

3-4-83. Expectant. At first glance there seems to be an impassable gulf between Jesus and Paul, between Christ and Christianity, between disciples and rigidly orgn church, between the gospel as taught by Jesus and the gospel about Jesus as taught by the letter-writers. To many people it is still a mystifying fact that the simplicity and profundity of J's teaching should go largely ignored in the instructive epistles Paul and the apostles wrote, and something that seems quite different be substituted in its place. And yet that is the fact, ~~and~~ ^{but} there is a bridge over the gulf, there is a connection bewteen that puzzling gospel of and gospel about. It is the Bk of Acts, which shall be our text for the next 3 months, 13 lessons, the Bk of the continuing work of J thru the spirit. It is the 2d volume in Lk's account of the mission of J from his birth to Paul's arrival in Rome, and the world-wide presence of the people of the way. And because the Bk of Acts ends so abruptly and incompletely, there are those who think Lk intended still a 3d volume, or that a part of a scrol is missing. But together the two Bks are a major part of NT, and Lk one of the 2 most important of NT writers. We have come to call them Lk/Acts, but the earliest references to them called them Letters to Theophilus, as you will see if you compare the first sentence of each volume. However named the works of Lk constitute the largest single part of NT; exceeds in bulk Paul's 13 ltrs, or the 5 writings (gospel, Revelat, and 3 ltrs) ascribed to John. So for sheer bulk, about 1/4 of the total, Lk's bks would be important to us in an underst of the beginnings of Xn Ch. But numbers are never as important as content, and in this too Lk stands tall. His gospel is the richest of the 3 synops, with far more material the other two omit, incl a number of the best-beloved parables and incidents. I find it diffic to imagine the gospel w/o the good samaritan, or the prodigal son, or those parables about the lost sheep, lost coin; but these stories, rightly well-loved, were recorded and preserved only by Lk. The beautiful birth-story in its details is found only here, as well as many other crucial details and events. It can safely be said that the loss of no other bk would have deprived us of so much informat upon which we base our faith and our underst of God. And the Bk of Acts, 2d vol of Lk's work, is equally as important. Nothing which has come down to us from the early yrs of the Ch can ~~equal~~ parallel this bk in detail and impact. We can by reading betw the lines of Paul's ltrs guess at the missionary work of the Ch, and even catch a hint of the internal debate over the nature of the Ch. But many of Paul's references and allusions would be meaningless to us w/o Acts--many of them are in fact incomprehensible as they stand, for they mention people and positions familiar to the readers at the time which have since been forgotten. But Lk's continuous treatmt of J's ministr and what followed provide the only source we have that make Paul's ltrs intelligible at all. So here is the bridge across that gulfbetw J and Paul, between Xr and Xty. Let us all take for ourselves the assignmt to read this exciting story this spring, read all of it. For in these sessions we can cover only a tiny portion of the whole; we must leap over much that is important. And those who join this class by radio may write us, to WFBCh at zip 27109, or call the church ofc, if you would like a list of this qr's topics and texts. For today, readings from Acts 1. In the writing of NT the earliest that we have are the ltrs of Paul to the Chs he establ and counselled. He ansd their questions, tried to solve their probls, and reminded them of the theol and ethical teachings of Ch. He made only the briefest of references to the life and teachings of J, and the few citats he made are not in any kind of order. Reading Paul is to assume a greatbody of informat that was not in writing, in any complete version, when Paul wrote. There were oral tradits, repeated by eye-witnesses, already being worked into antiphonal responses, and there were fragments of writing, but nothing systematic. By tradit it was the death of Peter in the mid-60's that caused the apostles to compose their recollections into more permanent forms than the oral. Sometime in the late 60's Mk wrote his brief acct, based upon Peter's memories recounted to Mk over a period of years. About 15 yrs later Lk composed and published the 2d of the gospels, probl early 80's, so that this yr or next could very well be the 1900th anniversary. Lk's scope was much wider than was that of the other 3 canonical gospels; at the same time, or nearly, he wrote the two bks Lk/Acts, and he intended them to be a unit, tied together. It is unfortunate that gospel of John was put betw them in our NT. Lk is by tradit a physician and a native of Antioch of Syria; after the death of Stephen and the flight of Xns from Jerus, Antioch was the center of the Ch, only later replaced by Rome. Somewhere Lk met Paul and became his companion, keeping a diary of their travels, and later writing it all down. His themes emphasized the universality of the Xn revelat, to get Jewish Xns to accept gentile converts, for in all likelihood Lk was himself one of those unclean outsiders; Lk also wrote more about women and about other oppressed groups than did the others, and in his version of Sermon on Mt the poor are blessed ~~because they have the KgdM of God because they are poor.~~ He told J's story, from birth to cross and to resurrection, and then with only a slight break, repetition, really, he went right on with it, beyond the road to Emmaus, beyond that bit of broiled fish, beyond the road as far as Bethany. ~~But~~ that is where we begin with the Acts. Acts 1: 1-5. The first of this is the repeated dedication, to someone named Theophilus--though the word means one who loves God, so it could be a general name for all believers--he may even have been an official high in the Emp's court. In the first bk, he writes, he described all that J began to do, and that is a Semitic idiom for did, from the beginning until he was taken up. Here we read that 40 days--Bibl language for a good long

time--40 days after the resurrection he appeared and he taught. Lk 24 has no time references, in fact it would appear that the ascension took place on resurrection day. One thing he commanded was that they remain in Jerus until the spirit baptism; the implicat in this is that w/o such an order they would have left the city, gone back to Galilee, gotten away from the dangers. But Jerus was the place where they had to make their proclamat; there many had seen J crucified, some had seen him alive again, all needed to hear the witness. As the great commission ordered the priorities, they must begin at Jerus, where they were not at ease, where they were not even safe. How many of us have to have a dab of tar on our heels to stick us to the place where we are needed. But the real key to the comdmt here is that they were to wait for the promised comforter, for the spirit. W/o him they were too weak to act. So the order was for silence and seclusion, in Jerus. They must just sit and wait, and I don't know anything more diffc than that. The hardest thing in the world is to do nothing, and yet there are times when it is the only thing to do. How many times have we stood beside the gurney on which a loved one was being wheelad into the operating room, and heard someone tell us, you wait here and we'll bring you the news. And isn't it hard, knowing how helpless we are, that there really isn't anything else we can do but wait. Our life is like that; there are some things we can work for, but there are other things we can only wait for. They also serve, said Milton, who only stand and wait, and that is one of the sharpest insights given to man. In our world the emphasis is placed upon activity, doing something and doing it well; we become experts in doing. But there is in man's spiritual being a large place for silence, for meditation, for passivity, for waiting. And the striking thing is that waiting is not the same as doing nothing. Waiting is an activity just as necessary in its own way as is action. The person who waits upon God is like the person who waits for the sunrise...little boy wondered where sun goes, stayed up all night, finally it dawned on him...it has always happened before, you expect it to happen again; after the darkest, longest night comes the dawn and then the day. And the meaning of the act of waiting is in that word EXPECT. The title the writers have given this lesson is The Expectant Fellowship. My dictionary tells me that to be expectant means more than merely to be waiting for something, it means to wait with some ground or reason in the mind for considering the event awaited as likely to happen. Those who are in the state of expectancy are optimists; what they are waiting for has not yet happened, it is not yet real, but they have no doubt that it will shortly occur and become real. So we wait, and we expect in confidence what we are waiting for, and that is the nature of faith. Then Lk adds an incident we get only here, and it is strange and surprising. Acts 1: 6-8. Is it not disturbing that the 11 chosen disciples were still looking to J to fulfill the prophetic role of political liberator and ruler to restore the throne of David? Do you underst that seeing J risen from the dead, and hearing him teach from the scriptures what the Christ of God would be and do, they still had that old notion that the Kgdm of God would be political, secular, of this age? Now that you have conq death, they are saying, are you now going to re-establ the Kgdm to Isr? In a way it comforts me, they were so close to him and yet did not underst, so it is not so strange that we have our probs. But note that J did not even try to ansr their question; he corrected it, for the question itself was a mistake. It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, he said, for only God knows that. Some of us, too spend our time asking that question, when will Xr return in glory, and some people have even named the day. One commentator wrote that there is something blasphemous in speculating about that which was hidden even from Xr himself. What he did was to shift the emphasis from wondering about the future to a certainty in the present. For some reason, which I do not underst, the present is the least popular time of all. Many of us find the past more congenial to our tastes; one candidate recently announced for Presid nominat saying that one party was still trying to solve the probs of 50's, while other was still living in 60's. Others of us prefer to dream about the future; when I graduate, when I get married, when I get promoted to manager... There is one news program on TV that allots about 3 minutes of its 24 in telling us what is coming up next. What J said here is important to all of us; remember the past but do not live there, await the future but do not waste time in idle speculation about it, live in the present. You shall receiv pwr, you shall be witnesses, from this city to the ends of the earth. There is no way back, he said, nor is it profitable to dwell upon the future, to whatever happened to late great planet earth. Now is the day to witness to what we have seen and heard and known within us. These people, who were still looking for a royal palace in Jerus, were told to look out from this hill to the ends of the World! Is not our vision always too small, too narrow. That promise, that redirected question, marked the conclusion of J's ministry. Acts 1: 9-11. The Ascension is not an easy doctrine for us. We no longer live in the world described by Dante, the world inhabited by people of 1st Cen. Earth is not fixed at the center of things any more; heaven, the empyrean, is not up there. Still, a cloud recd him, he went away, but not as the rest of us go away. That is what this describes to us. We have our orders, we have learned what we need, why do we stand gazing into heaven? first we wait, and receive, and then we proclaim, we shout, we give praise. And as we wait we renew our strength so that we rise up like eagles. One age ended, and another began.

3-13-83. Empowered. This is the 2d of 3 lessons taken from the beginning chapters of the Acts, w/ titles all beginning w/E. This yr we shall be studying the Bk of Acts, the 2d volume in Lk's acct of the Xr-event, the continuat of the story of what happened after the Resurr and the Ascension. Last week we read from Acts 1 and the subj was the Expectant Fellowship. That small group, hiding away in a room somewhere in Jerus, was commanded to remain in the city, not to go looking for security in their home province of Galilee, and to wait for the gift of the spirit. We saw that waiting is not an easy thing to do, but it is sometimes the right thing to do; and that waiting is not the same thing as doing nothing; and that waiting expectantly is the sign of strong faith. Now for today we read the first of Lk's accts of the giving of the spirit, making, as the lesson writers' titles say, the expectant fellowship the empowered fellowship. The Grk word power is the root of our words dynamite, dynamo, dynamic, and somehow that is stronger than the Latin-derived power. Text Acts 2. We shall read only a few verses of it for today; next week we shall return to the end of Ch 2 for a paragr, but we need to begin with an overview of Acts 2. As Mr. Carr said some time ago in a Bible study group, Acts 2 is a microcosm of church hist and the tension w/in ch over its mission. There are two great themes in Acts; one of them is mission, or ministry, and the other is the spirit. Mission is introd in Chap 1--you shall be my witnesses (the Grk word is martyr) in Jerus and in Judea, and to the end of the world, or the end of the age. The spirit is promised in Chap 1, as it is also promised in Lk 24--you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. That empowering is today's subject. For the story of the Ch in miniature, take a look at Acts 2. It begins with the speaking in tongues, and it ends with the experiment in communal living, and in that is the foreshadowing of the two extremes we have with us yet. At one extreme are the ecstasies, the charismatics, the holiness people, the laying on of hands people, the faith-healers, those who speak in incomprehensibly gibberish under the inspirat of the spirit. At the other end of the scale are those who busy themselves w/feeding the hungry, doing good in the neighborhood. And in the middle of Acts 2, in the middle between those extremes, Peter preached a sermon, he witnessed, he testified, he gave the proclamation. And there are those who argue that this arrangement of the text has meaning; that we are to have our ecstasies, and we are not to neglect the needy, but that the central function of the church is neither of these, but is proclamation. So let us take a look at the empowering, at the story of the giving of the spirit, of the virgin birth of the church. Acts 2: 1-4. The strongest tradits of the early Ch were two--one was the resurrection and the other was the gift of the spirit that the resurrection made possibl. These are the tradits we must hold to and cherish and proclaim to the world, for they are central. But that does not mean that the memories of the early witnesses to these tradits was always in agreemt. The Ch of Xr was built upon human beings, fallible and fallen and forgetful, not upon perfection or sinlessness. In fact the Ch is unique among human institutns in that the one requiremt for admission is that one must be a sinner. There is no room in it for those who are without sin. And those fallible, forgetful frailties knew without any doubt or question that the resurrection had happened, and that it picked them up and turned them around and made new creatures out of them; and they knew also that they had recd the gift of the spirit. But they could not remember just how it happened. If you will read John's gospel, 20:22, you will see that J himself gave the spirit on the day of resurrect: he breathed on them, and said, receive the holy spirit. And in Acts there are two versions of the gift of the spirit, perhaps taken from two different witnesses. The other is in 4:31, and it follows the release from prison of Peter and John. Some students think that in Chap 2 we have a source that parallels the source for Chaps 3, 4, and part of 5, so that we have two versions of the birth of the Church. They also think that in Chap 2 we have some of the very earliest source material in all the NT; it reflects the views & thoughts of the primitive Ch in those 2 months after the resurrection, and not the ideas that had appeared by the time Lk wrote. As an historian I think it commendable that a writer would be honest to his source materials, and not distort them to fit the ideas of the writers' time; there are great numbers of historians at work in these latter days who lack that simple honesty. So there were variant tradits about the gift of the Spirit, but there was complete agreemt that something miraculous happened to the early believers shortly after the Resurr, whether one day, or 50 days later; they felt a new inner power that changed their whole outlook on life and their purpose in it. It was the spirit of God that took possession of them and made it possibl for them to do things they could not do on their own. And in the tradit of Acts 2 it happened on the day of pentecost, which is the Grk transl of the Hebr festival of Weeks; pentekostos means 50th, and the word day is understood. The feast of weeks was one of 3 great Jewish festivals; the others were passover and tabernacles; and like the other two, pilgrims were expected in Jerus. The law required every male Jew living w/in 15 miles of the temple to go there for the celebrat. It began at the time of the escape from slav in Egy; first the passover, and then 7 wks later, a sabbath of weeks, on the 50th day, the giving of the law on Mt. Sinai. the feast included not only thanksgiving for the law but also a sacrifice of 2 loaves of bread in thanks for the harvest of the crops. It came in June, when the weather was good; some years brought millions of visitors to the city. And in all that great throng was a small group of J8s disciples, about 120 in number, who were waiting expectantly for something to happen. That Pentecost, something earth-shaking came to them as they waited. Since it was only 9 o'clock

