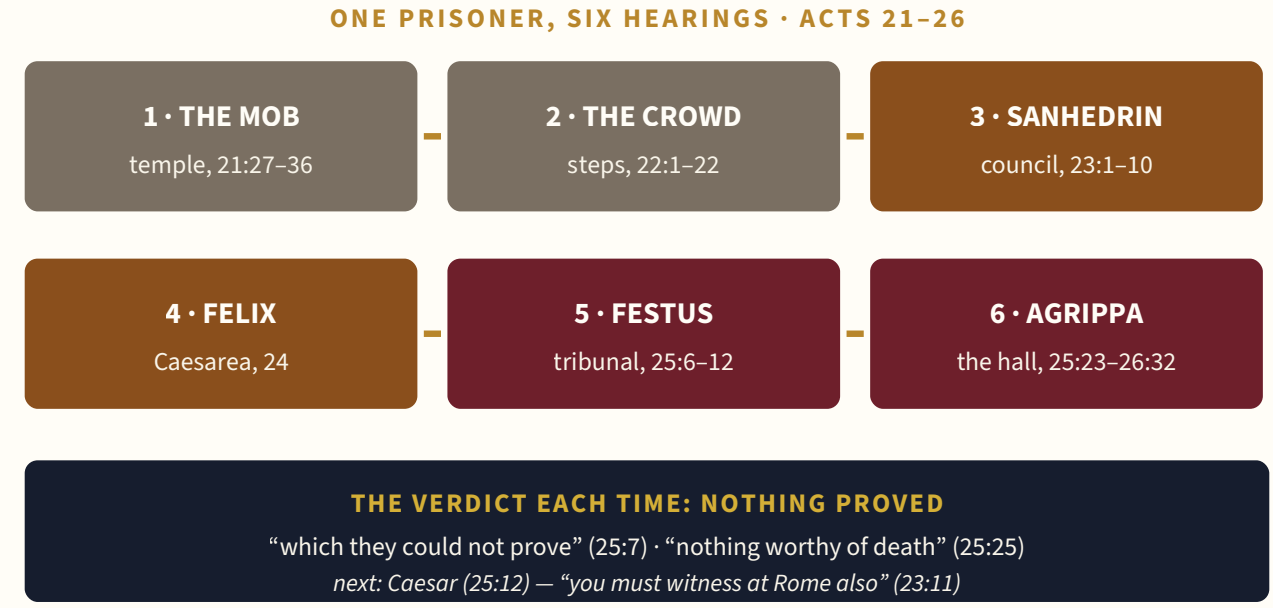
02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 25:11

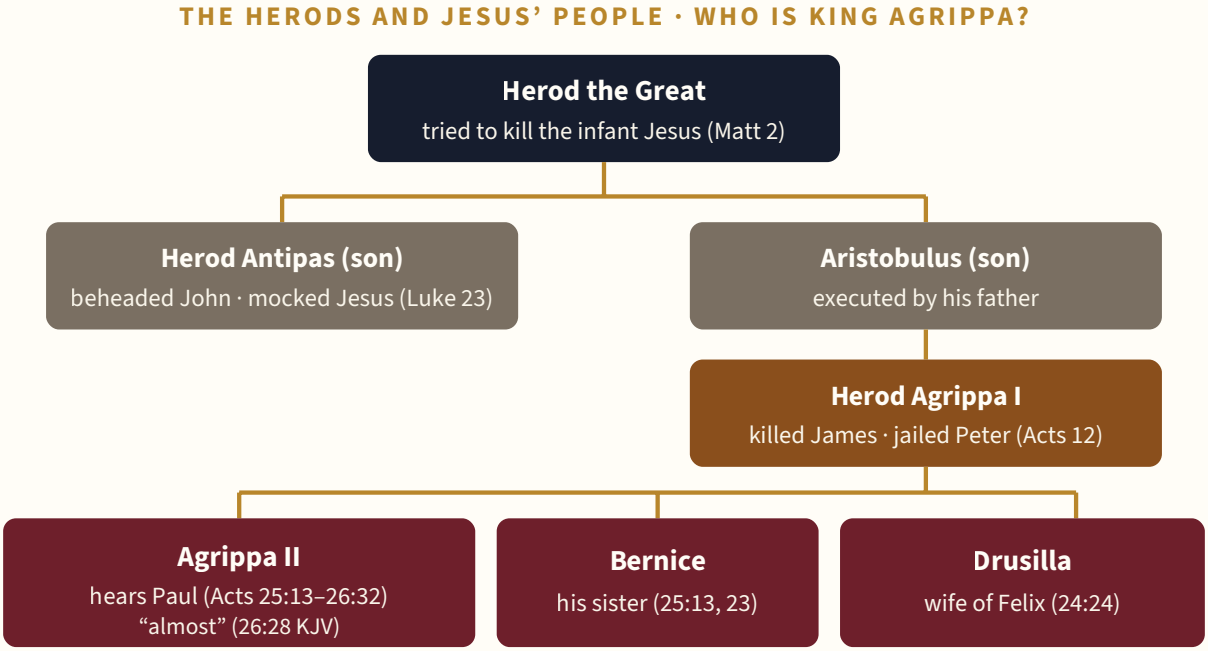
"If, then, I am a wrongdoer and have committed anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die; but if none of those things is true of which these men accuse me, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar."

FIGURE · ONE PRISONER, SIX HEARINGS



Read the boxes in order: every court Paul faced from the temple riot to King Agrippa found nothing it could prove, and the last step is Caesar.

FIGURE · THE HERODS AND JESUS' PEOPLE



Simplified — only the members named in the Gospels and Acts are shown.

King Agrippa came from a family that had opposed Jesus and His followers for three generations — and Paul offered him the same Christ.

Who was Festus? Porcius Festus took office about AD 59–60 and died in office a couple of years later. Guzik: "Felix was undoubtedly a bad man, but history tells us Festus was a basically good man." Henry is cooler: quick, fair in procedure, but "not so just to him as he should have been, for he does not release him." Both are true. Festus kept Roman procedure (vv16–17) and still wanted to do the Jews a favor (v9) — the same words Luke used of Felix (24:27).

Why did Paul appeal to Caesar? Because a trial in Jerusalem meant the road, and the road meant the ambush (v3). Guzik: "Paul saw through the plot against his life," and "Rightly and wisely, Paul wanted to avoid martyrdom if he could." He cites Calvin: "God, who has appointed courts of law, also gives his people liberty to use them lawfully." Paul was not afraid to die ("I do not refuse to die," v11); he refused to be handed over as a favor. And the appeal lined up with what the Lord had already told him: "you must witness at Rome also" (23:11).

Was it a mistake? Agrippa will say Paul "might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar" (26:32). But Luke gives no hint of regret. Guzik: the appeal served God's plan and got Paul to Rome. Paul had purposed in the Spirit, "I must also see Rome" (19:21).

Who were Agrippa and Bernice? Agrippa II, son of the Herod who killed James (12:1–2), great-grandson of the Herod who tried to kill the infant Jesus. Rome gave him territories in the north and the right to oversee the temple and appoint high priests (Guzik). Bernice was his sister; their closeness was the talk of the ancient world (Guzik: rumors; Henry: "Such lewd people were the great people generally in those times!"). Agrippa knew Jewish customs well (26:3), which is why Festus wanted his help.

"A dead man, Jesus, whom Paul asserted to be alive" (v19). Festus thinks it is a side issue in a religious squabble (*deisidaimonia*). It is the center of everything. Spurgeon: "Jesus is evidently nothing to Festus." Henry: "See how

slightly this Roman speaks of Christ." But Festus has stated the gospel exactly — He died, and He lives (*zēn*, "to be alive"). The question for every man is not whether Christianity is a respectable religion but whether Jesus is alive.

Great pomp. *Phantasia*, a show. Guzik: "All the pomp and pageantry was meant to communicate who was important, and who wasn't important." Henry: "Great pomp is but great fancy." Two thousand years later the only person in the room we remember for anything good is the prisoner.

Word study (Greek):

- **ambush — *enedra* (G1747):** a "sitting in wait"; the plot of 23:12–15 revived.
- **concession / favor — *charis* (G5485):** grace sunk to a political favor (25:3, 9; 24:27).
- **tribunal — *bēma* (G968):** the judge's seat (25:6, 10, 17); compare "the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor 5:10).
- **appeal — *epikaleomai* (G1941):** to call upon; also "calls on the name of the Lord" (Acts 2:21; Rom 10:13).
- **Emperor — *Sebastos* (G4575):** "Augustus," the Revered One (25:21, 25).
- **religion — *deisidaimonia* (G1175):** fear of the gods; only here (compare 17:22).
- **alive — *zaō* (G2198):** "to be living" — not just raised once, but alive now.
- **pomp — *phantasia* (G5325):** a show; only here.
- **definite — *asphalēs* (G804) / lord — *kyrios* (G2962):** nothing certain to write to "my lord," the emperor.

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **Malice waits two years** (Henry).
2. **Grace sunk to a favor** — *charis* in vv3, 9.
3. **Innocent, and still in chains** — nothing proved, and sent on anyway.
4. **Use the law; don't court the lion** (Guzik, Calvin).
5. **He called on Caesar because he had called on the Lord** — *epikaleomai*.
6. **A higher tribunal** — the *bēma* of Christ.
7. **The gospel in a pagan's mouth** — a dead man, alive (v19).
8. **Jesus is still little known** (Spurgeon).
9. **Great pomp is but great fancy** (Henry).
10. **God's word runs under man's injustice** (23:11; 25:12).

Cross-references: Matt 2:16; Luke 21:12–13; 23:8–11; Acts 9:15; 12:1–2; 17:22; 19:21; 23:11–35; 24:24–27; 26:32; 28:30–31; Rom 10:13; 13:1–4; 1 Cor 15:20; 2 Cor 5:10; 2 Tim 4:16–17; 1 Pet 3:15.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 25:19

"but they simply had some points of disagreement with him about their own religion and about △a dead man, Jesus, whom Paul asserted to be alive."

