

ACTS

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BACKGROUND

See [Author](#). Having recorded the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus in the Gospel bearing his name, Luke now told of the works of the risen, ascended, and glorified Christ through his church. Acts shows the dramatic spread of Christianity from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria, to Rome, and "to the ends of the earth" ([Acts 1:8](#)).

AUTHOR

The unanimous testimony of the early church is that the author is Luke, beloved physician and author of Luke (see [Luke: Author](#)). This is supported by the similarity in the inscriptions of the two books ([Luke 1:1-4](#); [Acts 1:1-5](#)) and by their similarity in character, style, and language. Acts continues the history given in Luke's Gospel. It is widely agreed that Luke, who accompanied Paul on some of his journeys ([Col. 4:14](#); [2 Tim. 4:11](#); [Philemon 1:24](#)), modestly referred to himself in this book as part of the "we" of the missionary band (see [Acts 16:10-18](#); [Acts 20:5-21:18](#); [Acts 27:1-28:16](#)).

DATE

Probably A.D. 60-62, since it ends before Paul's release from prison in 62 and makes no mention of the Neronian persecutions that began in 64.

RECIPIENTS

See [Luke: Recipients](#).

PURPOSE

- To record early church history and show that the gospel message is based on historical fact
- To show that the gospel applies to all nations and classes of people

UNIQUE FEATURES

- Acts can be called a tale of three cities, as it traces the spread of Christianity from Jerusalem to Rome through Antioch of Syria.
- It can also be called a tale of three continents—Africa, Asia, and Europe.
- It is a book of prayer, recording 18 prayer meetings.
- It is a book of revival, recording nine revivals.
- It is a book of preaching, recording 18 sermons.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER BIBLE BOOKS

Matthew, Mark, and Luke:

- In Acts the door of faith is opened to Jews, Romans, and Greeks. The three synoptic Gospels opened the door of faith to
 - Jews (Matthew)
 - Romans (Mark)
 - Greeks (Luke)

Luke and Hebrews:

See [Luke: Comparison with Other Bible Books](#).

The Gospels:

- The Gospels present the work of Christ in humiliation; Acts presents the work of Christ in exaltation.
- The Gospels tell how Jesus came to earth to take upon himself a human body; Acts tells how the Holy Spirit took upon himself a human body, the church.

The Gospels and Epistles:

- Acts is the connecting link between Gospels and Epistles: the sequel to the Gospels, the basis of the Epistles.

The Pauline Epistles:

- Acts provides the historical background of all of Paul's epistles except 1, 2 Timothy and Titus (see exposition on [§ Acts 28:30-31](#)).

OUTLINE

1. THE WITNESS IN JERUSALEM ([Acts 1-7](#))
 1. Prologue ([Acts 1:1-5](#))
 2. Christ's final instructions; the Ascension ([Acts 1:6-11](#))
 - C. In the upper room ([Acts 1:12-26](#))
 - D. Birth of church at Pentecost ([Acts 2](#))
 - E. Growth of church in Jerusalem ([Acts 3:1-6:7](#))
 1. Healing the lame man ([Acts 3](#))
 2. Persecution begins ([Acts 4](#))
 3. Ananias and Sapphira ([Acts 5:1-11](#))

4. Signs and wonders ([Acts 5:12-16](#))
 5. Persecution resumes ([Acts 5:17-42](#))
 6. First deacons ([Acts 6:1-7](#))
- F. Martyrdom of Stephen ([Acts 6:8-7:60](#))

II. THE WITNESS IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA ([Acts 8:1-9:31](#))

- A. Persecution resumes, aided by Saul ([Acts 8:1-3](#))
- B. Ministry of Philip ([Acts 8:4-40](#))
- C. Conversion of Saul ([Acts 9:1-31](#))

III. THE WITNESS TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH ([Acts 9:32-28:31](#))

- A. The church extends to Antioch ([Acts 9:32-12:24](#))
 - A. Aeneas, Dorcas healed ([Acts 9:32-43](#))
 - B. Conversion of Cornelius; church's response ([Acts 10:1-11:18](#))
 3. The church at Antioch of Syria ([Acts 11:19-30](#))
 4. Peter imprisoned and released ([Acts 12:1-24](#))
- B. The church extends to Asia Minor ([Acts 12:25-16:5](#))
 1. Paul's first missionary journey ([Acts 12:25-14:28](#))
 1. The missionaries appointed ([Acts 12:25-13:3](#))
 2. Cyprus ([Acts 13:4-13](#))
 - c. Antioch of Pisidia ([Acts 13:14-52](#))
 - d. Iconium, Lystra, Derbe ([Acts 14](#))
 2. Jerusalem Council ([Acts 15:1-35](#))
 3. Paul's new missionary team ([Acts 15:36-16:5](#))
- C. The church extends to the Aegean ([Acts 16:6-21:30](#))
 1. Paul's second missionary journey ([Acts 16:6-18:22](#))

1. Macedonian call ([Acts 16:6-10](#))
 2. Philippi ([Acts 16:11-40](#))
 - c. Thessalonica, Berea ([Acts 17:1-15](#))
 - d. Athens ([Acts 17:16-34](#))
 - e. Corinth ([Acts 18:1-17](#))
 - f. Return home ([Acts 18:18-22](#))
2. Paul's third missionary journey ([Acts 18:23-21:30](#))
 - a. Ephesus ([Acts 18:23-19:41](#))
 - b. Greece ([Acts 20:1-6](#))
 - c. Troas ([Acts 20:7-12](#))
 - d. Paul meets with Ephesian elders at Miletus ([Acts 20:13-38](#))
 - e. Paul returns home, is arrested ([Acts 21:1-30](#))
- D. The church extends to Rome ([Acts 21:31-28:31](#))
1. Paul's defense and trials ([Acts 21:31-26:32](#))
 1. Before Lysias and the Jewish mob ([Acts 21:31-22:29](#))
 2. Before the Sanhedrin ([Acts 22:30-23:10](#))
 - c. Paul taken to Caesarea ([Acts 23:11-35](#))
 - d. Before Felix ([Acts 24](#))
 - e. Before Festus ([Acts 25](#))
 - f. Before Agrippa ([Acts 26](#))
 2. Paul's voyage to Rome ([Acts 27:1-28:16](#))
 3. Imprisonment in Rome ([Acts 28:17-31](#))

TIMELINE

A.D. 30:	Ascension, Pentecost
A.D. 35:	Paul's conversion

A.D. 40:	Cornelius's Conversion
A.D. 47:	Paul begins 1st missionary Journey
A.D. 49-50:	Jerusalem Council, Paul begins 2nd journey
A.D. 60:	Paul imprisoned in Rome

Acts 1:1-5 *The final 40 days.* Luke began this sequel to his Gospel by explaining to his friend Theophilus the interaction between Christ and his apostles during the 40 days from the Resurrection to the Ascension. Christ told them to wait in Jerusalem for the promised Holy Spirit.

» **See also:** [Illustration: Outreach of the Apostles](#)

Acts 1:6-9 *Commission and cloud.* Christ commissioned the disciples to be his witnesses throughout the world and promised that the Holy Spirit would give them the power to do so (see exposition on [§][1 Cor. 12:12-31](#)). A cloud then transported him to heaven. [Acts 1:8](#) could be seen as a sort of divine outline for the book of Acts (see [Outline](#)):

- Witnessing in Jerusalem ([Acts 1-7](#))
- Witnessing in Judea and Samaria ([Acts 8:1-9:31](#))
- Witnessing to the end of the earth ([Acts 9:32-28:31](#))

Acts 1:10-11 *Just think of it: This same Jesus!* Two men told the disciples that Jesus would one day return:

- Christ's departure to heaven was personal, as will be his return (see [1 Thes. 4:16](#)).
- His going was visible, as will be his return (see [Rev. 1:7](#)).
- His going was from the Mount of Olives, as will be his return (see [Zech. 14:4](#)).

These two "men" may have been either humans (like Moses and Elijah, see [Matthew 17:3](#)) or angels (compare [Luke 24:4](#) and [John 20:12](#)).

Acts 1:12-14 *Praying with one accord.* Following Christ's ascension, some of the believers met in the upper room (see exposition on [§][Luke 22:7-16](#)) for a special extended prayer session. Besides the 11 apostles, there were

- "several other women" who had followed Jesus from Galilee, including Joanna, wife of Herod's steward ([Luke 8:3](#)); Mary and Martha ([John 11](#)); Mary (mother of James the Less, [Mark 15:40](#)); Mary Magdalene ([Mark 16:9](#)); Salome ([Mark 15:40](#)); and Susanna ([Luke 8:3](#))
- Mary the mother of Jesus (her final appearance)
- Jesus' half brothers ([Matthew 13:55](#); [Mark 6:3](#)), who had been unbelievers during his earthly ministry ([John 7:3-5](#)) but were now believers. Two of these are thought to have written the NT epistles of James and Jude.

Acts 1:15-26 *The disciples call a business meeting.* Reminding his fellow apostles of the OT Scriptures predicting the defection of Judas (see [Psalm 41:9](#); [Psalm 69:25](#); [Psalm 109:8](#)), Peter led them in choosing Matthias to replace him. Peter stated two requirements for apostleship: to have followed Christ throughout his ministry, and to have witnessed his resurrection ([Acts 1:21-22](#)).

Though only 120 disciples were present in the upper room ([Acts 1:15](#)), there were by this time many more disciples as well (see [1 Cor. 15:6](#)).

[Acts 2:1-13](#) *Wind, fire, tongues, and the Spirit.* On the day of the Jewish Festival of Pentecost (see exposition on [§ Leviticus 23:1-44](#)), a sound "like the roaring of a mighty windstorm" brought the promised filling of the Holy Spirit ([Acts 2:4](#); see [Acts 1:4-5](#); [John 14:16](#); and exposition on [§ 1 Cor. 12:12-31](#)), evidenced by the ability to "speak with other tongues." Jews from all over the world who were in Jerusalem for Pentecost heard the apostles speaking in their own languages, leading some to be amazed and others to conclude that they were drunk ([Acts 2:5-13](#))—though drunkenness has never been known to give one the ability to speak other languages coherently!

This is the first of only four biblical instances of speaking in tongues (for the others, see [Acts 10:46](#); [Acts 19:6](#); [1 Cor. 14](#)). The generally accepted date for this Pentecost is A.D. 30 (see [Dates of Selected Bible Events](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Outreach of the Apostles](#)

[Acts 2:14-21](#) *"Joel predicted this!"* Standing with the other 11 apostles, Peter boldly declared that the phenomenon of speaking in other languages was not due to drunkenness, but was a fulfillment of Joel's prophecy concerning the visitation of God's Spirit (see exposition on [§ Joel 2:28-32](#)). While Pentecost did fulfill most of that prophecy, its ultimate fulfillment will come in connection with the "day of the Lord" ([Acts 2:20](#); see exposition on [§ Isaiah 2:5-4:1](#)). Concerning the dual fulfillment of biblical prophecy, see [Introduction to the Prophets](#).