(to Nicodemus J had used wind as a symbol of spirit)
in the morning when Peter began his sermon, we can guess that it must have been dawn when they came together in that one place, or they had passed the night there together. Then it happened; their expectancy was fulfilled. Lk's source for this must have been a witness; what he/she remembered were the three signs or symbols of the coming of the spirit. One was wind, or the sound as of wind; another was fire; and the third was speech. First there was the roaring sound, breaking the silence of the gathering.//It was not a wind, but it was a sound like wind, like a gale bending the tall pines, like the hurricane protesting vehemently at whatever man-made is in its way. There is an old English dialectical word, wuthering, that is in the title of a 19th Cen novel, that means the sound of a blustery wind under the eaves. That sound was what they heard. There was no rush of air, no one's hair was blown about, no one's skirt ruffled. It was a sound. And then there was a fire, that people remembered looked just like a tongue, cloven, which means cut into two parts, and again it was not fire, but it looked like fire, glowing just above every one of them; and they remembered that it filled their hearts with warmth, and love, and excitement; they felt filled, ready for anything. And we are to imagine now that they left the room in which they had been, and went out into the streets--and this may well be the first time they have dared to do that--for the third symbol of the spirit was the gift of tongues. This is where the debate begins, for in NT there even in Acts, there are two meanings of that term; one of them is the uttering of meaningless syllables, meaningless at least to those who heard the sounds; in his ltr to the Corinthians Paul condemned it as one of those childish things we should put aside, or outgrow; that we should always speak so that we can be understood. But there were people in Corinth, and there are people today among us, who continue to accept speaking in tongues, glossolalia in Grk, as a sign of the spirit's presence. Even tho Lk later described that kind of speaking (see 10:46 and 19:6) w/no idea that it was unusual, that is not what is described in Acts 2. What we have here is the miraculous pwr to speak in all the languages of the world, and to be underst by all who heard. Imagine someone speaking on a world-wide radio program, w/satellites beaming the signal to all people everywhere, and whatever language was used was instantly understood by all who heard, in all the hundreds of languages, and 1000s of dialects, and accents. A year ago, while we were in Italy, there was a full-page ad in every newspaper in Engl and on the continent, announcing that in a very short time God would speak to all people everywhere, to announce the coming end of the age, and that everyone would hear the voice of God clearly in his head, and would know that it was God speaking, and all would hear it in their own language. If that has yet happened I'm worried, for I did not hear it, but that is an example. Read the rest of this portion of the chapter, to see that there were people from all over the world--I count 15 nations listed--and all underst in their native language. This was not meaningless gibberish, this was the proclamat of the risen lord. This was the bridging of the language gap that began at the tower of Babel; every nation under heaven, we read, heard them and understood. There are 2 meanings in this event: one is that the first effect of being filled w/God's spirit is to speak, to tell what has happened; when spirits are overflowing they find expression in speech. The other is that the picture we have here is a prophecy of the universality of the gospel, which shall be to all people, and all shall hear it and understand it. And note well that it will not happen by compelling all people to learn one language, as Mohammed heard his God say; it will be instead by blessing diversity, by sanctifying pluralism, by showing that every person's language may be hallowed by the word of God, and that all of us, though different, can still sing in harmony. And people heard the 120 speaking in everybody's language, telling of the resurrection, and some laughed; these people are drunk on new wine. Peter replied to the charge. Acts 2: 14-18. This is only a small part of Peter's proclamat read it all. This may well be the earliest apology, or defense of the Gospel, that anyone gave, and it is here that the author has let his source speak out of his primitive understanding. What I want to say about it applies to the entire sermon, not just to these few verses--but note that the death of J is the great problem; it would prevent people from accepting J as the promised messiah, the Xr. And we see in this sermon that the first evangelists spoke to convince people that Jesus fit all the requirements of the prophecies. The cross is still an embarrassment, 50 days after; it is not central as it would become to Paul. Nor is faith a prerequisite to salvat here, even tho when Lk wrote, in the 80's, Xty had become the proclamat of salvat thru faith in J Xr, that is not here. What is here is the emphasis upon the resurr as the proof of J's messiahship, that wiped away the effect of the disgraceful death, that it satisfied the requirements of scripture. ((Acts 2: 37-38.)) One other thing needs emphasis here; vv 17-18 are taken from the prophecy of Joel, about 350 yrs earlier, where the sign of the pouring out of the spirit upon all mankind would be that young men and women would prophesy, which in NT means preaching, uttering exhortats and teachings; men and women, not just men; unless your women are allowed to prophesy then Peter's proof-text for the gift of the spirit falls invalid. (Text here) Those who heard asked for instructions, and Peter told them: repent and be baptized, and you too shall receive the gift of the holy spirit. God in Xr wishes to enter every life and make it full, and exciting, and warm, and empowered to face all that life can throw at us. Ask, and it shall be given.

3-20-83. Expanding. Not long ago there was a public-opinion poll taken among church people. One question was, what makes a church grow? and some of the answers were instructive. A considerable pct replied that it is parking space; a large parking lot next to the church, and a highly visible location on one of the main lines of traffic. Others thought it was the appearance of the church--it has to look like a church; white wood with steeple, or soft pink brick. Others said that the clue to church growth was a jazzed-up program for special groups--teen-agers, singles, after-retiremt, a basketball court, a day-care center for pre-schoolers, and at least one meal a day in the church kitchen. As I say, all of that is instructive. What would you say if you were asked? what does make a church grow? and is growth important? does it really matter how many we are, if Xr is present wherever two or three of us are gathered in his name? I think it does ~~really~~ matter, and I think the answers we give to what makes a church grow are also important. That is the subj we have for today, texts Act 2,6. This qr we are studying Acts, the 2d vol in Lk's story of the founding and spread of Xn Ch. Unlike the other 3 gospel-writers we have in NT canon, Lk continued his acct on past the ascension and the great commission, for, quite simply, the story did not end there. In a significant sense it was only beginning, and that is what Lk saw. Today we have the 3d in a miniseries on the early Ch; two weeks ago it was the expectant felwshp, last week it was the empowered felshp, today it is the expanding felshp. In all of these we have concentrated on the two or three wks folwg the resurrection; 40 days after that came the ascension, and 10 days later came Pentecost and the gift of the spirit. That changed a little band of frightened disciples into bold witnesses. Peter preached his sermon, the earliest defense of the gospel we have, and Lk used it in his history ~~was~~ just as he got it from his sources, and not as he might have wished it to be. And it was a powerful sermon. It is recorded that 3000 souls were added to the number of believers. We are told nothing about that great enrollmt, who they were, what their condition. It is quite likely that many had heard J teach in the temple, or had seen him heal the sick; some may have been themselves healed; others may have watched him die, or heard about the crucifixion. Less than two months had passed, not long at any time, very short indeed among the ancients. And when they heard Peter declare that the same Jesus whom they had crucified had arisen and that God had made him both Lord and Christ, they were cut to the heart; they believed, and they acted upon their belief. The felshp expanded on that day, the great transformat had begun; never again would it be on the defensive. But oddly enough there was still fear. Lk 2: 43-47. Before we look at these lines I want to remind you of what we talked about last wk, for today's lesson is a continuat of that. I have read the last parag of Acts 2, and that is one of the most important chapters in NT. It begins w/gift of spirit and w/speaking in tongues, ecstatic expression of relig emotion; it ends w/communal living and concern for feeding the hungry who suddenly joined the felwshp after P's sermon. In those two scenes we have a foreshadowing of the 2 extremes we still have w/us. At one end of the spectrum are the charismat-fans, who speak in incomprehensible gibberish under the inspirat of the spirit. At the other end are those who busy themselves w/feeding the hungry, translating their faith into a stewardshp of ethics, taking part in the peace movemt, the nuclear freeze, in marches for civil rights and justice, perhaps also in a genderized world in which women are sometimes treated as less than men. At one end, the ecstatics, at the other, the activists who want whales protected and the environment kept free from pollution. And in the middle of Acts 2, and in the middle between those extremes, Peter preached a sermon, he proclaimed the gospel. And in that textual arrangemt there is meaning: that we are to have our ecstasies, and we are to help the needy, but the mission of the church is neither of these; it is proclamation. I need to do that review, even tho it is repetitious, for a bit later we must return to it. Now, in the words I have read, Lk says that fear came upon every soul, and that takes some explaining. Some of the students think it does not, for they argue that these words are out of place here; and they do fit in Chap 5, vv 5 & 11. But if they do belong here, if they have not crept here from chap 5, then we must see the word not as terror but as awe, not as fear but as faith. Thruout OT there are references to those who fear God and keep his cmdmts; here it is a sense of reverent wonder at the miracles taking place among them. The apostles were the means of working many wonders and signs; we are not told what these were, but in Chap 3 it was an act of healing. Wonders and signs is the common OT equivalent for miracles, any act which sets aside natural law and which reveals the presence of God. Those early believers also ate together, they broke bread together, and they practiced a simple form of communalism. I have heard many people call this communism, I have even heard them argue that because it failed, or was abandoned, it teaches that communism itself is doomed. There are two things that need saying about that experiment in community property. One is that it was never communism. This past wk we noted the centennial of the death of K Marx, with some articles and reports on his writings. Even a superficial perusal of his writings will show that the state socialism of eastern Europe is not communism either. Who was it, Plato, who said that the worst form of govt is always a perversion of the best, and in the most tyrannical and authoritarian of the socialist states we can see the truth of that aphorism. If the Xn has two shirts he is to give one to his neighbor, for mammon, or love of property, is the enemy of God for our ultimate allegiance; the love of money, and material possessions, is the root of all evil. Now, take that insight, and then compell all people willing or not to give of their

labor and time and thinking to support an army of privileged office-holders and you have a perversion of the best. I think, and some of you have heard me say, that pvt property is destructive, that the possessive pronouns are evidence of sin among us, that when the kgdm of God comes among men there will be a community of self-giving love that will make ownership obsolete. It will be voluntary and it will be complete. ~~Soviet and socialist leaders do not dare read Marx, and when they see his teachings taken out of his books and put into practice, as in Poland in the past two years, they oppose it with martial law and imprisonmts. Capitalists, too, fear Marx as a threat to their ownership.~~ What Marx opposed was the inhumanity of industrialism, and what he proposed was community,...

In Jerus there was a community where people shared what they had, by selling their goods and giving the proceeds to the common treasury, out of which all ate. They also attended the temple together, they ate together in their houses, they praised God, they studied the scriptures together. And in those few words we have an answer to our question, how does a church grow? Note the ingredients present among those early Xns: there was fear and reverence among them, something had happened to them and they were grateful and glad for it, they had an active community that was not just a Sunday morning thing. There was no parking lot nearby, but the spirit was at work, there was an active awareness of the transcendent among them, and they had a fellowship. But even as I describe the conditions that might answer our question I must add that with all of those qualities they also had a division and a quarrel in the community. Acts 6: 1-7. In these few lines we have the beginnings of a Grk Xty that was already breaking the narrow bonds of the church. We have also a puzzle for students of Acts. There is a break with what has gone before, and we are back to the probl of feeding people, as at the end of Chap 2, as tho 3, 4, 5, were inserted into the story. And, some think; some other materials have been left out. There is a full-blown argument between Jewish Xns and converts among the Jews who have adopted Grk language and ways; we get the impression that it has been going on for some time, but there is no earlier reference to it. There is also mention of the daily distribut of food, about which we have been told nothing, but here it is thrown in as though everybody is aware of what is meant. The division betw Jewish and Hellenistic Xns was a threat to the flwshp; the widow in the Grk-Jewish group complained that they were not getting their share of food. Aha, you say, there is the failure of the noble experiment in communal living. But something was done about it. The 12 called the Ch together and said a strange thing, v.2: it is not right that we should stop preaching the word of God to serve tables. Now, when you first read that you think you have never heard so arrogant a suggestion. Not so very much earlier, J had taught them that if they really wanted to be great they must be servants, he said that the first among them would be last, and the last first. Anyone who gives a cup of cold water to a disciple shall have his reward. And now here are these people saying they have more important things to do than to wait on tables. Who do they think they are? Are the preachers of the word to be the new nobility, with menials to do the dirty work and wash the bottles and the pots? That's what it says, and my first reaction is to kick it real hard. That's snobbish, that's selfish, that does not fit in with the new community. But wait. Take a look at those words in the light of the arrangement of the text in Chap 2. There was the charisma, and there was the common table with the activists, and in the midst of them, symbolic of superiority, was the proclamat. And that is what the 12 are saying here. Once again we are told that the mission of the church is preaching, not providing. The church, they are saying, goes w/proclam, not w/kitchens and parking lots. Note that the 12 did NOT say, we are going to stop feeding the fellowship, no more family night suppers; what they said was that they needed some admin assistance. There are hungry people in the world, the poor you have w/you always, there are sick people needing healing, there are orphans and widows and the elderly who need shelter, there are people in prison who need visitors who care, and we can ignore none of these needs. There are soup kitchens in our town feeding hungry people every day, and the downtown churches are sheltering the homeless. I get angry when I hear our denom ldrs want to cast off every instit which does not make the proclamat, even to the sale for profit of that beautiful assembly by the sea. ~~They blatantly refused to carry out the terms of Mr. Redwine's will; why should they keep that shoreline he developed?~~ Schools and hospitals and supportables are important, but that is not primary. It is a matter of priorities & perspectives. And so the Ch chose the 7, all of whom were Hellenistic ~~GREEK~~ Jews, who were to represent the Grk members as the 12 represent the Jewish Xns. **Only two of them do we hear of again--Philip and Stephen--and we hear of them because they did NOT spend their days waiting tables. Philip met that Ethiopian Jew on the road to Gaza and taught him; and Stephen preached in the synagog w/such effect that he was stoned to death. His blood was the seed of the church, for Paul was watching.

So what is the secret of Ch growth? First is the presence and work of the holy spirit; then there is the fellowship, eating and praying and studying together; and above all there is the proclamation that the J whom you crucified is lord and Xr by the pwr of God. Presenting that claim to the world is the mission of the church, and the most satisfactory service to God and to man.

