

Persecution and Ministry

Acts 9:1: And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, 2: And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem.

Saul Persecutes the Church.



Saul



9:1, 2. The New Faith Flourished in Damascus.--In Damascus the new faith seemed to have acquired fresh life and energy. The work of suppression must be begun there, and Saul was selected for this work (YI Nov. 15, 1900).

(Chs. 22:4; 26:11.) Saul Deluded and Deceived.--Saul had an abundance of energy and zeal to work out an erroneous faith in persecuting the saints of God, confining them in prisons and putting them to death. Although his hand did not do the work of murder, yet he had a voice in the decisions and zealously sustained them. He prepared the way, and gave up the believers of the gospel into hands that took their lives. In reference to his zeal Paul himself says, I was "exceedingly mad against them." "I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women." "Yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," Saul went, not to the lower, ignorant class, but to the highest religionists in the world, the men who acted a part in putting Christ to death, the men who possessed the spirit and sentiment of Caiaphas and his confederacy. These great men, thought Saul, if they had religious, determined helpers, could certainly put down this little handful of fanatical men. So to the high priest Saul went, "and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem." Christ permitted this, and many, very many lost their lives for their belief in Him. Paul honestly thought that he was persecuting a weak, ignorant, fanatical sect. He did not realize that he himself was the one deluded and deceived, and following ignorantly under the banner of the prince of darkness (MS 142, 1897).

The Conversion

"Saul, Saul, why are you
persecuting Me?"



9:1-4 (ch. 26:9; 1 Corinthians 15:9). Saul's Unbelief Honest, but Not Excusable.-- The mind that resists the truth will see everything in a perverted light. It will be fastened in the sure toils of the enemy, and view things in the light of the enemy. Saul of Tarsus was an example of this. He had no moral right to be an unbeliever. But he had chosen to accept the opinions of men rather than the counsel of God. He had the prophecies pointing to the Messiah, but the sayings of the rabbis, the words of men, were preferred. In his own wisdom, Saul knew not God nor Jesus Christ, whom He had sent. Afterward in repeating his experience, he declared that he thought he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Saul was honest in his unbelief. His was no pretension, and Jesus arrested him in his career and showed him on whose side he was working. The persecutor accepted the words of Christ, and was converted from infidelity to faith in Christ. Saul did not treat with indifference the unbelief which had led him to follow in Satan's track, and cause the suffering and death of the most precious of earth--those of whom the world was not worthy. He did not plead that his error of judgment was excusable. Long after his conversion he spoke of himself as the chief of sinners. "For I am the least of the apostles," he said, "that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." He did not make one excuse for his cruel course in following faithfully the impression of a conscience that was false (MS 9, 1898).

9:3-9. Made Blind That He Might See.--What a humiliation it was to Paul to know that all the time he was using his powers against the truth, thinking he was doing God's service, he was persecuting Christ. When the Saviour revealed Himself to Paul in the bright beams of His glory, he was filled with abhorrence for his work and for himself. The power of Christ's glory might have destroyed him, but Paul was a prisoner of hope. He was made physically blind by the glory of the presence of Him whom he had blasphemed, but it was that he might have spiritual sight, that he might be awakened from the lethargy that had stupefied and deadened his perceptions. His conscience, aroused, now worked with self-accusing energy. The zeal of his work, his earnest resistance of the light shining upon him through God's messengers, now brought condemnation upon his soul, and he was filled with bitter remorse. He no longer saw himself as righteous, but condemned by the law in thought, in spirit, and in deeds. He saw himself a sinner, utterly lost, without the Saviour he had been persecuting. In the days and nights of his blindness he had time for reflection, and he cast himself all helpless and hopeless upon Christ, the only one who could pardon him and clothe him with righteousness (MS 23, 1899).

9:6. Divine and Human Cooperation Necessary.--Always the Lord gives the human agent his work. Here is the divine and the human cooperation. There is man working in obedience to divine light given. If Saul had said, Lord, I am not at all inclined to follow your specified directions to work out my own salvation, then should the Lord have let ten times the light shine upon Saul, it would have been useless. It is man's work to cooperate with the divine. And it is the very hardest, sternest conflict which comes with the purpose and hour of great resolve and decision of the human to incline the will and way to God's will and God's way. . . . The character will determine the nature of the resolve and the action. The doing is not in accordance with the feeling or the inclination, but with the known will of our Father which is in heaven. Follow and obey the leadings of the Holy Spirit (Letter 135, 1898).

The Conversion of Saul



9:8, 9 (2 Corinthians 12:7-9; Galatians 6:17). "The Marks of the Lord Jesus."-- He [Paul] was ever to carry about with him in the body the marks of Christ's glory, in his eyes, which had been blinded by the heavenly light (LP 34).

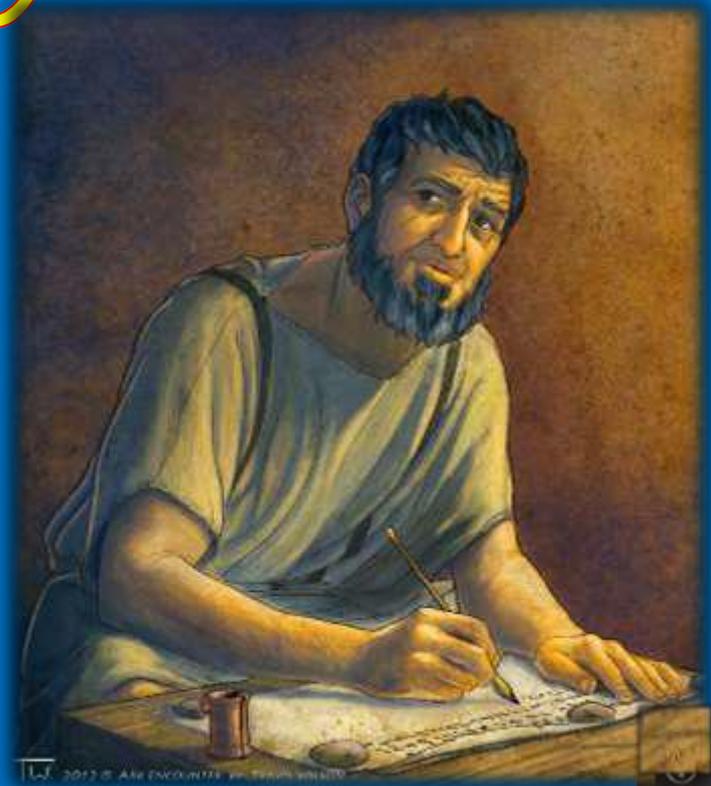
9:18, 19. Paul's Baptism.--Paul was baptized by Ananias in the river of Damascus. He was then strengthened by food, and immediately began to preach Jesus to the believers in the city, the very ones whom he had set out from Jerusalem with the purpose of destroying (LP 32).

The Ministry of Paul

Paul was dedicated to the persecution of the early disciples of Jesus in the area of Jerusalem.

The resurrected Jesus appeared to him in a great light.

Paul began to preach that Jesus of Nazareth is the Jewish Messiah and the Son of God.