[Acts 2:22-36](#) *"We killed him, but God raised him."* Peter then spoke to the crowd about Christ's death and resurrection. Though Christ had been morally blameless and performed many signs showing his deity, the Jews crucified him ([Acts 2:22-23](#)). God knew, however, that this would happen, as seen in the prophecies it fulfilled ([Acts 2:25-28](#); see [Psalm 16:8-11](#)), and in the fact that God raised Jesus from the dead—to which all the apostles could bear witness ([Acts 2:24, 32](#)). The tongues phenomenon, said Peter, proved that Jesus had ascended to his rightful place in heaven and had sent the Holy Spirit as promised ([Acts 2:33-35](#)). The conclusion: Jesus is "both Lord and Messiah!" ([Acts 2:36](#)).

[Acts 2:37-41](#) *What an altar call!* When the invitation was given, roughly 3,000 people repented, accepted Christ, and were baptized—the first instance of the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit promised by Jesus (see [Acts 8:12, 36](#); [Acts 9:18](#); [Acts 16:30](#); [John 16:8-9](#)). Acts records several instances of believers' being baptized following their conversion: the Samaritans (see [Acts 8:12](#)), the Ethiopian (see [Acts 8:36](#)), Saul (see [Acts 9:18](#)), Cornelius (see [Acts 10:47-48](#)), Lydia (see [Acts 16:15](#)), the Philippian jailer and his family (see [Acts 16:33](#)).

[Acts 2:42-47](#) *"Commonism," not communism.* The new believers met for worship, fellowship, and teaching on a daily basis. "Many miraculous signs and wonders" confirmed their faith. They sold their possessions and shared with those in need. Though definitely not communism, this system of mutual ownership might be called "commonism." Note the difference: Commonism says, "What's mine is yours," while communism says, "What's yours is mine." This financial experiment was temporary; it had its problems (see [Acts 5:1-11](#); [Acts 6:1](#)) and soon failed (see [2 Thes. 3:7-10](#)).

Acts 3:1-10 *Running and rejoicing beside the Beautiful Gate.* Peter and John healed a man who had been lame since birth. He leapt to his feet and praised God, amazing the onlookers. Perhaps they recalled Isaiah's wonderful prophecy about such healing (see [Isaiah 35:6](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Outreach of the Apostles](#)

Acts 3:11-26 *"He did it! Believe in him!"* Peter quickly gave God the credit for the miracle ([Acts 3:11-12](#), [16](#)), while reminding the people of their part in Christ's crucifixion and God's part in his resurrection ([Acts 3:13-15](#), [17-18](#)). He urged them to repent, that they might be saved and might receive "times of refreshing" from the Lord as they awaited Christ's second coming ([Acts 3:19-21](#)). He reminded them that they were the children of the prophets and should therefore be ready to accept the very one spoken of by those prophets ([Acts 3:22-26](#)).

Acts 4:1-4 *Opposition and growth.* As Peter and John continued to speak following the healing of the lame man, some Jewish leaders came upon the scene, expressed great alarm at the rapid increase of believers, and arrested Peter and John. Nonetheless, the church continued to grow. The KJV suggests that about 5,000 men became believers at this time, while most other translations suggest that the number of disciples "totaled" about 5,000 by this time. Even with this latter interpretation, since it includes only men, the total number of believers could have been as much as 10,000-20,000. Such growth was nothing less than supernatural. See also [Acts 5:14](#); [Acts 6:7](#).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Outreach of the Apostles](#)

Acts 4:5-12 *"We did it in the strength of the stone."* When asked by the Sanhedrin how the lame man had been healed, Peter replied that he was healed through the power of Jesus, whom they had crucified. Jesus was the "stone" they had rejected, just as the psalmist had prophesied (see [Psalm 118:22](#); see [Mark 12:10-11](#); [1 Peter 2:4-8](#)).

Peter's boldness before this hostile audience confirmed a promise of Christ (see [Matthew 10:16-20](#)) and probably influenced Peter's later advice (see [1 Peter 3:15](#)).

Acts 4:13-18 *"You cannot preach his name!"* Unable to deny that the lame man had been healed, the Jewish leaders nevertheless forbade the apostles to speak about Jesus. Judging from their earlier attempt to conceal the fact of the Resurrection (see [Matthew 28:11-15](#)), there is little doubt that the Jewish leaders would have denied this healing if they could have—but the healed man was standing there before them, so they couldn't deny it!

Besides [Matthew 28:11-15](#), there is no biblical record of the Jewish leaders ever trying to deny the Resurrection.

Just as there was no argument against this healing, there is no argument against the evidence of a transformed life.

Acts 4:19-22 *"But we must preach his name!"* The apostles' reply to the Jewish leaders' gag order was instant and final: We must proclaim what we have seen and heard. They were not going to obey the commands of mere humans when they conflicted with the commands of God. Fearing the reaction of the crowd if they beat them, the leaders again threatened Peter and John and released them.

[Acts 4:23-31](#) *A prayer for courage.* The apostles, joined by other disciples, prayed for courage in the face of such opposition, reminding themselves of David's prophecy of bitter hostility against the Son of God (see [Psalm 2](#)). The Holy Spirit shook the building where they were praying.

[Acts 4:32-37](#) *Great power, great grace, great giving.* As the apostles continued to bear witness to the Resurrection, the believers continued to share with each other (compare [Acts 2:44](#)), even selling their property to contribute to the common purse. ([Acts 4:32-35](#)). One of many making such a sacrifice was Barnabas, so named because of his gift of encouragement ([Acts 4:36-37](#)). Barnabas would become a key figure in the church's missionary outreach (see [Acts 9:26-27](#); [Acts 11-15](#)).

[Acts 5:1-11](#) *They lie, then they die.* Ananias and his wife, Sapphira, were struck dead by God for lying about a gift to the church. Their fate recalls that of Achan (see [Joshua 7:10-26](#)):

- Satan used Achan as well as Ananias and Sapphira to attack God's people from within the camp.
- The sin of all three involved greed and lying.
- All three were confronted and condemned by God's chief spokesperson at the time.
- All three were killed for their sin.
- All three served as examples to the people ([Acts 5:11](#); see [Joshua 22:20](#); [1 Cor. 10:1-6](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Outreach of the Apostles](#)

[Acts 5:12-16](#) *The sick, the signs, and Peter's shadow.* As the church grew, the apostles continued their miracle-working ministry. Many believed that even the touch of Peter's shadow would heal them, and all who had such faith were healed.

[Acts 5:17-28](#) *An angel and an empty prison.* Alarmed again by the church's rapid growth, the Jewish leaders put the apostles in prison, but they were soon released by an angel and continued preaching ([Acts 5:17-21](#)). When the leaders realized what had happened, they again ordered the apostles to cease preaching ([Acts 5:22-28](#)). This is the first of three miraculous prison releases in Acts (see [Acts 12:6-10](#); [Acts 16:26-27](#)). It also marks the first of six angelic appearances in Acts (see [Acts 8:26](#); [Acts 10:3, 22](#); [Acts 12:7](#); [Acts 12:23](#); [Acts 27:23](#)).

[Acts 5:29-32](#) *"We must obey our Lord!"* Again the apostles refused to stop preaching (see exposition on [Acts 4:19-22](#)), saying, "We must obey God rather than human authority" ([Acts 5:29](#)). Peter believed in law and order (see [1 Peter 2:13-14](#)), but this time followed God's higher law.

[Acts 5:33-42](#) *Great advice from Gamaliel.* Recalling some recent popular uprisings, a member of the Sanhedrin named Gamaliel advised the leaders to leave the disciples alone: Their ultimate success or failure would show whether or not they had God's approval ([Acts 5:33-39](#)). The other members agreed and, after again threatening and beating the apostles, they let them go. The apostles rejoiced that God had counted them worthy to suffer for him, and continued to witness ([Acts 5:40-42](#)).

[Acts 6:1-7](#) *Seven servants of God.* Following a problem in the church concerning the distribution of food, the 12 selected seven Spirit-anointed men to handle future problems. Among the seven were Stephen and Philip. The Hellenists ([Acts 6:1](#)) were Jews, mainly from outside of Palestine, who had adopted Greek culture. Laying on of hands ([Acts 6:6](#)) was done for various reasons in Bible times:

- as a benediction (see [Matthew 19:13, 15](#); [Genesis 48:14-20](#))
- for healing (see [Mark 5:23](#); [Mark 6:5](#))
- to impart the Holy Spirit (see [Acts 8:17, 19](#); [Acts 9:17](#))
- for ordination ([Acts 6:6](#); see [Acts 13:3](#); [Numbers 8:9-10](#); [1 Tim. 4:14](#); [2 Tim. 1:6](#))

» **See also:** [Illustration: Outreach of the Apostles](#)

[Acts 6:8-15](#) *The man with the face of an angel.* Stephen was confronted by Jews from a certain synagogue. Unable to withstand his Spirit-anointed wisdom, they accused him of blasphemy and had him arrested. To the amazement of his tormentors, he stood before the Sanhedrin with an angelic glow upon his face.

[Acts 7:1-53](#) *History 101: Stiff-necked fathers and sons.* When asked if the charge of blasphemy against him was true, Stephen answered with what amounted to a lesson in Israelite history. He showed how Israel had repeatedly resisted the people God sent to save them ([Acts 7:2-50](#)), culminating in their rejection of Christ ([Acts 7:51-53](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Outreach of the Apostles](#)

[Acts 7:54-60](#) *"Lord, forgive them."* As he was being stoned, Stephen saw Jesus standing at God's right hand and asked him to forgive his executioners. Saul, who would later, as Paul, become the leading missionary of the early church, assisted in Stephen's stoning ([Acts 7:58](#); see [Acts 8:1](#)).

Stephen was the first of three people to see Jesus after his ascension ([Acts 7:55](#); see [Acts 9:3-6](#); [Rev. 1:10](#); [Rev. 12-16](#)). Note that Stephen saw Jesus standing at God's right hand. This is the only reference to the Savior standing (after the Ascension) until the book of Revelation. In all other descriptions he is said to be seated (see [Acts 2:34](#); [Matthew 26:64](#); [Ephes. 1:20](#); [Col. 3:1](#); [Hebrews 1:3](#); [Hebrews 13](#); [Hebrews 8:1](#); [Hebrews 10:12](#)). Perhaps our Lord rises to welcome his saints home.