Sin to confess — keeping a grudge warm. The chief priests waited two years and brought up Paul the first day they could. I know what it is to keep a grudge alive, to rehearse it, to wait for my chance. Henry is right: "See how restless a thing malice is." I name the man I have not forgiven, and I give that grudge to God before it turns me into the kind of religious man who would set an ambush.

Sin to confess — trading people for approval. Festus wanted to do the Jews a favor, and Felix had done the same. I have done it too — kept quiet, gone along, let someone else pay so the people who mattered would like me. Grace is not a favor I trade; it is what God gave me for nothing.

Example to follow — Paul's courage and wisdom. "I do not refuse to die" — and "I appeal to Caesar." Paul was not reckless and he was not afraid. Many of the men I serve have been through courts and know how unfair they can be. Paul shows us we can use every lawful protection, tell the truth, and leave the outcome with God, who had already said, "you must witness at Rome also."

Truth to face — Jesus is alive. Festus called Him "a dead man." For a long time I lived like Jesus was a dead man in a story — respected, maybe, but not present. Paul kept asserting He is alive. If He is alive, I can speak to Him today, and He hears, and He will be there tomorrow in whatever hall I am brought into.

Promise to trust — God gets His man where He wants him. Priests, governors and kings all thought they were handling Paul. God was. When my life feels like it is in other people's hands — a judge, a parole board, a boss, a doctor — the same Lord who stood by Paul at night stands by me.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. Two years passed and the chief priests' hatred had not cooled. Is there a grudge I have kept warm for years — and what would it look like to lay it down? (25:1–3; Eph 4:31–32) *See how restless a thing malice is (Henry).*
2. Festus wanted to "do the Jews a favor" at Paul's expense. Where am I tempted to trade what is right for someone's approval? (25:9; 24:27) *The word for grace sunk to a political favor.*
3. Paul said, "I do not refuse to die" — and in the same breath appealed to Caesar. How do I hold together courage and wisdom when I am treated unjustly? (25:10–11; Rom 13:1–4) *Not afraid of the lions, but no head in the lion's mouth (Guzik).*
4. To Festus, Jesus was "a dead man" and a matter of "their own religion." How would the people around me describe Jesus from watching my life? (25:19) *Jesus is still so little known (Spurgeon via Guzik).*
5. Is Jesus to me a dead man in a story, or a living Lord I speak to? What changes on an ordinary day if He is alive? (25:19; 1 Cor 15:20) *Believe Paul's affirmation and speak to the living Jesus (Spurgeon).*
6. The hall was full of pomp, and the man in chains carried the only lasting word. Where do I measure my worth by rank, and where does God measure it? (25:23; 1 Pet 3:15) *Great pomp is but great fancy (Henry).*

Worship. The Lord who stood by Paul in the barracks rules over governors and kings. He turned an ambush into an appeal and a political favor into a voyage to Rome. And He is not a dead man: Jesus, who died, is alive — the first fruits of those who sleep, and the Judge before whose seat every tribunal on earth will one day stand.

Prayer. Lord Jesus, You are alive. Forgive me for the grudges I have kept warm and for the times I have traded what is right for someone's approval. Give me Paul's courage — not to refuse to die, if that is Your will — and his wisdom to use the means You have given. When my life seems to be in other people's hands, remind me that it is in Yours. And make me a man who keeps asserting, in every hall I am brought into, that You are alive. Amen.

Scripture: New American Standard Bible® (NASB), © 1960–1995 The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. · Teacher material summarized from David Guzik (Enduring Word), R.C. Sproul (Ligonier), C.H. Spurgeon and Matthew Henry — see Acts-25-Deep-Dive-Four-Voices.pdf for sources. · Importable: the companion .md carries the berean-study block.

SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 26

Not Disobedient to the Heavenly Vision — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

A prisoner in chains tells a king how Jesus stopped him on the road to Damascus and sent him to open blind eyes and turn men from darkness to light. Paul obeyed that vision for the rest of his life — and the men who heard him called him mad, came almost to faith, and stopped there.

00 The Text

ACTS 26 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for
yourself." Then Paul stretched out his hand and
proceeded to make his defense:

2 "In regard to all the things of which I am accused by the
Jews, I consider myself fortunate, King Agrippa, that I
am about to make my defense before you today;

3 especially because you are an expert in all customs and
questions among the Jews; therefore I beg you to listen to
me patiently.

4 "So then, all Jews know my manner of life from my
youth up, which from the beginning was spent among
my own nation and at Jerusalem;

5 since they have known about me for a long time, if they
are willing to testify, that I lived as a Pharisee
according to the strictest sect of our religion.

6 "And now I am standing trial for the hope of the
promise made by God to our fathers;

7 the promise to which our twelve tribes hope to
attain, as they earnestly serve God night and day. And for
this hope, O King, I am being accused by Jews.

8 "Why is it considered incredible among you people if
God does raise the dead?

9 "So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many
things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

10 "And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I
lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received
authority from the chief priests, but also when they were
being put to death I cast my vote against them.

11 "And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I
tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously
enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign
cities.

12 "While so engaged as I was journeying to Damascus
with the authority and commission of the chief priests,

13 at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from
heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me
and those who were journeying with me.

14 "And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a
voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, 'Saul, Saul,
why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick
against the goads.'

15 "And I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said,
'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.

16 'But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you;

17 rescuing you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you,

18 to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'

19 "So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision,

20 but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance.

21 "For this reason some Jews seized me in the temple and tried to put me to death.

22 "So, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place;

23 that the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles."

24 While Paul was saying this in his defense, Festus said in a loud voice, "Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you mad."

25 But Paul said, "I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth.

26 "For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner.

27 "King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do."

28 Agrippa replied to Paul, "In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian."

29 And Paul said, "I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains."

30 The king stood up and the governor and Bernice, and those who were sitting with them,

31 and when they had gone aside, they began talking to one another, saying, "This man is not doing anything worthy of death or imprisonment."

32 And Agrippa said to Festus, "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar."

Marked in the text

- **v2** "I consider myself fortunate" — Time / place / contrast
- **v5** "I lived as a Pharisee" — Time / place / contrast
- **v6** "the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers" — Promise / blessing
- **v7** "our twelve tribes" — Promise / blessing
- **v8** "Why is it considered incredible among you people if God does raise the dead?" — God — His character & actions
- **v9** "hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" — Sin / warning
- **v11** "being furiously enraged at them" — Sin / warning
- **v13** "a light from heaven, brighter than the sun" — God — His character & actions
- **v14** "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" — God — His character & actions
- **v14** "It is hard for you to kick against the goads" — Sin / warning
- **v15** "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting" — God — His character & actions
- **v16** "get up and stand on your feet" — Command / instruction
- **v16** "a minister and a witness" — Command / instruction
- **v18** "to open their eyes" — Command / instruction
- **v18** "from darkness to light" — Promise / blessing
- **v18** "from the dominion of Satan to God" — Promise / blessing
- **v18** "forgiveness of sins" — Promise / blessing
- **v18** "sanctified by faith in Me" — Promise / blessing
- **v19** "I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision" — Command / instruction
- **v20** "repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance" — Command / instruction
- **v22** "having obtained help from God" — God — His character & actions

- **v23** “the Christ was to suffer” — God — His character & actions
- **v24** “you are out of your mind” — Sin / warning
- **v25** “words of sober truth” — Time / place / contrast
- **v26** “this has not been done in a corner” — Time / place / contrast
- **v27** “do you believe the Prophets?” — Command / instruction
- **v28** “In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian” — Sin / warning
- **v29** “except for these chains” — Time / place / contrast
- **v31** “This man is not doing anything worthy of death or imprisonment” — Time / place / contrast
- **v13** “light” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v6** “hope” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v17** “Gentiles” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 26:15

"And I said, 'Who are You, Lord?' And the Lord said,
'△I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.'"

FIGURE · ONE ROAD, THREE TELLINGS

ONE ROAD, THREE TELLINGS · ACTS 9 · 22 · 26

	ACTS 9	ACTS 22	ACTS 26
TOLD BY	Luke, narrating	Paul, to the temple crowd	Paul, to King Agrippa
LANGUAGE	—	Hebrew dialect (21:40)	Jesus spoke Hebrew (26:14)
THE LIGHT	"a light from heaven" (9:3)	"a very bright light" (22:6)	"brighter than the sun" (26:13)
ANANIAS	sent; eyes healed (9:17–18)	"a man who was devout" (22:12)	not mentioned
ONLY HERE	the word to Ananias (9:15)	"the Righteous One" (22:14)	goads; full commission (26:14–18)

The same event each time; Paul tells it to fit his hearers, and saves the fullest commission for a king.

Compare the columns: Acts 26 drops Ananias and the blindness, brightens the light, and alone gives the goads and Jesus' full commission.

Setting. The auditorium at Caesarea, the day after Agrippa asked to hear Paul (25:22–23). King Agrippa II presides at Festus's invitation, with Bernice, the military commanders and the leading men of the city. Paul, in chains (v29), "stretched out his hand and proceeded to make his defense" (v1).

Structure:

- vv1–8 — **Israel's hope:** permission to speak (v1); "I consider myself fortunate" before an expert in Jewish customs (vv2–3); his life as a Pharisee "according to the strictest sect" (vv4–5); on trial "for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers" (vv6–7); "Why is it considered incredible … if God does raise the dead?" (v8).
- vv9–15 — **the persecutor stopped:** hostile to the name of Jesus (v9); prisons, votes, punishment in the synagogues, foreign cities (vv10–11); the road to Damascus at midday, a light brighter than the sun (vv12–13); "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads" (v14); "I am Jesus whom you are persecuting" (v15).