**These were called Deacons, from the Greek verb meaning to serve.

3-27-83. Philip. One of the more exciting memories I have of my childhood was of reading about Jean-François Champollion and the translation of Egyptian hieroglyphics. When he was a young boy he saw examples of that strange and beautiful writing, and was disappointed to learn that its meaning had been lost, that no one could read it. But Champollion solved the riddle; he cracked the code of that ancient language, and to do it he made use of the Rosetta stone, a small piece of rock which is now in a prominent place in the BritMus. Discovered by a French army officer in Egypt in 1799, the Rosetta has a statement in Greek, which was easily readable, and the same message in the ancient writing of the Egyptians. So using Greek, which was known, Champollion was able to read hieroglyphs which were not known. It was an illustration of the Euclidean proposition that things equal to the same thing are equal to each other; it was also an illustration of the meaning of the events we shall read about today, text Acts 8. We are still in our study of Acts, the 2d volume of Luke's story of the establishment and growth of the Church; with today we begin a series of lessons about the good news; today the topic is good news for outsiders, and it is another part of the story of the expanding Church that was breaking the narrow bonds in which it was born. Last week we read about the appointment of 7 believers with Greek names and backgrounds--not Gentiles, but Jews of the dispersion; only 2 of them are heard of again. Of Stephen and his sermon and his death we do not read; read it, it is in Chap 7, and the sermon is given in more detail than any other in Acts. Luke must have considered it important to give it so much space. But note that while Stephen was chosen one of the deacons, with the assignment of waiting on tables and making sure that all members of the fellowship got their fair share of the food distribution, he refused to stay in the kitchen. He went down to the synagogue of the freed slaves, and there he preached, and with such effect, and fervor, that he was stoned to death for it. Now for today we have a portion of Chap 8, in which we read of the activity, or a part of the activity, of another of that group of table-waiters, Philip. And he too broke out of the cage of the dining room; he proclaimed the word, the good news. When Stephen was martyred there was a general flight of believers out of Jerusalem, though the 12 stayed in the city. The others obeyed the instruction of Jesus--if persecuted in one city, he said, go on to another one, and shake the dust of the violent one off your shoes. Faith and bravery go with a strong dash of common sense, or prudent self-preservation, as my professor of ethics called it; part of valor is discretion. And here the hand of violence became the spreader of the seeds. I once watched a man try to put out a campfire by kicking the burning embers, and for a short time what he really did was to scatter the sparks so that a number of small fires was started. That is what happened with this scattering--the sower went forth to sow, and everywhere the seed was thrown a hardy plant sprouted. Luke traced several of those lines of growth, and the first of them is the story of Philip, who went into Samaria, to the north of Jerusalem and Judea. It was the next step in obeying the command we call the great commission. And Philip was one of those set apart for purely secular work, by those who understood that the proclamation was the primary function of the Church; the Church made Philip a deacon, but the Lord made him an evangelist, a missionary, the first we know about who travelled about to preach. And he was an evangelist for a long time to come; we catch a last sight of him in Chap 21, where he is host to Luke and Paul in Caesarea. But his first preaching was in Samaria, and soon the apostles in Jerusalem heard that the spirit was at work there, and sent a delegate, Peter & John, to investigate. Philip had gone on his own into Samaria; he had no divine command to go there, other than the expanding ripples of action that are described in the Great Commission. His next action was at the direct command of the spirit. Acts 8: 25-31. Philip might well have wondered why he was being taken out of service in the populous cities in Samaria and sent out to a desert place. The road to Gaza was a dusty path that went down the hill from Jerusalem, to Bethlehem and Hebron, and met the main highway to Egypt at a point near Gaza. Because of the clouds of dust, wheeled vehicles plodded along very slowly. And it was a lonely part of the world. Old Gaza, about 2 miles from the sea, had been destroyed in 4th Cen B.C. by Alexander the Great; there was a small village, New Gaza, that would be destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 66. Yep, it was a desert place; why send a successful preacher to a bit of dry rock? But Philip went immediately, not knowing where he was going, or why he was going there. As Alexander McLaren said, the river on which we sail winds, and not till we round the nearest bend do we see the course beyond. But as we obey the light we have, the way before us opens & becomes clear; an obedient heart is not left in uncertainty. And as he walked along that dusty road he met a man riding slowly along in a chariot, probably a 2-wheeled vehicle pulled by two horses, and as he rode along he was reading, and even reading aloud, maybe because reading a strange language was difficult for him. And when Philip heard what the man was reading, he knew why he had been ordered to that particular place at that time. The man was an Ethiopian government official, and isn't it sad that we do not know his name? But let's look at him, for he is an important link not only in the expanding Church but also in our understanding of how those early Christians understood the meaning of the Mission. Some have considered this man a Gentile, a non-Jew, one of the great host of people who lived in the Greek-Roman world beyond Judea. There is no evidence that Luke wanted the story to be seen that way. In Ch 10, which we must omit in this series, tells about Cornelius, a Roman army officer, who sent a delegation to Peter asking him to come to Caesarea to teach him, and it is clear that Luke intends this event to be the beginning of the mission to the Gentiles. In this story there is no indication that

Lk thought that a milestone had been passed, or a precedent either broken or set. The man was an Ethiopian, which means he was a Nubian, a black man, living in the Nile valley south of Egi itself. He was a pilgrim going back all the many hundreds of miles to his home, after a visit in Jerus to worship, perhaps to attend the relig festivals of the spring season. He was a convert to Judaism, at the very least, if not born a Jew; that he was reading a portion of 2d Isaiah shows him to be a man who wants to learn about the faith, a seeker, a devout man. He was also a eunuch, as often happened to men selected to administer the treasury and the harem of an eastern ruler. And that is what made him an outsider, for eunuchs, men who had been emasculated, were considered unfit to enter the temple to worship, they could not become priests, though in later prophetic writing there is evidence of a less rigid ~~restrict~~ treatmt of them. He was an official in the govt of Candace, the queen of the country in which he lived; the name Candace is her title and not her name, it is like Caesar or Pharoah, a name for the ruler. That was the man Philip met on the Gaza road, and he ran up to the chariot to listen to what the man was reading. Acts 8: 30-33. Now we are getting closer to the Rosetta stone that will enable us to get an insight into the thinking of early Xns, perhaps even the interpretat of scripture that the risen Lord taught the disciples in those days after the resurrect. The quotat the Ethiop was reading was the Grk translat of the Hebr for Isa 53: 7,8, and is a part of the suffering servant prophecies of OT. That was, and is, an idea, a concept, that is diffic for us to underst, as it was diffic for the Jews to underst. That good men must take upon themselves the burden of the folly, the thoughtlessness, the guilt of evil men, in order that they might be rescued from the errors of their ways,, is strange to us. We can underst that a person should be held accountable for his own behavior; if a person break the law, he should receive punishmt. But that one man break the law, and someone who is innocent receive the punishmt, that is the probl. It cryed out of injustice. It's not fair. And yet that is what the Xn Ch has proclaimed from its birth. And it is that which sets it apart from other relig understandings. We can accept it when God reveals himself in power, when God speaks to a weak person and makes him strong, a mighty leader in battle, a ruler who uplifts his people and who exalts God. The Jews never forgot the greatness of their nation under Kg David, that was the golden age, and they wanted to get back to it. It was the messianic dream, the promise that thru pain and exile, in defeat and humiliat, some day the royal line would be restored, the throne of David put back in place, and the glory of God shine for all to see. But there was another definit of messiah, God's anointed, and it was best expressed in 2d Isaiah, those exuberent, poetic lines that come after Chap 40. There we read that the innocent must suffer that the guilty may be forgiven; he was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted w/grief...he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities, w/his stripes we are healed. That is what the Ethiop was reading, and he asked, as we do, what does it mean? Acts 8: 34-39. Now we have it, we have the connection; this is the first definite application of the suffering servant prophecies to what Jesus did. Now we can underst what J had taught his disciples in those days after the resurrection. Philip explained the scriptures and told the Ethiop the good news, the gospel, of J. And the Ethiop was baptized; note that v.37 is missing in the best of the mss and has been smitted in RSV; they are in what is called the Western text, and make what some call the earliest baptismal creed; note that it is not the trinitarian expression, for it is older than that. He was baptised and he no longer needed Philip, who disappeared from him; now he went on his way rejoicing, for he understood. He had been looking for the wrong messiah; it was not to be the restorat of the royal line, not the secular state of old Judea; it was to be the sufferer, the one w/o pwr, w/no kingly clothing or insignia, but who has instead a self-giving, vicarious role to play. It is love in its fullest sense, that uncaused, unmerited pouring out of innocent blood that we who are guilty may find pardon for our transgressions. Today is palm sunday; it was about a month ago that we read of the triumphal entry, w/palm branches in the road, but with the son of man riding upon a lowly donkey. And then he was taken, (and crucified as a common criminal) he was whipped and driven through the streets, his blood was spilled and there were ugly marks upon his back. Now, from this meeting in the desert betw Philip and an unnamed pilgrim we know that it was necessary because God chose to fulfil the messianic hope w/asuffering servant. Here is the link that confirms the fact; like the Rosetta stone it brings together two events which have not been firmly connected earlier--one was the group of prophecies about the sufferer who saves us, a minor theme in OT Hebr thought, and the other was the good news of J. That is the major lesson we have in these verses, but there is another we must not overlook. Earlier in the acct we have seen how God in the holy spirit acted directly to change peoples' minds and lives. But in the story of Philip and the Ethiop traveller on the Gaza road we see something new. The holy spirit could have told that pilgrim what he needed to know about the meaning of the prophecy; an angel could have taught him, but did not. Instead the spirit instructed a human agent to go to that desert place and carry out a divine assignment, and that is a significant thing. It marks the transfer of the missionary effort to our kind, now it is up to us. The work of evangelism will henceforth be done by God-called and spirit-filled, but otherwise ordinary human beings. That is an exciting and thrilling assignmt, and it is for all of us to take up.

4-3-83. Paul. Here we are at Easter again, with its ancient creed, the oldest of them all--he is risen, the Lord is risen. That is the first and most important proclamat of the Ch, for all the rest of the doctrine and the experience of the incarnat rest upon the resurrection. If Xr be not risen, Paul told the Corinthians, then all our preaching is vain, and all your faith in vain; if Xr be not risen then for all of us there is no hope, this life is meaningless, and death is final; if Xr be not risen, then there is no forgiveness of sins and we are all under judgmt with no defense. If Xr be not risen, then no creed makes any difference, no article of faith matters. It would be immaterial which day we set aside for public worship, or what is the proper method and meaning of baptism, or any of the other details we treat with such care. But in the midst of our despair there comes to us that ancient proclamat, he is risen, he is risen indeed, and all our uncertainties fade away. That is what Easter means; it is the foundat stone upon which all else depends; without it the stripes he bore upon his back meant nothing except pain, they would not heal us except that he overcame all that evil could do to him. The cross is a lightning rod; it receives all the fiery darts of the wicked, and grounds them harmlessly so that we may live. And the effect of it is still happening; for today the lesson is about an appearance of the risen Lord some years after the resurrection, text Acts 9. In this lesson we meet Paul, the greatest evangelist and the most competent defender of the faith, the theologian who explained the meaning of the cross and the resurrection, the giant of the early Ch, the central portrait in the gallery of the apostles. And from the entry of Paul upon the scene, Lk's story widens still further with the missions to the Gentiles, which shall occupy us for the remainder of the course. Paul is unusual in many ways. He was born in Tarsus, the capital of the Roman province of Cilicia on S coast of AsMin, he was botha Roman and a Jewish citizen, both inherited from his father, a tent-maker. He was well educated in Grk learning, at the Univ in Tarsus, though he found but slight use for it in his work. He was also a product of the rabbinical school of the Pharisees in Jerus, the strictest Jewish sect, the most dedicated to protecting the law. His teacher was Gamaliel, that wise counsellor who told the Sanhedrin not to harm the apostles, for if their plan is of man it will fail, but if it is of God you cannot overcome it. He must have been a bit chagrined to see his student Saul acting in so violent a fashion soon after. For Saul, or Paul, was the most bitter of the enemies of the Ch, a young radical fanatic who considered J a blasphemer and a moral anarchist because he put man's needs above the law, above the sabbath, even above the temple. He was present in the group that stoned Stephen to death; the execut^s who cast the stones laid their coats at Paul's feet for safe-keeping--a recognit that he was one of them. And when that martyrdom sent the believers scurrying out of town, shaking the dust off their feet, this young man was not satisfied. He wanted to go forth and hunt them down, dig them up out of their hiding holes, nip the infant in its cradle. Acts 9: 1-2. The chapter begins w/word but, which is intended to contrast Philip's continuing ministry with Saul's continuing hatred. But Saul, still, or yet, breathing threats, and the word still connects w/v. 3 of the previous chapter, where Paul was laying waste the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. That is true zeal, this was no momentary outburst of anger, this was an enduring thing, that might become a life's work. And he now began to think not about prison, but death, for the heretics. And from entering house after house in Jerus he will follow the fugitives to Damascus. So he went to the high priest and asked authority to pursue his vendetta, and in the language as we have it he used the earliest expression for the Ch. If he found any belonging to the Way, men or women. The Way. That is the oldest name for the band of believers. The name Xn was not in general use in 1st Cen, before complet of NT writings. Instead the group referred to themselves as disciples, believers, saints, brethren, as if they were trying out names to see how they fit, and sounded. And I think all of those at one time or another were used as the name of a denomin. But for a short time another name was popular, the Way. It appears 5 times in Acts, and nowhere else in NT, and in every case it is preceded by the Grk definite article, THE Way. I have known people in this generat who like that title, and use it, even tho it did not catch on among apostles. But it has its signif, that Xty is not a creed or an institut, or even a community, but a way of life that takes in all that we are, not, as someone has said, a way of doing certain things, but a certain way of doing all things; it is practical, it meets all of man's nature and obligats. It if were a creed, that would be something to believe, but it is instead an agenda, something to be done, it is active, it goes somewhere, it is a way. It gives direction to life and it gives power to go thru with it. So Saul asked to go to Damascus, to see whether any belonging to the Way were there. He got the permission he asked, and also some attendants to help him in his inquisition, and forth they went upon that all-important road to Damascus. For just ahead of that fire-breathing Saul was a cataclysmic experience, a shattering upheaval, a miracle that changed him forever. Acts 9: 3-9. This is one of the turning points in human history, and its effects are still with us. Those of us who are of the Way from a Gentile background find in this event our birth certificate, we trace our roots to that blinding flash of light. Paul himself lived in it slight for the remainder of his life. Four times in the short book that is the NT this event is described by Paul himself--twice in I Cor, once in II Cor, and in Gal 1--and in the Acts, besides this acct, Paul is quoted in two speeches

