

# THE INVITATION BY EXAMPLE

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There are three ways to establish Bible authority: explicit command, necessary inference, and approved example. Explicit command would be an inspired writer's direct instruction, "be baptized" (Acts 2:38; 22:16; cf 10:48); a necessary inference would be drawn from a statement like "ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed ... being then made free from sin" (Rom. 6:17-18) which ties back to "he that is dead is freed from sin" (Rom. 6:7) showing that baptism, the act in which the old man died (Rom. 6:3-6), is the authorized means of going from serving God to obeying Him. One may have noticed in Romans 6:3 that Paul was writing to an audience who had been baptized already as he had been ("so many of us as were baptized in Jesus Christ" is an approved example).

It should be noted that under the new covenant--that is, in the Christian, or church, age [from Acts 2 through the Revelation]--salvation apart from obedience to the command to be baptized is neither shown through explicit command, necessary inference, nor approved example. One may assert that the thief on the cross is an example, but he was saved directly by Jesus Who had "power on earth to forgive sins" (Mat. 9:6); moreover, the thief may have been baptized previously by John, for he could have been among "Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan" who "went out to" hear John preach (Mat. 3:5) and he certainly already knew (Luke 23:42) of the kingdom which John preached (Mat. 3:1,2).

This latter form of authority, approved example, is well understood and appreciated; for example, Jesus is a positive example of humility (John 13:14), the prophets are positive examples of suffering and patience (Jam. 5:10), Sodom and Gomorrah are negative examples of the punishment of ungodliness (2 Pet. 2:6). Perhaps it should be added that approved example is well understood and appreciated until it comes to such things as the means of worship and aspects of salvation. The approved example of the New Testament worshippers who sang (; cf Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16) is ignored in favor of the unauthorized use of mechanical instruments in worship [again, use in the Old Testament age (e.g., 1 Sam. 10:5; Psa. 33:2; et al) is not authorization for use in this age]. By some (for example, universalists who believe all will be saved, or ones who believe in grace or works only salvation, or for those who believe that one can merely pray for salvation), the examples of salvation's requiring belief, repentance, confession, etc., is rejected. By many--the vast majority, in fact--the plenteous examples of baptism's being involved in salvation are explained away or ignored completely!

When one reads the New Testament [indeed, the whole Bible (Eze. 18:23; 33:11)] he sees an emphasis on salvation because God is a God Who wants to save (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9; John 3:16). Since God wants to save, He has shown through these means (command, inference, and example) how one must be saved. Knowing that salvation from Pentecost after Jesus' ascension through the remainder of time is not accomplished the way salvation was accomplished under the Old Law, the Bible student should see what the Christians of the First Century had done in obedience to God. Their examples speak volumes today!

Regarding Pentecost in A.D. 29, that day witnessed the preaching of the first Gospel sermon and the birth of the church which Jesus had promised to build (Mat. 16:18). Like the

prophets had alerted the Jews of the coming of that day (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:16-21; cf Isa. 2:2,3; Dan. 2:44), Jesus had prepared His disciples for that day (Luke 24:45-49; Acts 1:4,5,8; cf John 14:16,17,26; 15:26,27; 16:7-13). The Testator had died (Heb. 9:16,17), and He, Jesus, had nailed the Old Law to the cross (Col. 2:14); as "the mediator of the new testament" (Heb. 9:15), He was fulfilling prophecy and promise (Acts 2:33). It only follows, that on that day example would show how one could be added to His church.

In the audience on that day were Jews from Mesopotamia and further east, north Africa, Asia Minor, Crete, Rome, Arabia, and likely other places [it was the Jews themselves who were "calling role" in Acts 2:9-11]. Notably were Jews from Judea, ones who had actively killed the Messiah (Acts 2:23,36). Judea was a guilty nation that needed to repent (the language of Acts 2:38 shows that the command to repent was for the people in general: Literally, "you all repent"). But what of the individuals who composed that nation and of all the others who were present to hear the first Gospel sermon? The command to them was "be baptized every one of you." Here was Peter's inspire message: "You as a unit repent, and every individual one of you be baptized." Why? The nation had killed Jesus and needed to turn; the individuals had sins that were covered no longer under Judaism.

The example in Acts 2, then, is non-covenant sinners [Stephen would refer to the Jews as "uncircumcised in heart and ears" (Acts 7:51) because their physical circumcision was of no spiritual benefit to them (Col. 2:11 [note especially the participial Col. 2:12]; Rom. 2:28,29; Phil. 3:3)], that is, non-Christians, were commanded [both "repent" and "be baptized" are imperative] to have their sins remitted via immersion. Now, note: Those three thousand or so (Acts 2:41) who were added to the church (compare Acts 2:47) that day heard (Acts 2:8), believed [as is implied in their being pricked in the heart (Acts 2:37)], surely [especially those of Judea] repented having been convicted of rejecting and murdering Jesus, and were baptized (Acts 2:41). Note that many other things were said on that day [perhaps including their being told to confess Christ, but certainly being told to "Save yourselves from this untoward [perverse] generation [that had rejected the Lord]" (Acts 2:40)].

Before moving to the next example, it may be wise to answer what could be a quibble from Acts 2:44. Rather than being a quibble, it actually can serve as a foundational answer for the common objection that all one must do is believe. There, Luke recorded, "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; ..." These were not ones who merely believed, were saved by their mere belief, and who were due their mere belief sharing all things common with those who were converted on Pentecost. These actually included that number and the apostles and others who had already been converted during the ministry of Jesus: "All that believed" were all of the members of the Lord's church. Their being believers demonstrates the motivation of their obedience, not the sole act of their obedience; accordingly, it is possibly employing a figure of speech called synecdoche (in which part of something is expressed for the whole [as in the single act of belief or repentance or baptism being used for all of the steps of salvation]). Regarding this figure of speech, D.R. Dungan in his book *Hermeneutics* defined the term writing, "It is usually spoken of as a figure of speech by which we speak of the whole by a part, or a part by the whole" [p. 300]). Dungan then gave an example of "all the world" (Luke 2:1) signifying the Roman Empire. It is also possible that the figure of speech employed was metonymy which is simply "the employment of one name or word for another"(Dungan, p. 270).

One may refer to the Lord's church by any number of names including body, family, way, the believers, disciples, or as here "all that believed." Regardless of whether synecdoche or metonymy be the figure of speech employed, to suggest that those spoken of here had done nothing but believe is unwarranted--as it is in many of the texts used to support belief alone as sufficient [as in the popular application of John 3:16 and Acts 4:4--which shall be addressed shortly].