- vv16–18 — **the commission:** "get up and stand on your feet"; a minister and a witness (v16); rescued and sent to the Jewish people and the Gentiles (v17); to open their eyes, darkness to light, Satan to God, forgiveness, inheritance, "by faith in Me" (v18).
- vv19–23 — **the heavenly vision:** "I did not prove disobedient" (v19); Damascus, Jerusalem, Judea, the Gentiles — repent, turn, deeds appropriate to repentance (v20); seized in the temple (v21); help from God, nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said (v22); the Christ to suffer, first to rise, light to Jews and Gentiles (v23).
- vv24–32 — **almost persuaded:** "Paul, you are out of your mind!" (v24); "words of sober truth" (v25); "not been done in a corner" (v26); "do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do" (v27); "In a short time you will persuade me" (v28); "such as I am, except for these chains" (v29); the verdict aside — nothing worthy of death (vv30–31); "might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar" (v32).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "God" ×7 — vv6, 7, 8, 18, 20, 22, 29.
- "Jews / Jewish" ×7 — vv2, 3, 4, 7, 17, 21, 23.
- "king" ×7 — vv2, 7, 13, 19, 26, 27, 30; "Agrippa" ×6 — vv1, 2, 19, 27, 28, 32.
- "seen / appeared / saw / vision" ×5 — vv13, 16 (×3), 19.
- "hope" ×3 — vv6, 7 (×2); "promise" ×2 — vv6, 7.
- "light" ×3 — vv13, 18, 23; "Gentiles" ×3 — vv17, 20, 23.
- "defense" ×3 — vv1, 2, 24; "witness / testify / testifying" ×3 — vv5, 16, 22.
- "death" ×3 — vv10, 21, 31; "prisons / imprisonment / chains" ×3 — vv10, 29, 31.
- "Jerusalem" ×3 — vv4, 10, 20; "chief priests" ×2 — vv10, 12.
- "persecute" ×2 — vv14, 15; "turn" ×2 — vv18, 20; "repent / repentance" ×2 — v20 (×2).
- "mind / mad" ×3 — vv24 (×2), 25; "Prophets" ×2 — vv22, 27; "persuade" ×2 — vv26, 28; "dead" ×2 — vv8, 23.

Contrasts: a strict Pharisee ⟷ a servant of Jesus (vv5, 16). Hostile to the name of Jesus ⟷ sent in His name (vv9, 17). Furiously enraged ⟷ words of sober truth (vv11, 25). Darkness ⟷ light; Satan ⟷ God (v18). Disobedient ⟷ obedient (v19). Words ⟷ deeds appropriate to repentance (v20). Small ⟷ great (v22). Out of your mind ⟷ sober truth (vv24–25). Done in a corner ⟷ public (v26). A short time ⟷ a long time; almost ⟷ altogether (vv28–29). Chains ⟷ the freest man in the room (v29).

Shape of the chapter: a testimony in three parts — before Christ (vv4–11), meeting Christ (vv12–18), serving Christ (vv19–23) — followed by the interruptions and the verdict (vv24–32). Paul starts on trial and ends preaching; the king starts as judge and ends as the one being pressed for a decision.

Chapter theme (my words): The risen Jesus met a furious religious man, turned him around, and sent him to open blind eyes. Paul obeyed that vision all his life and offered the same Christ to a governor and a king, who called him mad and came almost — but almost is not enough.

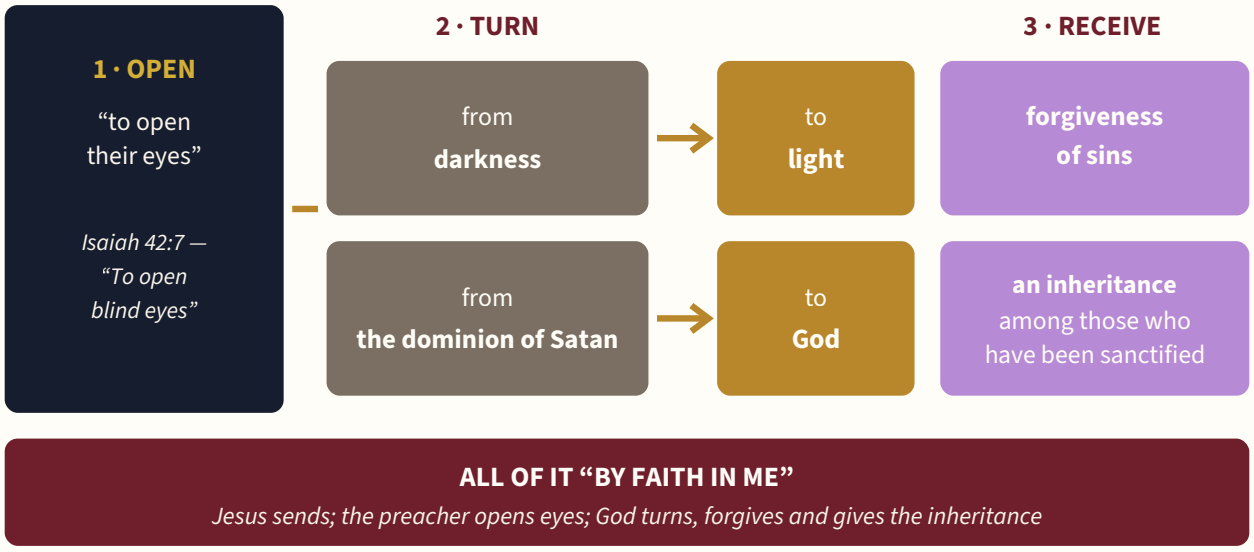
02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 26:20

"but kept declaring both to those of Damascus first, and also at Jerusalem and then throughout all the region of Judea, and even to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance."

FIGURE · THE COMMISSION OF 26:18



Read left to right: eyes opened, a man turned from darkness and Satan to light and God, and then forgiveness and an inheritance — all by faith in Christ.

What is "the hope of the promise"? Paul ties it to resurrection (v8) and to the Messiah promised by "the Prophets and Moses" (v22). Guzik: Paul "remained a faithful Jew," and his trust in Jesus "was an outgrowth of his trust in the hope of the promise." Henry: "His religion consists in the hopes of this promise." I note that Paul still speaks of "our twelve tribes" who hope to attain the promise (v7). He does not say the promise has passed to someone else; the hope of Israel is fulfilled in Jesus, and God will keep His word to Israel (Rom 11:26).

Why "incredible"? The question (v8) is about God, not about dead bodies. If God exists and made life, raising the dead is not hard for Him. Guzik: "Why should it be thought incredible that God can do anything?"

Why does this telling differ from Acts 9 and 22? Same event, different audience. Before a king Paul skips Ananias and the blindness, adds the proverb of the goads, and gives the commission as Jesus' own words (vv16–18). Guzik:

"Paul repeats the words from Acts 9:3-6," adapted for his hearers. The differences fill each other out; they do not contradict.

The goads. Spurgeon: the rebuke is tender — the ox only hurts itself, and the Owner has paid too much to lose it. Henry: Paul's "spirit at first perhaps began to rise," and then he yielded. Guzik: Saul repented of misguided religious zeal, not of immorality — a warning that sincere religion can still be fighting Jesus.

What is the commission? Open eyes, turn from darkness to light and from Satan's dominion to God, so men receive forgiveness and an inheritance among the sanctified "by faith in Me" (v18). Henry: the mind must be enlightened, and then "converting grace turns them from under the dominion of Satan." Guzik: "he is called to serve the message."

Repentance and works (v20). Sproul guards the line: "Paul's not here articulating a doctrine of justification by works." "No one was ever a more clear advocate of justification by faith alone." Henry: "It is not enough to speak penitent words, but we must do works agreeable to those words." Faith alone saves, and saving faith is never alone.

Is Paul mad? Festus thinks so. Guzik: "The gospel, when properly proclaimed and lived, will make some people think we are crazy." Paul answers with facts — "this has not been done in a corner." Sproul: "Christianity did not begin as a mystery religion." "If your faith is private, it's not Christian faith you're talking about."

What did Agrippa mean (v28)? The Greek *en oligō* can mean "in a short time" (NASB) or "almost" (KJV). He may have been deflecting with a smile — "You think you can make me a Christian that fast?" — or admitting he was close. Sproul and Spurgeon read it as the tragedy of almost; Guzik: "However close Agrippa was to becoming a believer, it wasn't close enough." Either way, the king stood up and walked out (v30).

Was the appeal a mistake (v32)? Agrippa says Paul could have gone free. Guzik: the appeal could not be retracted and it fit God's plan — Rome, as the Lord said (23:11).

Word study (Greek):

- **hope — *elpis* (G1680), *elpizō* (G1679):** confident expectation of God's promise (vv6–7).
- **incredible — *apistos* (G571):** unbelievable (v8).
- **furiously enraged — *emmainomai* (G1693) / mad — *mainomai* (G3105):** the persecutor raged; Festus says Paul raves.
- **goads — *kentron* (G2759):** an ox-goad; death's "sting" in 1 Cor 15:55–56.
- **minister — *hypēretēs* (G5257) / witness — *martys* (G3144):** servant of the message, eyewitness.
- **dominion — *exousia* (G1849):** Satan's ruling power (Col 1:13).
- **sanctified — *hagiazō* (G37):** perfect participle, set apart for good.
- **vision — *optasia* (G3701):** the risen Christ appearing from heaven.
- **repent — *metanoeō* (G3340):** a turning of mind that shows in deeds (*axia erga*).
- **sober — *sōphrosynē* (G4997):** sound-mindedness; **corner — *gōnia* (G1137).**
- **persuade — *peithō* (G3982) / short time — *oligos* (G3641) / Christian — *Christianos* (G5546).**
- **chains — *desmos* (G1199):** the bonds Paul excepts (v29).