epilepsy

Seven

in which he himself described what happened to him--Ch 22, 26. So it is a central event, one that picked up the chief antagonist and made of him the evangelist and founder of the Ch. We find it an uncomfortable teaching; we don't like sudden changes that drop out of nowhere. So people have speculated that Saul was suffering in conscience because he had seen Stephen die forgiving his killers, and that he may have been. But there was in no description of the event, either by Paul or Luke, that it happened. Another reason we have trouble with it is that it is a miracle, a supernatural intrusion of God into human affairs, where he has to right to venture. It was no problem at all to the man who was made blind, who heard the voice, who SAW, even though he was blinded, the risen Lord. And that is the meaning of this encounter to Easter. Paul counted himself one of the apostles, those whose experience w/J was at first hand, those who were witnesses to the resurrection, because of what happened to him that day on that road. Am I not an apostle? he asked the Corinthians. Have I not seen J our Lord? To the Galatians he said that God who called him thru his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles. And in his essay upon the resurrection, I Cor 15, he began with a listing of the appearances of the risen Lord, proofs too numerous to fabricate--first to Peter, then to the 12 (yep, he wrote 12), then to a gathering of more than 500 brethren at one time, and some of them are still alive and can witness to it. Then to James, and to the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. There was for Paul no difference between the appearances of the risen J to his disciples and the appearance to himself. He had seen J our Lord just as surely as had the original inner band. It was an outward and visible manifestat, but it was also an inner revelation...God was pleased to reveal his Son to me. Thus the greatest of Xn teachers, who has influenced more people than any other man who ever lived, was made an apostle by a miracle, and the miracle was a meeting with the risen Lord. It was not an angel who turned Paul around, nor a human agent as Philip, it was J himself. Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? he asked. We must look to the 3d descr of the event, in Chap 26, to find those words I found so dramatic as a boy--it hurts you to kick against the goads. Since we no longer plow w/oxen we do not even understand the imagery. And immediately Paul knew who it was who was speaking to him, but he said, who are you, Lord? And he ansd, I am J, whom you are persecuting. He died, but he arose, he lives, he is still intruding, still acting. That is the msg of Easter. And because he lives we all have hope, we can know that life and love are victorious over sin and death, and that by faith we too can meet the risen Lord, and know him as an indwelling guest. And so the attendants led Saul to Damascus where for 3 days he fasted, and remained blind. The other actor in the drama is one Ananias, a truly brave and faithful soul. Acts 9: 10-19. I think it obvious that none of us would have asked for Ananias' assignmt. It was like going to put a leash on a wildly mad dog; he bites, he drags people out of their houses. He was not the same Ananias as the synonym for liar, he was probl not one of the fugitives, for what he says about Saul seems to indicate he knew of it only by hearsay, and had not been among them in Jerus. I have heard from many about this man, he said, and he is dangerous. To Ananias also J appeared, but there seems to be a diff; to Paul it was the risen J, to Ananias it was a vision. So, assured that it was God's will, he went around to the house where Saul was, lying lonely in the darkness, probl overwhelmed by the wrong course his life had been taking. He may now even have remembered the words of Gamaliel--if it is of God you cannot overcome it; you might even be found opposing God. And in that brooding dark lay Saul, his past life shattered. Ananias came to him with love and trust; Brother Saul, he said, and in those words he gave evidence of that something new under the sun. How strange to speaker and hearer were those words--the persecutor now called brother by one of the Way. How humbly would the proud Pharisee bow to receive the gift of the holy spirit from the hands he had come to bind in chains. And with new eyes he now looked out upon a world in which all things had been turned exactly around, all things ~~new~~ were new, because there fell from his eyes something like scales, and as quickly as the blinding, so came back the sight. Thus was Paul ordained, and given the spirit, by Ananias, who was neither apostle nor church official, and yet he had the power. And it is signif that Paul's entry into the Way did not come from the recogn ldrs; he was not brought into the Ch by the apostles, nor did he owe to them his first lessons in Xty from human lips. Later he would say that he was an apostle, not from men, neither thru men. Later he would have occasion to differ with the apostles in the Jerus church, and in that debate he had a strong weapon; he was an apostle by the hand of J, and with the special assignmt of preaching to the Gentiles.

Here we are at Easter again, with its ancient creed, the oldest of them all--he is risen, the Lord is risen. We know it, we see it, by the eyesight of faith; for until we do, we are blind, to the direction of life, to the meaning of life, to the Way we take to live it triumphantly. With faith the scales fall away, and we can see, for a time as if in a darkened mirror, but then we shall see directly. For he is risen, he DOES live.

4-10-83. Enemies. Long ago I heard a story about a man who stayed home from church one Sunday morning, and while the rest of the family was away he decided to finish cooking the dinner. The roast was in the oven, carrots simmering in the pan, so he would cook the rice. He did not know how it expands; he put in lots of rice, 3 or 4 cupsful, so there would be enough for everyone. And he put in some water and he put the pan on the burner and he went back to the Sunday paper. Soon the family returned from morning worship and went into the kitchen to find four inches of rice on the kitchen floor, with still more oozing out of the saucepan. He learned a lesson that when you start cooking rice it has to expand; nothing can stop it. And that, in a small way, is the lesson we have for today; it is the story of the giant step the Church made in its growth for a small community in Jerusalem to a world-wide movement, text Acts 11. There are still churchists who debate which of the 2, Peter or Paul, was the greater man. Last week we read of the Damascus road conversion of Saul who became Paul; Paul was the scholar, the thinker, the writer; it is not too much to say that had Paul been illiterate the story of the Church would have taken a different course. But then there was Peter, the warmly impulsive fisherman, the doer, the man of faith who blurted out the confession at Caesarea Philippi, upon which the Church is built--thou art the Christ the son of the living God. He was the first of the apostles, the pastor who was commanded to feed the sheep. He had his problems adjusting his Galilean background to the enormity of the God who had entered his life. He first appeared in Acts as the preacher of Pentecost, and then as the healer of the lame man, and as the judge of Ananias who lied about selling his property. He defied the high priest with the fiery words, we must obey God rather than men, and that was a measure of Peter's growth; it was not so long before that that Peter was saying, when all seemed without hope, I don't know about the rest of you, but I'm going fishing. But God broke into that plan, and once again picked up Peter and turned him around and gave him a shove. Today we see him growing even more, ~~boiling~~ out of the saucepan and spreading all over the floor, in a new direction that must have been frightening. But it was a necessary break in the dike, for the infant Church had to move out of its cradle and become a faith for the entire world. It could no longer remain the exclusive religion of Jewish converts. And note the lines of growth as Luke traced them. First was the teaching by Stephen that led to his martyrdom and all that came off that; then there was Philip; another of the deacons, teaching the Ethiopian eunuch on the Gaza road; then the dramatic appearance to Paul on the road to Damascus. All of that was a preparation for the great crossing of the barrier between Jew & Gentile. The passage we have is of something like a trial by the extreme Jewish Christians of Peter, who broke the rules when he ate with Gentiles. Acts 11: 1-4. We ought to obey God rather than men, Peter said, and to prove it he obeyed a command he had, and for that he was censured and criticized by what Luke calls the circumcision party. In that early Church in Jerusalem the dominant element in the membership were Jewish some of Greek backgrounds, most of Hebrew. Christianity was considered a movement within Judaism, so Jewish rules & regulations and customs were still alive among them. The Messiah was the exclusive property of the Jews, and was not to be shared with outsiders. Anyone who dared break with small group of superorthodox Jews was an enemy of the law and the people of God. Now Peter was accused of committing 2 crimes; he had entered the house of an uncircumcised gentile, and had eaten with that pagan person; but even worse he had accepted the gentile as a member of the Christian community but had not demanded that he be circumcised, initiated into the way through the Jewish door. What we have in this passage is Peter's explanation of why he behaved as he did, and it is so important an event that Luke has given it to us twice, once in Chapter 10 and again in 11. It is the story of two people; Peter was one of them, and a Roman centurion Cornelius was the other. Each of them received a vision; it was as if God had put his left hand on Cornelius, and his right hand on Peter, and pushed them towards each other. Cornelius was commander of a Roman army unit in Caesarea, the Roman capital of the provinces of Judea and Samaria. As the seat of government Caesarea was the center of non-Jewish influence, of gentilism, and Cornelius was an officer in that hated Roman army; he was the embodiment of the enemy of all patriotic Jews. Those who awaited a Messiah in the royal line, to restore the kingdom, the throne of David, regarded Cornelius and all he represented as detestable, an insult, a humiliation. It would seem that the last place to look for the first gentile Christian would be in the military barracks in Caesarea, and yet there is where the angel of God went. Like other Roman officers on duty in Palestine Cornelius had been attracted to the Jewish religion and was clearly under its influence. We are told that he was devout, or of good behavior; he gave alms; and he was a man of prayer. But there was one other fact about him, which we can infer from his conduct, and that was that he was still dissatisfied, still looking for something beyond, something he had not possessed. I think it is important that we understand that about Cornelius, for there are many people in our world who do all the right religious things and do them sincerely and are still not fulfilled. We do our prayers, we give our alms, we live in devotion, and still we feel that something is lacking. Here is Cornelius, a pagan who was not content with Roman gods, maybe even a student who did not know the consolation of philosophy; he was a God-fearer who prayed constantly. It was in the hour of prayer that he received his vision; he saw an angel who came in and spoke to him--send to Joppa to the house of Simon the tanner, who lives by the seaside, and bring one Simon called Peter to your house. That same day he sent 3 men to carry out the mission, and they travelled all night and into the next day, for Caesarea was 40 miles away from Joppa, where Peter was. That was one

tho he went further than others

trouble some

Also in Chap 10

vision; the other was even more ~~unsettling~~. Acts 11: 5-10. This is the familiar vision of the table cloth filled w/things to eat. Peter was hungry and waiting for his dinner; he went up on the roof where he could see the waters of the sea, and he fell asleep, or in a trance. He saw a cloth coming down to him from heaven, held by its 4 corners; it opened to show a great number of creatures on it, animals, and creeping things, snakes and birds, all of them unclean, forbidden to the pious Jew. And a voice spoke to him: rise, Peter, kill and eat. It was repulsive to him; he had never broken the dietary rules, and he could not now even in his vision. But the voice went on: what God has cleansed you must not call common. And for emphasis the vision was repeated twice more, three times in all. Peter could not understand it, for it went against everything he had lived by, everything he consid sacred. But then it became clear to him. Acts 11: 11-14. Peter came out of his trance wondering what his vision meant, still shaken by the grossness of it, and then he got another command from the spirit. Go down and welcome the 3 men who are coming to your gate, for I have sent them. Do you see the precise timing of these two streams of events? The 3 men coming from Caesarea have been a day and more on the road, and just at the moment of their arrival Peter had his vision of unclean things made clean by the will of God. At that moment the two sets of actors and the two visions came together, and there was something new under the sun. Generats of hostility and ill-will and misunderst fell crashing to earth, for Lk wanted his readers to know that the step that took Xty beyond the rigid limits of its origins came not from man, but from God. It was a warning about drawing a line btw us and them, as if God felt as we do about people who are different from us. And yet it was so easy from the pious Jew to feel himself better than other people, set apart, a nation of priests. The great sea of humanity that surrounded Judea was pagan, it was sensual, lusty, and licentious, knowing no moral absolutes other than the golden mean, and that, to the law-abiding Jew, was unclean. He must separate himself from those people, to keep himself from temptat, to keep himself clean. That was the attitude Peter took w/him down to the gate, but there he saw the meaning of his vision, and he acted upon it. Up on the roof of the house of Simon the tanner Peter learned a fundamental lesson, and from that moment and that spot we can date the beginnings of Xty as a world movemt which shall be to all people. Peter took the 3 visitors into ~~his~~ the house, and then went w/ them to the house of Cornelius in Caesarea, where he heard of the other vision which had brought the two men together. And as Peter broke with a lifetime of habit one world ended and another was born. He actually went into the house of a gentile, a Roman, an army ofcr, one of the enemies of his people. He ate with them, food which had not been chosen and prepared in the accepted manner. The apron strings were broken not only for Peter, that day, but also for the growing church. He would not allow the Roman to kneel before him--I am a man, the same as you are, he said; and then he preached. Truly I see that God shows no partiality, God is no respecter of persons. Those were the words that show how much Peter had grown in just 4 days. Just a few days earlier he had considered Gentiles as unclean things, on the same level w/serpents and creeping things, unfit, not to be associated w/by the pure. Now he could see that God was big enough to be God also to that unclean, uncircumc Roman/ and he preached a sermon that told how J fulfilled all of God's promises, and even now made salvat available to all men everywhere. How this man has changed his outlook! In Acts 2:36 he was preaching to a Jewish congregat on Pentecost, and he said that J was Lord and Xr to the house of Isr, and he believed that was the end to it. It was to be a small thing, directed only to the lost sheep of the house of Isr, a thing contained w/in the ancient faith; here, to the household of Cornelius, 10: 36, he moved far beyond that narrow birth spot--he is Lord of all. And even as Peter was preaching still another miracle happened before his eyes. Acts 11: 15-18. The holy spirit fell upon all who heard the word, just as it had been given to all who were present at the Pentecost event. And the group that had gone along w/Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy spirit, which they had assumed ~~with~~ was their personal private possession, not to be shared w/just anybody, had been poured out upon Gentiles, pagans, the unclean, creepy crawley creatures. And not only that. What was even more amazing, the gift of the spirit came before there was a confession of fath, before there was a baptism, before there was a laying on of apostolic hands. Peter remembered the words of J ~~20~~ years earlier--John bapt w/water, but you shall be bapt w/holy spirit. And then Peter asked of his critics the crucial question, v.17: if then God gave the same spirit to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Ld J Er, who was I that I should withstand God? God had shown the way, and Peter walked obediently in it. He knew he must open the door to the KgdM to all who were called to enter, to Jew and Gentile alike. This mtg of Galilean and Roman had broken the ties that bound Xty to its beginning point. It had outgrown the limitats of its beginnings, it could now become a world faith, a house of prayer for all nations. And soon thereafter Barnabas brought Saul to Antioch, where they worked a year among gentiles, where the disciples were for the first time called Xns. A great chang had taken place in a short time; Xns had learned that God was bigger than anything they had imagined. H₂ve any of you seen what happens when a tree grows through pavement, and tears it apart because it will not be restrained? That happened in the house of Cornelius, and on the roof of Simon the tanner, and the world has not been the same since.