In Acts 3:19, the Jews who had killed Jesus (Acts 3:14,15) were told, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; ..." As in Acts 2:38, the repentance was necessary for these in general (note the "therefore" associated with "repent ye"). There also needed to be conversion. Conversion, the Greek *epistrepho* (ἐπιστρέφω), literally "turn upon," is complementary to their need to repent. They had killed Jesus and needed to turn back to God so that they could be saved. This is not salvation by repentance alone; rather, it is representative of the Jews' urgent need to return to the God Whom they had abandoned (consider the parables of Matthew 21:33-45). The Jews had forfeited their position as God's people!

In Acts 4:4, Luke recorded, "Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand." Similarly, Luke later in the chapter recorded "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any *of them* that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common" (Acts 4:32). Attention was just given to the figure of speech known as synecdoche. In these two passages it is being employed by Luke. To illustrate that these did not *only* hear and believe, were one asked whether these repented or whether they confessed Christ as Lord, the answer likely would be a resounding "Yes" to both. If the answer be "Yes," then they did not merely hear and believe--synecdoche is required. If they not only heard and believed, but also repented and confessed, then would they not also have done what they had seen others doing two chapters earlier and submit to baptism? Were they being taught a contrary plan of salvation so soon? If one would argue that repentance and confession were involved in their having "believed," then he *cannot* argue that their being baptized is necessarily excluded.

In the midst of this passage is Acts 4:12 which reads, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." Salvation was only available in Jesus whom they had crucified (Acts 4:10), it could not be attained in Judaism; accordingly, they had two choices: remain lost in Judaism or be saved in Christ. Five thousand acted upon the latter, being believers in Jesus. Just a side note, but what had Jesus taught? Jesus had taught, yea, had authorized, that hearing (Mat. 13:9), believing (John 8:24; Mark 16:16), repenting (Luke 13:3,5), confession (Mat. 10:32), and even baptism (Mark 16:16; John 3:3,5) were essential and tied to salvation! If those in Acts 4 were doing things according to Jesus' name, then they were not merely hearing and believing; rather, they were obeying.

Later, when questioned by the high priest before the Sanhedrin concerning their continuing to preach Jesus in Jerusalem (Acts 5:27,28), Peter and the other apostles answered, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Blaming the council again [the high priest had accused them of intending to bring Jesus' blood upon them], Peter and the others said, "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted

with his right hand *to be* a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:30,31). Were these teaching that forgiveness of sins was merely a gift which required no effort on the part of the Jews? Does this imply that today salvation is a gift which is merely given and requires no effort on the part of man?

Notice four things: first, when one gives something, it must be received in order to have the effect the giver intended [if one were to offer another a one hundred dollar bill, the one who had been offered the money would understand that he would have to do something to accept the money--even if it were as simple as reaching out his hand to receive it from the giver~one may quibble in this modern age, "He could direct-deposit the gift"; however, that would still require the recipient's sharing his bank and account information!]; second, the Lord not only gave forgiveness of sins, He also gave "repentance to Israel" [did that repentance require a change on their part, or could the Jews continue their crusade against Christ and His church? If that repentance were merely given then the Jews are saved to this day, yet Paul said, "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46)]; third, even if this were a mere gift, this passage does not apply universally, but is "to Israel"; fourth, in the very next sentence, one sees that there is a difference between those who obey and disobey.

What, then, did Peter mean when he said that God exalted Jesus to give "forgiveness of sins"? Interestingly, "forgiveness of sins" is not a common phrase. It will be seen again in Acts 13:38 in Paul's sermon in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:14-41). In that context, one sees John's baptism of repentance [which was for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4)] (Acts 13:24). One also sees that the One, through Whom forgiveness is preached, justifies "all that believe ... from all things" [which the law of Moses could not do] (Acts 13:39). As in Acts 5, the message was for Jews who ultimately had to obey Christ. The expression is seen again in Acts 26:18 where Saul, being commissioned by Jesus to preach to the Gentiles (Acts 26:17), was told his mission was "To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." How did Paul reveal the availability of remission of sins to the Gentiles? The same expression is used in his writing to the Ephesians and Colossians; he told them of Christ "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;" (Eph. 1:7) and "In whom we have redemption through his blood, *even* the forgiveness of sins:" (Col. 1:14), tying the forgiveness of sins to the blood of Christ which both of these groups had accessed in obedience which is connected to being baptized (Eph. 2:13; Col. 2:12; cf Rom. 6:3,4). In short, in Acts 5:31 Peter was telling the Jewish leaders that Israel could be saved, but their salvation could only be accomplished through the One Whom they had put to death; thankfully He still could provide salvation [for Jesus had been raised and exalted], but that salvation had to be accomplished in obedience--which began with Israel's repenting [as had been the message in Acts 2:38].

When one reaches Acts 6, he sees some interesting uses of the word "faith." First, Stephen was described as "full of faith" (at least in Acts 6:5 and in some versions in Acts 6:8 as well). Stephen's being full of faith could demonstrate that he was full of belief, but I would suggest that could be said of the other six chosen by the apostles. Perhaps this could demonstrate

that he was full of *the* system of faith, but there is no definite article in the Greek and surely the other six were similarly knowledgeable. Some might argue that he was full of some miraculous aspect of faith, but "and of the Holy Ghost" in verse 5 and "and power" in verse 8 that show he was *also* full of that in addition to full of faith, showing a distinction between those attributes. Given that he boldly preached Jesus in the synagogues and before the Sanhedrin even to the point that he was martyred (Acts 6:8-7:60), his being "full of faith" might be taken as "full of confidence" or "full of conviction" to a degree that the other six were not [at least of yet]. This is not some inherent, personal saving belief.

Also in Acts 6, one sees "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith" (Acts 6:7). "The faith" here does contain the definite article in the Greek (τῇ πίστει) as in the English "to the faith." This is the system of faith. As the word was preached and disciples were multiplied, even many of the priests [the Jewish religious leaders] obeyed the faith. What faith did they obey? There was only one [and would continue to be only one (Eph. 4:5)]; it was the faith which had been preached when the church was established and the Jews [perhaps many of them were even present at the first Gospel sermon and establishment of the church] were told "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins," (Acts 2:38). There is no Scriptural reason to believe that they would have obeyed *any* different instruction. They were obedient to the faith and would have been added to the church as all others (Acts 2:47) who likewise obeyed.