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **Accused by Jews for the hope of the Jews** (vv6–7).

2. **Not "can a man rise?" but "can God raise him?"** (v8).
3. **Who was really mad?** — *emmainomai* (v11) and *mainomai* (v24).
4. **The goad hurts the one who kicks** (Spurgeon).
5. **To persecute the church is to persecute Christ** (vv14–15).
6. **A blind man sent to open eyes** (Guzik; Isa 42:7).
7. **The whole gospel in one verse** (v18).
8. **Works show repentance; they do not buy it** (Sproul, Henry).
9. **Not done in a corner** — the gospel is public truth (Sproul).
10. **Almost is not enough** (Spurgeon, Henry).

Cross-references: Ps 16:10; Isa 42:6–7; 49:6; 53; Luke 3:8; 24:46–47; Acts 9:1–19; 11:26; 22:1–21; 23:11; 24:15; Rom 11:26; 1 Cor 15:20, 55–56; 2 Cor 4:4–6; Phil 3:5–6; Col 1:13; 1 Tim 1:13–15; 1 Pet 4:16.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 26:29

"And Paul said, "I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, ☆ might become such as I am, ◷ except for these chains.""

FIGURE · FOUR RESPONSES IN ONE HALL

FOUR RESPONSES IN ONE HALL · ACTS 26:24–32

FESTUS the Roman	AGRIPPA the king who knows	THE COURT aside, privately	PAUL the prisoner
"Paul, you are out of your mind!" (v24)	"In a short time you will persuade me" (v28)	"not … worthy of death or imprisonment" (v31)	"such as I am, except for these chains" (v29)

MAD · ALMOST · INNOCENT · ALTOGETHER

Spurgeon: Paul "almost persuaded him to be a Christian altogether" — but almost is not enough.

The same speech, four answers: the skeptic, the almost-believer, the private verdict, and the free man in chains.

Example to follow — Paul telling his story. Paul had one testimony and he told it to a mob, a council, a governor and a king. Who I was, how Jesus met me, what He sent me to do. Many of the men I serve have a past as dark as Saul's — some literally voted against people, locked them up, hurt them. Paul's story says the worst man in the room can become the freest. This week I will write my own story in those three parts and be ready to tell it.

Sin to confess — kicking against the goads. I know the feeling of God pressing on me — a word from Scripture, a brother's warning, a consequence I could not dodge — and of kicking back. It only drove the point deeper. I confess the places where I am still resisting Him, and I stop kicking.

Promise to trust — darkness to light. Verse 18 is my story: eyes opened, turned from darkness and from Satan's dominion to God, forgiven, given an inheritance among the sanctified — all by faith in Christ. No record, no past, no prison can take that inheritance away.

Command to obey — don't be disobedient to the vision. Jesus told Paul to get up and stand on his feet, and Paul obeyed for thirty years. Repent, turn to God, and do deeds that fit repentance. Not words only. If I say I have turned, the people closest to me should be able to see it — in how I talk at home, how I handle money, how I treat the man who wronged me.

Warning to heed — almost. Agrippa was close enough to hear, to believe the prophets, to feel the pull — and he stood up and walked out. I have watched men come almost to Christ and stay there for years. Almost is not enough, for them or for me. Paul's wish is my prayer: that every man I sit with would become such as I am in Christ — except for these chains.

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. Before Christ, Saul was sincere, religious — and furious. Where has my religion or my zeal made me angry and hard rather than loving? (26:9–11; 1 Tim 1:13) *His great rage showed his relationship with God was not right (Guzik).*
2. What "goads" has God used on me — people, consequences, His Word — and where am I still kicking? (26:14) *The goad hurts the one who kicks (Spurgeon).*
3. Jesus said, "Get up and stand on your feet" — and gave Paul a job. What has He given me to do with my story? (26:16–18) *Serve the message, don't make it serve you (Guzik).*
4. Which part of verse 18 do I most need to remember about my own life: eyes opened, turned to God, forgiven, or given an inheritance? (26:18; Col 1:13) *All of it "by faith in Me."*
5. What "deeds appropriate to repentance" would show the people around me that I have really turned? (26:20; Luke 3:8) *Not penitent words only, but works agreeable to them (Henry).*
6. Agrippa was close and stayed put. Is there any part of my life where I am "almost" — and what is holding me back? (26:27–29) *The flaw is in the hearer's nature, not the preacher's logic (Spurgeon).*

Worship. The risen Jesus stopped a furious persecutor with a light brighter than the noonday sun and called him by name. He is the Christ who suffered and rose first from the dead, the light promised to Israel and the nations, the One who opens blind eyes and turns men from Satan to God, who forgives sins and gives an inheritance to everyone who trusts Him.

Prayer. Lord Jesus, You met me on my own road when I was fighting You. Forgive me for kicking against the goads. Open my eyes wider, keep me turned from darkness to light, and make me a man who is not disobedient to what You have shown me. Let my deeds match my repentance. Give me Paul's boldness to tell my story to small and great, and his heart to wish that every man who hears me would become altogether Yours. Amen.

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SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 27

I Believe God — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

God sends Paul to Rome by way of a shipwreck, and the prisoner in chains becomes the one steady man on a sinking ship. When every human means has failed, Paul believes God's bare word, keeps the crew doing their part, and watches God bring every one of the 276 safely to land.

00 The Text

ACTS 27 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 When it was decided that we would sail for Italy, they proceeded to deliver Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan cohort named Julius.

2 And embarking in an Adramyttian ship, which was about to sail to the regions along the coast of Asia, we put out to sea accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica.

3 The next day we put in at Sidon; and Julius treated Paul with consideration and allowed him to go to his friends and receive care.

4 From there we put out to sea and sailed under the shelter of Cyprus because the winds were contrary.

5 When we had sailed through the sea along the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we landed at Myra in Lycia.

6 There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship sailing for Italy, and he put us aboard it.

7 When we had sailed slowly for a good many days, and with difficulty had arrived off Cnidus, since the wind did not permit us to go farther, we sailed under the shelter of Crete, off Salmone;

8 and with difficulty sailing past it we came to a place called Fair Havens, near which was the city of Lasea.

9 When considerable time had passed and the voyage was now dangerous, since even the fast was already over, Paul began to admonish them,

10 and said to them, "Men, I perceive that the voyage will certainly be with damage and great loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives."

11 But the centurion was more persuaded by the pilot and the captain of the ship than by what was being said by Paul.

12 Because the harbor was not suitable for wintering, the majority reached a decision to put out to sea from there, if somehow they could reach Phoenix, a harbor of Crete, facing southwest and northwest, and spend the winter there.

13 When a moderate south wind came up, supposing that they had attained their purpose, they weighed anchor and began sailing along Crete, close inshore.

14 But before very long there rushed down from the land a violent wind, called Euraquilo;

15 and when the ship was caught in it and could not face the wind, we gave way to it and let ourselves be driven along.

16 Running under the shelter of a small island called Clauda, we were scarcely able to get the ship's boat under control.

17 After they had hoisted it up, they used supporting cables in undergirding the ship; and fearing that they might run aground on the shallows of Syrtis, they let down the sea anchor and in this way let themselves be driven along.

18 The next day as we were being violently storm-tossed, they began to jettison the cargo;

19 and on the third day they threw the ship's tackle overboard with their own hands.

20 Since neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small storm was assailing us, from then on ⚠ all hope of our being saved was gradually abandoned.

21 When they had gone a long time without food, then Paul stood up in their midst and said, "Men, you ought to have followed my advice and not to have set sail from Crete and incurred this damage and loss.

22 "Yet now I urge you to keep up your courage, for ☆ there will be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship.

23 "For this very night an angel of △ the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me,

24 saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, △ God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.'

25 "Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for ☆ I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told.

26 "But we must run aground on a certain island."

27 But when the fourteenth night came, as we were being driven about in the Adriatic Sea, about midnight the sailors began to surmise that they were approaching some land.

28 They took soundings and found it to be twenty fathoms; and a little farther on they took another sounding and found it to be fifteen fathoms.

29 Fearing that we might run aground somewhere on the rocks, they cast four anchors from the stern and wished for daybreak.

30 But as the sailors were trying to escape from the ship and had let down the ship's boat into the sea, on the pretense of intending to lay out anchors from the bow,

31 Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, "Unless these men remain in the ship, you yourselves cannot be saved."

32 Then the soldiers cut away the ropes of the ship's boat and let it fall away.

33 Until the day was about to dawn, Paul was encouraging them all to take some food, saying, "Today is the fourteenth day that you have been constantly watching and going without eating, having taken nothing.

34 "Therefore I encourage you to take some food, for this is for your preservation, for ☆ not a hair from the head of any of you will perish."

35 Having said this, △ he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of all, and he broke it and began to eat.

36 All of them were encouraged and they themselves also took food.

37 All of us in the ship were two hundred and seventy-six persons.

38 When they had eaten enough, they began to lighten the ship by throwing out the wheat into the sea.

39 When day came, they could not recognize the land; but they did observe a bay with a beach, and they resolved to drive the ship onto it if they could.

40 And casting off the anchors, they left them in the sea while at the same time they were loosening the ropes of the rudders; and hoisting the foresail to the wind, they were heading for the beach.

41 But striking a reef where two seas met, they ran the vessel aground; and the prow stuck fast and remained immovable, but the stern began to be broken up by the force of the waves.

42 ⚠ The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners, so that none of them would swim away and escape;

43 but the centurion, ☆ wanting to bring Paul safely through, kept them from their intention, and

commanded that those who could swim should jump overboard first and get to land,

44 and the rest should follow, some on planks, and others on various things from the ship. And so it happened that ☆ they all were brought safely to land.