[Acts 8:1-3](#) *Enter Saul, scatterer of sheep.* Saul, who had held the clothes of those stoning Stephen ([Acts 7:58](#)), now helped launch a full-scale persecution of believers.

» **See also:** [Illustration: Outreach of the Apostles](#)

[Acts 8:4-8](#) *The Greater Samaritan Crusade.* Philip the Evangelist, one of those appointed to serve the church ([Acts 6:5](#)), went to Samaria (see [Acts 1:8](#)), where he performed many miracles and proclaimed the gospel, with many responding.

[Acts 8:9-25](#) *"The Spirit's power cannot be bought!"* A Samaritan named Simon, who had once attracted large crowds with his sorcery, responded to the gospel ([Acts 8:9-13](#)). When Peter and John came to Samaria to impart the Holy Spirit to the new believers ([Acts 8:14-17](#)), Simon saw the manifestations of the Spirit and offered to pay the apostles for that power ([Acts 8:18-19](#)). Peter promptly set him straight ([Acts 8:20-24](#)). Peter and John then returned to Jerusalem, preaching in many Samaritan villages on the way ([Acts 8:25](#)). Simon's action has given us the word *simony*, the buying and selling of religious rights and offices.

Acts 8:26-40 *"How can I understand it?"* Philip was led by the Spirit from Samaria to the Gaza Desert, where he encountered an Ethiopian eunuch (a royal official) in his chariot, reading [Isaiah 53](#). When Philip explained the gospel based on that passage, the eunuch believed and was baptized.

The eunuch's question ([Acts 8:31](#)) reflects the tragic condition of lost sinners: How can they understand God's will unless someone guides them (see [Romans 10:13-15](#))? Philip was able to respond to his need and lead him to Christ based on Scripture ([Acts 8:35](#); compare [Luke 24:27-32, 45](#)). [Acts 8:35](#) tells, in a nutshell, why the Bible was written.

Acts 9:1-19 *Blinded, that he might see.* One day in the year 35, about five years after Pentecost, Saul was on a mission to persecute Christians in Damascus when he was knocked from his horse and blinded by a heavenly light. Jesus appeared to him, asking why he was fighting so hard against him ([Acts 9:1-5](#)). Saul was taken to Damascus, where God commissioned a timid believer named Ananias to heal his blindness, assuring him that Saul had been chosen to take the gospel to the Gentiles ([Acts 9:6-16](#)). Having been healed, Saul was baptized ([Acts 9:17-18](#)).

Several times in Acts, the church is described as "the Way" ([Acts 9:2](#); see [Acts 19:9, 23](#); [Acts 22:4](#); [Acts 24:14, 22](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Outreach of the Apostles](#)

» **See also:** [Illustration: Man Called Paul, A](#)

Acts 9:20-31 *From persecutor to persecuted.* The newly converted Saul persuasively preached Christ in the Damascus synagogue, to the amazement of all who had known him as an enemy of Christ ([Acts 9:20-22](#)). Learning of a plot against his life, Saul escaped to Jerusalem, where Barnabas assured the Christians that he had been genuinely converted ([Acts 9:23-27](#)). Soon however, people in Jerusalem were trying to kill him, so he returned to Tarsus, his hometown ([Acts 9:28-31](#)). The year was A.D. 38, three years after his conversion (see exposition on ^s[Galatians 1:13-24](#)).

Acts 9:32-43 *Alive at her own funeral!* Meanwhile in Jerusalem, Peter healed Aeneas, resulting in many conversions ([Acts 9:32-35](#)). He then resurrected Dorcas ([Acts 9:36-43](#)), and many more came to faith.

Acts 10:1-33 *Sincere seeker, reluctant witness.* About 10 years after Pentecost, in the year A.D. 40, an angel appeared to Cornelius, a Gentile military man who was sincerely seeking God. The angel told him a man named Peter would show him how to find God, and Cornelius immediately sent for Peter ([Acts 10:1-8](#)).

Meanwhile at Joppa, Peter, unaware of all this, saw a vision in which he was told to eat some animals that the law classified as unclean (see [Leviticus 11:1-47](#)). In the vision he refused to do so, and God rebuked him for his disobedience ([Acts 10:9-16](#)). At that moment the three men sent by Cornelius arrived, and Peter went with them back to Cornelius ([Acts 10:17-23](#)).

When they met, Peter and Cornelius shared with each other the amazing circumstances that had brought them together ([Acts 10:24-33](#)). Peter explained how the vision had helped him overcome his prejudice against Gentiles ([Acts 10:28-29](#)), and Cornelius expressed his eagerness to hear whatever Peter might have to say as God's spokesman ([Acts 10:33](#)).

Peter's initial reply concerning the unclean animals ([Acts 10:14](#)) is a great contradiction. If God is "Lord," one cannot say no to him.

» **See also:** [Illustration: Outreach of the Apostles](#)

[Acts 10:34-43](#) *Cornelius gets a gospel summary.* Knowing that Cornelius had heard reports of Christ's earthly ministry ([Acts 10:37-38](#)), Peter gave personal testimony to the truth of those reports, especially the fact of his resurrection ([Acts 10:39-41](#)), then declared that Christ's resurrection made salvation possible for all who believe in him, whether Jew or Gentile ([Acts 10:42-43](#)).

[Acts 10:44-48](#) *Baptized by the Spirit and in water.* At that moment God's Spirit fell upon Cornelius and all his household, regenerating them and causing them to speak in tongues, whereupon Peter baptized them. Cornelius's conversion is the third of three great conversion stories in Acts involving descendants of each of Noah's sons:

- the Ethiopian eunuch, descendant of Ham
- Saul, descendant of Shem
- Cornelius, descendant of Japheth

[Acts 11:1-18](#) *Convinced of God's grace.* When the legalistic Jewish Christians in Jerusalem complained about Peter's association with the Gentile Cornelius ([Acts 11:1-3](#)), Peter carefully explained his vision ([Acts 11:4-10](#)), God's revelation to Cornelius ([Acts 11:11-14](#)), and the confirming sign of the Holy Spirit ([Acts 11:15-17](#)). This convinced the Jewish believers that God had indeed offered salvation to both Jews and Gentiles.

» **See also:** [Illustration: Outreach of the Apostles](#)

[Acts 11:19-30](#) *Barnabas and Saul help a young church grow.* When a new church was formed in Antioch, Barnabas was sent by the Jerusalem church to help it. He in turn brought Saul from Tarsus ([Acts 11:25-26](#); see [Acts 9:28-31](#)) to help him. It was here in Antioch that believers were first called Christians—one of only three times this term occurs in the Bible (see [Acts 26:28](#); [1 Peter 4:16](#)). Having been told by the prophet Agabus that there would be a famine in Jerusalem, the Christians in Antioch sent gifts with Barnabas and Saul to those in Jerusalem (see exposition on [§Acts 20:1-6](#)).

[Acts 12:1-17](#) *"Wake up, Peter! It's a jail break!"* Trying to earn the favor of the Jewish religious leaders, Herod Agrippa executed James the apostle and then put Peter in prison, planning to kill him as well ([Acts 12:1-4](#)). When believers prayed, God sent an angel to release Peter from prison ([Acts 12:5-11](#)). When Peter then tried to join the people who had been praying for him, he had difficulty convincing them that he was indeed alive ([Acts 12:12-17](#)). We shouldn't be surprised when God answers our prayers!

On the eve of his scheduled execution Peter was sound asleep ([Acts 12:6](#)), perhaps remembering Christ's promise that he would live to be an old man (see [John 21:18](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Outreach of the Apostles](#)

[Acts 12:18-24](#) *The penalty for blasphemy.* Unable to find his escaped prisoner, Herod went to his palace in Caesarea. Shortly thereafter, God struck him dead for allowing people to worship him.

[Acts 12:25-13:3](#) *The first international missionaries.* Barnabas and Saul (Paul, see [Acts 13:9](#)) returned from their mission of mercy in Jerusalem (see [Acts 11:27-30](#)) to their home church at Antioch, taking with them John Mark (see *Mark: Author*). The Holy Spirit indicated to the church that they should dedicate Barnabas and Paul "for the special work I have for them" ([Acts 13:2](#)). This first of Paul's missionary journeys began in the year A.D. 47, some 12 years after his conversion. Concerning those 12 years, see exposition on [§Galatians 1:13-24](#).

- » **See also:** [Map: Paul's First Missionary Trip](#)
- » **See also:** [Illustration: Outreach of the Apostles](#)

[Acts 13:4-12](#) *When one is blinded, the other believes.* The missionaries' first stop was Paphos on the island of Cyprus. When they witnessed to Sergius Paulus, the governor, a sorcerer named Bar-Jesus opposed them and was struck blind, which helped lead Sergius Paulus to faith. Beginning with [Acts 13:9](#), Saul was known by his Gentile name, Paul, perhaps to help him identify with the Gentile world.

[Acts 13:13](#) *Mark quits the team.* The missionaries left Cyprus and sailed to Perga in Pamphylia, part of present-day Turkey. For some reason John Mark left Paul and Barnabas and returned to Jerusalem. While Barnabas had helped get Paul started in his ministry (see [Acts 9:27](#); [Acts 11:25-26](#)) and had apparently been the dominant member of the missionary team (see [Acts 12:25](#); [Acts 13:2](#)), "Paul and those with him" ([Acts 13:13](#)) suggests that Paul now became the leader.

[Acts 13:14-41](#) *Paul's first recorded sermon.* Arriving in Antioch of Pisidia, Paul was invited to speak at the synagogue ([Acts 13:14-15](#)). After briefly overviewing Israel's history from the Exodus to David ([Acts 13:16-22](#)), Paul identified Jesus as David's promised seed ([Acts 13:23](#)), who had been killed by the Jews in Jerusalem ([Acts 13:24-29](#)) but was then raised from the dead, just as David had predicted ([Acts 13:30-37](#); see [Psalm 16:10](#)). Paul explained that, through his resurrected Son, God was offering forgiveness of sins—something the law could not provide ([Acts 13:38-41](#)).

[Acts 13:42-52](#) *"You've had your chance; now it's their turn."* Many Jews responded to the gospel ([Acts 13:42-43](#)). However, when Paul's next audience included many Gentiles, the Jews began opposing him ([Acts 13:44-45](#)). Citing God's ancient evangelistic charge to Israel (see exposition on [§Isaiah 43:8-13](#) and [§Isaiah 56:1-8](#)), Paul and Barnabas preached to the Gentiles, and many responded, leading the Jews to expel them from the city ([Acts 13:46-52](#)).