9:25-27 (Galatians 1:17, 18). Two Grand Characters Meet.--The gates of the city were vigilantly guarded, day and night, to cut off his escape. The anxiety of the disciples drew them to God in prayer; there was little sleeping among them, as they were busy in devising ways and means for the escape of the chosen apostle. Finally they conceived a plan by which he was let down from a window and lowered over the wall in a basket at night. In this humiliating manner Paul made his escape from Damascus. He now proceeded to Jerusalem, wishing to become acquainted with the apostles there, and especially with Peter. He was very anxious to meet the Galilean fishermen who had lived and prayed and conversed with Christ upon earth. . . . He attempted to join himself to his brethren, the disciples; but great was his grief and disappointment when he found that they would not receive him as one of their number. They remembered his former persecutions, and suspected him of acting a part to deceive and destroy them. True, they had heard of his wonderful conversion, but as he had immediately retired into Arabia, and they had heard nothing definite of him further, they had not credited the rumor of his great change. Barnabas, who had liberally contributed of his means to sustain the cause of Christ and to relieve the necessities of the poor, had been acquainted with Paul when he opposed the believers. He now came forward and renewed that acquaintance, heard the testimony of Paul in regard to his miraculous conversion, and his experience from that time. He fully believed and received Paul, took him by the hand, and led him into the presence of the apostles. He related his experience which he had just heard--that Jesus had personally appeared to Paul while on his way to Damascus; that He had talked with him; that Paul had recovered his sight in answer to the prayers of Ananias, and had afterward maintained in the synagogue of the city that Jesus was the Son of God. The apostles no longer hesitated; they could not withstand God. Peter and James, who at that time were the only apostles in Jerusalem, gave the right hand of fellowship to the once-fierce persecutor of their faith; and he was now as much beloved and respected as he had formerly been feared and avoided. Here the two grand characters of the new faith met--Peter, one of the chosen companions of Christ while He was upon earth; and Paul, a Pharisee, who, since the ascension of Jesus, had met Him face to face, and had talked with Him, and had also seen Him in vision, and the nature of His work in heaven (LP 34-36).

The Ministry of Peter

Dorcas, a kind and charitable woman, fell sick and died.

Peter's reputation and miracles became known around Joppa and Lydda.

“...and many believed in the Lord.”

Aeneas, paralyzed, bed-ridden for eight years

In the tenth chapter of Acts we have still another instance of the ministration of heavenly angels, resulting in the conversion of Cornelius and his company. Let these chapters [8-10] be read, and receive special attention. In them we see that heaven is much nearer to the Christian who is engaged in the work of soulsaving than many suppose. We should learn through them also the lesson of God's regard for every human being, and that each should treat his fellow man as one of the Lord's instrumentalities for the accomplishment of His work in the earth (MS 17, 1908).

The Lord has raised up others that prize eternal life, and that can feel and realize something of the value of the soul, and they have freely bestowed their means to advance the cause of God. The work is closing; and soon the means of those who have kept their riches, their large farms, their cattle, etc., will not be wanted. I saw the Lord turn to such in anger, in wrath, and repeat these words: "Go to now, ye rich men." He has called, but you would not hear. Love of this world has drowned His voice. Now He has no use for you, and lets you go, bidding you: "Go to now, ye rich men." {1T 174.4}

Oh, I saw it was an awful thing to be thus forsaken by the Lord--a fearful thing to hold onto a perishable substance here, when He has said that if we will sell and give alms, we can lay up treasure in heaven. I was shown that as the work is closing up, and the truth is going forth in mighty power, these rich men will bring their means and lay it at the feet of the servants of God, begging them to accept it. The answer from the servants of God will be: "Go to now, ye rich men. Your means is not needed. Ye withheld it when ye could do good with it in advancing the cause of God. The needy have suffered; they have not been blessed by your means. God will not accept your riches now. Go to now, ye rich men." {1T 175.1}

Then I was directed to these words: "Behold, the hire of the laborers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth." I saw that God is not in all the riches that are obtained. Satan often has much more to do with acquiring property than God. Much of it is obtained by oppressing the hireling in his wages. The naturally covetous rich man obtains his riches by grinding down the hireling, and taking advantage of individuals wherever he can, thereby adding to a treasure that will eat his flesh as it were fire. {1T 175.2}

A strictly honest, honorable course has not been taken by some. Such must take a very different course and work fast to redeem the time. Many Sabbathkeepers are at fault here. Advantage is taken even of their poor brethren, and those who have an abundance exact more than the real worth of things, more than they would pay for the same things, while these same brethren are embarrassed and distressed for want of means. God knows all these things. Every selfish act, every covetous extortion, will bring its reward. {1T 176.1}

I saw that it is cruel and unjust to have no consideration for a brother's situation. If he is distressed, or poor, yet doing the best he can, allowance should be made for him, and even the full value of things he may purchase of the wealthy should not be exacted; but they should have bowels of compassion for him. God will approve of such kindly acts, and the doer will not lose his reward. But a fearful account stands against many Sabbathkeepers for close, covetous acts. {1T 176.2}

I was pointed back to a time when there were but few who listened to and embraced the truth. They had not much of this world's goods. The wants of the cause were divided among a very few. Then it was necessary for some to sell their houses and lands, and obtain cheaper to serve them as a shelter, or home, while their means were freely and generously lent to the Lord, to publish the truth, and to otherwise aid in advancing the cause of God. As I beheld these self-sacrificing ones, I saw that they had endured privation for the benefit of the cause. I saw an angel standing by them, pointing them upward, and saying: "Ye have bags in heaven! Ye have bags in heaven that wax not old! Endure unto the end, and great will be your reward." {1T 176.3}

God has been moving upon many hearts. The truth for which a few sacrificed so much, in order to get it before others, has triumphed, and multitudes have laid hold of it. God in His providence has moved upon those who have means, and has brought them into the truth, that as His work increases, the wants of the cause may be met. Much means has been brought into the ranks of Sabbathkeepers, and I saw that at present God does not call for the houses His people need to live in, unless expensive houses are exchanged for cheaper ones. But if those who have an abundance do not hear His voice, cut loose from the world, and dispose of a portion of their property and lands, and sacrifice for God, He will pass them by, and call for those who are willing to do anything for Jesus, even to sell their homes to meet the wants of the cause. God will have freewill offerings. Those who give must esteem it a privilege to do so. {1T 176.4}

Some give of their abundance, but yet they feel no lack. They do not particularly deny themselves of anything for the cause of Christ. They still have all that heart can wish. They give liberally and heartily. God regards it, and the action and motive are known and strictly marked by Him. They will not lose their reward. You who cannot bestow so liberally must not excuse yourselves because you cannot do as much as some others. Do what you can. Deny yourselves of some article that you can get along without, and sacrifice for the cause of God. Like the widow, cast in your two mites. You will actually give more than all those who give of their abundance; and you will know how sweet it is to deny self, to give to the needy, to sacrifice for the truth, and to lay up treasure in heaven. {1T 177.1}

I was shown that the young, especially young men, who profess the truth, have yet a lesson of self-denial to learn. If these made more sacrifice for the truth, they would esteem it more highly. It would affect their hearts, and purify their lives, and they would hold it more dear and sacred. {1T 177.2}

The young do not take the burden of the cause of God, or feel any responsibility in regard to it. Is it because God has excused them? Oh, no; they excuse themselves! They are eased, and others are burdened. They do not realize that they are not their own. Their strength, their time, is not their own. They are bought with a price. A dear sacrifice was made for them, and unless they possess the spirit of self-denial and sacrifice, they can never possess the immortal inheritance. {1T 178.1}

The Vision of Cornelius



10:1-4 (Philippians 4:18). Prayer and Almsgiving as Sweet Incense.--[Acts 10:1-4 quoted.] It is a wonderful favor for any man in this life to be commended of God as was Cornelius. And what was the ground of this approval?--"Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God."