Marked in the text

- **v1** “we would sail for Italy” — Time / place / contrast
- **v3** “Julius treated Paul with consideration” — Promise / blessing
- **v9** “since even the fast was already over” — Time / place / contrast
- **v10** “the voyage will certainly be with damage and great loss” — Sin / warning
- **v11** “the centurion was more persuaded by the pilot and the captain of the ship than by what was being said by Paul” — Sin / warning
- **v13** “When a moderate south wind came up” — Time / place / contrast
- **v14** “a violent wind, called Euraquilo” — Time / place / contrast
- **v20** “all hope of our being saved was gradually abandoned” — Sin / warning
- **v22** “keep up your courage” — Command / instruction
- **v22** “there will be no loss of life among you” — Promise / blessing
- **v23** “the God to whom I belong and whom I serve” — God — His character & actions
- **v24** “Do not be afraid, Paul” — Command / instruction
- **v24** “you must stand before Caesar” — Time / place / contrast
- **v24** “God has granted you all those who are sailing with you” — God — His character & actions
- **v25** “keep up your courage” — Command / instruction
- **v25** “I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told” — Promise / blessing
- **v29** “they cast four anchors from the stern and wished for daybreak” — Time / place / contrast
- **v31** “Unless these men remain in the ship, you yourselves cannot be saved” — Command / instruction
- **v34** “not a hair from the head of any of you will perish” — Promise / blessing
- **v35** “he took bread and gave thanks to God in the presence of all” — God — His character & actions
- **v37** “two hundred and seventy-six persons” — Time / place / contrast
- **v42** “The soldiers’ plan was to kill the prisoners” — Sin / warning
- **v43** “wanting to bring Paul safely through” — Promise / blessing
- **v44** “they all were brought safely to land” — Promise / blessing
- **v20** “saved” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v34** “preservation” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v43** “safely” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v33** “encouraging” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v34** “encourage” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)
- **v36** “encouraged” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 27:20

"Since neither sun nor stars appeared for many days, and no small storm was assailing us, from then on ⚠all hope of our being saved was gradually abandoned."

FIGURE · THE VOYAGE TO ROME



Follow the gold line from Caesarea to Fair Havens, the red line of the storm's fourteen-day drift to Malta, and the maroon line on to Puteoli and up the Appian Way to Rome.

Setting. Late in the sailing season ("even the fast was already over," v9), Paul and other prisoners are handed to Julius, a centurion of the Augustan cohort, and sail from Caesarea (v1). Luke ("we") and Aristarchus go with him (v2). The route runs Sidon — the lee of Cyprus — Myra in Lycia, where they board an Alexandrian grain ship (vv3–6) — Cnidus — the lee of Crete — Fair Havens (vv7–8). Against Paul's warning they try for Phoenix (vv9–13), are

caught by Euraquilo (v14), and drift fourteen days across the Sea of Adria (v27) to a beach on an unknown island (v39).

Structure:

- vv1–12 — **the voyage and the warning:** Julius and the prisoners (v1); Sidon, friends and care (v3); Myra and the Alexandrian ship (vv5–6); slow sailing to Fair Havens (vv7–8); "the voyage was now dangerous" — Paul's warning (vv9–10); the centurion trusts the pilot and captain; the majority decides for Phoenix (vv11–12).
- vv13–26 — **the storm and the angel:** a moderate south wind (v13); Euraquilo (vv14–15); Clauda, the boat, the cables, the sea anchor (vv16–17); cargo, then tackle, overboard (vv18–19); no sun or stars — "all hope ... abandoned" (v20); Paul stands up: "keep up your courage" (vv21–22); the angel: "Do not be afraid, Paul ... God has granted you all" (vv23–24); "I believe God" (v25); "we must run aground on a certain island" (v26).
- vv27–38 — **the fourteenth night:** soundings, twenty and fifteen fathoms (vv27–28); four anchors from the stern (v29); the sailors' escape attempt (v30); "Unless these men remain in the ship" — the ropes cut (vv31–32); "take some food ... not a hair ... will perish" (vv33–34); bread and thanks before all (v35); all encouraged; 276 persons (vv36–37); the wheat thrown out (v38).
- vv39–44 — **the wreck and the rescue:** a bay with a beach (v39); anchors cast off, rudders loosed, foresail up (v40); a reef where two seas met; the stern breaks up (v41); the soldiers' plan to kill the prisoners (v42); the centurion stops it — swimmers first, then planks (vv43–44); "they all were brought safely to land" (v44).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "ship / ship's" ×17 — vv2, 6, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 19, 22, 30 (×2), 31, 32, 37, 38, 39, 44.
- "sail / sailed / sailing" ×11 — vv1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7 (×2), 8, 13, 21, 24.
- "day / days / daybreak" ×9 — vv3, 7, 18, 19, 20, 29, 33 (×2), 39; "night / midnight" ×3 — vv23, 27 (×2); "fourteenth" ×2 — vv27, 33.
- "Paul" ×9 — vv1, 3, 9, 11, 21, 24, 31, 33, 43; "sea" ×9 — vv2, 4, 5, 12, 17, 27, 30, 38, 40.
- "food / eat / eating / eaten / bread" ×8 — vv21, 33 (×2), 34, 35 (×2), 36, 38.
- "all" ×7 — vv20, 24, 33, 35, 36, 37, 44.
- "wind(s)" ×6 — vv4, 7, 13, 14, 15, 40.
- "saved / preservation / safely" ×5 — vv20, 31, 34, 43, 44; "escape" ×2 — vv30, 42.
- "courage / encourage(d/ing)" ×5 — vv22, 25, 33, 34, 36.
- "anchor(s)" ×5 — vv13, 17, 29, 30, 40; "centurion" ×5 — vv1, 6, 11, 31, 43; "land" ×5 — vv14, 27, 39, 43, 44.
- "damage / loss" ×5 — vv10 (×2), 21 (×2), 22.
- "God" ×4 — vv23, 24, 25, 35; "Crete" ×4 — vv7, 12, 13, 21; "soldiers" ×3 — vv31, 32, 42.

Contrasts: Paul's warning ⟷ the pilot, the captain and the majority (vv10–12). A moderate south wind ⟷ a violent wind (vv13–14). All hope abandoned ⟷ "keep up your courage" (vv20, 22). Loss of the ship ⟷ no loss of life (v22). Sailors escaping ⟷ "Unless these men remain" (vv30–31). Fourteen days without food ⟷ bread and thanksgiving (vv33–35). The prow stuck fast ⟷ the stern broken up (v41). Soldiers who would kill ⟷ a centurion who would save (vv42–43).

Shape of the chapter: a slow start (1–12), a long fall (13–20), a word from heaven at the bottom (21–26), and then everything climbs back toward land (27–44). The turning point is a prisoner standing up in the middle of the ship.

Chapter theme (my words): God's promise to bring Paul to Rome does not keep him out of the storm; it carries him through it. When every human means is gone, Paul believes God's word, keeps the men doing their part, gives thanks in the dark, and every soul on board is brought safely to land.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 27:31

"Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, "Unless these men remain in the ship, you yourselves cannot be saved.""

FIGURE · THE PROMISE AND THE MEANS

THE PROMISE AND THE MEANS · ACTS 27:22–44

WHAT GOD PROMISED		WHAT THEY STILL HAD TO DO	
v22	"no loss of life among you, but only of the ship"	v31	keep the sailors in the ship: "Unless these men remain …"
v24	"God has granted you all those who are sailing with you"	v34	eat: "take some food, for this is for your preservation"
v26	"we must run aground on a certain island"	v38	lighten the ship: the wheat into the sea
v34	"not a hair from the head of any of you will perish"	vv43–44	swim, or ride planks and pieces of the ship to land

"And so it happened that they all were brought safely to land" (v44) — the promise kept, through the means

God's promise on the left was certain; the duties on the right were still required. Paul never treats one as a reason to skip the other.

Was Paul's warning prophecy or seamanship (v10)? Guzik: Paul "did not necessarily speak here as a prophet of God, but perhaps as an experienced traveler on the Mediterranean" — he had been shipwrecked three times already (2 Cor 11:25). Henry hears more: the centurion was "governed more by human prudence than by divine revelation." Note that Paul's first word predicted loss of life (v10); the angel's later word promised none (v22). God gave more than Paul had expected — which fits Guzik's reading of v10 as judgment and vv23–24 as revelation.

Why did God let His obedient servant sail into a storm? Jonah's storm came because he ran; Paul's came while he was going where God sent him (23:11). The angel's "must" covered both Caesar and the reef (vv24, 26). Sproul's sermon centers on Paul's "confidence in God's sovereign hand to bring him through the tempest at sea." Obedience is not insurance against storms; it is the assurance of God's presence in them.

"God has granted you all" (v24). The phrase suggests Paul had been praying for the people on board. Henry: "As God had saved all in the ship for Paul's sake, so here the centurion saves all the prisoners for his sake." One man's faithfulness became the reason for 275 rescues.

If the promise was certain, why must the sailors stay (v31)? Because God ordained the means along with the end. The promise of v24 did not make the sailors, the food or the cut ropes unnecessary; it made them effective. Spurgeon: "When we have done our best and can make no headway, we had better commit our vessel to the care of God." Guzik: "Paul knew two reasons why they had to stay together."

Was the meal of v35 the Lord's Supper? Luke uses the words of the upper room — took bread, gave thanks, broke, ate (Luke 22:19). Guzik sees "hints that Paul regarded this meal as communion at the Lord's Table for the Christians present." Most of the company were pagans and the meal was for "preservation" (v34), so it is at least a grace said before everyone; I hold Guzik's suggestion loosely.

Believing God (v25). Spurgeon: "It is a grand thing to believe God when the winds are out." Guzik: "Paul believed God when there was nothing else to believe." Henry: "for I believe God, and depend upon his word." Faith here is not a feeling about the storm; it is trust in what God said about the outcome.