[Acts 14:1-6](#) *The Greater Iconium Crusade.* Going next to Iconium, in Galatia, Paul again spoke in the synagogue, and many responded, both Jews and Greeks. Once again the unbelieving Jews opposed him, and he and Barnabas had to flee.

- » **See also:** [Illustration: Outreach of the Apostles](#)

[Acts 14:7-18](#) *"Honest! I'm Paul, not Hermes."* At Lystra, also in Galatia, Paul healed a crippled man, causing the people to worship him and Barnabas as the gods Zeus and Hermes ([Acts 14:8-13](#)). They tried to point the awestruck crowd to the one true God, but found it difficult to do so ([Acts 14:14-18](#)).

The eagerness of even the priest of Jupiter to worship Paul and Barnabas may be explained by the Roman poet Ovid's report of an ancient myth: When Zeus and Hermes visited this area disguised as

mortals, everyone turned them away except one old couple, resulting in a flood that drowned everyone except this couple. The crowd's worship may have been an effort to avoid a repetition of that event.

[Acts 14:19-20](#) *Stoned and left for dead, or so they think.* Thanks to some troublemaking Jews, the same crowd that had tried to worship Paul now tried to kill him, but Paul survived and went back into Lystra to preach, then went to Derbe.

[Acts 14:21-28](#) *Discipling the new churches.* Paul and Barnabas then retraced their steps, discipling and encouraging the new converts in each city, and appointing elders ([Acts 14:21-25](#)). Then, after two years on the road, they returned to their home church in Antioch and reported their great success among the Gentiles. Paul probably wrote his letter to the Galatians, his earliest known letter, at this time.

[Acts 15:1-12](#) *Saved by grace or by circumcision?* Some Christians came from Judea to Antioch and taught that circumcision was necessary for salvation. Paul and Barnabas opposed this heresy and were sent by the church to Jerusalem to settle the matter with church leaders there ([Acts 15:1-5](#)).

At Jerusalem, Peter reminded the assembled leaders that he had personally led Gentiles to Christ (see [Acts 10:24-48](#)) totally apart from the law. His conclusion: Why burden them with the yoke of a law that no Jew had ever kept? Why not acknowledge that Gentile Christians, just like Jewish Christians, are saved by grace alone ([Acts 15:6-11](#))? Paul and Barnabas then told of the many Gentiles God had saved during their missionary trip.

» **See also:** [Illustration: Outreach of the Apostles](#)

[Acts 15:13-21](#) *James declares the decision.* After a time of silence, James spoke up. He reminded the council of Peter's report of Gentile faith and that Amos the prophet had predicted God would save the Gentiles by grace (see [Amos 9:11-12](#)). He then announced the decision, which apparently had been reached by consensus: Circumcision would not be forced upon saved Gentiles, but they should be encouraged to refrain from unclean food and from sexual immorality.

The decision was announced not by Peter but by James, pastor of the Jerusalem church. Nowhere in early church history is Peter seen exercising official authority over the other apostles.

The decision (directed by the Holy Spirit—[Acts 15:28](#)) showed great wisdom in that it avoided unduly offending unsaved Jews (see [1 Cor. 10:32-33](#)).

[Acts 15:22-35](#) *A special letter to all the churches.* The leaders wrote a letter to Gentile churches announcing their decision ([Acts 15:22-29](#)). Judas and Silas took the letter to Antioch, where Silas remained, ministering with Paul and Barnabas.

[Acts 15:36-41](#) *They disagree, divide, and double!* As they prepared for a second missionary journey, Barnabas wanted to include Mark, but Paul, remembering Mark's defection, refused, so the team split. Paul chose Silas and began ministering to nearby churches, while Barnabas took Mark and left for Cyprus. Happily, Paul was later reconciled to both Barnabas (see [1 Cor. 9:6](#)) and John Mark (see [Col. 4:10](#); [2 Tim. 4:11](#); [Philemon 1:24](#)). This is the last mention of Barnabas in Acts.

[Acts 16:1-5](#) *Timothy joins the team.* At Lystra, a young man named Timothy, whose mother and grandmother were godly Jewish women (see [2 Tim. 1:5](#)) but whose father was a non-believing Greek,

joined Paul and Silas as they continued delivering the letter from the Jerusalem Council to churches in the area.

» **See also:** [Illustration: Outreach of the Apostles](#)

[Acts 16:6-10](#) *Two noes, then a go.* Twice the Holy Spirit forbade Paul to preach in certain areas. Finally, in a vision at Troas, God led the team westward toward Macedonia. "We" ([Acts 16:10](#)) indicates that Luke had now joined Paul, Silas, and Timothy.

» **See also:** [Map: Paul's Second Missionary Trip](#)

[Acts 16:11-15](#) *The first European Christian.* The team sailed to Philippi in Macedonia, where they attended a prayer meeting beside a river. A businesswoman named Lydia, along with her entire household, was saved and baptized.

[Acts 16:16-24](#) *When she is freed, they are bound.* Paul freed a demon-possessed girl but incurred the wrath of her masters, who had grown rich from her fortune-telling. They instigated the arrest, beating, and imprisonment of the missionaries.

[Acts 16:25-34](#) *Songs in the prison, the gospel in a nutshell.* In the inner dungeon with their backs bleeding, Paul and Silas sang praises to God, and God sent a violent earthquake that opened all the prison doors and loosened the prisoners' chains ([Acts 16:25-29](#)). Fearing that his prisoners had escaped, the jailer drew his sword to kill himself, but Paul assured him they were all still there. Paul explained the gospel to the jailer, and he and his entire household believed in Christ and were baptized ([Acts 16:30-34](#)). The prisoners' singing recalls Christ's singing on the eve of his crucifixion (see [Matthew 26:30](#)).

[Acts 16:35-40](#) *"We demand an apology."* Learning that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens and should not have been beaten, the frightened Philippian officials apologized and begged them to leave town.

[Acts 17:1-9](#) *A three-week revival brings trouble.* In Thessalonica, Paul led both Jews and Greeks to Christ ([Acts 17:1-4](#)). As usual, however, some Jews stirred up trouble, accusing the apostles of turning "the world upside down" and defying Roman law.

» **See also:** [Illustration: Outreach of the Apostles](#)

[Acts 17:10-15](#) *Berean Bible students.* Paul and Silas left Thessalonica by night for Berea, where they found the people more interested in the Scriptures than those in Thessalonica. Once again Paul's stay was cut short because of trouble with the Jews. Leaving Berea, he headed for Athens.

[Acts 17:16-21](#) *The preacher and the philosophers.* After a lively encounter with Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in Athens, Paul was invited to discuss Jesus and his resurrection at their public forum, called the Areopagus or "Mars' hill" ([Acts 17:22](#), KJV). The followers of Epicurus (341-270 B.C.) believed that while God existed, he had no interest in humankind, and the main purpose of life was pleasure. The Stoics believed God was the world's soul, and life's goal was to rise above all things, showing no emotional response to either pain or pleasure. Both groups took a dim view of Paul's

theology, calling him a "babblers" (Greek *spermologos*, [Acts 17:18](#), which described birds making their nests).

[Acts 17:22-34](#) *Paul's message from Mars Hill.* Paul began his address to the philosophers by mentioning all the altars he had seen in Athens, each bearing the name of a different false deity. Recalling one altar dedicated "To an Unknown God," he presented to them the true God, Creator and Controller of all things, final Judge of all humanity, and Redeemer of all who would repent ([Acts 17:22-31](#)). When Paul climaxed his sermon by telling of Christ's resurrection, some of his hearers believed, others mocked, and some weren't persuaded but still had an open mind ([Acts 17:32-34](#)).

[Acts 18:1-6](#) *The testimony of the tentmakers.* Going next to Corinth, Paul was delighted to meet two wonderful believers, a Jewish man named Aquila and his wife, Priscilla, who were, like Paul, tentmakers by trade. He worked with them while evangelizing regularly in the synagogue. After opposition from the Jews, he again turned to the Gentiles ([Acts 18:6](#); compare [Acts 13:46](#)).

Aquila and Priscilla are mentioned six times in the NT. Having come to Corinth from Rome ([Acts 18:2](#)), they later accompanied Paul to Ephesus ([Acts 18:18-19](#)), where they discipled Apollos ([Acts 18:24-28](#)) and hosted a church in their home (see [1 Cor. 16:19](#)). Still later they apparently returned to Rome (see [Romans 16:3-5](#)). Catacomb inscriptions hint that Priscilla was from a distinguished Roman family.

At this time Paul probably wrote his first letter to the Thessalonians, whom he had just visited ([Acts 17:1-9](#)). He wrote his second letter to them about three months later.

» **See also:** [Illustration: Outreach of the Apostles](#)

[Acts 18:7-17](#) *Great fishing in Corinth.* From his new headquarters in a Gentile home next door to the synagogue, Paul continued preaching. Crispus, leader of the synagogue, and his entire household were converted and baptized, along with many others ([Acts 18:7-8](#)). Having received special reassurance in a vision, Paul remained in Corinth for a year and six months ([Acts 18:9-11](#)). During that time Sosthenes, a new leader of the synagogue, tried to have Paul beaten and imprisoned, but was himself beaten by an angry Gentile mob after the governor refused to hear the case.

[Acts 18:18-22](#) *A quick trip to Jerusalem.* Accompanied by Aquila and Priscilla, Paul left Corinth for Jerusalem. He had apparently taken a Nazirite vow ([Acts 18:18](#)) and needed to visit the Temple to complete it ([Acts 18:21](#); see [Numbers 6:1-21](#)). He left his tentmaker friends in Ephesus, promising to return and minister with them if God so willed. From Jerusalem Paul returned to Antioch.

[Acts 18:23](#) *On the road again, for the third time.* After a brief report to his home church, Paul embarked on his third missionary journey, which would take him back to Ephesus ([Acts 19:1](#)).

» **See also:** [Map: Paul's Third Missionary Trip](#)

[Acts 18:24-28](#) *The rest of the story.* In Ephesus, Aquila and Priscilla met a powerful Bible teacher named Apollos, whose knowledge of the gospel was limited to the message of John the Baptist. This godly couple explained to Apollos "the way of God more accurately" ([Acts 18:26](#)), whereupon he went to Achaia and boldly proclaimed Christ.

[Acts 19:1-10](#) *Paul's two-year Bible school.* Having passed through Galatia and Phrygia (see [Acts 18:23](#); [Acts 19:1](#)), Paul arrived back at Ephesus, where he led some disciples of John the Baptist to a fuller understanding of the gospel, just as Aquila and Priscilla had done for Apollos. Paul then spent two years teaching in a private school, reaching many from all over that area.