At the stoning of Stephen, a great persecution led to the church's being scattering abroad and preaching the Word as they went (Acts 8:1-4). One of those brethren was Philip who preached in Samaria (Acts 8:5). The Samaritans "with one accord gave heed" to him and his genuine proofs of his message (Acts 8:6,7); moreover, when they believed, they were baptized. Luke plainly recorded, "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12). One thing is noteworthy, another is evident. First, noteworthy is this: Critics of baptism do not use this passage to make a case against repentance and confession; in fact, most surely would hold that these things were part of Philip's message and of the Samaritans' obedience--they had heard the "name of Jesus Christ" and surely appreciated the necessity conforming to the laws of His kingdom. *If* baptism were likewise not specifically mentioned, would it receive the same recognition of having taken place that these other acts receive? Second, evident is this: As he was preaching about the kingdom and Christ, Philip must also have preached baptism. How else would the Samaritans have known that they were to be baptized?

Among those who heard and obeyed was one who, formerly, "had bewitched" the Samaritans through feigned miracles--mere trickery, perhaps even sleight of hand (Acts 8:9). The Gospel and the miraculous power accompanying it were powerful even for this fraud, for "Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done" (Acts 8:13). Simon had been converted; howbeit, he appears--especially initially--to have been more impressed by the means of the message than the message itself. Have no doubt, though; the Samaritans, including Simon, "were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 8:16); indeed, they were members of the Lord's church.

Simon's infatuation with the genuine ability accompanying the laying on of apostles' hands (Acts 8:18,19) was sin (Acts 8:20-22a) [some will allege that Simon was never *really* converted before he was told only to repent and pray (Acts 8:22); however, one will notice that Simon was not said to have sinned until *after* he had seen that the gift of the Holy Spirit was transmissible (Acts 18:18) *after* Peter and John had arrived from Jerusalem (Acts 8:14,15)]. This new convert Simon did not need to be baptized again; he had been and that had accomplished the washing away of his former sins (cf Acts 22:16). But, now the new creature (2 Cor. 5:17; cf Rom. 6:4) had new sin. Accordingly, Simon was told, "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:22). Some have called this "God's Second Law of Pardon." Sadly there have been ones through the years who have taught that one who had been saved but subsequently sinned was doomed with no further hope. From a church history perspective, this is what prompted the Shepherd of Hermas to graciously allow for one extra act of repentance (*Book of Mandates*, IV.3) [but one had better not sin the second time!]. That men would alter God's simple plan is not new, either with regard to initial salvation (e.g., disregarding baptism or accepting a mere prayer) or subsequent restoration (e.g., saying that one cannot be saved after a post-conversion sin or after a post-restoration second sin). God's plan is simple and consistent as all of these examples show.

Philip was called from his work in Samaria to meet a proselyte who was traveling from Jerusalem back toward his Ethiopian home after one of the Jewish feasts (Acts 8:27). As he traveled along the bumpy, deserted road toward Gaza on the first leg of his return, he was reading Isaiah (Acts 8:26,28), specifically Isaiah 53:7,8 (Acts 8:32,33). Philip joined him and, starting from that passage, began to preach to him about Jesus (Acts 8:35). Preaching Jesus must have included preaching about the church and about the means of entry, for "as they went on *their* way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" (Acts 8:36). How else could the eunuch have known that he needed to be baptized posthaste? Philip, upon the eunuch's declaration of belief expressed in his confession [the only time the "formula" (for lack of a better term, but compare Matthew 16:16) is seen in the church age] (Acts 8:37), had the chariot stopped and baptized the eunuch. Some have quibbled that this was desert, so there would not have been sufficient water to baptize (thus potentially allowing for pouring or sprinkling of water upon the eunuch); however, the word "desert" in Acts 8:26, the Greek *eremos* (ἔρημος), can also mean "desolate, solitary, wilderness" (Strong) and "lonely" (Zodhiates); that is, a place that is "deserted" (Thayer); moreover, there was sufficient water for Philip and the eunuch to both go down into it!

Acts 9 contains the first of three accounts (cf Acts 22:4-16; 26:11-20 [at this time focus will be given to Acts 9's account and meshing it with those in Acts 22 and 26; those latter passages will be given more detail in their respective order]) of the conversion of the great persecutor of the early church, the man who gave consent to the murder of Stephen--Saul of Tarsus (Acts 8:1). As Acts 9 begins, Saul, more commonly called by his Latin name Paul, has been given authority to persecute the church as far as Damascus in Syria; the "bound" of Acts 9:2 is not an innocuous term, for Acts 9:1 speaks of his "breathing out threatenings and slaughter" and Acts 26:10 has this confession: "... and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against *them*." As terrible as Saul was to the church, the Lord saw great value in him (1 Tim. 1:12); Paul told Timothy of his blasphemous persecution, merciful salvation, and ignorant unbelief (1 Tim.

1:13) and of the Lord's abounding grace (1 Tim. 1:14). Paul called himself the "chief of sinners" (1 Tim. 1:15), explaining that his salvation was a "first" example of the ability of Jesus to save (1 Tim. 1:16)--the words "chief" and "first" are forms of the same word in the Greek, *protos* (Gr. *πρῶτος*). None should say "Jesus Christ cannot save me," for Jesus was able to save Paul; for some a genuine mourning over grievous sin may prompt them, humbly, to feel such, but they can have assurance of even their salvation; for others, claiming to have such terrible sins merely excuses their remaining in sin, for they are, pridefully, effectively saying, "I am a greater sinner than Jesus is a Savior." If Paul could be saved, anyone can!

Some will speak of Saul's journey pre-arrival in Damascus as the conversion of Saul. In reality, he was not saved on the road to Damascus. Note what Jesus told him: "**Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? ... I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. ... Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do***" (Acts 9:4-6; cf 22:7,8,10; 26:14,15) and "**But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; Delivering thee from the people, and *from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, To open their eyes, and to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from the power of Satan* unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me***" (Acts 26:16-18). Jesus did not tell Saul that his sins were forgiven; rather, He told Saul what his purpose would be and that he would be told in Damascus what he had to do. Paul told Agrippa, "Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But shewed first unto them of Damascus, ..." (Acts 26:19,20). Saul was not saved on the road to Damascus! There was no joy like that accompanying salvation (Acts 8:39); rather, there was blindness and fasting (Acts 9:9,10) and praying (Acts 9:11).