Neither prayer nor almsgiving has any virtue in itself to recommend the sinner to God; the grace of Christ, through His atoning sacrifice, can alone renew the heart and make our service acceptable to God. This grace had moved upon the heart of Cornelius. The Spirit of Christ had spoken to his soul; Jesus had drawn him, and he had yielded to the drawing. His prayers and alms were not urged or extorted from him; they were not a price he was seeking to pay in order to secure heaven; but they were the fruit of love and gratitude to God.

Such prayer from a sincere heart ascends as incense before the Lord; and offerings to His cause and gifts to the needy and suffering are a sacrifice well pleasing to Him. Thus the gifts of the Philippian brethren who ministered to the needs of the apostle Paul while a prisoner at Rome, are said to be "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God."

Prayer and almsgiving are closely linked together--the expression of love to God and to our fellow men. They are the out-working of the two great principles of the divine law, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength"; and, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Thus while our gifts cannot recommend us to God or earn His favor, they are an evidence that we have received the grace of Christ. They are a test of the sincerity of our profession of love (RH May 9, 1893).

10:1-6 (Hebrews 1:14). Ministering Angels Note Each Individual.--That same Holy Watcher who says, I know Abraham, knew Cornelius also, and sent His angel with a message to the man who had received and improved all the light God had given him. The angel said, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter." Then the specific directions are given, "He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do." Thus the angel of the Lord works to bring Cornelius in connection with the human agent through whom he might receive greater light. Study the whole chapter carefully and see the simplicity of the whole transaction. Then consider that the Lord knows every one of us by name, and just where we live, and the spirit we possess, and every act of our life. The ministering angels are passing through the churches, noting our faithfulness in our individual line of duty (Letter 20a, 1893).

Earnest Seekers Not Left in Darkness.--Here we are given positive evidence that the Lord does not leave in darkness those who follow all the light given them, but sends His angels to communicate with them. Cornelius was living in accordance with the instruction given in the Old Testament Scriptures, and the Lord sent a messenger to tell him what to do. God could have given Cornelius all the instruction he needed by the angel, but this was not His plan. His purpose was to place Cornelius in connection with those who had been receiving knowledge from on high, whose work it was to impart this knowledge to those seeking for light. Thus God always deals with His people. . . Cornelius obeyed the instruction given. He united with the church, and became a useful and influential laborer together with God (MS 67, 1900).

God Uses His Appointed Agencies.--[Acts 10:1-4 quoted.] The angel did not give him the light that he might have given him, but directed him to take a course whereby he might come into connection with one who could tell him precious truth. . . . [Acts 10:5, 6 quoted.] Cornelius implicitly obeyed the instruction, and the same angel went to Peter, and gave him his instructions. This chapter [Acts 10] has much precious counsel in it for us, and we should study it with humble attention. When the Lord has His appointed agencies whereby He gives help to souls, and men disrespect these agencies, and refuse to receive help from them, and decide that they will be directly taught of God, the Lord does not gratify their desire. The man who takes such a position is in danger of taking up with the voices of strangers, and of being led into false paths. Both Cornelius and Peter were instructed what they were to do, and they obeyed the angel's word. Cornelius gathered his household together to hear the message of light from Peter. If he had said, I will not be taught of any man, the angel of God would have left him to himself; but this was not his attitude (RH Oct. 10, 1893).

Cornelius' vision was for him to send for Peter.

*Peter meets with the
Roman Centurion,
Cornelius.*

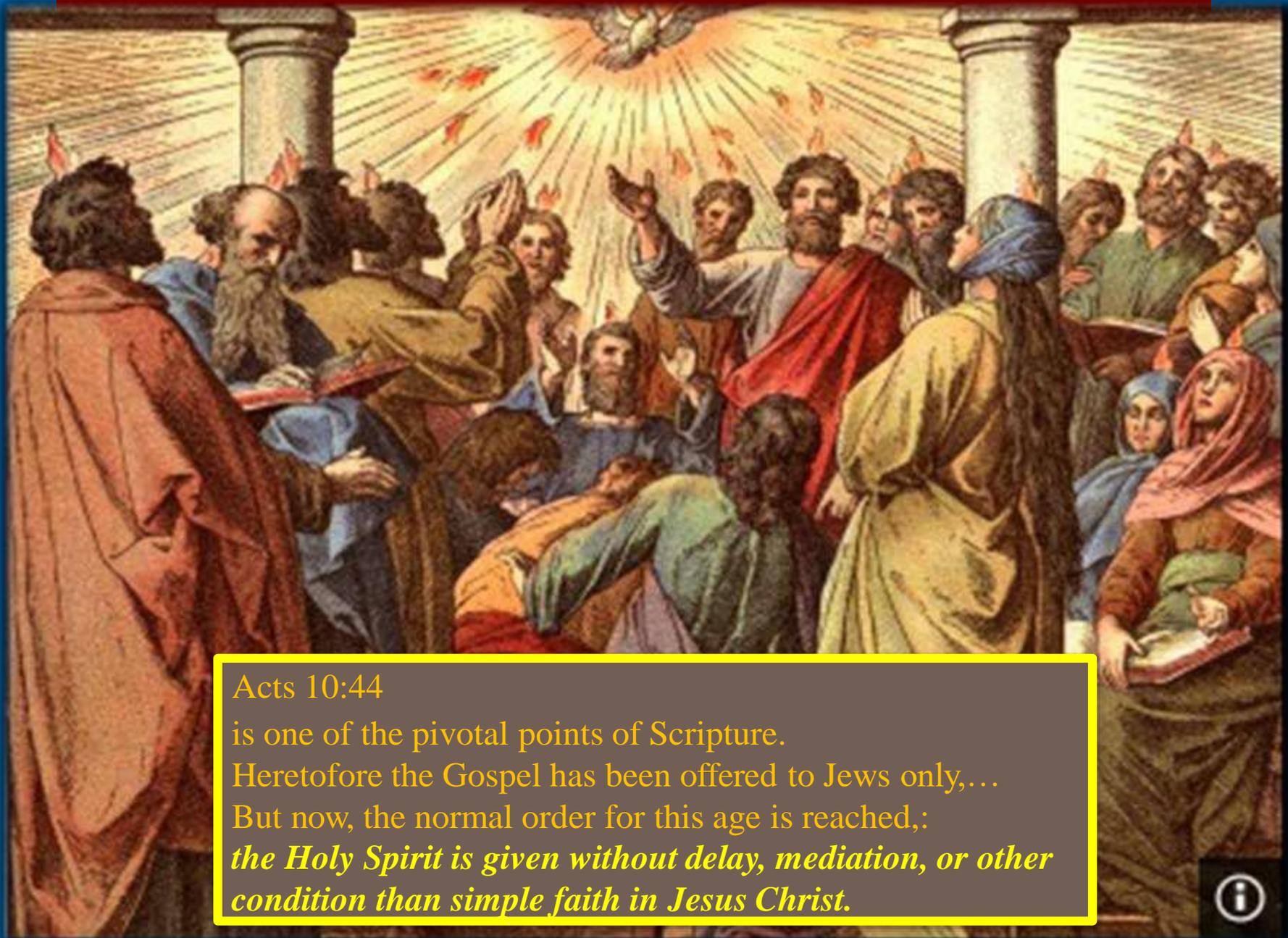


Cornelius and his friends are baptized with the Holy Ghost first, and then with water.
Uncircumcised Gentiles are admitted into the Christian church.