» **See also:** [Illustration: Outreach of the Apostles](#)

[Acts 19:11-20](#) *The sick get better; some books get burned.* God gave Paul great power to heal people and cast out demons, but when some local exorcists tried to imitate Paul, a demon-possessed man attacked them! News of this event brought about a revival, with many converts burning their occult books.

[Acts 19:21-22](#) *He resolves to see Rome.* As Paul's time in Ephesus drew to a close, he spoke of his hope to someday minister in Rome—a hope that would be fulfilled, though not in the way he might have hoped (see [Acts 27-28](#)). Paul probably wrote his first letter to Corinth at about this time, three years after his ministry there (see [Acts 18:1-17](#)).

[Acts 19:23-41](#) *Demetrius, Diana, and discord.* Paul faced one more crisis before ending his lengthy stay at Ephesus. Demetrius, a craftsman who sold silver shrines of the Greek goddess Diana, instigated his fellow shrine merchants to lead a riot against Paul, charging that his preaching had hurt their sale of shrines ([Acts 19:23-28](#)). An angry and confused crowd soon filled the amphitheater and held a two-hour-long "Diana rally" ([Acts 19:29-34](#)). Only when an official warned them that their rioting might bring about Roman punishment did cooler heads prevail.

The temple of Diana was one of the seven wonders of the ancient world ([Acts 19:27](#)). The image in the temple was of a woman with many breasts, signifying nature's fertility. The original stone from which the image had been carved was believed to have fallen from heaven ([Acts 19:35](#)), leading some historians to believe it may have been a meteorite.

[Acts 20:1-6](#) *From Ephesus to Troas.* Immediately following the uproar over Diana, Paul sailed to Greece, where he spent three months strengthening the believers and collecting an offering for the poor in Jerusalem (see [Acts 11:27-30](#); [Acts 24:17](#); [Romans 15:25-26](#); [1 Cor. 16:1-4](#); [2 Cor. 8-9](#); [Galatians 2:8](#)). When he was ready to return home to Syria, a plot by the Jews caused him to change his plans and go through Macedonia. Several men joined Paul, including Luke ("us," [Acts 20:5](#)), who with Paul soon joined the others at Troas—back on the Asian side of the Aegean.

Paul probably wrote 2 Corinthians, followed by Romans, at about this time.

» **See also:** [Illustration: Outreach of the Apostles](#)

[Acts 20:7-12](#) *He sits on a wall and has a great fall.* While Paul was preaching in Troas, a young man named Eutychus fell asleep on a windowsill and fell to his death. To everyone's amazement and joy, Paul raised him from the dead. Besides the resurrection of Christ and of those raised following his crucifixion (see [Matthew 27:53](#)), the raising of Eutychus is the last of eight resurrections in the Bible:

- widow's son raised by Elijah (see [1 Kings 17:22](#))
- Shunammite's son raised by Elisha (see [2 Kings 4:35](#))
- man raised by Elisha (see [2 Kings 13:21](#))

- widow's son raised by Jesus (see [Luke 7:14-15](#))
- Jairus's daughter raised by Jesus (see [Luke 8:54-55](#))
- Lazarus raised by Jesus (see [John 11:44](#))
- Dorcas raised by Peter (see [Acts 9:40](#))
- Eutychus raised by Paul ([Acts 20:12](#))

[Acts 20:13-38](#) *Passing the torch of testimony.* Having decided against a stopover at Ephesus so that he could get to Jerusalem for Pentecost, Paul sent for the Ephesian elders from Miletus ([Acts 20:13-17](#)). Paul reviewed his ministry among them ([Acts 20:18-21](#), [26-27](#), [32-35](#)), challenged them to feed and lead God's flock ([Acts 20:28](#)), warned concerning false teachers that would arise among them ([Acts 20:29-31](#)), and spoke of the dangers he sensed awaiting him in Jerusalem ([Acts 20:22-25](#)). Paul and the elders then prayed together and bid each other an emotional farewell.

Paul had spoken of God's grace both "publicly [and] in [their] homes" ([Acts 20:20](#)). The world's greatest theologian was also a great soul winner. Christ's teaching about the blessedness of giving, which Paul quotes ([Acts 20:35](#)), is not found in any of the Gospels (see [John 21:25](#)). Christ's life, of course, perfectly exemplified such giving (see [2 Cor. 8:9](#); [Ephes. 5:2](#); [Phil. 2:5-8](#)).

[Acts 21:1-14](#) *Warnings fall on Paul's deaf ears.* Paul and his companions sailed from Miletus to Tyre, where some Spirit-anointed believers tried to warn him not to go to Jerusalem; he ignored their warnings and continued his journey ([Acts 21:1-6](#)). At Caesarea they stayed with Philip (see [Acts 6:5](#)) and his four unmarried daughters, all of whom were prophetesses (see *Prophetesses*). While in Caesarea, Paul was again warned against going to Jerusalem, this time by Agabus ([Acts 21:10](#); see [Acts 11:28](#)). Still, he was determined to go, despite the danger.

» **See also:** [Illustration: Outreach of the Apostles](#)

[Acts 21:15-30](#) *Back in Jerusalem, a failed attempt to appease.* In the year A.D. 57, Paul and his companions, along with some disciples from Caesarea, arrived in Jerusalem and met with James and the other elders to report on their work among the Gentiles ([Acts 21:15-19](#)). The elders told Paul that some Jewish Christians were accusing him of trying to turn Jewish Christians in other nations away from the law. They suggested that, to dispel those rumors, Paul should take a special vow and visit the Temple, and Paul did so ([Acts 21:19-26](#)). Rather than appeasing the Jews, however, Paul's gesture only added fuel to the fire as he was falsely accused of bringing Gentiles into the Temple. A mob seized him and removed him from the Temple ([Acts 21:27-30](#)).

[Acts 21:31-40](#) *Rescued by a Roman.* The mob was about to kill Paul when he was rescued by Claudius Lysias, commander of the Roman garrison ([Acts 23:26](#)). Learning more about Paul in a private meeting, Lysias allowed him to address his tormentors.

[Acts 22:1-21](#) *"This is my story."* Defending himself before the angry crowd, Paul reviewed his background and Jewish theological training ([Acts 22:3](#)), his earlier persecution of Christians ([Acts 22:4-5](#)), his conversion to Christ ([Acts 22:6-20](#)), and his call to evangelize the Gentiles ([Acts 22:21](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Outreach of the Apostles](#)

Acts 22:22-29 *"Do what you want, but I'm a citizen."* When Paul mentioned the Gentiles, the crowd became unruly again, and Lysias had Paul bound and whipped. When Paul revealed that he was a Roman citizen, Lysias became fearful, for he had almost broken Roman law by scourging a citizen (compare exposition on [§Acts 16:35-40](#)).

Acts 22:30-23:10 *Another confrontation, another confinement.* Unclear about the exact charges the Jews had brought against Paul, Lysias arranged another confrontation between Paul and his accusers ([Acts 22:30](#)). When Paul spoke, Ananias the high priest ordered his assistants to slap him. Paul called Ananias a disparaging term, not knowing he was the high priest. Upon learning of his identity, Paul apologized ([Acts 23:1-5](#)). Paul successfully divided the assembled leaders on the issue of resurrection, but the resulting uproar was so serious that Lysias once again took Paul into custody—for his own protection ([Acts 23:6-10](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Outreach of the Apostles](#)

Acts 23:11 *"Yes, Paul, you'll go to Rome."* As Paul sat in prison that night, Jesus appeared and reassured him that this trouble would result in his taking the gospel to Rome—which Paul had longed to do (see [Acts 19:21](#); [Romans 1:13](#)). (Until this divine reassurance, he probably had just been hoping to get out of Jerusalem alive—see [Romans 15:31-32](#).)

Acts 23:12-22 *40 frustrated (and hungry!) men.* More than 40 Jewish men conspired against Paul and took a vow to neither eat nor drink till they had killed him ([Acts 23:12-15](#)). Paul's nephew learned of the plot and, at Paul's instruction, reported it to Lysias. There is no record as to when those 40 men ate again!

Acts 23:23-35 *The midnight ride of the revered Paul.* Lysias sent Paul that very night to Caesarea, center of Roman government, protected by a small army. He sent with him a letter to Felix, Roman governor of Judea, explaining the charges against Paul.

Acts 24:1-9 *Charges by the prosecution.* The Jewish religious leaders, along with a lawyer named Tertullus, came to Caesarea to press charges against Paul. After flattering Felix ([Acts 24:2-3](#)), Tertullus falsely accused Paul of inciting riots against both the Jewish religion and the Roman government, and of profaning the Temple by bringing in a Gentile. He described Paul as a leader of the "Nazarenes," a term used only here of believers in Jesus of Nazareth.

» **See also:** [Illustration: Outreach of the Apostles](#)

Acts 24:10-21 *Answers by the defendant.* Paul pleaded innocent to the riot charges ([Acts 24:10-13](#)), proclaimed his loyalty to his Jewish heritage ([Acts 24:14-17](#)), and pointed out that his original accusers hadn't even bothered to press charges ([Acts 24:18-19](#)). He freely admitted, however, that he was a believer in Jesus and his resurrection ([Acts 24:14-15](#)), which, said Paul, was the real reason for the trial ([Acts 24:20-21](#)).

Acts 24:22-27 *A more convenient season?* Realizing there was no evidence against Paul, Felix put him under house arrest until Lysias arrived, instructing the guards to treat him gently ([Acts 24:22-23](#)). In the following days, Felix was deeply affected by Paul's preaching but refused to respond ([Acts 24:24-25](#)). Two years later, when Festus replaced Felix as governor, Paul was still being detained.

[Acts 25:1-12](#) *"Let Nero decide my case."* When Festus visited Jerusalem, the Jews tried to persuade him to bring Paul there, secretly planning to kill him en route ([Acts 25:1-3](#)). Festus refused but invited them to return with him to Caesarea, where they again brought their false charges against Paul, all of which he refuted ([Acts 25:4-8](#)). Wanting to curry favor with his Jewish subjects, Festus invited Paul to go to Jerusalem to stand trial. Paul wisely refused. Having spent two years in prison without ever being convicted, he demanded his right as a Roman citizen and appealed to Caesar, and Festus granted his appeal.

The Caesar to whom Paul appealed was Nero, who had begun his reign about five years previously in A.D. 54. Nero's early reign was peaceful and gave no hint of the cruelties to follow.