Word study (Greek):

- **admonish / urge — *paraineō* (G3867):** only Acts 27:9, 22 in the NT.
- **the fast — *nēsteia* (G3521):** the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:29–30; 23:27).
- **Euraquilo — *Eurakylōn* (G2148):** a northeaster; KJV "Euroclydon" from later manuscripts.
- **keep up your courage — *euthymeō* (G2114):** to be in good heart; vv22, 25.
- **serve — *latreuō* (G3000):** worship-service; "whom I serve" (v23).
- **must — *dei* (G1163):** vv24, 26; *edei* "ought" in v21.
- **saved — *sōzō* (G4982); preservation — *sōtēria* (G4991):** vv20, 31, 34.
- **encouraging — *parakaleō* (G3870):** vv33–34.
- **gave thanks — *eucharisteō* (G2168):** v35; 28:15.
- **anchors — *ankyra* (G45):** vv29, 30, 40; Heb 6:19.
- **bring safely through — *diasōzō* (G1295):** 27:43, 44; 28:1, 4.

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **The prisoner is the freest man on board** (Spurgeon: "the observed of all").
2. **Experts and majorities can both be wrong** (vv11–12; Henry).
3. **A soft south wind is not a sign from God** (v13).
4. **God's "must" included a shipwreck** (vv24, 26).
5. **Belonging comes before serving** (v23; Guzik).
6. **Believe God, not merely in God** (v25; Spurgeon).
7. **Promise and means are not rivals** (vv24, 31).
8. **Thanksgiving in the dark** (v35).
9. **Saved for another's sake** (Henry).
10. **Anchors hold you till daylight** (vv29, 40; Heb 6:19).

Cross-references: Lev 16:29–30; 23:27; Ps 107:23–30; Isa 43:2; Jonah 1:4–15; Luke 8:22–25; 21:18; 22:19; Acts 1:8; 19:21; 23:11; 25:11–12; 26:32; Rom 1:15; 2 Cor 1:4; 11:25; Heb 6:19; 1 Pet 3:20.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 27:23–24

"For this very night an angel of △ the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me, saying, '▯ Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, ☆ God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.'"

FIGURE · FOURTEEN DAYS IN THE STORM



Read down the line: each day takes something more away — cargo, tackle, sun and stars, hope — until a word from God stands in the middle and everything after it moves toward land.

Example to follow — the man who stood up (v21). Paul was the prisoner, the one nobody listened to at Fair Havens. When everyone else had given up, he stood up in the middle of them and spoke a word from God. Some of the men I serve are written off the same way — the inmate, the guy with the record. God can make that man the steadiest person on the ship. I want to be that man for my group this week, and I want to stop writing other men off.

Sin to confess — trusting the pilot over the Word. I have done what the centurion did: listened to the expert, the majority, the convenient breeze, when God had already said "don't" (vv11–13). I confess choosing comfort and consensus over obedience, and calling an easy start a green light.

Truth to face — I belong to Him. "The God to whom I belong and whom I serve" (v23). Before I am a servant I am His. My service has failed plenty of times; my belonging has not. That is why Paul could stand in a storm without fear.

Command to obey — keep up your courage, and stay in the ship. God told Paul, "Do not be afraid" (v24), and Paul passed it on: "keep up your courage" (vv22, 25). But he also said, "Unless these men remain in the ship, you yourselves cannot be saved" (v31). For me that means I don't jump into the lifeboat when it gets hard — I stay in the Word, stay with my brothers, stay in the group, eat what God puts in front of me.

Promise to trust — not a hair will perish. God "granted" Paul every life on board (v24), and "they all were brought safely to land" (v44). The ship was lost; the people were not. I may lose cargo and tackle this year, but God has not lost me. "This hope we have as an anchor of the soul" (Heb 6:19).

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. Paul's warning was set aside because the experts and the majority wanted to go (vv10–12). Where am I tempted to follow the crowd or the "pilot" over what God has plainly said? (27:9–12) *Many will show respect to good ministers that will not take their advice (Henry).*
2. A moderate south wind made them think they had their way (v13). When has an easy start convinced me that God approved a decision I had already made? (27:13–15) *The gentle breeze led straight into Euraquilo.*
3. "The God to whom I belong and whom I serve" (v23). Which comes first for me — belonging to God or serving Him — and why does the order matter? (27:23–24) *God never forgets those who belong to Him and serve Him (Guzik).*
4. Paul said, "I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told" before anything changed (v25). What promise of God do I need to say out loud while my storm is still blowing? (27:22–25; Heb 6:19) *It is a grand thing to believe God when the winds are out (Spurgeon).*
5. God promised every life, yet Paul said, "Unless these men remain in the ship, you yourselves cannot be saved" (v31). Where am I using God's promises as an excuse to skip the means He gave me — His Word, His people, the group? (27:24, 31–34) *The certainty of the end does not cancel the duty of the hour.*
6. Paul gave thanks for bread in front of 275 frightened people (v35). Who is watching how I act in my storm, and what do they see? (27:33–36; 2 Cor 1:4) *He had been comforted of the Lord and with this consolation he could cheer others (Spurgeon).*

Worship. The Lord who stood by Paul in the barracks stood by him again in the storm. He rules the wind He did not stop, keeps His word to the last hair, saves through the sea and not around it, and brings His servants exactly where He said they must go.

Prayer. Lord, I belong to You, and I want to serve You. When the sun and stars are gone and hope is slipping, help me say with Paul, "I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told." Forgive me for trusting the pilot and the majority over Your Word. Keep me in the ship with my brothers, teach me to give thanks in the dark, and make me a steady man for the people sailing with me. Bring us all safely to land. Amen.

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SMITH FOR CHRIST PUBLISHING · BEREAN DASHBOARD STUDY

Acts 28

Unhindered — O·I·A, integrated with the Deep Dive

OBSERVATION · INTERPRETATION · APPLICATION · 2026-11-10 · NASB 1995

"Seeking God diligently — examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so." — Acts 17:11

CHAPTER THEME

God brings Paul to Rome exactly as He promised — through a shipwreck, a snakebite and a chain — and the book of Acts ends not with Paul's trial but with the gospel going out from a rented room with all openness, unhindered. Some believe and some refuse, but the salvation of God keeps moving to the nations.

00 The Text

ACTS 28 (NASB95), MARKED

HOW THIS STUDY IS MARKED — God — His character & actions · Command / instruction · Key repeated word · Sin / warning · Promise / blessing · Time / place / contrast

1 When they had been brought safely through, then we found out that the island was called Malta.

2 ☆ The natives showed us extraordinary kindness; for because of the rain that had set in and because of the cold, they kindled a fire and received us all.

3 But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, ⚠ a viper came out because of the heat and fastened itself on his hand.

4 When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they began saying to one another, "⚠ Undoubtedly this man is a murderer, and though he has been saved from the sea, ◷ justice has not allowed him to live."

5 However △ he shook the creature off into the fire and suffered no harm.

6 But they were expecting that he was about to swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after they had waited a long time and had seen nothing unusual happen to him, they changed their minds and ⚠ began to say that he was a god.

7 Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the leading man of the island, named Publius, who welcomed us and entertained us courteously three days.

8 And it happened that the father of Publius was lying in bed afflicted with recurrent fever and dysentery; and Paul went in to see him and △ after he had prayed, he laid his hands on him and healed him.

9 After this had happened, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases were coming to him and getting cured.

10 They also honored us with many marks of respect; and when we were setting sail, they supplied us with all we needed.

11 At the end of three months we set sail on an Alexandrian ship which had wintered at the island, and which had ◷ the Twin Brothers for its figurehead.

12 After we put in at Syracuse, we stayed there for three days.

13 From there we sailed around and arrived at Rhegium, and a day later a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli.

14 There we found some brethren, and were invited to stay with them for seven days; and thus we came to Rome.

15 And the brethren, when they heard about us, came from there as far as the Market of Appius and Three Inns to meet us; and when Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage.

16 When we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him.

17 After three days Paul called together those who were the leading men of the Jews, and when they came together, he began saying to them, "Brethren, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.

18 "And when they had examined me, they were willing to release me because there was no ground for putting me to death.

19 "But when the Jews objected, I was forced to appeal to Caesar, not that I had any accusation against my nation.

20 "For this reason, therefore, I requested to see you and to speak with you, for I am wearing this chain for the sake of the hope of Israel."

21 They said to him, "We have neither received letters from Judea concerning you, nor have any of the brethren come here and reported or spoken anything bad about you.

22 "But we desire to hear from you what your views are; for concerning this sect, it is known to us that it is spoken against everywhere."

23 When they had set a day for Paul, they came to him at his lodging in large numbers; and he was explaining to them by solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to persuade them concerning Jesus, from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets, from morning until evening.

24 Some were being persuaded by the things spoken, but others would not believe.

25 And when they did not agree with one another, they began leaving after Paul had spoken one parting word, "The Holy Spirit rightly spoke through Isaiah the prophet to your fathers,

26 saying, 'GO TO THIS PEOPLE AND SAY, "YOU WILL KEEP ON HEARING, BUT WILL NOT UNDERSTAND; AND YOU WILL KEEP ON SEEING, BUT WILL NOT PERCEIVE;

27 FOR THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL, AND WITH THEIR EARS THEY SCARCELY HEAR, AND THEY HAVE CLOSED THEIR EYES; OTHERWISE THEY MIGHT SEE WITH THEIR EYES, AND HEAR WITH THEIR EARS, AND UNDERSTAND WITH THEIR HEART AND RETURN, AND I WOULD HEAL THEM.'"

28 "Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will also listen."

29 [When he had spoken these words, the Jews departed, having a great dispute among themselves.]

30 And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him,

31 preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.