Acts 10:44

“While Peter yet spoke these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word.”



Acts 10:44

is one of the pivotal points of Scripture.

Heretofore the Gospel has been offered to Jews only,...

But now, the normal order for this age is reached,:

the Holy Spirit is given without delay, mediation, or other condition than simple faith in Jesus Christ.



Many Today Like Cornelius.--There are many today who are in the same position as Cornelius. They are living up to the light they have received, and God speaks to them, as He spoke to Cornelius, and brings them by His appointed agencies to the place where they will receive the truth into good and honest hearts. God reveals Himself to those who are striving to form characters that He can approve. The prayers of those who fear Him, who recognize their obligations to Him, are heard and answered. The Lord takes special notice of those who walk in the light that He has given them, who testify by their deeds that they are trying to honor God. Through a Peter He will present the pearl of great price, and through a Cornelius and his family many souls will be brought to the light (RH Aug. 8, 1899).

By the wonderful works of God, Cornelius was led to bring his energetic, faithful life into connection with the disciples of Christ. Thus shall it be in the last days. Many will prize the wisdom of God above any earthly advantage, and will obey the Word of God as the supreme standard. These will be led to great light. These will come to the knowledge of the truth, and will seek to get this light of truth before those of their acquaintance who like themselves are anxious for the truth. Thus they become conscientious light bearers to the world. Themselves constrained by the love of God, they will constrain others, and will improve every opportunity to invite and urge others to come and see the beauty of the truth, and to give their abilities to advance the work of God (MS 97, 1898).

Some who are numbered among merchants and princes will take their position to obey the truth. God's eye has been upon such as they have acted according to the light they have had, maintaining their integrity. Cornelius . . . maintained his religious experience, strictly walking in accordance with the light he had received. God had His eye upon him, and He sent His angel with a message to him. The heavenly messenger passed by the self-righteous ones, came to Cornelius, and called him by name (MS 97, 1898).

Much is said concerning our duty to the neglected poor. Should not some attention be given to the neglected rich? Many look upon this class as hopeless, and they do little to open the eyes of those who, blinded and dazed by the glitter of earthly glory, have lost eternity out of their reckoning. Thousands of wealthy men have gone to the grave unwarned. But indifferent as they may appear, many among the rich are soul burdened. Riches and worldly honor cannot satisfy the soul. Many among the rich are longing for some divine assurance, some spiritual hope. Many long for something that will bring to an end the monotony of their aimless life. Many in official life feel their need of something which they have not. Few among them go to church, for they feel that they receive little benefit. The teaching they hear does not touch the heart. Shall we make no special appeal to them? God calls for earnest, humble workers, who will carry the gospel to the higher classes. It is by no casual, accidental touch that the wealthy, world-loving souls can be drawn to Christ. Decided personal effort must be put forth by men and women imbued with the missionary spirit, those who will not fail nor be discouraged (RH April 6, 1911).

The Fifth Persecution:
The Arrest of Peter



12:6. Peter Ready to Yield Up His Life.--The apostle was not intimidated by the situation. Since his reinstatement after his denial of Christ, he had unflinchingly braved danger, and had shown a noble courage and boldness in preaching a crucified, risen, and ascended Saviour. As he lay in his cell he called to mind the words that Christ had spoken to him: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not." Peter believed that the time had come for him to yield up his life for Christ's sake (RH April 27, 1911).

Singleness of Purpose

In the life of Christ, everything was made subordinate to His work, the great work of redemption which He came to accomplish. And the same devotion, the same self-denial and sacrifice, the same subjection to the claims of the word of God, is to be manifest in His disciples. Everyone who accepts Christ as his personal Saviour will long for the privilege of serving God. Contemplating what heaven has done for him, his heart is moved with boundless love and adoring gratitude. He is eager to signalize his gratitude by devoting his abilities to God's service. He longs to show his love for Christ and for His purchased possession. He covets toil, hardship, sacrifice. The true worker for God will do his best, because in so doing he can glorify his Master. He will do right in order to regard the requirements of God. He will endeavor to improve all his faculties. He will perform every duty as unto God. His one desire will be that Christ may receive homage and perfect service. There is a picture representing a bullock standing between a plow and an altar, with the inscription, "Ready for either," ready to toil in the furrow or to be offered on the altar of sacrifice. This is the position of the true child of God—willing to go where duty calls, to deny self, to sacrifice for the Redeemer's cause. {HDL 48-49.}

Acts 12:2 “Herod killed James the brother of John with a sword.”

Peter, in jail, was covered by four soldiers with Herod's plan to bring him forth to the people on Easter.



Acts 12: 23 “An angel of the Lord smote Herod because he did not give God the glory.”