» **See also:** [Illustration: Outreach of the Apostles](#)

[Acts 25:13-27](#) *"I'd like to meet this man!"* When Herod Agrippa II and his sister Bernice (who reportedly was also his mistress) paid a visit to Festus, he told Agrippa about Paul's case ([Acts 25:13-21](#)), and Agrippa expressed a desire to hear from this famous prisoner ([Acts 25:22](#)). Festus eagerly brought Paul before the king, hoping that Agrippa could help him decide what to tell Nero concerning the charges against Paul ([Acts 25:23-27](#)).

Herod Agrippa II, son of the Agrippa who died for blasphemy ([Acts 12:20-24](#)), was the last of the Herodian dynasty. He sided with Rome when it destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

[Acts 26:1-23](#) *"Here's the whole story, King Agrippa."* Defending himself before Agrippa, Paul spoke of his loyalty to the law of Moses, asserting that his accusers knew of this though they wouldn't admit it ([Acts 26:1-5](#)). He then went right to the heart of the matter: The Jews were opposing him because of his belief in Christ ([Acts 26:6-8](#)). And indeed he himself had violently opposed Christ ([Acts 26:9-11](#)) until Christ appeared to him, calling him to faith and commissioning him to preach the gospel ([Acts 26:12-18](#)).

Paul then summarized his ministry among Jews and Gentiles, saying it was for this ministry, not for the many false charges, that he was on trial ([Acts 26:19-21](#)). Again he proclaimed that Christ, in fulfillment of the OT, had brought hope of eternal life to both Jews and Gentiles ([Acts 26:22-23](#); see [Acts 26:7-8](#)). Paul knew that Agrippa was well versed in Jewish customs and Scriptures ([Acts 26:3, 26](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Outreach of the Apostles](#)

[Acts 26:24-32](#) *Almost persuaded?* Festus interrupted Paul's discourse, calling him insane. Paul denied that charge and called on Agrippa to vouch for his interpretation of Scripture ([Acts 26:24-27](#)). Agrippa replied that he was almost "persuaded" (KJV) by Paul's presentation but then proceeded to dismiss the case, noting that he would gladly have set Paul free, had he not appealed to Caesar. In Greek, [Acts 26:28](#) reads, "In short, you are trying to persuade me to be a Christian," suggesting that Agrippa considered Paul presumptuous to think he could so easily convert him.

[Acts 27:1-12](#) *Smooth sailing at first.* In the year 59, Paul was at last headed for Rome, albeit as a prisoner. The voyage was smooth at first ([Acts 27:1-6](#)), but then they encountered several days of rough sailing before arriving safely at the port of Fair Havens ([Acts 27:7-8](#)). Ignoring Paul's warning about the dangers of continuing the voyage at that time of year, they prepared to sail to Crete ([Acts](#)

[27:9-12](#)). Though not recorded in Scripture, Paul had apparently been in three previous shipwrecks (see [2 Cor. 11:25](#)).

» **See also:** [Illustration: Outreach of the Apostles](#)

[Acts 27:13-20](#) *But then the storm.* Soon after leaving Crete, Paul's ship was struck by hurricane-force winds. The crew tried everything to stay afloat, but the storm raged many days till all hope was gone.

[Acts 27:21-44](#) *"Don't worry, we'll all survive!"* After several days of storm, Paul told the crew God had reassured him that, because he wanted to get Paul safely to Rome, everyone on the ship would survive the storm, even though they would run aground on an island ([Acts 27:21-26](#)). And that is exactly what happened ([Acts 27:27-44](#)). Meanwhile, Paul's faith encouraged the others as they prepared for shipwreck ([Acts 27:33-37](#)).

People to remember from Acts

- [Apollos](#)
- [Aquila and Priscilla](#)
- [Barnabas](#)
- [Cornelius](#)
- [Felix](#)
- [Festus](#)
- [James \(Half Brother of Christ\)](#)
- [Paul](#)
- [Philip \(The Evangelist\)](#)
- [Silas \(Silvanus\)](#)
- [Stephen](#)

APOLLOS

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM ACTS)

Key Facts: Gifted evangelist, disciplined by Aquila and Priscilla

Total Bible References: 10

Key References: [Acts 18:24-19:1](#); [1 Cor. 3:6](#)

Apollos Speaks

I saw them as they entered the synagogue and quietly sat down, this Jewish man and his Gentile wife. They were an interesting couple. Were they seekers? Scoffers? Whatever the case, I hoped my sermon

would help instruct them concerning the great truths of the faith. Little did I dream, however, that it would be just the opposite. Thank God for Aquila and Priscilla!

"Apollos," they said, "we want to fill you in regarding events following John the Baptist's ministry." ([Acts 18:24-26](#))

I sat there spellbound, hearing the details of Messiah's death, resurrection, and ascension, and the miracle at Pentecost. What doors of service all this would open, preparing the way for a visit to Greece, where God anointed my preaching to strengthen the body of Christ there, especially in the church at Corinth. ([Acts 18:27-19:1](#))

I have now been able to minister full circle, from Alexandria in the south, to Ephesus in the north, and Greece in the west. Who else but Paul himself could boast of this? However, I dare not forget how the great apostle put his and my ministries into their proper perspective: "My job was to plant the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God, not we, who made it grow." ([1 Cor. 3:6](#))

Spiritual Lessons from Apollos

- The person who would teach others must first be willing to be taught, as was Apollos ([Acts 18:24-26](#)).
- The gift of teaching is not limited to professional pastors or others with theological education. Aquila and Priscilla were tentmakers ([Acts 18:2-3, 26](#)). We should learn from whomever we can.

Key Verses

"When Priscilla and Aquila heard [Apollos] preaching boldly in the synagogue, they took him aside and explained the way of God more accurately. Apollos had been thinking about going to Achaia, and the brothers and sisters in Ephesus encouraged him in this. They wrote to the believers in Achaia, asking them to welcome him. When he arrived there, he proved to be of great benefit to those who, by God's grace, had believed. He refuted all the Jews with powerful arguments in public debate. Using the Scriptures, he explained to them, 'The Messiah you are looking for is Jesus' " ([Acts 18:26-28](#)).

QUILA AND PRISCILLA

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM ACTS)

Key Fact: Fellow tentmakers who worked with, assisted, and encouraged Paul ([Acts 18:1-3](#))

Total Bible References: 6

Key References: [Acts 18:1-3, 24-26](#); [1 Cor. 16:19](#)

Aquila and Priscilla Speak

We just heard the news. Paul has been martyred in Rome by Nero. How tender to learn that we were in his thoughts right up to the very end. ([2 Tim. 4:6-7, 19](#))

What glorious memories Paul's very name evokes. Had it not been for our expulsion from Rome, we would probably never even have met the great apostle. Wonderful ways of God, bringing together three believers who shared the same trade and the same desire for ministry! ([Acts 18:1-3](#))

But the miracle continued, for we sailed with him from Corinth to Ephesus just in time to meet Apollos, whom we were able to help to a better understanding of the faith. How gratifying it has been to hear of his effective ministry in the years since then. ([Acts 18:18, 24-25](#))

For our part, we'll just go on making tents, always available when God chooses to use us again.

Spiritual Lessons from Aquila and Priscilla

- This dedicated couple, tentmakers by trade ([Acts 18:2-3](#)), was greatly used by God to minister to both Apollos ([Acts 18:24-28](#)) and Paul ([Romans 16:3-4](#); [2 Tim. 4:19](#)). In fact, they converted their house into a church ([1 Cor. 16:19](#)). Never downplay or underestimate your lot in life.

Key Verse

"When Priscilla and Aquila heard [Apollos] preaching boldly in the synagogue, they took him aside and explained the way of God more accurately" ([Acts 18:26](#)).

BARNABAS

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM ACTS)

Key Fact: Paul's trusted missionary colleague

Total Bible References: 30

Key References: [Acts 4:36](#); [Acts 9:26-27](#); [Acts 11-15](#); [Galatians 2:11-14](#)

Barnabas Speaks

The church continues to grow here in Antioch just as it did at the beginning. How wonderful it was back then to see all that spiritual excitement, especially among the new converts. What a privilege to help in the spiritual growth of the church. Then there was that hurried northern trip to select a man as my assistant in the church, one Saul of Tarsus. ([Acts 11:21-25](#))

"Christians"—"Christ Ones." That's what the unbelievers nicknamed us back then. What a wonderful time of prayer and worship we had with the other prophets and teachers in Antioch. Of course, it was during one of those glorious sessions that God's Spirit called both Saul and me to the mission field. The next two years would forever change my life, giving me a worldwide view of the need to proclaim the Good News. ([Acts 11:26](#); [Acts 13-14](#))

I still wonder who was right concerning our disagreement. Whatever the case, God used that unpleasant event to double his missionary personnel! ([Acts 15:36-40](#))

Paul is often in my thoughts. He's now a prisoner in Rome. How thankful I am John Mark is there ministering to him. ([Acts 28:16, 30](#); [Col. 4:10](#))

God's commission to us on the eve of our first missionary journey still burns in my heart after all these years: "I have made you a light to the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the farthest corners of the earth." Until my dying day I intend to do just that. ([Acts 13:47](#))

Spiritual Lessons from Barnabas

- There's one in every crowd! Barnabas was known and loved in the Jerusalem church as "Son of Encouragement" ([Acts 4:36](#)). He used to the full his spiritual gift of encouraging others ([Romans 12:6-8](#); [2 Tim. 1:6](#)).
- Sometimes the greatest blessing one believer can give another is to give him or her the benefit of the doubt. Barnabas did this for both Paul ([Acts 9:26-27](#)) and John Mark ([Acts 15:36-39](#)).
- Faithfulness, like charity, begins at home. After Barnabas had proven himself in his home church (Jerusalem, [4:36-37](#)), God used him in many churches (see [Acts 11:22-26](#); [Acts 13:5-6, 14](#); [Acts 14:1, 6](#)).
- Even our greatest spiritual strengths can fail when our guard is down. Usually a spokesman for the church's fledgling mission to the Gentiles ([Acts 15:12](#)), on at least one occasion Barnabas was affected by anti-Gentile sentiment ([Galatians 2:11-13](#)).
"When the danger least thou fearest, then the tempter's snare is nearest."

Key Verses

"When [Barnabas] arrived and saw this proof of God's favor, he was filled with joy, and he encouraged the believers to stay true to the Lord. Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and strong in faith. And large numbers of people were brought to the Lord" ([Acts 11:23-24](#)).

CORNELIUS

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM ACTS)

Key Fact: Roman military officer led to Christ by Peter

Total Bible References: 10

Key Reference: [Acts 10:1-48](#)

Cornelius Speaks

The dispatch from Rome arrived this morning: Due to my age, I am being retired immediately from military duty. While at first I felt some regret at the news, my overall feeling is great relief. For years I have served Caesar with pride, zeal, and devotion. But now I am free to serve my beloved Savior with that same faithfulness.