Marked in the text

- **v2** "The natives showed us extraordinary kindness" — Promise / blessing
- **v3** "a viper came out because of the heat and fastened itself on his hand" — Sin / warning
- **v4** "Undoubtedly this man is a murderer" — Sin / warning
- **v4** "justice has not allowed him to live" — Time / place / contrast
- **v5** "he shook the creature off into the fire and suffered no harm" — God — His character & actions
- **v6** "began to say that he was a god" — Sin / warning
- **v8** "after he had prayed, he laid his hands on him and healed him" — God — His character & actions
- **v11** "the Twin Brothers for its figurehead" — Time / place / contrast
- **v14** "and thus we came to Rome" — Time / place / contrast
- **v15** "he thanked God and took courage" — Command / instruction
- **v16** "Paul was allowed to stay by himself" — Time / place / contrast
- **v20** "I am wearing this chain for the sake of the hope of Israel" — Promise / blessing

- **v22** “it is spoken against everywhere” — Sin / warning
- **v23** “solemnly testifying about the kingdom of God” — God — His character & actions
- **v23** “from both the Law of Moses and from the Prophets” — Time / place / contrast
- **v24** “Some were being persuaded by the things spoken, but others would not believe” — Time / place / contrast
- **v27** “THE HEART OF THIS PEOPLE HAS BECOME DULL” — Sin / warning
- **v27** “AND I WOULD HEAL THEM” — Promise / blessing
- **v28** “this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles” — God — His character & actions
- **v28** “they will also listen” — Promise / blessing
- **v30** “was welcoming all who came to him” — Promise / blessing
- **v31** “preaching the kingdom of God” — God — His character & actions
- **v31** “with all openness, unhindered” — Time / place / contrast
- **v14** “brethren” — Key repeated word (every occurrence)

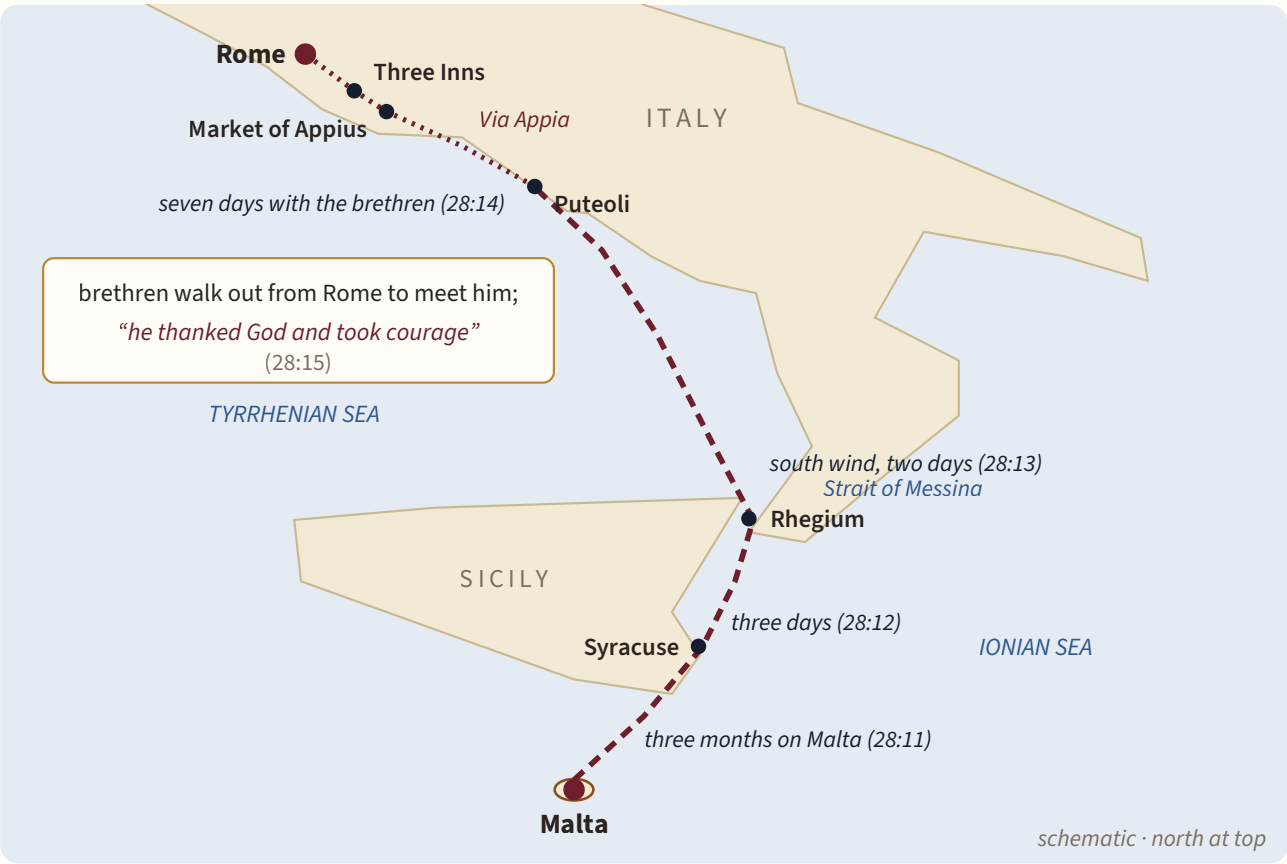
01 Observation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT SAY?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 28:15

"And the brethren, when they heard about us, came from there as far as the Market of Appius and Three Inns to meet us; and when Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage."

FIGURE · MALTA TO ROME



Follow the dashed line north from Malta by Syracuse and Rhegium to Puteoli, then the dotted line up the Appian Way, where the brethren met Paul at the Market of Appius and Three Inns.

Setting. The survivors of chapter 27 are on Malta (v1), in rain and cold (v2). After three months they sail on an Alexandrian ship with "the Twin Brothers for its figurehead" (v11), by Syracuse and Rhegium to Puteoli (vv12–13), then walk the Appian Way, met by brethren at the Market of Appius and Three Inns (vv14–15). In Rome Paul lives under guard (v16), meets the Jewish leaders twice (vv17–28) and stays two years in rented quarters (v30). Luke's "we" runs through v16.

Structure:

- vv1–10 — **Malta:** the island named (v1); the natives' kindness and a fire (v2); the viper (v3); "a murderer … justice has not allowed him to live" (v4); no harm — "he was a god" (vv5–6); Publius' welcome (v7); his father healed after prayer and the laying on of hands (v8); the island's sick cured (v9); honors and supplies (v10).
- vv11–16 — **the road to Rome:** three months; the Twin Brothers (v11); Syracuse, Rhegium, Puteoli (vv12–13); seven days with brethren — "thus we came to Rome" (v14); the Market of Appius and Three Inns — "he thanked God and took courage" (v15); Paul allowed to stay by himself with a guard (v16).
- vv17–29 — **the hope of Israel:** after three days, the leading Jews called (v17); innocent, delivered, forced to appeal (vv17–19); "this chain for the sake of the hope of Israel" (v20); no letters, no bad report; "this sect … spoken against everywhere" (vv21–22); a day of testimony from the Law and the Prophets (v23); some persuaded, some not (v24); Isaiah 6 (vv25–27); "this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles" (v28); [v29, bracketed in the NASB: the Jews depart disputing].
- vv30–31 — **unhindered:** two full years in rented quarters, welcoming all (v30); preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the Lord Jesus Christ "with all openness, unhindered" (v31).

Repeated words, with counts:

- "said / saying / spoke / spoken / speak / reported" ×12 — vv4, 17, 20, 21 (×3), 22, 24, 25 (×2), 26, 29 (v29 bracketed).
- "came / come / coming" ×9 — vv3, 9, 13, 14, 15, 17, 21, 23, 30.
- "welcomed / received / kindness / entertained / honored / supplied / welcoming" ×8 — vv2 (×2), 7 (×2), 10 (×2), 21, 30.
- "Paul" ×7 — vv3, 8, 15, 16, 17, 23, 25; "see / seeing / seen / saw" ×7 — vv4, 6, 8, 15, 20, 26, 27.
- "hear / heard / hearing / listen" ×6 — vv15, 22, 26, 27 (×2), 28.
- "God" ×5 — vv6 ("a god"), 15, 23, 28, 31; "kingdom of God" ×2 — vv23, 31.
- "three" ×5 — vv7, 11, 12, 15, 17.
- "brethren" ×4 — vv14, 15, 17, 21; "island" ×4 — vv1, 7, 9, 11.
- "chain / prisoner / guarding / soldier" ×4 — vv16 (×2), 17, 20.
- "Jews" ×3 — vv17, 19, 29 (v29 bracketed); "fire" ×3 — vv2, 3, 5; "persuade(d) / believe" ×3 — vv23, 24 (×2).
- "heart" ×2 — v27 (×2); "prophet(s)" ×2 — vv23, 25.

Contrasts: Saved from the sea ⟷ "justice has not allowed him to live" (v4). Murderer ⟷ a god (vv4, 6). A prisoner ⟷ welcomed like a dignitary (vv15–16). Nothing against our people ⟷ delivered to the Romans (v17). Persuaded ⟷ would not believe (v24). Keep on hearing ⟷ will not understand; keep on seeing ⟷ will not perceive (v26). A heart grown dull ⟷ "I would heal them" (v27). Chained (v20) ⟷ unhindered (v31).

Shape of the chapter: two journeys and two meetings. Malta (1–10) and the road (11–16) finish the voyage; the meeting with the Jews (17–29) and the two years (30–31) finish the book. It moves from a fire on a beach to a door open in Rome.

A note on verse 29. The NASB prints v29 in brackets — its sign for words probably not in the original writings. The oldest Greek manuscripts lack it; the later text behind the KJV has it. It repeats what v25 already says, so I read it and lean nothing on it.

Chapter theme (my words): God keeps His word to Paul all the way to Rome, through kindness and a viper, healing and a chain. Paul preaches the hope of Israel to his own people first, grieves over hardened hearts, and keeps preaching Jesus to whoever will come — and Luke ends the book with the gospel unhindered.