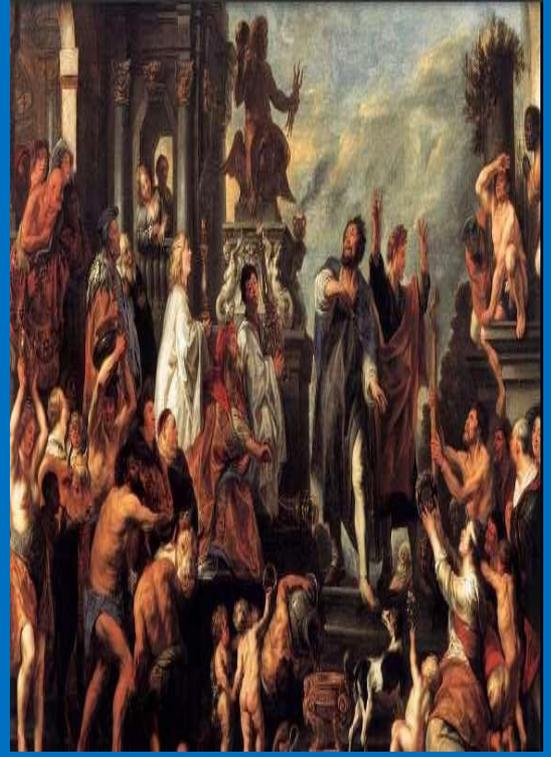
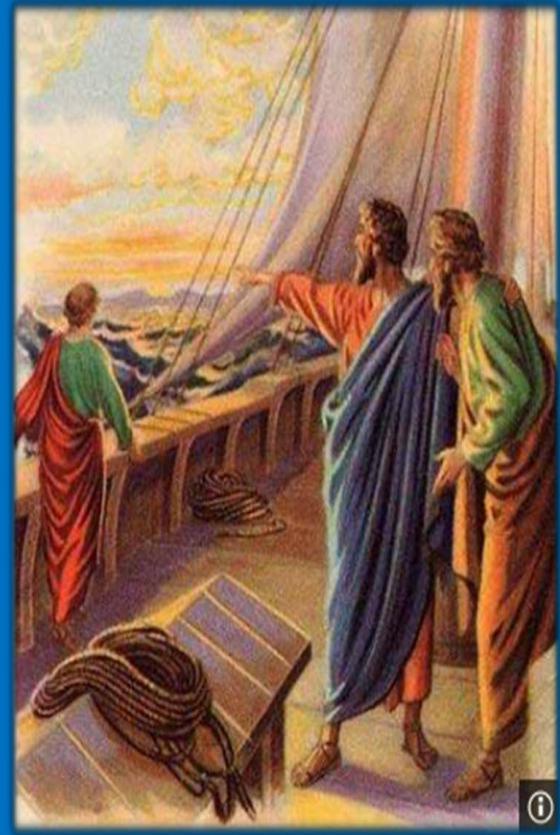
Herod knew that he deserved none of the praise and homage offered him, yet he accepted the idolatry of the people as his due. His heart bounded with triumph, and a glow of gratified pride overspread his countenance as he heard the shout ascend, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man." But suddenly a terrible change came over him. His face became pallid as death and distorted with agony. Great drops of sweat started from his pores. He stood for a moment as if transfixed with pain and terror; then turning his blanched and livid face to his horror-stricken friends, he cried in hollow, despairing tones, He whom you have exalted as a god is stricken with death. Suffering the most excruciating anguish, he was borne from the scene of revelry and display. A moment before he had been the proud recipient of the praise and worship of that vast throng; now he realized that he was in the hands of a Ruler mightier than himself. Remorse seized him; he remembered his relentless persecution of the followers of Christ; he remembered his cruel command to slay the innocent James, and his design to put to death the apostle Peter; he remembered how in his mortification and disappointed rage he had wreaked an unreasoning vengeance upon the prison guards. He felt that God was now dealing with him, the relentless persecutor. He found no relief from pain of body or anguish of mind, and he expected none. Herod was acquainted with the law of God, which says, "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me" (Exodus 20:3); and he knew that in accepting the worship of the people he had filled up the measure of his iniquity and brought upon himself the just wrath of Jehovah. {AA 151}

The same angel who had come from the royal courts to rescue Peter, had been the messenger of wrath and judgment to Herod. The angel smote Peter to arouse him from slumber; it was with a different stroke that he smote the wicked king, laying low his pride and bringing upon him the punishment of the Almighty. Herod died in great agony of mind and body, under the retributive judgment of God. This demonstration of divine justice had a powerful influence upon the people. The tidings that the apostle of Christ had been miraculously delivered from prison and death, while his persecutor had been stricken down by the curse of God, were borne to all lands and became the means of leading many to a belief in Christ. The experience of Philip, directed by an angel from heaven to go to the place where he met one seeking for truth; of Cornelius, visited by an angel with a message from God; of Peter, in prison and condemned to death, led by an angel forth to safety--all show the closeness of the connection between heaven and earth. To the worker for God the record of these angel visits should bring strength and courage. Today, as verily as in the days of the apostles, heavenly messengers are passing through the length and breadth of the land, seeking to comfort the sorrowing, to protect the impenitent, to win the hearts of men to Christ. We cannot see them personally; nevertheless they are with us, guiding, directing, protecting. {AA 152}

Heaven is brought near to earth by that mystic ladder, the base of which is firmly planted on the earth, while the topmost round reaches the throne of the Infinite. Angels are constantly ascending and descending this ladder of shining brightness, bearing the prayers of the needy and distressed to the Father above, and bringing blessing and hope, courage and help, to the children of men. These angels of light create a heavenly atmosphere about the soul, lifting us toward the unseen and the eternal. We cannot behold their forms with our natural sight; only by spiritual vision can we discern heavenly things. The spiritual ear alone can hear the harmony of heavenly voices. "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them." Psalm 34:7. God commissions His angels to save His chosen ones from calamity, to guard them from "the pestilence that walketh in darkness" and "the destruction that wasteth at noonday." Psalm 91:6. Again and again have angels talked with men as a man speaketh with a friend, and led them to places of security. Again and again have the encouraging words of angels renewed the drooping spirits of the faithful and, carrying their minds above the things of earth, caused them to behold by faith the white robes, the crowns, the palm branches of victory, which overcomers will receive when they surround the great white throne. It is the work of the angels to come close to the tried, the suffering, the tempted. They labor untiringly in behalf of those for whom Christ died. When sinners are led to give themselves to the Saviour, angels bear the tidings heavenward, and there is great rejoicing among the heavenly host. "Joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." Luke 15:7. A report is borne to heaven of every successful effort on our part to dispel the darkness and to spread abroad the knowledge of Christ. As the deed is recounted before the Father, joy thrills through all the heavenly host. {AA 153}

The principalities and powers of heaven are watching the warfare which, under apparently discouraging circumstances, God's servants are carrying on. New conquests are being achieved, new honors won, as the Christians, rallying round the banner of their Redeemer, go forth to fight the good fight of faith. All the heavenly angels are at the service of the humble, believing people of God; and as the Lord's army of workers here below sing their songs of praise, the choir above join with them in ascribing praise to God and to His Son. We need to understand better than we do the mission of the angels. It would be well to remember that every true child of God has the co-operation of heavenly beings. Invisible armies of light and power attend the meek and lowly ones who believe and claim the promises of God. Cherubim and seraphim, and angels that excel in strength, stand at God's right hand, "all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation." Hebrews 1:14. {AA 154}

OPPOSITION



The Religious Ignorant Persecutes

- **John 16:1** These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. **16:2** **They shall put you out of the synagogues:** yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will **think that he doeth God service**. **16:3**
And these things will they do unto you, because **they have not known the Father, nor me.**

The Religious Ignorant Persecutes

- Ignorance of the nature of God's Government, His character and the Principles of His dealing with sin promotes tyranny and inspires persecution.
- Fear of anticipated discord and confusion leads godly people to stoop to employ Satan's principle of force.

The Religious Ignorant Persecutes

- Any arbitrary infliction of punishment upon those perceived to be in the wrong demonstrates ignorance of God's ways.
- When a church falls from grace, God permits it to employ the worldly principles of secular institutions to maintain discipline, order and restraint. Much instruction can be found to justify this system of government.

The Religious Ignorant Persecutes

- However, Christ is still the perfect pattern of God's character; system of government; and the principles to be employed in dealing with sin and sinners.
- Church leaders look past Christ and adopt the methods of imperfect patterns to model their behavior after because it suits their sense of justice better to do so.