How often have I thanked God for Simon Peter. Had it not been for him, this old soldier would probably have degenerated into a callous and corrupt ex-military man, like so many of my army associates. How strange are God's ways. I feared him and gave liberally to his cause without even knowing him. And then that heavenly messenger appeared! "Send some men down to Joppa to find a man named Simon Peter," he said. Amazing! I'm probably one of the very few Gentiles to have ever seen an angel. ([Acts 10:1-6](#))

To say I was impressed with Peter would be an understatement. I tried to worship the man! What a blunder! But then Peter related how God had had to straighten out some things in *his* life, which made me feel better. ([Acts 10:25, 28](#))

Peter then told me and my family and friends all about the wonderful ministry of Christ, his death, and his resurrection. ([Acts 10:34-43](#))

At that instant God's Spirit fell upon us in an unforgettable experience of his presence. Peter baptized us, and then he was gone. ([Acts 10:44-48](#))

Well, all that was decades ago. But Peter's message has long since become my rally cry to all I meet: "He is the one all the prophets testified about, saying that everyone who believes in him will have their sins forgiven through his name." ([Acts 10:43](#))

Now that I'm retired, I can share that Good News full-time!

Spiritual Lessons from Cornelius

- God directs the steps of unbelievers who are sincerely seeking him ([Acts 10:1-8](#); see [John 6:44](#); [Acts 16:7-11](#)).
- Sometimes, however, God has to prepare the hearts of human soul winners to reach out to those who are seeking ([Acts 10:9-22](#)).

Key Verses

"One afternoon about three o'clock, he had a vision in which he saw an angel of God coming toward him. 'Cornelius!' the angel said. Cornelius stared at him in terror. 'What is it, sir?' he asked the angel. And the angel replied, 'Your prayers and gifts to the poor have not gone unnoticed by God! Now send some men down to Joppa to find a man named Simon Peter. He is staying with Simon, a leatherworker who lives near the shore. Ask him to come and visit you' " ([Acts 10:3-6](#)).

FELIX

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM ACTS)

Key Facts: Roman governor, heard Jewish leaders' case against Paul

Total Bible References: 8

Key References: [Acts 23:23-24:27](#)

Felix Speaks

Maybe I shouldn't have left Paul in chains. Well, he's Festus's worry now. Frankly, I was hoping to secure some bribe money from him and then let him go. It was so evident during the trial that those Jerusalem Jews and their slick lawyer had absolutely no case whatsoever against Paul. ([Acts 24:1](#), [26-27](#))

Paul's defense was a masterpiece. And his sermon a few days later had a tremendous effect on both me and my wife. I'm ashamed to admit his words about coming judgment so unnerved me that I promptly dismissed him, promising to continue the discussion at a more convenient time. But of course that time never came. ([Acts 24:10-25](#))

Spiritual Lessons from Felix

- Though evidently convicted by Paul's preaching, Felix refused to respond, claiming that he would reconsider at a "more convenient" time ([Acts 24:25](#)). As far as Scripture records, that more convenient time never came. God cannot save a person yesterday, and

by tomorrow the heart now open may be forever closed. The only "convenient" day to accept Christ is today! (See [Luke 12:20](#); [2 Cor. 6:2](#); [Hebrews 3:7-8](#).)

Key Verses

"A few days later Felix came with his wife, Drusilla, who was Jewish. Sending for Paul, they listened as he told them about faith in Christ Jesus. As he reasoned with them about righteousness and self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified. 'Go away for now,' he replied. 'When it is more convenient, I'll call for you again' " ([Acts 24:24-25](#)).

FESTUS

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM ACTS)

Key Facts: Roman governor after Felix, also heard Jewish leaders' case against Paul

Total Bible References: 13

Key References: [Acts 24:27-26:32](#)

Festus Speaks

Paul set sail for Rome today. A fascinating man indeed. Was he really mentally unbalanced as I accused him of being in the heat of the moment? Probably not, but what can you say about someone who claims he saw and heard a dead man speak from out of a bright light! ([Acts 26:13-18](#), [24](#); [Acts 27:1-2](#))

Strange that he was so hated by his own religious peers. The idiots! They thought I could be tricked into helping them kill him. ([Acts 25:1-5](#))

No doubt about it, both Agrippa and Bernice were impressed with Paul. I still wonder, however, just what Agrippa had in mind when he responded to him. Were his words an attempt to ridicule the prisoner? Or was there a hint that Paul's message was getting through to him? ([Acts 25:23](#); [Acts 26:28](#))

Well, whatever, here's one Roman governor who couldn't be taken in by a smooth-talking Jewish evangelist. But a sobering thought remains: If he wasn't insane, what power on earth could have caused him to suffer all those things—and perhaps now the loss of life itself—simply to propagate the memory of an obscure dead man?

Spiritual Lessons from Festus

- Christians may be ridiculed for their faith whether they present it in a scholarly way or in plain, everyday language. Peter and John were obviously uneducated ([Acts 4:13](#)), while Paul was scorned for his great intelligence ([Acts 26:24](#)).

Key Verses

"Suddenly, Festus shouted, 'Paul, you are insane. Too much study has made you crazy!' But Paul replied, 'I am not insane, Most Excellent Festus. I am speaking the sober truth' " ([Acts 26:24-25](#)).

JAMES (HALF BROTHER OF CHRIST)

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM ACTS)

Key Facts: Pastored church at Jerusalem, authored NT book bearing his name

Father: Joseph ([Matthew 13:54-56](#))

Mother: Mary ([Matthew 13:54-56](#))

Brothers: Joseph, Simon, Judas; (half brother) Jesus ([Matthew 13:55](#))

Occupation: Pastor

Total Bible References: 11

Key References: [Acts 1:14](#); [Acts 15:13](#); [Acts 21:18](#); [Matthew 13:55-57](#); [John 7:1-8](#); [1 Cor. 15:7](#);
James

James Speaks

"Old Camel Knees" they call me, because of all the hours I spend kneeling in prayer. But I don't mind, for it's meant to be a compliment. It seems there is so much to talk to God about. Perhaps, though, my praying days are numbered. The high priest issued his final warning. Either I deny Jesus or be thrown from the pinnacle of the Temple into the Kidron Valley and be finished off by stoning!

Of course, I cannot and will not recant. Years ago, growing up in Nazareth, I would probably have been more than willing to denounce my older half brother for his messianic claims. How insane we were back then, my brothers and sisters and I, not realizing that he was totally different from us. To my everlasting shame I allowed our mother to stand alone at the cross, unsupported by any of us. Frankly, I experienced no great sorrow at his death. ([Matthew 13:55-57](#); [John 7:1-8](#); [John 19:25](#))

But, oh, what a difference a day can bring. On that glorious Resurrection Sunday the Crucified One actually appeared to me. ([1 Cor. 15:7](#))

Of course, nothing has been the same since. Thank God that Jude, my youngest brother, has also embraced the faith. We both pray that Joseph, Simon, and our sisters will do the same. ([Jude 1](#))

What a joy—and what a job!—to pastor the great assembly of believers in Jerusalem. I often think of that all-important meeting our church hosted. It was my privilege to announce the decision: The Jewish rite of circumcision would not be forced upon Gentiles who believe. Word has just reached me that Paul has been released from his Roman imprisonment. Praise God! He and Peter were our star witnesses in that council. ([Acts 15:4, 7-12, 19](#); [Philemon 1:22](#))

Hopefully, both Jewish and Gentile readers have been helped by my letter. In this dark hour I am suddenly reminded of a precious promise he directed me to write: "God blesses the people who patiently endure testing. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him." ([James 1:12](#))

Spiritual Lessons from James

- Familiarity often does breed contempt. Even though born of the same mother as Jesus ([Matthew 13:54-56](#)) and raised in the same home, James grew up as a skeptical unbeliever ([John 7:5](#)).
- Though James in his letter (written c. A.D. 45) taught against all kinds of prejudice ([James 2:9](#)), some years later he himself showed such prejudice ([Galatians 2:11-14](#)). We should practice what we preach ([Romans 2:21-22](#)).

Key Verse

"Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles" ([1 Cor. 15:7](#)).

PAUL

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM ACTS)

Key Facts: Apostle, authored 13 of the 27 NT books, may have authored Hebrews

Father: Unnamed ([Acts 23:6](#))

Sister: Unnamed ([Acts 23:16](#))

Occupation: Tentmaker, apostle ([Acts 18:1-3](#); [Ephes. 3:6-8](#))

Key Events in His Life:

- Educated as a Pharisee (see [Acts 22:3](#))
- Persecutes Christians ([Acts 7:58](#); [Acts 8:1-3](#))
- Converted ([Acts 9:1-31](#))
- In Damascus and Arabia ([Galatians 1:17](#))
- In Jerusalem with Barnabas ([Acts 9:26-27](#); [Galatians 1:18](#))
- Works at Antioch with Barnabas ([Acts 11:25-26](#))
- On first journey, stoned at Lystra ([Acts 14:8-19](#))
- Jerusalem Council ([Acts 15](#); [Galatians 2:1](#))
- On second journey, joined by Timothy ([Acts 16:1-3](#))
- Macedonian call ([Acts 16:9](#))
- With philosophers in Athens ([Acts 17:16-33](#))
- On third journey, two-plus years in Ephesus ([Acts 19](#))
- Farewell to Ephesian elders ([Acts 20:17-35](#))
- Arrested in Jerusalem ([Acts 21:27](#))
- Taken into Roman custody ([Acts 22:24](#))
- Appeals to Caesar ([Acts 25:10](#))
- Survives shipwreck; arrives in Rome ([Acts 27-28](#))
- Under house arrest; ministers in Rome ([Acts 28:30-31](#))
- Released after two years (?) (see [Philemon 1:22](#))
- Imprisoned again (?) (see [2 Tim. 1:8](#))
- Senses that death is near ([2 Tim. 4:6-8](#))

Total Bible References: 180

Key References: [Acts 8-28](#); Romans-Philemon

Paul Speaks

"An old man!" That's how I described myself to Philemon. And that was 10 years ago! I'd have to think back another 20 years to arrive at the time God called me. He said that I would be a "chosen instrument" to take his name to "the Gentiles and to kings, as well as to the people of Israel" and that I would suffer greatly for his name's sake. ([Acts 9:10-16](#); [Philemon 1:9](#))