Why, then, one might ask, did Ananias call him "brother Saul" (Acts 9:17; 22:13)? One can be a brother in one sense and not another: There are physical brothers, step and foster brothers, brothers-in-arms (like the famed "Band of Brothers"), "blood brothers" (as children sometimes might pretend to be), brothers in industries ("International Brotherhood of ..."), brothers in a fraternity, brothers on the sports field, religious brothers, national brethren, et cetera. Ananias was a Jew speaking to a Jew; it was fitting and proper for him to call Saul, "brother Saul"--especially given Ananias had had his reservations about Saul (Acts 9:13,14) and may have been trying to find common ground with this one who could be an enemy.

Some may argue that the baptism in Acts 9:18 was just a washing since Paul was probably still dirty from his journey and had been weakened by fasting (Acts 9:19). Acts 22:16 plainly answers that objection, for Ananias said, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Paul was fasting in his sin, not in his salvation. "Calling on the name of the Lord," that is, obeying the authority of the Lord, required Saul be baptized so that his sins could be washed away. Until he was baptized, he was no more than a blasphemous persecutor of the church for he was still in his sins!

As Acts 9 closes, Peter's work has come back into focus: when he healed Aeneas, people "turned to the Lord" (Acts 9:32-35); when he raised Tabitha, "many believed in the Lord (Acts 9:36-42). Any claiming salvation by belief only in Acts 9:42 must acknowledge that turning only (Acts 9:35) is equally sufficient [which, ironically, would eliminate belief]. In reality, one who



turns to the Lord only does so believing in the Lord and one who turns to the Lord in belief is going to do all that the Lord has commanded, including being saved the same way all others in the church age had been and would.

From Genesis 12 God had a chosen people, the family of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; 2 Cor. 11:22) who were the Hebrews (Gen. 40:15; Phi. 3:5 [one will note Abram had been designated a Hebrew (Gen. 14:13)]) or Israelites (Exo. 9:7; Acts 2:36 [so named for Jacob (Gen. 32:28,32)]) or Jews (the first mention of which was 2 Kings 16:6; cf Mat. 2:2). Ultimately, though, they were not all Israel who were Israel (Rom. 9:6), for there was spiritual Israel (Eph. 2:11-13; Gal. 6:15,16; Phil. 3:3) when "the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Rom. 11:25). Isaiah had prophesied of the coming church, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2:2). Jesus Himself said, "**And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd**" (John 10:16).

It has already been shown that, from before his conversion, Paul was commissioned to preach to the Gentiles (Acts 26:17; cf 9:15; Eph. 3:8), but Paul was not the first to do so; that is where Acts 10 plays its role. In a city of the Jews was an Italian centurion named Cornelius (Acts 10:1); while he was not a Christian, he had a great admiration and respect for the God Who was worshipped in the land in which he was stationed--the respect was to such a degree that Cornelius "feared God with all his house, ... gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway" (Acts 10:2). Cornelius was not saved (Acts 10:6,33,48), but God desired him to be! In a vision, Cornelius was told that God knew of his seeking to please God and was instructed to send for Peter (Acts 10:3-6). The next day, Peter likewise received a message from God (Acts 10:9-16).

Cornelius knew why he had sent for Peter (Acts 10:6), but Peter had no idea what his vision meant (Acts 10:17)--in fact, even the clarification of those sent for Peter was vague; they said that the centurion was "to hear words from thee" (Acts 10:22, ASV). By Acts 10:28, Peter understood: "Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean"; it may be more correct to say he partly understood, for asked the reason that he had been sought (Acts 10:29) and he would need more proof that Cornelius was not just a Gentile to whom he could speak, but one who was a candidate for salvation. Having heard Cornelius' story and the conclusion that Cornelius was "to hear all things that are commanded thee of God"(Acts 10:30-33), Peter put together more of the pieces: "God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him ... that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:34-43). Do note, though, that Peter thought it worthy to mention, "The word which *God* sent unto the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) That word, *I say*, ye know, which was published throughout all Judaea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached;" (Acts 10:36,37), indicating that the original mandate was for Jews to be



baptized [as a side note, do remember that John's baptizing was "for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4; Luke 1:77; 3:3)]. To put an exclamation point upon the occasion, "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word" (Acts 10:44). Be careful to note that those who witnessed this were not only described as "as many as came with Peter" but also as "the circumcision" and note the result: They were "astonished ... because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 10:45).

This was not the moment of Cornelius and his company's conversion; rather, this was a sign to the Jewish Christians that the Gentiles could be added to the church, just as the like-event on Pentecost was a sign that the church was being established in the first place! (Acts 2:4-21). Having seen the sign, and now *fully* understanding why he was called; he said, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" (Acts 10:47). Oh, what to do? This was a lost audience who had been instructed to send for Peter so that he could tell them what God commanded; therefore "he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord" (Acts 10:48). That chosen people of Genesis 12 was now a different chosen people, composed not of descendants of Abraham only, but of Jew and Gentile who submitted to God through the "law of Christ" (cf Gal. 6:2; Rom. 8:2; 10:4).

The question was solved for Peter, and likely for those Jewish Christians with him; however, those in Jerusalem were not so willing to accept that the Gentiles could be converted; they "contended with him, Saying, Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and didst eat with them. But Peter rehearsed *the matter* from the beginning, and expounded *it* by order unto them" (Acts 11:2-4). Acts 11 is a retelling of Acts 10 not from the third person perspective of Luke, but from the first person perspective of Peter!