Be Not Offended When They:

- Put you out of the synagogue
- Strip you of your position in church
- Prevent you from preaching, teaching, singing, travelling, working on their behalf
- Disparage your reputation
- Misrepresent your words and actions
- Refuse to acknowledge your presence
- Shun making contact with you

BECAUSE JESUS SAYS,

- **Mat. 5:10 Blessed [are] they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 5:11 Blessed are ye, when [men] shall revile you, and persecute [you], and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 5:12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great [is] your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.**

The Psalmist Says,

- **Ps. 119:165 Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.**

Listen To Paul

- Heb. 13:5 [Let your] conversation [be] without covetousness; [and be] content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. 13:6 So that we may boldly say, The Lord [is] my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

Unbelieving Brethren

- **Persecution will come from**
 - Those who don't believe you are called by God.
 - Those who don't believe you are qualified for the work.
 - Those who don't believe you are spiritual enough to minister.
 - Those who believe you are stubborn to persist in doing God's will.
 - Those who believe you have an independent spirit to follow the dictates of conscience

Silent Brethren

- There is a time
 - when silence is not golden.
 - when silence is not eloquence.
 - when silence is treason.
 - when silence is cowardice.
 - when silence is consent.
- Through it all, it is not the scorn and prevarication of our enemies that will hurt us most but the silence of our friends.

Experience of 1844

- Many were persecuted by their unbelieving brethren. In order to retain their position in the church, some consented to be silent in regard to their hope; but others felt that loyalty to God forbade them thus to hide the truths which he had committed to their trust. Not a few were cut off from the fellowship of the church for no other reason than expressing their belief in the coming of Christ. {4SP 227.1}

Stoned for the Faith

- In the same way the work is to be carried now. Let those preparing to be laborers study Acts 14. Let them become familiar with this whole chapter, for those who will become laborers together with God in these last days will realize similar experiences as those recorded in verse nineteen. "And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, (who had so recently refused to be worshiped as a god), drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead. {PH038 7.2}

Behavior of Church-Men

- **Rev. 13:15** And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. **13:16** And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: **13:17** And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.

Have No Fear

- **Mat 10:28** And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

Over-comers

- **Rev 12:9** And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. **12:10** And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

Over-comers

- **Rev 12:11** And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. **12:12** Therefore rejoice, [ye] heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.

So, To Over-Comers Jesus Says,

- **Rev. 2:7 ...To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.**
- **Rev. 2:11 ... He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.**
- **Rev. 2:17 ...To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth [it].**

So, To Over-Comers Jesus Says,

- **Rev. 2:26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: 2:27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. 2:28 And I will give him the morning star.**

So, To Over-Comers Jesus Says,

- **Rev. 3:5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.**

So, To Over-Comers Jesus Says,

- **Rev. 3:12** Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, [which is] new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and [I will write upon him] my new name.

So, To Over-Comers Jesus Says,

- **Rev. 3:21** To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.

Fear of Punishment

- **John 9:19** And they asked them, saying, Is this your son, who ye say was born blind? how then doth he now see? **9:20** His parents answered them and said, We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind: **9:21** But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself.

Fear of Punishment

- **John 9:22** These [words] spake his parents, because they feared the Jews: for the Jews had agreed already, that if any man did confess that he was Christ, he should be put out of the synagogue. **9:23**

Therefore said his parents, He is of age; ask him.

Fear Even in Leadership

- **John 12:42 Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess [him], lest they should be put out of the synagogue:12:43 For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.**

Fear in Peter

- After his restoration, he was committed with the responsibility to feed the church. (John 21:15-17)
- He was recognized as one of the pillars in the church. (Gal. 2:9)
- One of the first God sent to the Gentiles with the Gospel. (Acts 10)
- His testimony of God's work in his ministry settled the contention in Jerusalem. (Acts 15)

Fear in Peter

- He stood against the Jewish leaders and proclaim, “we ought to obey God, rather than men.”
- Yet, fear of men, fear of his Christian brethren, fear of offending his fellow church leaders, caused him to adjust his behavior when dealing with the gentile converts.

Fear in Peter

- Gal. 2:11 But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. 2:12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, **fearing them which were of the circumcision.** 2:13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that **Barnabas** also was carried away with their dissimulation.

Perfect Love

- **1John 4:17** Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. **4:18** There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.

God's Command – Fear Not!

- **Isa. 41:10** Fear thou not; for I [am] with thee: be not dismayed; for I [am] thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.

He Gives Power

- Isa. 40:27 Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the LORD, and my judgment is passed over from my God? 40:28 Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, [that] the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? [there is] no searching of his understanding.

He Gives Power

- Isa. 40:29 He giveth power to the faint; and to [them that have] no might he increaseth strength. 40:30 Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: 40:31 But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew [their] strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; [and] they shall walk, and not faint.

Defense of His People

- {Mar 191.3} There is a marked contrast between those who bear the seal of God and those who worship the beast and his image. The Lord's faithful servants will receive the bitterest persecution from false teachers, who will not hear the word of God, and who prepare stumbling blocks to put in the way of those who would hear. But God's people are not to fear. Satan cannot go beyond his limit. The Lord will be the defense of His people.

Defense of His People

- He regards the injury done to His servants for the truth's sake as done to Himself. When the last decision has been made, when all have taken sides, either for Christ and the commandments or for the great apostate, God will arise in His power, and the mouths of those who have blasphemed against Him will be forever stopped. Every opposing power will receive its punishment. {Mar 191.3}

Permanent Persuasion

- **Rom. 8:38** For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, **8:39** Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

15:1, 5 (Romans 2:24-29; Galatians 5:6; Ephesians 2:14-16; Colossians 2:14-17; Titus 1:9-11). Circumcision of No Value After the Cross.--[Titus 1:9-11, 13, 14 quoted.] There were those in Paul's day who were constantly dwelling upon circumcision, and they could bring plenty of proof from the Bible to show its obligation on the Jews; but this teaching was of no consequence at this time; for Christ had died upon Calvary's cross, and circumcision in the flesh could not be of any further value.

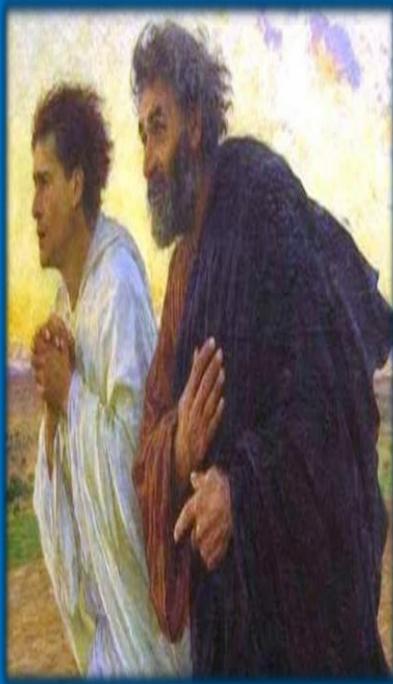
The typical service and the ceremonies connected with it were abolished at the cross. The great antitypical Lamb of God had become an offering for guilty man, and the shadow ceased in the substance. Paul was seeking to bring the minds of men to the great truth for the time; but these who claimed to be followers of Jesus were wholly absorbed in teaching the tradition of the Jews, and the obligation of circumcision (RH May 29, 1888).