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4-17-83. Missionaries. Wm Carey was a poor cobbler when he recd the call that made him the father of modern foreign missions. He went to the church authorities of his denomination--and it may come as a shock that he was a Baptist--and asked permission and assistance to go to India to preach the gospel, and he was turned down cold. He heard strange words from those Ch ldrs: the idea of traveling anywhere to share the faith was silly, and even worse than that, it was arrogant, it betrayed the venal sin of pride. "Young man," he was told, "when God sees fit to convert the heathen, he will do it w/o your help or ours." Fortunately cobbler Carey would not give up despite his opposit, and in 1793 began his mission in India; his work inspired the format of missionary bds and societies in Britain and the U. S., and one of the offshoots was the BpStConv of NC. But of the response to ~~his~~ Carey's request for assistance, I am sure you recogn the anti-miss attitude. Prior to Philip's mission to the Ethio on the Gaza road God had acted in part thru human and in part thru divine intervention, but after Philip, and certainly after Paul, it was true that God used human agents, God-called and spirit-filled people, just plain ordinary people like you, and like me, earthen vessels into which God poured the inexpressible treasure. And now today there is a return to the cynicism and skepticism that met Carey's effort; many Ch people openly question whether it serves any purpose to support missions to other peoples and other cultures; some have even given up on the secularism and the materialism of our own society, and favor ending home missions. The subj is still alive, & for today we have a lesson on the way in which the early Ch concerned itself w/sharing the faith, texts Acts 13, 14. Those people who dedicate their lives to the study of the Acts divide the book into two parts. Part 1 is from the beginning to the end of Chap 12, and its theme is the growth of the Ch from Jerus to Antioch. That marked a major step in the outward growth of the Ch into the world. Antioch of Syria was the major city in the region of the eastern Medit, it was the capital of the Roman province, and it was the site of the first Gentile Xn Ch, the mother Ch of all the others. It is not too much to say that you and I, and our Ch, were born in Antioch. After Peter walked that road from Joppa to Caesarea, and entered the house of the Roman centurion Cornelius, some of those who left Jerus when Stephen was killed began preaching to the Grks in Antioch, and a number of them believed. The Ch in Jerus sent Barnabas to assist the group, and it was not long before there were so many that Barnabas needed help, and he knew where to go to get it. He went to Tarsus where Paul was still in shock, and still rethinking his life, and brought him to Antioch. They worked together for over a year among the gentiles, and it was there that the discipls were for the first time called Xns. So attaining a foothold in Antioch was an important event, a major turning point. Now, w/beginning of Chap 13, we have part 2 of the Acts. The theme is the expansion into the Medit world from Antioch to ~~Jerus~~ ^{Rome}, and this portion of the bk has sometimes been called the Acts of Paul. And there is a noticeable difference in Lk's writing; as soon as Paul became the central figure there is much more information and it is much more trustworthy. Whatever the source, and it was very likely Paul himself, and also the personal participat of Lk, it is better than it was before Chap 13. But now the time had come for Paul to begin to act upon the call he had recd on the rd to Damascus, to preach the gospel to the gentiles. Acts 13: 1-3. Five ldrs are named in these lines, but only 2 are known to any extent at all, and the five are named as if they were the only ldrs the Ch had. But they were prophets and teachers; it is not clear exactly what were the different functions; perhaps one explained what the other proclaimed. Prophets were those who brought the word of God to their generat, to those who heard them, but note that teachers are second in the list. They were worshipping God and fasting, waiting for some communicat, and then the call came to them. It was the beginning of the Medit mission of Paul, something that grew out of a long developmt and growth, the story of which is told in first 12 chaps of Acts. It was not planned on paper, nor was it the work of a committee. It was a thing that began w/resurrection, that grew w/Pentecost, that first got establ in Jerus before it overflowed from there. The road to Emmaus, the road to Bethany, the road to Gaza, and to Damascus, and to Caesarea, isn't it interesting that so much of the story took place on roads? It is in a sense a parable of growth, for roads go places, they suggest movement, just as the early ch was called the Way. Now a major road was opening for the growing infant, and Lk takes care to point out that it was the Holy Spirit that called them and sent them on their way. He also makes it clear that it was the Antioch church that supported and set apart and laid hands upon the two missionaries. It always helps to have support; not even a Paul could undertake a mission singlehanded and alone; it takes fellowship and undergirding to make it work, it takes contributions from a great many people to maintain one missionary. We owe a debt to those Xns at Antioch, who gave their support to what became the most important activ in the world at the time, the seed from which an entire forest of plants has sprung. So the Ch set them apart, laid hands upon them, and the first missionary journey began. There folws an acct of the ~~travels~~ travels of Barnabas and Paul to Cyprus and to various cities in AsMin. It was at one of those spots that we have our first signif glimpse of what it was like to be a spokesman for Xty in the pagan Grk world. Acts 14: 8-13. There are two legends behind this strange event, and the response of the people of Lystra. These people had seen a miracle performed, and they immediately assumed that Zeus and Hermes had come down to walk among them. And they reacted in that way because of those two legends in which those

two gods had come down among them, in the likeness of men. One of them was the legend of Lycaon, the name from which their native dialect had come; according to the tale he entertained visiting gods by giving them human flesh to eat upon, and when the gods learned that he had done this they turned him into a wolf. That is the gruesome story; the other is one of the most beautiful to come from the ancient classics. It is the story of Philemon and his Wife Baucis. In that part of the world where was Lystra the legend told that once Jupiter and Hermes came to earth in human form, and went to 1000 homes and were rejected, sent on their way, until they came to the home of that humble, poor couple. They took in the strangers, they fed them of cabbage and bacon, they made them comfortable, and for that they were honored; as Ovid told the story, one was turned into an oak tree, the other into a linden, and there forever their branches were intertwined. It pointed a moral, Ovid wrote: the power of Heaven has no bound or limit, and the gods look after good people still. The important thing is that the people of Lystra knew the story, and what good things could come to people who welcomed the gods when they came in human form. They were living expectantly, even with their distorted view of the deity. That was the background to this strange incident. It began with a miracle, and that is not easy in the skeptical 20th Cen. to accept. It points up a kind of subtheme to the Acts, that the whole story was based upon miracle. We must decide for ourselves whether we can believe or not, but the fact is that if we erase the miracles from the Acts there is not much left, and what is left does not make any sense at all. Take a look at what happened here. There was a man born a cripple; he had never walked. He was sitting in some public place, we do not know where. Paul looked at him, and shouted to him, stand up on your feet, because he saw he had faith to be made well. And he did, and he was; he sprang up and he walked. There is the miracle, and you may explain it as you will, or must. But however you explain it you must take into account the response of the crowd, who were not believers, not in any plot or conspiracy. But they saw what had happened, and they began to shout, in their native dialect, the gods have come down to us in the likeness of men. Now, if there were no miracle, why did they react with those words? And there is one other thing about their outcry, their explanation of what had happened to the man born lame, and that is that they were awaiting an incarnation. The central proclamation of Xty is that the word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and glory, that the light was in the world and the darkness could not overcome it. And here are these pagans, remembering a legend that Ovid wrote, and Hawthorne retold, seeing in a healing miracle the appearance of gods in human form. Barnabas was the older, and may have had a full beard; he must therefore be Jupiter; Paul may have been smaller, so he was Hermes the son of Jupiter. Does it not suggest something important that those pagans considered it well within the possible that divinity could take upon itself human flesh, and walk and dwell among men? It is interesting, because there are many people living in the year of our lord who reject outright any claim that God could do that thing. Could those ancient pagans see clearer into the purposes of their distorted gods than we can see into the nature of the one living God? But so those people shouted, and the priest of the temple of Zeus in Lystra brought oxen and garlands of flowers to offer sacrifice with the people. And at last the two missionaries understood what the crowd was saying; they tore their garments in the classic eastern response to blasphemy. And Paul preached a sermon on the spot. Acts 14: 14-18. This is one of the most interesting sermons recorded in NT, and that because of the circumstances which brought it to us. Paul had healed a cripple, and the crowd had responded by shouting that these two were gods incarnate, for only divine power could have healed that lame man. But clearly, definitely, decisively, the two rejected any divine pretensions. We are but human, with natures like your own, they said; to them it was no temptation to be regarded as gods. We are living in an age in which it is increasingly popular to treat heroes as more than human, from the sports star to the entertainer, to the office-holder. Because we hunger for heroes, and want to worship heroes, we grasp, if not at straws, then almost straws. But here these two Jewish Xns, to whom blasphemy was as repulsive as was eating creepy crawley things, ~~they~~ rejected any effort to make them more than human. No metamorphosis for them. Another interesting thing is that the sermon was about God the father; in it is no reference to Xr the son. No mention of the incarnation, the cross, the resurrection, the gift of the spirit. And some have criticised Paul for the omission. But wait; those people had no understanding of the nature of God; they were impressed that here were 2 men who could do something they could not themselves do. There is something in the literature about pearls before swine, valuable things thrown to dogs. And it is a hard teaching, from one who asked us not to judge, and to love those who would spitefully use us. But to these people religion meant taking the temporal, the passing, the imperfect, and worshipping it as god. Many of us, in our way, do the same; we elevate nation, or pleasure, or our work. Paul had to tell those people something about God before he could speak to them of Xr. Reverence must come before instruction, for there must be faith in the land before there can be orthodoxy. Paul spoke of nature, and a God who provided what man needed, and scarcely could restrain the people from sacrificing to them. The end of the incident is also odd; read how that crowd turned upon Paul and stoned him and left him for dead. That first missionary journey was a foreshadowing of what was to come as Xns moved into the pagan world; and yet from their efforts came the victory of faith over force. Let us give thanks.

4-24-83. Conference. It was nearly a cen & q̄r ago that Chas Dickens wrote his romantic novel about the Fren Revol. He named it a Tale of 2 Cities, London and Paris they were, and he began it with the line, it was the best of times, it was the worst of times. It is a story that has charmed readers since it was published in 1859, and among other things it started people talking in terms of the comparison of cities as a way of symbolizing or dramatizing an histera. It has become a commonplace among students of western Civ to describe it, too, as a tale of 2 cities--Jerusalem and Athens, the two dominant themes in that unique blend of ideas and values we call western. From Jerus came that ethical teaching, that vision of righteousness that began w/Jews and was spread thruout the western world by Xn missionaries; and along w/it went thē emphasis upon monotheism, a God of grace and mercy. And from Athens came the philos ideas, know thyself, nothing to excess, knowl is virtue, the unexamined life is not worth living. It was an attitude that became basic of western man, that the universe is orderly and knowable. So fundamental are these two streams of thought, on the surface at least contradictory, that the tale of 2 cities becomes the theme of understanding civilizati. But there is another pair of cities that ^{are} also important to us, and that is what we shall read about today. They are Jerus and Antioch of Syria, two cities we would not immediately recognize as symbolizing a turning point in history. And yet the diffs between them, and the quarrel they had early in hist of Xn Ch, determined the subsequent course of that story. Text Acts 15. This is another lesso in our q̄r's study of Acts; last wk we began 2d half of the bk, which begins w/chap 13, has Paul as it central figure, and tells the story of the expansion of the Ch from Antioch to Rome. Antioch was thus the pivotal Ch in the story of the Acts of the Apōtles; it was the first gentile Ch, it was the city where the disciples were first called Xn, and it sent out and supported the missionary actiivs which took the Ch into Asia and Greece and then to Italy. We are all of us, and all of our Chs are, children of that mother ch in Antioch. And it was because it was a gentile congregat that it became part of that tale of 2 cities. The liberties preached by Paul and Barnabas and Peter were offensive to the devout Jews who dominated the Ch in Jerus. From Moses and the exodus, thru the priests and the temple and the prphets, to Jesus preaching in the temple, the center of the Jewish faith was in the law as given to Moses. The law was evidence of God's grace to his chosen people, and obedience to it was necessary to be Jewish--obedience to every jot and tittle of it. And the outward sign of the cogenant, from the time of Abraham in Gen 17, was the ritual act of circumcision performed upon newborn males on the eighth day of their lives. And in all of those 13 centuries B.C. there were non-Jews converted, or proselytized, into the faith; to become Jews these all must endure all aspects of the Jewish style of life and faith and practice. When J accepted the reqs of the suffering svt Messiah, nearly all, if not in fact all, of the early believers in his divinity & in his resurrection were Jews who practiced their faith in all its fullness. And they saw no need to give up their foods, their worship, their prayers, or to relax any of the requiremts of their faith. J did not come to abolish the law and the prophets, as he himself said; he came instead to fulfill them. Anyone who relaxes one of the least of these cmdmts, he warned, would be called least in Kgd̄m of Heaven--and I am reading from Matt 5;17ff. He observed all of the Jewish rites & festivals and customs, he went regularly into the synagog to pray, and he taught in the temp̄e when he was in Jerus. Among his closest pupils it is likely that all were Jews, tho some students think Matthew the tax-collector may not have been. B̄t at the time the idea was wide-spread, if not universal, that messiah was promised to the Jews, their inheritance, and not to anyone else. Other people, the ones outside Judaism, were unclean morally and physically; they did not keep the law, and they ate w/no discriminat, they drank blood and ate meat w/blood in it, all of which was repulsive to the devout and law-abiding Jew. That is why the fathers of the early Ch in Jerus were bewildered to see the holy spirit given to those who were ignorant of the law, who ate unclean things, and whose bodies lacked the sign of the covenant. Two wks ago we read again Acts 11 in which Peter told of his vision, of seeing unclean things come down from heaven upon a tablecloth, of being commanded to rise and kill and eat; and when he objected that he had never broken the food rules the voice told him, what God has cleansed you must not call unclean. And you remember that led him to Cornelius, the Roman army officer in Caesarea, and a whole group of the enemy who rec'd the holy spirit. And even more unsettling, in Antioch there was an entire church composed of unclean gentiles. God was moving in unaccountable and mystifying ways. Yrs ago I heard the story of a mother hen who was put to hatch some duck eggs; hatch they did, and the hen guarded them, and took them to feed and to drink, and all went well until those ducklings decided it was time to take to water. In a straight line they marched down to the pond and into it they leaped, the mother hen cackling in anguish, trying to turn them back with her wings, expecting them all to perish ⁱⁿ their folly. They were not acting as respectable chicks should act. There is something of that in the attitude of those who defended the ancient ways of Judaism, of ~~Moses~~ Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and of Moses, and of the prophets. Like that mother hen they tried to steer the Ch into familiar ways, but the spirit of God would not accept man-made restrictions. And so there arose in the early Ch the tale of 2 cities, of Jerus the golden, of the hill of Zion, of the temple and the tradit of a 1000 yrs and more of a spl covenant w/the almighty God, of the scrolls and the commentaries upon the law as given on the mountain