Some feel that Cornelius and his household were saved when the Holy Ghost fell upon them (Acts 11:15); however, the angel had told Cornelius that he would be told "words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved" (Acts 11:14). The Holy Spirit no more saved them than He had saved Peter and the other apostles, for Peter said "the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning--Peter and the others were already saved; this was not for the purpose of salvation, but for the same purpose as in Acts 2. What was that purpose? In Jerusalem on that Pentecost were thousands of Jews not only from Jerusalem and Judea but "out of every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5, cf 9-11) who had not been exposed to or had not appreciated that Jesus was the Messiah. The Holy Spirit was giving them a sign which had been anticipated from the time of Joel (Acts 2:16-21) and which proved the veracity of the Apostles' message that Jesus was the Christ. In Acts 10, Cornelius and his household were not needing a sign; rather, Peter and those with him were cautious in allowing Gentiles to enter the church, and while Peter had seen the vision (Acts 10:9-16; 11:5-10) [though he wasn't convinced of its meaning (Acts 10:17)], those who were with him had not even that much indication that Gentiles could be saved. Now, seeing the Holy Spirit fall upon Cornelius and his house, Peter said, "Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as *he did* unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?" (Acts 11:17). Peter's recounting the event worked, for "When they [the suspicious Jewish Christians-DFC] heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18). Do note that "repentance unto life" was not all that was involved in Cornelius and his household's salvation; rather, that is another synecdoche, for they had heard (Acts 11:14) and believed (Acts

10:2 [the "who believed" in verse 17 were the at least those already Christians, but perhaps even the Apostles who trusted God's signs (cf Acts 10:45)] and perhaps confessed (Acts 10:46) and certainly been baptized (Acts 10:48) as well.

The door had been Divinely opened to the Gentiles, and many of those who had scattered at the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 8:1) preached to the Gentiles in Antioch (Acts 11:20). There was likely already a church there composed of Jewish Christians (Acts 11:19), but now "a great number [of Antioch's Gentile population-DFC] believed, and turned unto the Lord" (Acts 11:21). Did they only believe? No, they also turned to the Lord (repentance). Is that all? No, for "believed" and/or "turned" here would be another synecdoche including hearing and confessing and--given its place in the other conversion accounts--submitting to baptism.

Following the conversion of this wave of Antioch's Gentiles, Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch (Acts 11:22), apparently to do what Barnabas was known to do: Encourage the new Christians (Acts 11:23; cf 4:36; 11:24). Barnabas then went to Tarsus to carry Saul (Paul) to Antioch also (Acts 11:25,26). Several things are notable from a general perspective: first, this is where the disciples first wore the "new name" Christian (cf Isa. 62:2); second, here is [as far as Revelation is concerned] Paul's introduction to his mandate as apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 22:21; 26:17; Rom. 11:13; 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11); third, this would be the church from which Paul's missionary journeys originated (Acts 13:2,3; 15:36; 18:22,23); and, fourth, here is where the first need for contributions for the brethren in Jerusalem was prophetically made known (Acts 11:27-30; cf 1 Cor. 16:3; 2 Cor. 8:19).

Paul's first journey is recorded from Acts 13:3-14:26. Paul and Barnabas with John sailed to Cyprus from Antioch's port city of Seleucia landing and preaching in Salamis on the eastern side of the island (Acts 13:4,5). The journey had begun well enough, but a threat lay just on the other side of the island, for "when they had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name *was* Barjesus: Which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; ..." (Acts 13:6,7). While Sergius Paulus "desired to hear the word of God" preached by Barnabas and Saul [Paul's Hebrew name], the Jew, "Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith" (Acts 13:7,8). Judaizers greatly threatened the work of Paul and others in the first century, and this particular one hoped that Sergius Paulus could be turned from the Gospel at the point of first hearing it! Note that Elymas tried to turn one "from the faith" (Acts 13:8) who had not yet, but would subsequently have (Acts 13:12), believed--only after seeing the punishment of Elymas (Acts 13:9-11). While one does not read anything more than that Sergius Paulus believed, he sees in the text that one's being turned "from the faith" was not a proof of his having been saved. Seeing no further history for Sergius Paulus, one might wonder whether he ever did anything more than believe. Sadly, in the narrative, one reads nothing specifically of his conversion or of his going away joyful (remember the post-baptism response of the eunuch in Acts 8:39); however, one would hope that Sergius Paulus' belief here were a synecdoche for obedience.

In Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:14) [not to be confused with Antioch of Syria from which the journey originated], Paul preached a lesson on the history of God's people from their time in Egypt to the coming of Jesus to a current call for action (Acts 13:16-41); within this sermon's purview fell the work of John the baptist who "had first preached before his [Jesus-DFC] coming

the baptism of repentance" (Acts 13:24) which had been "for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3). Paul went on to say that Jesus who had been killed had also been raised (Acts 13:28,30); that was the One through Whom Paul preached "the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 13:38). He was speaking to Jews (Acts 13:26), some of whom may have been in Jerusalem when Jesus was condemned or when the church had been established; regardless of whether these ones had, it was Jews who had rejected and killed Jesus and who had been convicted in Acts 2. At that time, only about three thousand [likely a relatively small percentage of those in Jerusalem that day] obeyed (Acts 2:41). The rest had yet rejected Jesus. They had not appreciated what Paul would say in Acts 13:39: "And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."

The Mosaic system could not save, but Jesus' system would! This does not appear to have been a simple call to mere belief, but a contrast between the system which Moses began and the one which replaced it--regardless, both required obedience. The Jews left but the Gentiles wanted more! (Acts 13:42). Again, the Jews, at least a significant number still did not believe--albeit many did (Acts 13:43). The next Saturday, "almost the whole city together to hear the word of God" (Acts 13:44). For the envious, unbelieving Jews, that was the last straw; effectively, Paul and Barnabas said, "Fine," for "Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). If the Jews would not believe, the Gentiles would; in fact, "when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). If we follow the reasoning laid out, those who ultimately were converted ("ordained" is not "foreordained"; rather, would be similar to "added" in Acts 2:47--this thought will be developed shortly) believed--many had been in the synagogues on the Sabbath days and had heard the message of the Jews, but preferred Jesus' system over Moses.' Now to return to the meaning of "ordained." The Greek word is *tasso* (Gr. [τάσσω](#)) which means "To place, set, appoint, arrange, order" (Zodhiates). In Acts 2:47, the word "added" is *prostithemi* (Gr. [προστίθμι](#)) which is a contracted (with *pros*, "to" or "toward") form of *tithemi* (Gr. [τίθμι](#)) a synonym of *tasso* meaning, "To set, add, put, lay unto or with something" (Zodhiates).

In Iconium, the initial response to Paul and Barnabas was favorable; however, the "unbelieving Jews" quickly turned the Gentiles of Iconium against those bearing the Gospel (Acts 14:1,2); fortunately, the receptive Jews and Greeks continued to hear for a "long time" seeing the confirming miracles (Acts 14:3). The belief of the Jews and Greeks may be a synecdoche; however, it could merely be their immediate recognition that Paul and Barnabas preached Truth with the necessary obedience following at some point. Sadly, the opposition had a powerful effect against the ones who believed and the missionaries who were forced to flee into Lycaonia (Acts 14:4-6; cf 2 Tim. 3:11).