15:11 (Galatians 3:8; 1 Corinthians 10:4). Only One Gospel.--There is no such contrast as is often claimed to exist between the Old and the New Testament, the law of God and the gospel of Christ, the requirements of the Jewish and those of the Christian dispensation. Every soul saved in the former dispensation was saved by Christ as verily as we are saved by Him today. Patriarchs and prophets were Christians. The gospel promise was given to the first pair in Eden, when they had by transgression separated themselves from God. The gospel was preached to Abraham. The Hebrews all drank of that spiritual Rock, which was Christ (ST Sept. 14, 1882).

(Exodus 13:21, 22; 1 Corinthians 10:1-4; 1 Timothy 2:5.) Christ's Blood Avails for Us as for Israel.--Shrouded in the pillar of cloud, the world's Redeemer held communion with Israel. Let us not say, then, that they had not Christ. When the people thirsted in the wilderness, and gave themselves up to murmuring and complaint, Christ was to them what He is to us--a Saviour full of tender compassion, the Mediator between them and God. After we have done our part to cleanse the soul temple from the defilement of sin, Christ's blood avails for us, as it did for ancient Israel (YI July 18, 1901).

Paul and Barnabas separate and go their own ways.

Paul and Silas
Cyprus



Barnabas and Mark
Syria



*Paul Finds
Timothy*



Paul and Silas in Macedonia

There were churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.
The Lord called them to Macedonia.

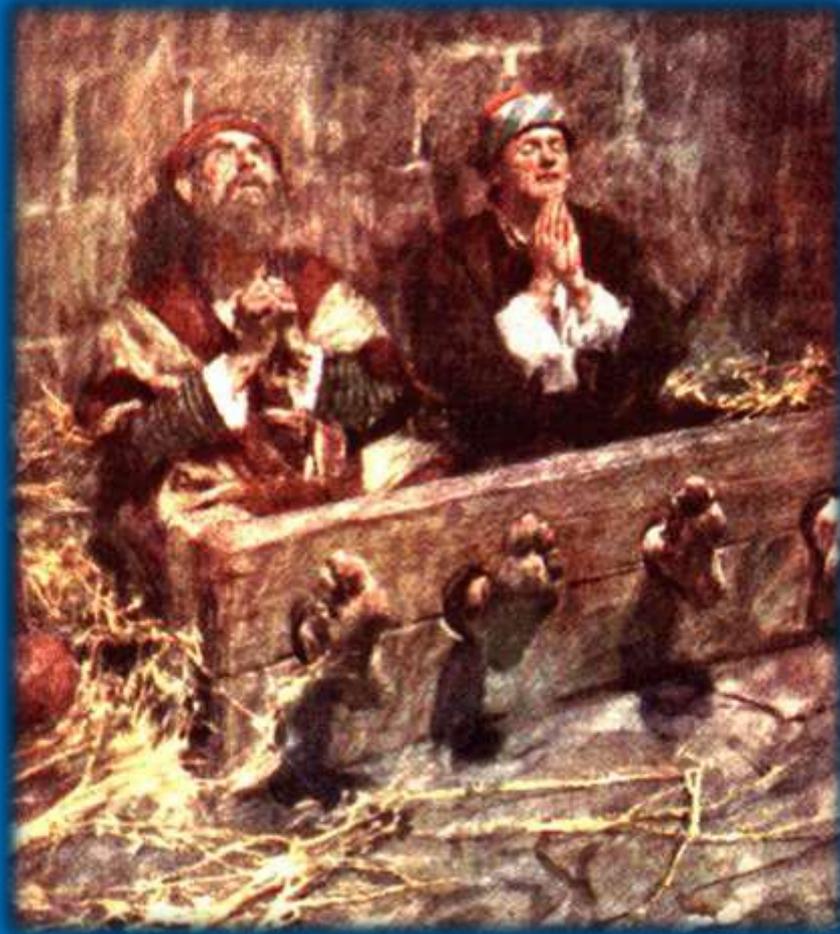


Visitations in order:

Phrygia in Galatia
Troas
Samothracia
Neopolis
Philippi

Preaching the Word
of God, casting out
demons, and
healing the sick.