And of Antioch, a gentile city of no great relig tradit, of half-a-million people who did not keep the laws of God, who ate meat that had been offered to idols, or had been blessed by pagan priests, who were dietetically impure as they were sexually impure, as they also stole and cheated and bore false witness. And God had no more respect for his chosen than to give to those unlikely candidates the same full measure of the spirit which he had given to the Jewish Xns in Jerus. Well, at the very least they could put a high wall around the treasure of the faith, and make a tiny gate in it, so that all who entered had to do so by first becoming Jews. And when the gentiles protested that demand there was a great debate in what is called the Jerus council of A.D. 48. Acts 15: 1-5. Now before we take a look at what happened at that first church council let me take a brief bow to the scholars. It is utterly impossible for anyone to make Lk's acct of this meeting agree w/that of Paul in Galat 2. So divergent are the accts that Acts 15 is the most diffic chapter in the entire book for those who study it seriously. There are a number of theories about what might have happened, and you will find them listed and described in the literature on Acts. One view is that there were two visits by Paul to Jerus, one called the famine visit, which you will find referred to in the closing lines of Acts 11; in that view the quarrel between Peter and Paul, which is recorded in Gal 2, happened at that time. In that view the 2d visit to Jerus, called the council visit, is that described in Acts 15, which is before us. Thus it is not necessary to explain how Peter could be such an obstructionist in Paul's letter, and so cooperative in Lk's story here, because they happened at two different times. Others simply think that Lk found evidence in his sources of visits to Jerus, and did not underst what had happened, so he wrote about one in Acts 11 and about the other here. However the scholars resolve their problems here, and they are real and serious, we can get on to the version we have here. The key of course is in V.1: unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses you cannot be saved. We have already heard rumblings of that opinion in the questioning of Peter's behavior in entering the house of Cornelius, but Paul's missionary journey to the great unclean world made the matter more acute and more pressing. And as you can hear, it was a theol question they were raising; as Paul could see clearly, if anything other than faith were made necessary to salvat then Xty became just another relig of works, a relig in which the penitent is expected to do something pleasing to God, something worthy of salvat. What the Judaizing Xns in Jerus were saying was that for gentiles to become Xns they must first become Jews, else they were not heirs of the promise. But the way they were saying it went much deeper than that. In its largest form the issue was: is Xty a narrow natl sect, or is it a universal faith which shall be for all people? Does it lack pwr and meaning outside the Jewish cradle in which it was born, or is all of that like the eggshell that, having served its purpose in protecting the embryo until it hatched, is then abandoned? And in that fight it is our condition that was at stake, yet we must never forget that all who participated in the debate were sincere and concerned indivs. The matter was settled in the Jerus Council, or conference; or rather, matters, for there were 2 issues, 2 related matters, on which a decision was needed. One was the question of whether a gentile Xn who had not received the Jewish sign of the covenant was in fact a legitimate Xn; the other was the question of foods, by which was meant the matter of social relatsps between Jewish and gentile Xns, between clean and unclean people. They were ~~two~~ separate questions, but they were related. How many of you can remember, or maybe you know someone even yet, who in a community of blacks and whites is willing to acknowledge the validity of the other's confession of faith, but remains uncomfortable sharing a meal or a social occasion with them? The decisions of that Jerus Council are of contin relevance to us. There is not time to read the description of the debate--please read all of Chap 15 and Gal 2 for yourselves. There was much debate, we are told, and then we are given the gist of 3 argumts; Peter spoke first, Acts 15:6-11. There is much food for thought in this: this is the Peter who went to Cornelius, who underst that God cleansed all things and all people, who saw the gift of the holy spirit ~~the~~ to those who had not kept the law. And in v.11 he gave us pure Paul, the most completely Paul-view we have in all the Acts, or so one commentator wrote. We know from experience that whenever we put anything alongside faith as the way to salvat replaces faith as primary; it had to be faith OR the law of Moses; it could not be both, for if it were both, faith would be removed as THE means of salvat. We shall be saved thru the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they shall also be. Then Paul and Barnabas reported on their work among the gentiles. After they finished James spoke. He was a brother of J, not one of the apostles but a late-comer, now ldr of the Jerus Ch, recogn among Jewish Xns as their spokesman. He proposed a compromise: Acts 15: 19-20. It gives something, and it takes something; it gave the gentiles freedom from the most diffic of the Jewish rules, but it expected of them that they not offend the sensitivities of the law-abiding Jews, in food and in morality. In time it gave liberty to all Xns, for if the law was not applicable to the gentile the Xn of Jewish origins could not be long held to it. Thus ended the Jerus Council of 48 A.D. which saved the unity of the Ch ~~and~~ while opening its doors to gentiles who did not know the law. But beyond that was a question the Ch has had to face over and over again, of deciding what is essential and what is not of what is the gift and what is the wrapping paper. The tale of the 2 cities of Antioch and Jerus is the story of our faith, our church, and our salvat.

5-1-83. Macedonia. In the past 8 wks these lessons from Acts have had as the theme the incredible expansion and growth of the early Xn Ch, beginning at Jerus and spreading outward from there, breaking thru every barrier or limit that was put in its way. And in every one of these major leaps the author of Acts was careful to emphasize that each step was commanded and inspired by Jesus Christ himself. We have seen how Philip received special instructions to proceed to the Gaza road and there to join himself to a particular chariot that was travelling there. And we have seen Peter up on the roof of that house in Joppa, looking out over the sea and thinking of food, for he was hungry, and there he saw the vision of the large tablecloth, full of unclean things, and the command to eat, for what God had cleansed no man could call unclean, words that led him directly to Cornelius the Roman official who lived in Caesarea. And with that the spirit was given in full measure to gentile people who did not know the law, who were not part of the ancient covenant w/Abraham. And that was followed by the establmt of a gentile church in Antioch of Syria, where Paul and Barnabas preached and taught a non-Jewish congregat. It was so shocking a thing that it made necessary the Jerus Council of 48AD, about which we read last wk. Note that every step of the way was made necessary by a comd from the risen Lord and the holy spirit of God. And now we come to another important moment in Ch hist, and also in world hist, for there were two addl barriers to be crossed, one geographic and one gender, and the author of this bk makes one point clear, that it was Christ who directed the evangelists to make the great crossing from Asia to Europe. For today the lesson focuses upon Paul looking out over the narrow sea that separates Asia from the western world, a scene that reminds us of Peter's view over the Medit before he was jolted out of his rut and his attitudes turned completely around. Text Acts 16. A bit of background is necessary here. Today's events follow after the Jerus Council, which we read about last wk. There the leaders of the early Ch were able to reach a compromise thanks to the vision and statesmanship of Paul, and the tolerance and generosity of Peter, a compromise that opened the entire gentile world to the gospel. By that agreement gentiles would be freed from the major effects of Jewish law and practice, but in return must avoid offending the sensitivities of orthodox Jews in eat practices and sexual morality. It meant that now the door to the world outside Jewry was open to the preaching of the evangelists especially called and set apart to proclaim the gospel of Xr to the gentiles. And condits among them were favorable for missions activity. For about 2 cns there was peace w/in the empire, it was a pol and cultural unity stretching from the river of India to the Scottish border, the roads were unsurpassed for 1500 years and the Medit was a Roman lake offering easy communicats, and there was a common language known and spoken everywhere in that Medit world. And it is remarkable that all of those factors existed at the same time --some even say miraculous. And it was a relatively brief but golden age, ~~and~~ after 180AD the outside people began to fight their way into the empire, disrupting its economy and destroying its peace and order, and beginning the end of a common speech. And there was another factor; though the gentiles did not know the Jewish law and prophets and did not share the Messianic hope, they were interested in new ideas and their most oft-repeated question was what must I do to be saved? Many of them were ready to talk about life and its meaning, and the inevitabil of death and suffering. If relig may be defined as inward response to external reality, then many of those outsiders were eager to know more about relig and what their inward response might be, for external reality was just as enigmatic to them as it is to many of us. So it was that after AD 48 Paul and Silas and Timothy set forth upon what many have called the 2d missionary journey. It began at Antioch and went northward by a zigzag course through the major cities of AsMin. It was Paul's strategy to establ Chs in the cities and intend it to spread into the countryside and the villages; that did not always occur. For our word for pagan is the Latin word for a rural person. And as they travelled Lk who wrote Acts makes it clear that the guide and commander of the expedit was Jesus himself. Acts 16: 6-10. As a major commentator on Acts said of these verses, they are designed to show how the Apostles, guided in surprising ways by signs from above and contrary to their own plans, conducted no mission at that time in AsMin, but were driven on to Troas and even beyond Asia itself. And that is obviously the intention. The language of directions and stopovers is vague and imprecise, so that people are still arguing over exactly where the three apostles went. But it is clear that something the people involved considered superhuman was at work in these events, so that the guidance from God was apparent. Paul planned to preach in Asia, which means the western shore of AsMin, in what is now Turkey; he then went thru the region of Phrygia and Galatia, which are two provinces in the interior of AsMin. He then planned to go into Bithynia, on the north of AsMin--we really need a map of the ancient Med world to see it clearly. And in every case something interferred to prevent them. We are not told what happened; it could have been threats of attack from Jewish zealots, or bad weather, or an intuitive feeling. But we are told that when they wanted to go one way, the Holy Spirit forbade them to go that way, and when they tried another direction, this time it was the spirit of Jesus that would not allow them, and so they tried still a 3d direction and it was then that they saw the vision of the man from Macedonia. So the important thing about that 3d miss journey is not the geography of it, or the route they took, or where they went; the important thing about it is the theology it contains. For in these verses is the doctrine, or the theory, of the guidance of God in human af-

why not tell them from beginning?

fairs. It is what the theologs call providence, the idea that God has a plan by which he guides us. It is not an easy or an obvious teaching. Most of us do not expect God to guide us, and some of those who do reduce the idea to superstition, as when someone closes their eyes, opens the Bible and puts finger to line, and then does whatever it says... Judas went out and hanged himself; go thou and do likewise; or they turn it into the idea of puppet people whose strings are being pulled by a messenger-boy God who tells us all that we are to do, what career to enter, what mate to choose, how to vote or make a pie or where to spend spring break. So the idea of providence becomes either a superstition or a game played by the religiously immature. And it is neither, and yet what it is is not simple. It is somewhere between fatalism, which holds that everything that happens was foreordained, planned beforehand; and on the other hand accidentalism, which is the idea that everything that happens is an historical accident, that nothing is arranged in advance. Belief in the providence of God holds that God has a grand strategy which affects the course of history, but in which there is wide space for personal freedom and choice and response. I doubt that God told Paul what time to get up in the morning, or what to eat for his dinner, or what clothing to put on, though it might have happened. And I would not be surprised to know that on occasion his journey was delayed by illness or an upset stomach, or even a blister on his heel. God lets some things take their own course, as he lets us decide much for ourselves. But in the long run of things, God is in control and there is no possibility of his failure. That is the lesson of these lines. On the surface it looks like aimless wandering across the face of Asia Minor, time wasted and miles walked to no purpose, but underneath there is the hand of God, closing, even slamming doors in Paul's face, pushing him along. And then, at Troas he saw the vision of the Macedonian. How did he know it was a Macedonian? We are not told; was it his accent, or the clothing, or was there more to the vision than we are told? But know it he did, and he heard what we have come to call the Macedonian call to come over into Europe and leave Asia to others. And immediately, v. 10, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, because now the providence of God was clearly evident. The implication is clear that there was no delay, and that is important. How many times have I felt the need to do something, write somebody a letter, or go visit, or read a certain book, and I put it off for a better time and ended up not doing it at all? There is no time like the present, goes the old saying; obedience delayed is the beginning of disobedience, for it often means an unwillingness to do what so plainly lies before us. And it may also be true that the more we have to do the easier it is for us to do the duty we are given; too much leisure makes for little accomplishment; because we need not act immediately too often we do not act at all. So the travellers crossed that major barrier between two worlds. Acts 16: 11-15. This is the first record of the preaching of the gospel in Europe, and most probably the first time it happened. So in these few lines we stand figuratively at the small spring from which flowed a brook that became a mighty river, and then a raging torrent, and an ocean in influence. Here is the beginning, and what became known as Christendom for a 1000 yrs came of it; hundreds of thousands of people, even millions of them, and thousands of miles, and an entire civilization came of it. It happened in Philippi, which you will see on the map near the eastern coast of that part of Greece called Macedonia; they went by ship, by way of Samothrace, which is an island between Troas and Neapolis. Note that this is one of the "we" passages of Acts, usually taken to mean that Luke the author was a member of the party, and here we have an eyewitness report. Paul remained in Philippi long enough to establish a church, and it was one of his favorites; no one can read the letter to the Philippians feeling the warmth of Paul's love for those people. It was, like so many places Paul worked, a Roman military colony; there, on the sabbath, they went down to the river, for that was the usual place for Jewish prayers in places where there was no synagogue; this was a place of prayer, which in Latin would be an oratory, in the open air. The only people who came there that day were women, and to them the missionaries spoke. There is no indication in the account that anything unusual was taking place, but we cannot overlook its importance. From that riverbank came Christendom, western civilization as we know it. And we are told that one woman was named Lydia, of Thyatira, a dealer in purple cloth; that might not be her name, for Thyatira was a city in the district of Lydia, and the Greek could mean a Lydian woman; the Philippians mentions two women by name, and some think this was one of them. Whatever, she is the first European convert to Christianity. She was a businesswoman, she took an interest in prayer and spiritual matters, and God opened her heart to hear what Paul was saying. In all of that there is meaning for us. Just as Paul broke the geographical limitations upon the gospel when he took ship to Macedonia, and now in his first convert he crossed that other line that is often even more difficult, the gender barrier. Women have always formed the heart of the Christian Church, but they have not always been accepted as equals in the sight of God and man. Indeed, for 1000 yrs and more the Church was suspicious of women, they were praiseworthy only when locked away in nunneries or when mothers. In the law, in the economy, in society, women were treated as less worthy than men, restricted to children and kitchen and church, in Martin Luther's words; so it is instructive and significant that the first woman convert to Christianity was a well-to-do businesswoman who ran a shop and bought and sold goods in the market. She invited the preachers to stay in her home, and they accepted her hospitality; in her home was the first church in all of Europe. So here are two major strides toward the uttermost parts of earth-- into Europe, and into the house of a woman, 2 major breakthroughs whose effects are still with us.