In Lystra was a believing man who needed to be healed (Acts 14:8,9)--Paul perceived his faith which had been undoubtedly gained by hearing Paul preach the Word of God (Rom. 10:17; Acts 14:7). Persecuted in Lystra as well (Acts 14:19), Paul with Barnabas went on to Derbe (Acts 14:20) and preached before returning through Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch and "confirming the souls of the disciples, *and* exhorting them to continue in the faith" (Acts 14:21,22). These churches were young, but [likely given the number of Jewish-Christians] were ready to have

elders, so "when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed" (Acts 14:23).

Returning to Antioch at the end of the first journey, Paul and Barnabas "rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles" (Acts 14:27). Paul and Barnabas had opened the door, but the converts themselves had chosen whether to enter; when they entered, undoubtedly the Lord added them to the church as He had at the beginning (Acts 2:47).

Ecumenical "Church Councils" [as the ones at Nicea in A.D. 325, Constantinople in 360, Ephesus in 431, Rome in 1123, Trent in 1546, and many others] have dominated "Christian" [in the world's definition], especially Catholic, history for the larger part of the last two thousand years [all the way to Vatican II from 1962-1965]. In justification for these doctrine-determining events, some have gone to Acts 15 and have called its assembly the first "church council." As one studies this chapter, he sees doctrine not being decided but recognized. He is reminded of Matthew 16:19, and, if he appreciates the tenses of the original language, will understand that the meeting in Jerusalem could only bind what had already been bound in heaven. Please consider the events of Acts 15.

After Paul and Barnabas had returned from their missionary journey, Jewish Christians who thought that Gentile Christians needed to submit to Jewish ordinances went to Antioch to dispute with Paul and Barnabas; accordingly, it was "determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question" (Acts 15:1,2). Not surprisingly, it was "certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, [who said-DFC], That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command *them* to keep the law of Moses" (Acts 15:5). Verse six says that "the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter"; "to consider" is not the same as "to decide"; in fact, the Greek word is *eido* (εἶδω), meaning, simply "to see"--it can also mean "be sure" (Strong). The decision had been made in heaven and confirmed by heaven through the events surrounding Cornelius' and his household's conversion; all that lacked was being sure. So, Peter brought up the events of Acts 10 (Acts 15:7-9,12). Incidentally, in verse nine, "by faith" is in the Greek "by the faith" (τῇ πίστει)--the same system that could save Jews could save Gentiles; moreover, there was no other burden--no Pharisaical burden, or even Jewish burden--placed upon those in Acts 10 (implied in Acts 15:10).

What of James' "sentence"? He said, "Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and *from* fornication, and *from* things strangled, and *from* blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day." (Acts 15:19-21). Was that not very council-like? The word "sentence" is *krino* (κρίνω) and is associated with judgment, meaning "*decide ... try, condemn, punish*" (Strong), but it can mean "to form or give an opinion after separating and considering the particulars of a case" and to "judge in one's own mind as to what is right, proper, expedient" (Zodhiates). One will notice, too, that "it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well" (Acts 15:28,29)--even if this were a ruling, it was not one of a council of men [like the ecumenical councils of church history]; rather, it was of God (Acts

compare the language of Matthew 16:19: God bound or loose and man, according to God's binding or loosing, bound or loosed); accordingly, this council did not decide doctrine.

In Acts 16 the reader is introduced to Timothy and told that while Timothy's father was a Greek, his mother [and grandmother also, for that reason (2 Tim. 1:5)] "was a Jewess, and believed" (Acts 16:1). Eunice, his mother, was a Christian. Likely, both she and Timothy had been converted on Paul's first journey, for Timothy "was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium" (Acts 16:2) indicating his having been converted sometime earlier. Also, Paul's wanting for Timothy to be a co-laborer (Acts 16:3) implies that some time had passed since Timothy's conversion. Acts 16:4 reminds the reader of Acts 15:28,29; but not only were Paul and his co-workers giving the congregations their marching orders, they also were strengthening the congregations "in the faith" and seeing the congregations grow "in number daily" (Acts 16:5).

Paul had a plan for this missionary journey, but the Lord had a different one, so Paul sailed across the northern area of the Aegean Sea following the "Macedonian Call" (Acts 16:6-11). Reaching Philippi, "the chief city of that part of Macedonia" (Acts 16:12), Paul found no synagogue, but found worshippers of God "by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made" (Acts 16:13). One there was Lydia--she worshipped, she listened, her heart was opened by the Lord [likely in the same way that the Jews on Pentecost were "pricked in their heart" by Peter's message (Acts 2:37) and yet still in their sins (Acts 2:38)], she paid attention (Acts 16:14), but she still needed to be baptized; in fact, not only was she but also her household were baptized (Acts 16:15). While some argue that "her household" implies that infants were baptized, there is no ground for such argument. Even if "her household" only meant her children, there is nothing to show that she was too young to have older children who were capable of their own obedience; moreover, she was a business woman, "a seller of purple"--her household, *oikos* (*οἶκος*), could have included those with her in business or others if they lived "together in a house" (Zodhiates) [cf Acts 10:2; 11:4]. On this verse in his *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, A.T. Robertson wrote,

There is nothing here to show whether Lydia's "household" went beyond "the women" employed by her who like her had heard the preaching of Paul and had believed. "Possibly Euodia and Syntyche and the other women, Phi. 4:2,3, may have been included in the family of Lydia, who may have employed many slaves and freed women in her trade" (Knowling). "This statement cannot be claimed as any argument for infant baptism, since the Greek word may mean her servants or her work-people" (Furneaux). In the household baptisms (Cornelius, Lydia, the jailor, Crispus) one sees "infants" or not according to his predilections or preferences.