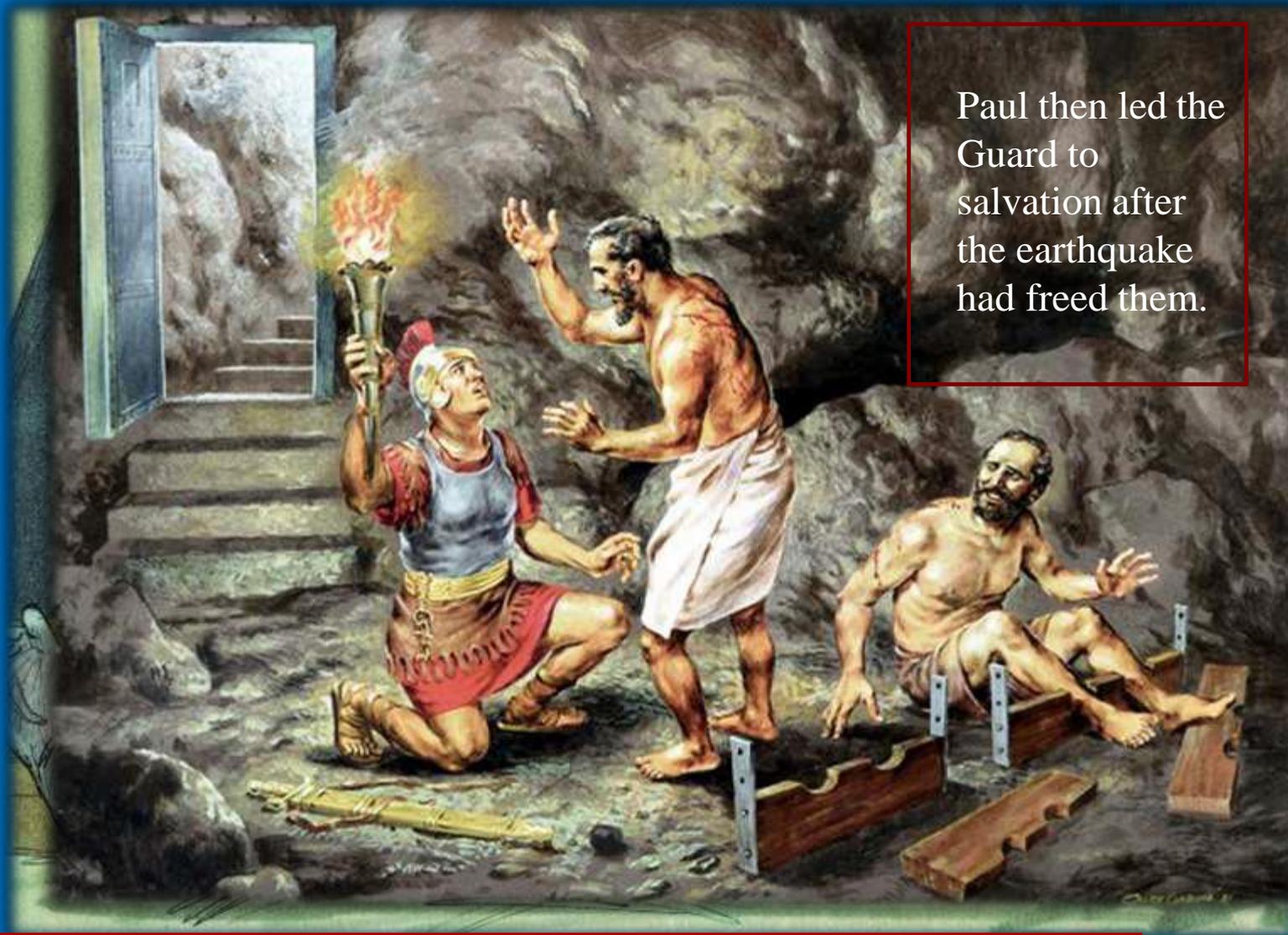
Paul and Silas, Jailed



Paul and Silas had silenced the words of a diviner which had upset the people who had listened to her.

The mob who had sympathy for the diviner forced the officials to jail Paul and Silas.

Then..... the earthquake, releasing Paul and Silas from the stocks.



Paul then led the Guard to salvation after the earthquake had freed them.

Paul and his associates:

welcomed by the local church in each city
reasoned with Jews in their synagogues
speaking from the Scriptures
witnessing for Jesus Christ
strengthening all the disciples
teaching baptism
teaching baptism of the Holy Spirit
performing miracles

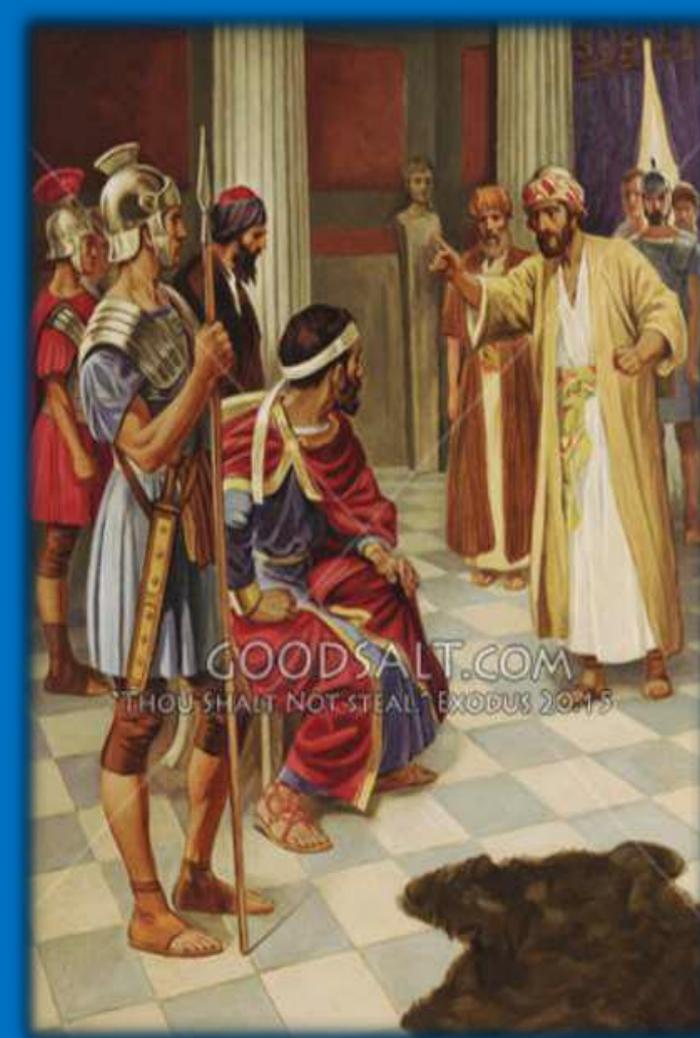
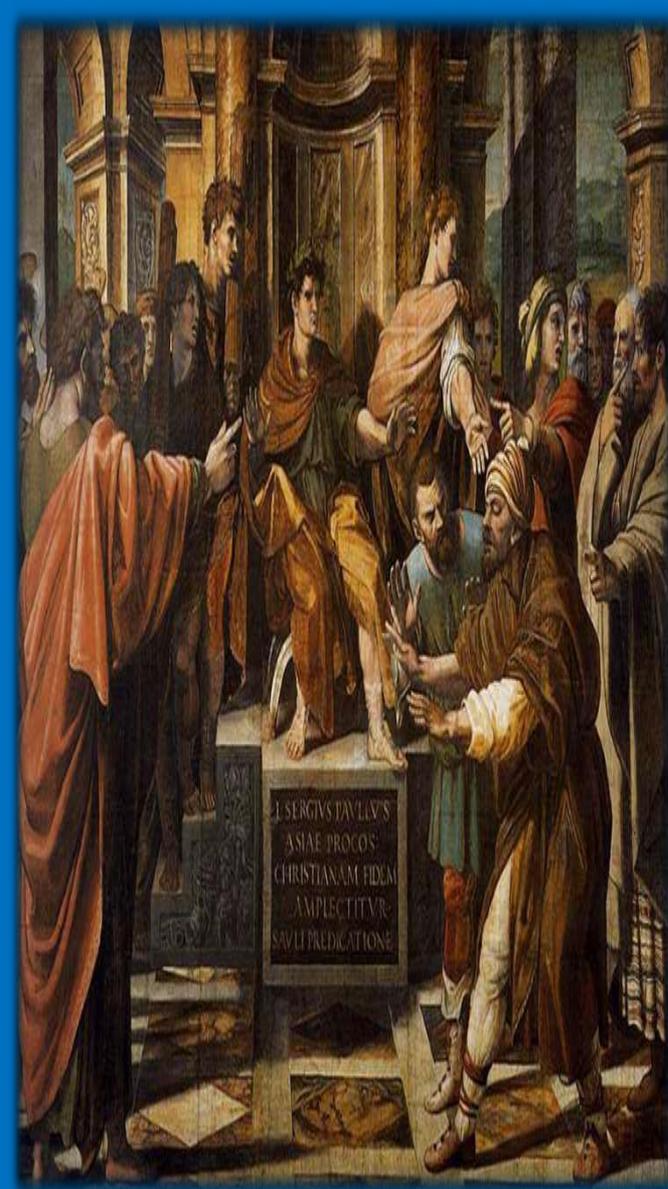
Some were persuaded but **some were not**,
they would form mobs and try to drive
Paul and his people out of the city
forcing Paul and his people to escape
the city at night

Some would preach the word of the Lord but they weren't believers and preached magic

*Acts 19: 10b: "...so that all
who lived in Asia heard the
word of the Lord, both Jews
and Greeks."*

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**Elymus, aka Bar-Jesus,
attempted to turn the
procounsul away from the
faith**



*Elymas the sorcerer is
struck blind before
Sergius Paulus.
Painting by Raphael*