How precise that prophecy has proven to be! I've often meditated on each part of it: Of course the main thrust of my missionary work has been "to the Gentiles." I have proclaimed him to Greeks and Romans and Asians; to business people and soldiers; to idolaters and philosophers. ([Acts 14:8-19](#); [Acts 16:11-15](#); [Acts 17:16-34](#); [Romans 11:13](#); [Phil. 1:12-14](#))

"And to kings!" There I was, in chains, preaching Christ at Caesarea before Felix, Festus, and King Agrippa himself! ([Acts 24-26](#))

"As well as to the people of Israel!" Oh, how my heart has ached for Israel! Of course, I did have the opportunity to proclaim the Messiah before my people at Antioch, Jerusalem, and Rome, and many other places besides. ([Acts 13:14-15](#), [38-39](#); [Acts 22](#); [Acts 28:16-18](#), [30-31](#); [Romans 9:1-3](#); [Romans 10:1](#))

Then what he said about suffering: No doubt about it, this old body bears ugly scars from numerous battles and beatings. But as I once reminded some Roman believers, what we suffer down here is not worthy to compare with the glory awaiting us up there. ([Romans 8:18](#); [2 Cor. 11:24-28](#); [Galatians 6:17](#))

Hopefully both Timothy and Mark will be able to arrive before they come to get me. How much these two have meant to me. Timothy I consider my spiritual son, and Mark proved to be such a help during my previous imprisonment. God has certainly turned him around since our first trip. ([Acts 15:36-40](#); [Col. 4:10](#); [2 Tim. 1:2](#); [2 Tim. 4:6](#), [9](#), [11](#); [Philemon 1:24](#))

I know he will be heartbroken, however, to learn that Demas has forsaken me, as have many others. But that faithful one who first confronted me outside Damascus so many years ago has never for a single moment forsaken me. I think of that dark night in Jerusalem when he reassured me. Later, as I stood on a sinking ship in the midst of a frightful storm, he again came to me. And now, during the most trying time of my life, he continues to stand by me. ([Acts 9:1-6](#); [Acts 23:11](#); [Acts 27:23-24](#); [2 Tim. 4:10](#), [16-17](#))

I have fought the good fight; I have finished the race; I have kept the faith. This is my final testimony. And my final expectation? I know that the Lord has reserved for me a crown of righteousness. So do your worst, Nero! You cannot kill that which cannot be killed. Your cruel sword will simply validate my passport into the portals of eternal glory. ([2 Tim. 4:7-8](#))

Spiritual Lessons from Paul

- "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—and I was the worst of them all" ([1 Tim. 1:15](#)). Do you feel that you have sinned too much to be saved? According to the world's worst sinner, this is impossible. Prior to his conversion, Paul relentlessly persecuted Christians ([Acts 7:58](#); [Acts 8:1-3](#); [Acts 9:1-18](#); [Acts 22:5](#), [19](#); [Acts 26:10-11](#); [Galatians 1:13](#)), yet God's grace was sufficient to save him.
- To mistreat another Christian is to mistreat Christ himself. Christ identifies with his disciples ([Acts 9:4](#); see [Matthew 25:31-45](#); [Col. 1:18](#)).
- Paul spoke of "knowing" Christ and "the mighty power that raised him from the dead" ([Phil. 3:10](#)). But if we want to experience this power, we must be prepared to pay the price: "to suffer with him" ([Phil. 3:10](#); see also [2 Cor. 1:5](#); [1 Peter 4:13](#)). Paul both began ([Acts 9:16](#)) and ended ([2 Tim. 4:6](#), [16-17](#)) his ministry by suffering.
- Paul and Barnabas were ministering *to* the Lord when they were called to minister *for* the Lord ([Acts 13:2](#)). The first involves praise and worship, while the second has to do with proclamation and witness. God wants both from us.
- No matter how unresponsive people may be when we present the gospel, we can do so with the confidence that "many people here in this city" belong to God ([Acts 18:9-10](#)). While some may scoff, there are many others whose hearts he has prepared to hear.

- At least eight times, Paul offered himself as a role model, exhorting his readers to follow him as he followed Christ (see [1 Cor. 4:16](#); [1 Cor. 11:1](#), [Galatians 4:12](#); [Phil. 3:17](#); [Phil. 4:9](#); [1 Thes. 1:5-6](#); [1 Thes. 2:10](#); [2 Thes. 3:7-9](#)). Are we able to offer ourselves as role models?
- Paul ([2 Tim. 4:7](#)), like Jesus ([John 17:4](#)) and unlike Belshazzar ([Daniel 5:26-27](#)), could testify at the end of life that he had successfully finished his course. We should work to make that our testimony as well.

Key Verse

"To me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" ([Phil. 1:21](#), NKJV).

PHILIP (THE EVANGELIST)

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM ACTS)

Key Facts: Evangelist, presented gospel to an Ethiopian royal official

Total Bible References: 16

Key References: [Acts 6:5](#); [Acts 8:5-8, 26-40](#); [Acts 21:8-15](#)

Philip Speaks

What a privilege it was to meet and entertain in our own home the great apostle Paul himself! In addition to having wonderful fellowship, we found much in common with him. He has functioned as an evangelist over the years, as have I. He is a recognized prophet, as are my four daughters. He began his ministry as an associate in a local church, as did I. ([Acts 6:1-5](#); [Acts 8:5](#); [Acts 11:25-26](#); [Acts 13:1](#); [Acts 21:8-9](#))

We bade him Godspeed this morning. It is obvious he plans to head straight for Jerusalem, in spite of Agabus's somber warning. At any rate, God's will be done. That was our parting prayer for him. Hopefully, that is his prayer for us as well. ([Acts 21:10-15](#))

Paul's departure reminded me again of the day I watched that newly converted Ethiopian disappear into the dusty distance toward his homeland. Whenever God brings him to mind I pray for him. Dear long lost friend, how I hope your thrilling confession back there beside that oasis continues to be your daily testimony: "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." ([Acts 8:26-39](#))

Spiritual Lessons from Philip

- God used Philip mightily in a citywide evangelistic crusade ([Acts 8:5-8](#)), but not before he had proven himself to be a faithful, Spirit-anointed servant in his local church ([Acts 6:3-6](#)). See [Matthew 25:23](#).
- Ever sensitive to the Spirit's leading, Philip left his successful preaching campaign in Samaria ([Acts 8:5](#)) to reach one man in the desert of Gaza ([Acts 8:26-39](#)). Likewise, if you truly seek his will, God will "guide you along the best pathway for your life" ([Psalm 32:8](#)).

- "Children are a gift from the LORD" ([Psalm 127:3](#)). "Teach your children to choose the right path" ([Proverbs 22:6](#)). Philip acknowledged the truth of the psalm and acted upon the admonition of the proverb, raising four godly daughters ([Acts 21:8-9](#)).

Key Verse

"So Philip began with this same Scripture and then used many others to tell him the Good News about Jesus" ([Acts 8:35](#)).

SILAS (SILVANUS)

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM ACTS)

Key Fact: Paul's associate on his second missionary journey

Total Bible References: 13

Key References: [Acts 15:22-18:22](#); [2 Cor. 1:19](#); [1 Peter 5:12](#)

Silas Speaks

"Asked of God." That's the meaning of the name my parents gave me. And looking back, it does seem that God has had his hand upon my life. He has certainly blessed me, allowing me to help proclaim the gospel in other lands. And what a team leader Timothy and I had—the great apostle Paul himself. ([Acts 15:40](#); [Acts 16:29-32](#))

While I had already experienced some danger and hardship for Christ's name, I don't believe anything could have prepared me for what would occur at Philippi. Among other things, we suffered satanic opposition, followed by being arrested, beaten, and imprisoned. So, what did we do? We sang his praises! And what did God do? He sent an earthquake! No wonder the news spread that we were turning the world upside down! ([Acts 15:26](#); [Acts 16:16-26](#); [Acts 17:6](#))

In retrospect, I especially enjoyed the brief ministry Timothy and I had in Berea. Nowhere else did I find believers so devoted to the Scriptures! ([Acts 17:10-14](#))

My earthly father called me "Asked of God." Hopefully, someday my heavenly Father will call me "Approved by God."

Spiritual Lessons from Silas

- Just as Aaron and Hur held up Moses' hands during the battle with the Amalekites ([Exodus 17:12](#)), Silas ministered to Paul during his second missionary journey ([Acts 15:40-18:22](#)). Christian leaders today often voice their need for godly Silases to help hold up their hands in ministry.

Key Verses

"So it seemed good to us, having unanimously agreed on our decision, to send you these official representatives, along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. So we are sending Judas and Silas to tell you what we have decided concerning your question" ([Acts 15:25-27](#)).

STEPHEN

(PEOPLE TO REMEMBER FROM ACTS)

Key Fact: First recorded Christian martyr

Occupation: Deacon, evangelist

Death: Recorded in [Acts 7:60](#)

Total Bible References: 7

Key References: [Acts 6:3-7:60](#)

Stephen Speaks

I often wondered what it would be like to see his glory as did Peter, James, and John on that mountain. Or, for that matter, to have witnessed his resurrected glory along with Mary Magdalene, Cleopas, and the apostles. Now I see it, and the sight is indescribable! ([Acts 7:55-56](#); [Matthew 17:1-2](#); [Luke 24:18-48](#); [John 20:16-18](#))

It all began so innocently, with my appointment as an official servant in our local church. What wondrous days followed, as God empowered both my witness and works for him. Many new converts were added to the church, including a large number of Jewish priests. But one day my preaching antagonized a group from the synagogue and the battle was on! They accused me of blaspheming both Moses and God. What a ridiculous charge! ([Acts 6:3](#), [7-11](#))

"The face of an angel" is how they described my appearance during the trial. "Heathen at heart and deaf to the truth" is how I described them at the end of the trial. ([Acts 6:15](#); [Acts 7:51](#))

The pain is becoming intense, but my mind is perfectly clear! Suddenly I am filled with a great desire to pray for my tormentors as Christ once did for his! For some reason my heart goes out to that young man caring for the coats of those who stone me. ([Acts 7:58](#), [60](#); [Luke 23:34](#))

It is enough! "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ([Acts 7:59](#); [Luke 23:46](#))

Spiritual Lessons from Stephen

- Stephen began his message by speaking of the God of glory ([Acts 7:1](#)) and concluded by seeing the glory of God ([Acts 7:55](#)). The first, when faithfully done, will always give birth to the second.
- "Love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you!" ([Matthew 5:44](#)). Following his master's example ([Luke 23:34](#)), the dying Stephen forgave those who were stoning him ([Acts 7:60](#)). What would we have done?

Key Verses

"And as they stoned him, Stephen prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' And he fell to his knees, shouting, 'Lord, don't charge them with this sin!' And with that, he died" ([Acts 7:59-60](#)).