Ultimately, while in Philippi, Paul and Silas were thrown into prison, accused thus: "These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans" (Acts 16:20,21). Really, they had just hit some of the locals "in the pocket book" for "the hope of their gains was gone" (Acts 16:19). In prison, they did not lose hope or complain, rather, "at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God" (Acts 16:25). One may remember that then an earthquake struck and the

prison was compromised and the jailor (who had been asleep) was going to kill himself thinking that all of his charges would have escaped (Acts 16:26,27). Surely to his amazement, not only did the prisoners remain (Acts 16:28), but two of them would teach him the Gospel. His immediate question, though, is an odd one. The first thing that is recorded he asked had nothing to do with the prison, but with salvation (Acts 16:30). Why that question? We read that "the prisoners heard" Paul and Silas' praying and singing at midnight, perhaps the jailor had heard them earlier--before his sleep. One will also note that the question was not asked when he "sprang in" (Acts 16:29), but when he "brought them out," which indicates there was a period of time not developed narratively in which he may have checked the condition of the other prisoners and spoken concerning the state of the prison.

Regardless of when he asked, his question was the essential one: "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas told him, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." Was the single act of believing all that he had to do? First, if that were so, then not only would he have been saved by the single act, so would his household--did they not have to believe for themselves? Second, at this point he had not even been taught "the word of the Lord," and neither had his household (Acts 16:32). Third, he subsequently was baptized (Acts 16:33), implying that he did not think that belief was the only thing to be done. One will note that after he and his household had been taught and had washed the wounds of the Good News bringers and had been immediately baptized, he fed them and rejoiced (Acts 16:34). He did not rejoice and then get baptized; rather, like the Ethiopian he was baptized and then rejoiced (Acts 8:38,39). Consider also that the acts of verse 34 are tied together with the participial "believing in God with all his house"; this belief was not a one-time saving action; rather, it was the basis for his other actions.

Having left Philippi and having passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, Paul reached Thessalonica where he found a synagogue and preached the resurrection of Christ for three weeks (Acts 17:1-3). In Thessalonica a good number, especially of the "devout Greeks" and chief women, believed and, as the saying is, threw in their lot [a relatively literal translation of "consorted" (*proskleroo*, [προσκληρόω](#))] with Paul (Acts 17:4). Their believing here may imply their mere agreement with Paul's teaching, or, more likely, their having been converted; regardless, it is not a statement of an act by which they were saved; in fact, their belief is contrasted with the unbelieving of the Jews (Acts 17:5)--surely, the Jew's believing not was a state not an act.

Ultimately, so threatened and endangered by the Jews, "the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea" where there was another synagogue (Acts 17:10). Similar results were seen in Berea as had been in Thessalonica, for "many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few" (Acts 17:12) and "the Jews of Thessalonica ... came thither also, and stirred up the people" (Acts 17:13). Again, believed may have been mere agreement or a demonstration of their obedience; it does not appear to be a one-time salvation-acquiring action. One will note that these were ones searching "the scriptures daily" (Acts 17:11).

Next, Paul, leaving Silas and Timothy behind (Acts 17:14), moved on to Athens where he had occasion to preach on the Areopagus, Mar's Hill, at the foot of the famed Acropolis (Acts 17:19,22). There he found ones who worshipped many gods and even ignorantly worshipped the

true God (Acts 17:23). While there have been many suggestions regarding what God's winking at the Gentiles' past signified, what is sure is that by the time Paul was among them, repentance was necessary for all everywhere (Acts 17:30). That repentance was necessary because there would be a day of judgment (Acts 17:31). Few would question that repentance was all that was necessary, for, surely, belief and obedience would be necessary; interestingly, the idea that repentance would need to be accompanied by belief and obedience allows for baptism to be a part of the obedience; sadly, some may concede that here [at least with reference to repentance including belief], but not in other places where belief [by itself] is tied to salvation. More plainly put, as "to repent" [verse 30] does not imply that they did not need to believe, so "believed" [as in verse 34] should not be taken to imply that they had not needed to repent, confess, or be baptized. "To repent" was essential, but so was that they believed, and so was that they obeyed other commands given by Divine authority but not specified in every specific case.

Leaving Athens, Paul went to Corinth (Acts 18:1) where he met Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:2) and was joined by Silas and Timothy (Acts 18:5). There, Paul preached to and was rejected by the Jews so he switched his focus to the Gentiles (Acts 18:5-7). Ironically, one of those who believed was "Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue" (Acts 18:8). That Crispus and his house specifically are spoken of as having believed, while many others "hearing believed, and were baptized," does not mean that he was not baptized also; rather, Crispus' belief is shown because of the contrast with his former state and his former brethren. Before hearing Paul, he had not believed in or followed Jesus; rather, he had believed in and followed the commands found in the Old Law; moreover, among the Corinthian Jews he was one of the few who at Paul's preaching developed faith in Jesus--the others' faith remained in Moses. In reality, any who "hearing believed" would ultimately have been told by Paul that dying to the old man in baptism was also necessary (Rom. 6:3-9).

Acts 18 also introduces us to a brother named Apollo, "an eloquent man, *and* mighty in the scriptures" (Acts 18:24). Apollos was on fire for the Lord, but he did not have all of the knowledge that he needed. He knew of baptism, but only of the baptism of John (Acts 18:25). That baptism, one might recall, was for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4); however, that baptism was temporary in scope anticipating the coming of Jesus and the baptism authorized by Him [which shall be seen in studying Acts 19:1-5]. Fortunately for Apollos, he was taught "more perfectly" by Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:26). Apollos now not only had the ability, but he also had the knowledge which would help "them much which had believed through grace" (Acts 18:27). God's grace enabled salvation, but man had to hear, believe, and obey it!

Apollos was not the only one who knew only the baptism of John. In Ephesus Paul encountered twelve (Acts 19:7) "certain disciples" who had "not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost" though these had believed (Acts 19:1,2). Their belief had not been a sufficient end (Acts 19:3)--some things are worthy of note: first, it was taken for granted by Paul that these had been baptized. If baptism were unnecessary or merely an afterthought, that they certainly had been baptized would not have been expected. Second, indeed, they had been baptized as had been taken for granted. Note that Paul's question was not "Were you baptized?," but "Unto what then were ye baptized?" Third, they had been baptized with John's baptism of repentance [which had been "for the remission of sins" (Luke 3:3)]. That they knew not of the Holy Ghost indicates that they were either or both unaware that the Messiah had come [which



had been anticipated by John's disciples (Luke 3:4; cf Mat. 3:11)] or that the church [the kingdom to which John pointed (Mat. 3:2)] had been established. Apparently these twelve were baptized with the baptism of John after the church had been established or at least for the wrong reason, anticipating that which had already taken place. Fourth, they would need to be baptized with the baptism that was "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 19:5) [which is also "for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38)]. Fifth, they were baptized the second time.