Mother's Day

5-8-83. Corinth. It is an easy thing for us to over-romanticize the missionary expansion of the early Ch, to point out its high spots, the miracles, the divine guidance, the successes that planted the church in the western world. But there was another side to the story, and it is not so pleasant. When we find the going tough, when we confront our doubts, and strong opposit, when we work with all the patience and skill we know to make peace in the family, to save a friendship or to keep a church from dividing in anger, it may be a consoling thought for us to remember that even from the beginning, even as the holy spirit was so clearly at work, those apostles had their discouragements too. It was not all cushions in the pews or fans in the windows for them, it was not an unbroken spring of successes. It must have been confusing to Paul and his associates as they wandered thru the wilderness of AsMin, not given a clear command where to go, but getting negatives in all directions--not that way, and not that other way, and not down that road. They must have wanted to scream out, tell us what to do. And then Paul had his vision of the Macedonian begging help. He took the plunge, he dared, he moved out into a new field of activ, beyond Asia and into Europe. And from the moment he arrived at Philippi he had little encouragement. There were some successes, yes, but for the most part he knew nothing but danger and discomfort, trouble and disappointment. At Phil he was hauled off to prison, in Thessalonika he was hounded out of town, farther south at Berea he escaped by sea from an angry crowd. In Athens, the cultural center of the ancient world, he preached a sermon, or rather, delivered a lecture, on Mars Hill, that was almost entirely a failure from any point of view. In Athens were people who spent their time doing nothing but telling and hearing new ideas. They listened in silence as Paul talked of the unknown God, but when he spoke of the resurrection from the dead they laughed him out of town. THAT hurt Paul, as it would wound any of us; reasoned argument any of us can accept, but rude and ignorant ridicule is too much. It convinced P that he was in Europe by God's command but that did not mean he would have an easy time of it. He was downcast, disconsolate, discouraged, dispirited. If you or I have ever been in that mood of defeat, then hear on, for our lesson today is an acct of what Paul did to confront that loss of confidence, text Acts 18. This is another in the series of lessons from Acts, and this month's unit is the story of the expansion of the Ch into Eur and to Rome itself. Last wk we saw the great leap across the border dividing As from Eur, and in this we see Paul in Corinth, burdened w/more problems than most of us feel. Until his 2 companions joined him--and in one of his letters he wrote of the joy he had when they came to him--he was alone; he was alone in Athens and was alone for a time in Corinth. That contributed to his sorrows. Solitude is not easy for gregarious human beings to bear. Thoreau praised it at Walden but he too moved back into town; someone said of solitude that it is a nice place to visit but no one wants to live there. When we are downcast, blue and burdened, we need human companionship and the human touch. Lonely he was in Corinth, but he began to climb out of his despair. Acts 18: 1-4. Here is Paul's arrival in the wickedest city in the world, the city he became closely associated with. The Ch he founded there caused him more grief, and in the end more joy, than any other he knew; he visited Corinth at least 3 times, he wrote the ch at least 4 letters of which we have portions or fragments, and it was while he was in that iniquity that he wrote to the Thessalonians and some think also to the Galatians, and also the greatest of his extant writings, the letter to the Romans. Clearly, Corinth was crucial, another of those turning point places that directed the course of Ch Hist and of western history. And a less likely place you could hardly imagine. The original Grk city had been destroyed, and what Paul saw was a rebuilt city only about 75 years old, a commercial center on the narrow strip of land joining the two parts of Greece, and at a spot where east-west trade funnelled. Corinth was a Roman city with little of Greece about it, not an intellectual center nor one with long tradit. What it did have was an enormous temple to Aphrodite, the goddess of love, with which were associated, by some estimates, over 1000 temple prostitutes whose flagrant vice shocked even the blasé Romans. There was even a Greek word, to live like a Corinthian, which meant to practice utter debauchery. Some students of Paul think it signifies that the passages in Paul's letters condemning pagan behavior most vehemently were all written from Corinth. And because of the fulness of detail in the Corinthian letters we know more about that Ch than about any other, so that it is of interest to us for that reason. But first Paul had to climb out of his gloom. In 1 Cor 2:3 he tells us that he came to the city in weakness and much fear and trembling, and those words tell us of the depth of his despair. That same chapter begins w/famous words, I did not come to you preaching in lofty words or wisdom, for that he had tried in Athens and it did not work. He was a failure, a fugitive, a man of troubles. Europe had begged his help but had not welcomed him w/warm hospitality. How did he handle his loneliness and his discouragement? He found a friend and he went to work, that's what he did. He took a room in the home of Priscilla, called Prisca in the letters, and Aquila, and he did that because they were in his trade, of tent-making. When Paul was sad he found work for his hands. There is something therapeutic about work, especially work that produces something to show the effort and the skill. I know people who bake a pie when something sorrowful happens, I know others who clean out the attic when their feelings have been hurt. Weaving goat's hair into tent cloth, and then sewing it into larger pieces, may well be

as effective a way of serving God as preaching in a big church or offering a sacrifice at the altar. There is a work for every one of us to do, and we are happier and healthier when we work. We ought to rewrite that familiar saying to read, don't curse the darkness, find something to do. Paul took pride in the fact that in Corinth he was not a burden on anybody; he paid his own way. But then Timothy and Silas came to join Paul, bringing gifts of money from that small Ch in Philippi. And after that three things happened in Corinth that have meaning for us. Acts 18: 5-8. Here we see a rejuvenated Paul, his dejection gone. He was occupied w/preaching, or KJV he was pressed in the spirit, is the translation we have; but what the line really says is that he began to be absorbed in preaching, he was engrossed in it, his recovery was complete, he was his old self again. And notice what he was preaching; no more talk about unknown gods, and the God in whom we live and move and have our being; no more effort to compete w/Greek philos. As one of Paul's biographers said, at Athens he learned that mere academic argument on behalf of Xty seldom converts anybody. Now we read that he testified and that is something different from a debate. That is proclamation, announcement, claim, and what he claimed was that the Xr, Messiah, was J. KJV has it the other way around, and is less accurate: it says he testified to the Jews that Jesus was Xr. But among the Jews Messiah was the familiar term, and J the unknown quantity. We are not told, but he must have taught them patiently, from scripture how J fulfilled the prophecies and the messianic Psalms. We do not know how long he testified and taught, but eventually he realized that his efforts were fruitless and he rebelled. In a typically oriental act he shook out his garments, the equivalent of shaking dust off one's sandals, and gave up on them. Your blood be on your own heads, he said, I am innocent; in the older translation I am clean. That is an extremely serious thing to say. We must be extremely patient, and loving, + persuasive, presenting the proclamation w/all the skill we possess, and even then it may be too soon to put all the blame for failure upon stubborn people. How can we know at what point the effort is futile? J spoke of casting pearls before swine, and holy things before dogs. But when do people in need become swine to be abandoned, or dogs to be driven away? I am a teacher and have been one for many years, working w/materials which are not quite so final as were the subjects of Paul's lessons, but I do know the cut of a sneer on the lips of a student who rejects what I present, and represent. I have felt, as if it were a living thing, the hostility of a group of students to an idea or a principle. And I know the impulse to shake out my garments and leave them to their pointless, and in some cases even destructive lives. But the problem is, can I really say I am innocent, I am clean, I have done all I can for you and this is the end? In Corinth, at least, he gave up on the Jews, he moved out of the synagogue and into the house of one Titius--a 4th Cen Xn scholar identified him as the Titus of the epistle--and even worse, converted Crispus the leader of the synagogue. He was right next door to the synagogue, and his first convert was its chief. Sometimes a threat such as Paul's jolts people into deciding. Then came the divine approval. Acts 18: 9-11. Some think this vision out of place, for it seems to come to a man dejected and downcast; those who think it here see it as support for a man troubled by his failure with the Jews of Corinth. Certainly it is a comforting word to a man who needed it. Have no fear, God told him, speak on and never stop, hold not thy peace, do not be silent, for I am with you and no man shall injure you, I have many people in this city. The command comes first: keep on speaking out, and do not ever keep silent. These lines ought to be written on a wall in every house in this land, for there remain injustices among us crying for correction, there are wounds that need bandaging, there is a truth that must be spoken to those in power. Certainly they should be inscribed where every pastor and priest and rabbi can see them--do not be afraid, speak and do not keep silence, for I am with you--but the rest of us, the hungry sheep of the flock, we too need to speak, and to encourage our pastor to speak, the word he has to speak. The command came first: speak out. It was followed by a promise, I am with you, and that presence is more than enough to scatter the demons of fear or of despond. It is all we need. Then the reminder: I have many people in this city. We may not see them, or recognize them, but they are there, people who live under judgment and in the joy of redemption, people who see the present in terms of past and future, who have a sense of the transcendent. Whenever we think we are the last of the faithful, the remnant, we should remember Paul's vision; even in Corinth, the wickedest town west of the Pecos, in debauchery and vice without equal, God had many people, souls yet to be won, thieves to find honest labor, libertines to regain self-respect, prostitutes restored to purity. When we are ready to give up on the human race, let us look again at what is there, for God does not see people as we see them. And finally, the case before Gallio. Acts 18: 12-16. It is Gallio who enables us to date these events as AD 51 or 52, he was a learned man w/no patience for pettiness and time-wasting. The Jews wanted the proconsul to condemn Paul as the leader of an illegal sect. Gallio saw it as a fuss between factions of Jews, and refused to be involved. He took no notice, it was a question of words and names and your own law. He drew a firm line between opinion and conduct, which is the basis of a free society. Violent opinion hurts no one; violent conduct is a threat to peace. In that Gallio was right. But in assuming that opinion has no relation to conduct he was sadly in error; the true forces that shape the world are ideas, for they inspire deeds. Paul in Corinth moved from despair to joy; he had the promise of God's presence.

3d Thing

3 things go to a person downcast
1) Find work; recapture faith, see meek

5-15-83. Ephesus. 30 yrs ago died the man who had been for many yrs Dean of St Paul's in London, the man whose sermons were so pessimistic and so critical of the world he lived in that he was called the gloomy dean. His name was William Ralph Inge, and he said something once that might be the text for today's lesson. Most people make the mistake of thinking that relig is necessarily a good thing and fail to realize that many, if not most, religions are thoroughly bad. So spoke the sad & unhappy dean, and what he said pointed up the truth that relig when it is divinely revealed lifts people out of their limitats, but when relig is made to serve some human purpose it emphasizes those limitats for all to see. Someone said once that if a relig is popular it means that it is in fact not a relig but a superstition, a saying that may be an insult to the human race, implying as it does that only a self-serving, inferior set of beliefs would appeal to the majority of us. And yet we know the prophecy, and we are confident that it will one day be fulfilled, that at the name of J every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess, for the good news is for all people everywhere. And yet, as Peter wrote in his letter, our adversary the devil prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour; and one of his favorite tricks is to change relig from the self-denying to the self-serving, and in that is the difference between good relig and bad. The contrast between them, and the conflict between them, is the theme of the lesson for today, text Acts 19. This is the 3d in a unit of lessons on the expansion of the Ch from Asia to Europe, from Antioch to Rome. In earlier sessions we saw Paul cross over to Philippi from AsMin, and get thrown into jail; we saw him beat a hasty retreat from Berea, get laughed out of Athens, and climb out of discouragement at Corinth. After a lengthy stay there, he went on to Ephesus which is back on the asian side of the Aegean, and there he remained more than 2 yrs. He told us in his letters that he had immense problems while he was there; he called them afflictions in one place, and said that he was so utterly, unbearably crushed that he despaired of life itself. And yet Lk in the Acts passes over the two yrs w/little mention except for the one confrontat which we shall see today. There was a major crisis in Ephesus, and there may have been more than one of them, but we do not find the story in Acts. What we do find is a violent riot, with a city which lost all control over its sanity, an event which threatened the lives of two of Paul's assocs. And it might have been what Paul meant when he wrote to the Corinthians that humanly speaking he fought with beasts at Ephesus. I know it is not a clear reference, that it could easily mean something else, but it could also mean that riot, that city gone mad. And it went mad because of the confrontat between good relig and bad relig, and because that good relig was depriving some workers of their trades, and therefore their profits. So let us go back to Ephesus, it is the only view we have of it this term, to see what effects a superstition can have upon a mob of people; even, if you will, what are the dangers that lurk in the underlying assumptions of a small-d democratic system of govt. First, we take a brief look at Paul's plans for his future course Acts 19: 21-22 This verse is the preface for the remainder of Acts, just as the great commission in Chap 1 gives the outline of the whole. But see the vision of the man. Nothing small or piddling here. First he would go back to Grc and then to Jerus--and here we are not told why he would make that journey; from other sources we know he went to collect contribs from the Eur Chs to take to support the brethren in the original Ch in Jerus. But then he had to see Rome; it was the center of the world, it was the capital of the Emp, and it was always Paul's strategy to work from the top, fr the major city in the district, for his was an urban Xr as the Emp itself was an urban society. And he did get to Jerus and he did see Rome, but not in the manner he had envisioned. He did not expect to enter Rome a prisoner awaiting trial; God's ways are not our ways, and to Paul it may have seemed that in the very accomplt of his grand strategy its purposes were being defeated. But his vision, though grand, was still limited. And between him and Rome there was a fight with beasts in Ephesus. It started w/speech by one of the Ephesian craftsmen named Demetrius. Acts 19: 23-27. This is one of those rare events of which we have not only a vividly descriptive acct here, but one that is supported in nearly every sentence by archaeological diggings and inscriptions carved into stone. About this conflict there can be no doubt, whatever be your view of Paul and his mission. First there was Ephesus, and that Paul stayed there for so long a time is an indicat of its importance. It was known as the Light of Asia, it was the capital of a Roman province so it was the HQ of the proconsul, the governor; it was also a free city in that it was permitted to retain its Grk constitut which gave pwr to the citiz body, the demos, which met in assembly when matters were to be decided. The presiding officer of the assy was called the town clerk, as we transl the term. The most imposing bldg in Ephesus was the monumental temple to Artemis, a goddess of fertility the Romans called Diana; it was one of the 7 wonders of the ancient world. It was octagonal in shape, and large--340 by 160 feet; it had, or was reported to have, gold instead of mortar between its stones, it had 127 pillars 60 ft high around it, each 20 ft in circumf at the base. The inner portion, the holy of holies, was open to the skies and was 70 ft wide. It was in 1904 that a team excavated the foundats of that great edifice--and incidentally the story of the diggings of the archaeologists is a romantic and exciting way to learn about the ancients; if you know a child with a bright mind, go to the library and get the story of the diggings at Troy, or Khossos, or Mykenos; they are thrilling ways to get interested in anghst. That temple, and the theatre where the assy met, have both been uncovered at Ephesus. The temple