02 Interpretation

WHAT DOES THE TEXT MEAN?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 28:28

"Therefore let it be known to you that △this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; ☆they will also listen."

FIGURE · THE VERDICT TURNS

THE ISLANDERS' VERDICT TURNS · ACTS 28:3–6

VERSE 4	VERSES 5–6	VERSE 6
"Undoubtedly this man is a murderer" Justice has caught him	he shook the creature off and suffered no harm; they waited a long time	*"he was a god"* they changed their minds

Both verdicts were wrong. Paul was neither a murderer nor a god, but a servant of *"the God to whom I belong and whom I serve" (27:23)*

Henry: "See the uncertainty of popular opinion, how it turns with the wind"

Read left to right: the same crowd that called Paul a murderer called him a god a few hours later; the truth is in the band beneath.

Why does Luke tell us about the viper? Not to make snake-handling a test of faith. Jesus had promised His disciples "authority to tread on serpents" (Luke 10:19), and Luke shows God protecting His witness on the way to Rome. Henry draws the human lesson — "See the uncertainty of popular opinion, how it turns with the wind" — and Guzik notes that "For these natives, Paul had to be seen in extremes." Paul was neither a murderer nor a god; he belonged to and served the living God (27:23).

Healing on Malta. Paul prays first, then lays on hands, and Publius' father is healed (v8). Henry: Paul came "not as a physician to heal him by medicines, but as an apostle to heal him by miracle." Guzik notes that the word for the others "getting cured" (v9) "more literally means, "to receive medical attention"" — some think Luke the physician helped. Either way, Guzik's summary fits: "God did the work, but Paul made himself ready and available for the work."

Why did Paul need courage at Three Inns? He had just been through a shipwreck and was walking into Rome in chains to face Caesar. The brethren who came out to meet him were God's answer. Henry: "It put new life into him, cheered up his spirits, and banished his melancholy." Strong men still need brothers.

What is "the hope of Israel" (v20)? The Messiah and the resurrection God promised the fathers (23:6; 26:6–7). Guzik: Paul was a prisoner "because of his belief in Israel's Messiah, the hope of Israel." Paul never saw faith in Jesus as leaving Israel's faith; he saw it as its fulfillment.

Does verse 28 mean God is finished with Israel? No. Paul turns to the Gentiles in Rome as he did in Pisidian Antioch (13:46) and Corinth (18:6), yet he went to the synagogue first every time. Guzik: "It just meant that God would find those who would hear it." Henry: "Paul made intercession for them, but never against them." Paul himself wrote to this same city that "a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved" (Rom 11:25–26). I hold, with Romans 11, that God has a future for national Israel — the disciples' question about "restoring the kingdom to Israel" (1:6) was answered "not yet," not "never." Guzik's "spiritual kingdom" describes what Paul preached in Rome; it does not cancel the promises still to come.

Why does Acts 28:26–27 read differently from Isaiah 6:9–10 in my Bible? Paul (and Luke) quote the Greek Old Testament, which makes the people's own hearts the subject ("the heart of this people has become dull"); the NASB of Isaiah translates the Hebrew command to the prophet ("Render the hearts of this people insensitive"). Both say the same hard thing: persistent refusal ends in inability to hear. Jesus used the same text (John 12:40).

What about verse 29? It is bracketed in the NASB because the oldest manuscripts lack it; the KJV includes it from later manuscripts. Henry, reading the KJV, comments that "they had great disputes among themselves." Nothing is lost if it is not original — v25 already says they disagreed and began leaving.

Why does Acts end without Paul's trial? Guzik reports the early tradition that Paul was likely acquitted and later executed under Nero around A.D. 66–67, but Luke does not tell us. Luke's subject is the word, not the man: "The word of God was unhindered" (Guzik). Sproul's next sermon framed Paul's aim in Rome as preaching "the gospel of the Kingdom." "The Book of Acts really is a never-ending story" (Guzik).

Word study (Greek):

- **brought safely through — *diasōzō* (G1295):** 28:1, 4; 27:43, 44.
- **natives — *barbaros* (G915):** non-Greek speakers; Rom 1:14.
- **kindness — *philanthrōpia* (G5363):** love of mankind; compare 27:3.
- **viper — *echidna* (G2191):** the snake of v3.
- **Justice — *Dikē* (G1349):** the islanders' goddess of vengeance.
- **Twin Brothers — *Dioskouroi* (G1359):** Castor and Pollux, sailors' gods.
- **thanked — *eucharisteō* (G2168); courage — *tharsos* (G2294):** v15; *tharsos* only here.
- **hope — *elpis* (G1680); chain — *halysis* (G254):** v20.
- **sect — *hairesis* (G139):** v22; 24:5, 14; 26:5.
- **solemnly testifying — *diamartyromai* (G1263); persuade — *peithō* (G3982):** vv23–24.
- **become dull — *pachynō* (G3975):** v27.
- **salvation — *sōtērion* (G4992):** v28; Luke 2:30; 3:6.
- **rented quarters — *misthōma* (G3410); welcoming — *apodechomai* (G588):** v30.
- **openness — *parrēsia* (G3954); unhindered — *akōlytōs* (G209):** v31.

Key insights to carry (from the Deep Dive):

1. **Kindness from unexpected people** (v2).
2. **Crowds swing between extremes** (vv4–6; Henry).
3. **Shake it off into the fire** (v5).

4. **God does the work through a willing man** (v8; Guzik).
5. **A pagan figurehead, a sovereign God** (v11).
6. **Even apostles need brothers** (v15; Henry).
7. **The chain is for the hope of Israel** (v20).
8. **A hardening that is partial** (vv26–27; Rom 11:25–26).
9. **Luke closes the circle** — "the salvation of God" (v28; Luke 3:6).
10. **The last word is "unhindered"** (v31).

Cross-references: Isa 6:9–10; Luke 2:30; 3:6; 10:19; John 12:40; 16:33; Acts 1:6–8; 4:29–31; 9:15; 13:46; 18:6; 19:21; 23:6, 11; 24:5, 14; 26:6–7; 27:23–24; Rom 1:14–16; 10:1; 11:1, 25–26; 15:23–24; Phil 1:12–14; 2 Tim 4:17; Heb 10:24–25.

03 Application

HOW DOES IT CHANGE ME?

KEY VERSE · ACTS 28:30–31

"And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and ☆ was welcoming all who came to him, △ preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ ◷ with all openness, unhindered."

FIGURE · THE ROAD TO ROME



Read the top row, then the bottom: promise, purpose, appeal, arrival — and a book that ends with the word still going out.

Eight verses trace the promise from Jesus' commission to the last word of Acts; Rome was never an accident.

Example to follow — the man at the fire (v3). Paul had just survived a shipwreck, and the first thing Luke shows him doing is gathering sticks. No speech, no title — just work. When the snake bit, he shook it off and went on. A lot of the men I serve have had something fasten itself onto them — an addiction, a record, a reputation. You can shake it off into the fire and keep serving.

Sin to confess — living by the crowd's verdict. I have let people's opinions swing me like the islanders' — up when they praise me, crushed when they condemn me (vv4–6). I confess caring more about what people call me than about whose I am. Neither "murderer" nor "god" is the truth about Paul or about me; I belong to God and serve Him.

Truth to face — I need my brothers. Paul, the apostle, took courage when he saw the brethren (v15). I am not too strong for that. This week I will show up for the men God has given me, and I will let them show up for me.

Command to obey — keep preaching, keep welcoming. Paul spent two years "welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ" (vv30–31). I may not be free to go where I want, but I can open the door where I am. Chained or not, I can talk about Jesus to whoever walks in.

Promise to trust — the word is not chained. Paul's circumstances "turned out for the greater progress of the gospel" (Phil 1:12). The last word of Acts is "unhindered." Whatever limits are on me, they are not on God's word. And I trust that God is not finished with Israel or with me (Rom 11:1, 26).

Questions for the table (from the Deep Dive):

1. The islanders called Paul a murderer, then a god (vv4–6). Whose opinion of me swings like that — and whose opinion am I actually living for? (28:3–6; 27:23) *See the uncertainty of popular opinion, how it turns with the wind (Henry).*
2. Paul gathered sticks for the fire like any castaway (v3) and prayed for a sick man in a stranger's house (v8). What ordinary service is God asking me to do where I am right now? (28:3, 8–9) *God did the work, but Paul made himself ready and available (Guzik).*
3. Paul took courage when he saw the brethren (v15). Whose face do I need to see this week — and whose face does someone else need to see? (28:14–15; Heb 10:24–25) *It put new life into him and banished his melancholy (Henry).*
4. Some were persuaded and others would not believe (v24). How do I keep loving and praying for people who have heard and refused? (28:24–27; Rom 10:1) *Paul made intercession for them, but never against them (Henry).*
5. Paul was chained to a soldier, yet the word went out "unhindered" (vv16, 31). What chain in my life — a record, a limit, a sentence — have I treated as a reason God can't use me? (28:16, 30–31; Phil 1:12–14) *My circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel (Phil 1:12).*
6. Acts ends without telling us what happened to Paul. If the story keeps going, what is my chapter supposed to look like? (28:30–31; 1:8) *The Book of Acts really is a never-ending story (Guzik).*

Worship. The God who kept Paul through the sea kept him from the viper, healed an island through his prayers, sent brothers down the Appian Way to meet him, and opened a door in Rome that no chain could close. His salvation has been sent to the nations, His promises to Israel stand, and His word runs unhindered.

Prayer. Lord, thank You for bringing me this far, through storms I did not choose. Free me from living by the crowd's verdict; I belong to You. Thank You for my brothers — help me take courage from them and give it back. Soften hard hearts, beginning with mine, and save Your people Israel. Make my room, my cell, my table a place where anyone who comes hears about the kingdom of God and the Lord Jesus Christ, with all openness, unhindered. Amen.

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