Why would they need to be baptized again if John's baptism were for the remission of sins? Because John's baptism was only in effect pre-establishment of the church; accordingly, belief in the Christ, Jesus, now motivated obedience to His authority not John's (Acts 19:4). Having been baptized again, they received miraculous gifts by the laying on of Paul's hands (Acts 19:6). This is an extremely important but easily overlooked point: The gift of the Holy Ghost was not given in the baptism itself; rather, that giving was a separate act performed by an apostle (Acts 8:18).

Paul's work in Ephesus was a long one and effective. For three months he preached in the synagogue (Acts 19:8). Meeting opposition in the synagogue, Paul preached "daily in the school of one Tyrannus" (Acts 19:9) for two years, during which "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10). In Ephesus itself, genuine miracles performed by Paul (Acts 19:11,12) and the humorous episode of the demon and the sons of Sceva (Acts 19:13-16) caused Jesus' name to be magnified (Acts 19:17) and believers to act (Acts 19:18), "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed" (Acts 19:20).

After journeying into Macedonia and Greece (Acts 20:1,2), Paul made it back into the area of Ephesus, stopping at Miletus where he met the elders of the Ephesian church (Acts 20:15-17). Recounting his work among them, Paul spoke of his teaching "publicly, and from house to house" (Acts 20:20), "testifying ... repentance ... and faith" (Acts 20:21); note that Paul's preaching in Ephesus had convicted of sin and produced repentance; moreover, it had built faith which had obviously motivated obedience.

Paul's purpose in only going to Miletus, and not to Ephesus also, was not to be delayed in his effort to reach Jerusalem for Pentecost (Acts 20:16). Paul and his company arrived in Jerusalem and went to see James and the elders and to give an account of "what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry" (Acts 21:17-19). Jerusalem would be a place of potential (Acts 21:21) and actual (Acts 21:27ff) opposition. In this text, there are two groups described as ones "which believe" (Acts 21:20,25): Jews and Gentiles. This is not speaking about *all* Jews and *all* Gentiles, neither of Jews and Gentiles who had developed faith but had not acted upon it; rather, these were Jews and Gentiles who were believers, Christians. These Christians were, as Jews, capable of having their Jewish sensibilities offended or, as Gentiles, of going back to pagan practices; they were Christians, believers, nonetheless.

The last quarter of Acts (chapters 22-28) is largely Paul's defense before Jews and Romans alike and his journey to Rome to appear before the Caesar. As Acts 21 concluded, Claudius Lysias allowed Paul the opportunity to speak to the Jewish multitude who had just sought his death (Acts 21:31). Paul's speech included an account [the second of three (cf Acts 9:1-18; Acts 26:12-18)] of the events surrounding Saul/Paul's conversion. When Ananias met Paul in Damascus, Paul was still in his sins. Meeting Jesus on the way had not removed them (Acts 9:6); neither had fasting (Acts 9:9) or praying (Acts 9:11) for three days removed them.

Ananias asked Paul, "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). Before one say that Paul received remission because he was told to call out the name "Jesus," pay close attention to the wording: Paul was not commanded to "arise, and be baptized, and wash" and call. This was not an action like the others. The word "calling" is a participle used adverbially. It is showing *how* he was performing the actions. His obedience to Ananias' command was his obeying the authority of Jesus Christ. "Calling upon" (from *ἐπικαλέω*, *epikaleo*) can mean "In a judicial sense, to call upon, invoke a higher tribunal or judge, i.e., to appeal to, e.g., Caesar" (Zodhiates) and "name" includes "authority" (Strong) [the way one may say "Stop in the name (by the authority) of the law"].

After his conversion, Paul had returned to Jerusalem. He told the Jews that, while Paul was in the temple, Jesus warned Paul to leave Jerusalem for the Jews would not hear Paul (Acts 22:18). Paul effectively responded that they would not hear him in the synagogues (implying away from the temple, outside of Jerusalem but in Judea) either (Acts 22:19,20) for it was not merely Stephen who had suffered at his hand. Thus, Jesus had him depart to teach the Gentiles (Acts 22:21). When Paul spoke of beating "in every synagogue them that believed on thee:" (Acts 22:19), it seems that he was using another synecdoche [part for the whole], with "obeyed" being implied--he likely would have beaten the Christians in the synagogues, not those who merely believed on Jesus but had not become His disciples.

When Felix, procurator of Judea from around A.D. 52-56, and his wife, Drusilla, "sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ" (Acts 24:24), he was learning about the Christian system, the law of Christ. This is not personal faith, but that in which Christians are (1 Cor. 16:13; 2 Cor. 13:5; Col. 2:7; et al) and for which Christians contend (Jude 3).

Speaking before Festus, procurator from about A.D. 56 to 62, Agrippa, king of the areas around Galilee from the late 40s to A.D. 70, and Bernice, Paul again gave account of the events surrounding his conversion. As the Lord identified Himself to Paul (Acts 26:15), He also commissioned him (Acts 26:16-18). In this context, Jesus gave among Paul's purpose that he was "To open their [the Gentiles-DFC] eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." The preposition demonstrates that this faith is used substantively; perhaps the idea is the same as "the faith" (Acts 24:24) or perhaps the idea is that of another synecdoche (as in Acts 22:19) or perhaps of believing (as the start of the process); regardless, if faith here be belief alone providing forgiveness then it is certainly out of place in the book of Acts, especially given that belief alone was not sufficient for the salvation of the one to whom Jesus spoke. Paul went on to say that he "was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance" (Acts 26:20). This reminds the reader of the command of Peter that the Jewish nation repent of killing Jesus (Acts 2:38). Their state having repented would still have been a sinful one, for only their hearts and actions would have changed, not their sinfulness. Accordingly, the Jews on Pentecost were commanded, every one to be baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38); so, here, they were to do "works meet for repentance," that is there were other elements that were necessary to be undertaken.

As the book of Acts closes, Paul "dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him" (Acts 28:30,31). That is a sad picture given Paul's bonds, but at least he was able to preach and teach, for the Gospel Itself could not be bound (2 Tim. 2:9). A sober reality of preaching and teaching comes through in Acts 28:24: "And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not." This was general acceptance or rejection of the message of the preacher; such fulfilled prophecy (Acts 28:25-27; Isa. 6:9,10), and such continues to this day wherever the Seed (Luke 8:11) is sown (Mat. 13:3-9,18-23).