The temple made Eph a goal for tourists and pilgrims, and that meant good business for inn-keepers and souvenir shops, where people bought small images of Diana with her two lions. None has been found in silver, but there are some in clay. And Paul and his associates were cutting into that profitable trade of making and selling the little images of Diana. And that aroused the workmen who made them. Demetrius, the spokesman--and there is an inscription listing one by that name as one of the overseers of the temple of Diana, but of course it could be another; it was a common name. Look here, he said, we earn our bread by making these images--probably were not shrines, which means something else--and all over the province of Asia this Paul has hurt our trade by saying god is not something made with men's hands. And notice the order of his complaint, for it is a perfect example of the way self-interest disguises itself as unselfish idealism. The danger to what Demetrius called our craft he put first, and then after that he warned of the danger to the magnificence of the goddess. It is easy to be religious or patriotic or anything else commendable when it pays to be so; you would not expect a maker of souvenir images of a god to hold firmly to the creed that they be no gods which are made with hands. Instead you would expect them to claim that if you cannot see it, and touch it, and take it home with you, they be not gods. And in that is the conflict between good religion and bad, between faith that lifts people out of themselves, beyond their selfishness and grasping and pettiness, and superstition that centers on the self and its comfort. It also raises a larger question of the effect of religious faith upon the way people earn their bread. It is a testimonial to the impact of Paul's work in Ephesus that the sellers of silver Dianas felt a decline in their sales. I'm sure every one of us could think of some business or enterprise that would dry up when a faith of morality and genuine devotion dominated the community. I never remember the exact figures, but I am always appalled each year to read the estimates of the amount of money spent on vice of one kind or another. Benj Franklin said that many a man thinks he is buying pleasure, when he is really selling himself a slave to it, and that is happening to increasing numbers of us. But put a community of believing Christians in the neighborhood and it presents a challenge to the purveyors of the mind-killers, or the spirit-deadeners, or the attractions that turn men and women into beasts. So Demetrius mixed his concoction of zeal for a religious cause with a canny eye for profits; he hid the shekels behind the temple of the goddess; he cloaked the material gains in the flag of the country, as other leaders in other lands have done before and since. And he touched a tender nerve. Acts 19: 28-32. How thin a veneer of civility, or respect for order, covers over the wildness that is in us. It is so easy to arouse emotions to violence, by getting people to shout in unison a simple, even meaningless slogan--great is Artemis, Diana, of the Ephesians. There is so much in the story and so little time! Do you hear them claiming that goddess as their very own, the goddess that all Asia and the world worship. And of course there was confusion, for it was a mindless beast roaring in the streets. We have seen them in our own time, for we are not far removed from lynchings by bloodthirsty thugs who on another occasion are the pillars of the community; we are not far from police dogs and fire hoses turned upon people praying on the courthouse steps; we see it on the TV news, students here, workers there, soldiers on the rampage in Afghanistan or in central America. Nothing unleashes the raw emotions of people quicker than high-minded respect for the proprieties of civilization. How many crimes have been committed in the name of religion, or patriotism, or purity of blood lines, or the superiority of our civilization and the depravity of theirs. Great is Diana of the Ephesians, they shouted; for hours they stood and shouted it, until they were hoarse, they were in confusion, most of them did not even know what was going on. But they shouted anyway. Crucify him! Hang him! Cut off his hands! Stone him! The aristocrats to the lamp-posts! In every generation we have heard the brainless scream of King Mob. And the more democratic the form of government the greater the threat of vigilante action--people taking the law into their own hands, playing follow the leader when the leader is so cunningly using emotions and slogans and half-truths, and outright lies, to get us to do what he wants, and all the while we think of ourselves as free, self-government people. We need to remember that the voice of the people is not always the voice of God, and that fanaticism is first-cousin to madness, and that self-control is the basic quality of the civilized. We need to be familiar enough with good religion, the fruits of the spirit, to recognize bad religion when it appears in the neighborhood--bigotry and violence and greed and selfishness. But then the crowd was controlled by a Roman official. Acts 19: 35-41. The speech by the unnamed official, whose function it was to preside over the popular assembly, is so complete and so friendly to Paul & friends that some students think Luke wrote it as a reply to all who found fault with effects of Christ upon economic activists. It is clear that he intended it as another bit of evidence that Christ was no threat to the established authority, as all who knew anything about it declared. It was also one of Luke's purposes to show how Roman officials came to the rescue of Christians. In Ephesus the official quieted the raging beast and restored order. Perhaps some of the crowd crept home ashamed of themselves, while others waited to read the morning paper to see what all the commotion was about. And there are lessons for us in this confrontation--that there is such a thing as bad religion, that we are constantly confronted with temptation to run wild in our desire to do good, that Paul could survive the storm because he had his eye upon a distant goal. Ephesus was a passing incident to one who could see the towers and aqueducts of Rome shimmering in the distance. For there was his goal.

5-22-83. Jerusalem. One of the more endearing aspects of the Bibl as a source of relig inspirat is the fact that it never does idealize the nature of the very human beings who were agents and spokesmen for God. The man after God's own heart was not described as an unreal person of no emotion or passion; no, he took off his clothes and danced naked before the ark, he lusted after a woman married to another man, and then sent that man into the battle where he would be killed. The Bibl describes men of God who sulked when they did not get their way, who were capable of towering rages and strong likes and dislikes, who could be wrongheaded and ~~malicious~~ and superstitious and unfaithful and unreliable. Nowhere in the record does it suggest that God chose only perfect specimens to be his human voices, and nowhere does it say that after choosing them God made them perfect. And it seems to me that ~~this~~ is one of the most attractive facts about the encounters between God and man in the Bibl. It says that just plain human beings can be the channels by which God speaks to this generat. They may be quarrelsome people, they may be stubborn, or unattractive, but God can put them, and us, to good use in the world. Today's lesson makes that point, for weshall see two examples of relig ldrs who behaved in what we would call human rather than angelic manner, text Acts 23. After today we have only one lesson left in our study of the Acts; this is another in a unit this month on spread of the Ch from Asia to Europe, from Antioch to Rome. Last wk, in Chap 19, we heard Paul say he wanted to travel thru Grc and then to Jerus, and after that, he said, I must also see Rome. For long it had been his ~~ambit~~ to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also; Rome was the center of the world and it was ~~always~~ Paul's strategy to strike at the head, the chief city, the capital, for he expected the word to spread from the center to the surrounding region. But before he could make that journey he had to fight wild beasts at Ephesus (1Cor15:32) when a mindless riot rocked the city. The town clerk finally managed to call the assy to order and send everyone home to cool off, but the violence had its effect anyway; soon thereafter Paul left Ephesus, the acct of which you will find in Ac20, ~~which begins~~ what the scholars call Paul's 3d missionary journey. It began w/his final visit to Macedonia and Greece, where we know from other sources that he collected contribs for the financ troubl church in Jerus. And from Corinth, the Grk end of his journey, he went back into Asia by land, back to Philippi in the north, back to Troas in Asia, to Caesarea, and to Jerus. At Miletus, on the way, he explained that ~~he~~ was bound in the spirit to go to Jerus, not knowing what would happen to him there. At the seaport of Tyre he was warned against going to Jerus, because the hostility of the Jewish ldrs was a threat. But he was bound to go. And the violent mob was waiting for him. Before a wk had passed they were shouting for his blood. He was accused of betraying the ancient fath of the chosen people, and of taking a Gentile named Tophimus into the holy temple. Twice he had to be rescued by the Roman army garrison and taken to the barracks for his protection. Look at Acts 21:34 and 22:24, for those. And then, for reasons which are still debated by the scholars, the Roman official turned him over to the Jewish court. Acts 22: 30. This, and what follows, is one of the most puzzling events in the bk of Acts. We are told that the Roman tribune ordered the high Jewish court to hold a session, and put Paul down before them, to find out why the Jews accused him. Just before this Paul has taken advantage of his Roman citizenship to escape further floggings, and one might expect that would have meant that his case would be referred directly to the governor, or that he would have been set free. Some speculate that the Jewish court demanded of the Romans the right to question Paul, or that they brought specific charges against him. Critics charge that this could not be historical fact, for the Romans would never hand over a Roman citizen to a court of non-Romans. But here it is, and we must deal with it. Acts 23: 1-5. This must have been the most courageous in all the NT; there he stood, one man taking on both the high officials of the Jews and the Roman imperial officers. And he was not a bit afraid. Looking intently, or earnestly, at the high court, he called them brothers. It might have been for that that he was stricken, or, as is generally assumed, Lk has given us only the barest of outlines and the trial was much more complicated than we have it. The high priest that year was Ananias, not the same man who was stricken dead for lying about his estate in Chap 5; for some reason he thought Paul had insulted him or his court. What Paul said was that he had no reason to recant his actions or apologize for his teachings, because to that day he had lived before God with a clear conscience. The Grk word means awareness of having done right or wrong, so he was saying he knew he had done right in all that he did, and it may have been that which aroused the ire of the crusty judge. We know something of him from secular history; he was appointed high priest by the king of the region, whose name was Herod Agrippa; he was appointed in AD 48 and was high priest until he was deposed about 58, so within a 10-year period this story of Paul before the Sanhedrin gives us a date. A bold man in his temper, and very insolent, the historian Josephus said of him. For whatever reason he took offense at something Paul said or did, and he ordered those standing by him to strike him on the mouth, which they did. It suggests that the offense was something he said--he declared his own innocence, he was in good conscience, or perhaps the term brothers was disrespectful to the arrogant judge. And here it should be noted that the high priest did not act in the Jewish tradit of justice. A people who could produce the psalms, and the prophets, especially that Amos, who demanded that justice be as plentiful as water in the streets ~~after~~ a heavy rainfall, would not look w/favor upon such brutality in the high court. It was inexcusable

that Paul should be hit while in a court, but for the order to do it to come from the high priest makes it all the more despicable. And there, ~~in~~ is the first example of a human being in a high place. He was wrong to do what he did, but before we are too quick to judge him, look at the result. Paul was hurt by the blow to his mouth, possibly also hurt by the violence at the very center of the Jewish legal system, and he lost his temper. He flew off the handle, and he shouted his contempt for the priest. You whitewashed wall, he called him; this was a term of extreme abuse, the exact origin of which is lost. Things the Jews considered contaminating they painted white so they could be clearly seen and avoided, sepulchres, for instance, were whitewashed because they were filled w/dead men's bones and were unclean. (Paul was so mad (Jesus used the expression for the ceremonially clean relig ldrs who were inwardly evil.)) that he used a term that meant the priest was contaminated and should be avoided. And there is the second human being in a high place. Paul had a strong temper to begin with, and held it in check only by the greatest of effort. Here it was stretched so far it snapped for a moment, before he regained control. It would be a beautiful story if I could read you that he turned the other cheek, or even that he bore the blow in silence, like the sheep before his shearers is dumb, or the lamb before the slaughterer. St. Jerome, translator of the Latin Vulgate in 4th Cen, wrote an essay regretting that Paul did not display the patience of the Savior, who when he suffered in the flesh rose superior to the injury, and ever since people have noted that J, when struck, answered nothing, while Paul shouted an insult. And what it tells us is that we are human, that Paul was human, and we are subject to the ills and the flaws of humanity. It does not excuse our temper tantrums, or our striking others with blows, or our imprecations against those who strike us; no, we still have the ideal by which to measure, and that is the cheek turned for a second blow. But God understands when passion consumes self-control, so long as we do not let the sun go down on our anger, and so long as we ask forgiveness for what we said or did. When someone asked Paul why he reviled the high priest, he replied that he did not know who it was. We are not told why he did not know, and that presents another mystery. Some explain it by saying that Paul had bad eyesight, may even have been blind, so he could not see who gave the order; this was his thorn in the flesh, in that version. Or was he being ironical, I beg your pardon, sir, I did not know you? Or because Ananias had taken his position since Paul had visited the city. He quoted Ex22 that one should respect one's rulers, but note that he offered no apology, so we are left to guess that perhaps Paul would have responded in exactly the same way even had he known who it was. And the other result of that blow upon the mouth was a great shouting quarrel in the court. Acts 23: 6-10.

We will never know whether Paul deliberately started a fight among them, or not, but he did note a division among them, between Pharisees, who had the greatest infl among the people, and the Sadducees, who controlled the temple. Critics of this story of Paul before the court declare that the division between the two factions was much less severe than the acct here would have us believe. But Lk has made their quarrel a part of his story, and it is another example of human beings in high places. Paul's declarat drove a wedge between the two groups that made up the high court. Once again he called them brothers, and then said he was a Pharisee, son of a Pharisee, and that he was on trial because he held to the hope and the resurrection of the dead, which the Pharisees believed. It was at best a misstatement, or perhaps Lk has not given us the whole story. (In 21:28 he says they seized Paul because he taught against the law and the temple, and because he brought Grks into the temple. Here he has Paul saying he was on trial because he was a Pharisee and believed as a Pharisee. And this was the same man who could write the sharpest criticisms of that group; in Phil 3 he rejected everything they represented. And as for the Pharisees, they were the stoutest defenders of the anc faith; if the charge against Paul was that he opposed the temple and the law they would never have sided with him, whatever he may have said about the resurrection. And Paul may have regretted saying that which divided the court; some read 24:21 as an apology.) However it came about, Lk described an almost incredible scene; the highest court in the land turned into a shouting riotous mob; a grt clamor arose, a dissention which became violent; it was a mob which might well have been wild beasts as in Ephesus, which could have torn Paul into bits had not the Roman ofcl intervened to rescue him. And in that mad courtroom, composed of the highest relig ldrs in the purest ethical relig in all the world at that time, there were human beings who quarrelled over a doctrine. I do not underst enough psychol to explain why people get so angry over what they believe, but I do know we have that failing. Sometimes it is funny, sometimes it is just a quarrel, but I have known people who had such a falling out over a matter of relig belief that they never spoke to each other again. And they were the very best examples of piety and faith. Bigotry is a continuing temptat that faces us all; Oliver W Holmes said the mind of a bigot was like the pupil of the eye; the more light you pour upon it, the more it will contract. So here we have an assemblage of people, relig ldrs all of them, used of God to minister to his people, who behaved in ways of which they were later ashamed. The high priest so forgot his obligat to conduct a fair trial that he called for violence; Paul momentarily lost his temper, but then threw a relig hot potato into the laps of his judges, who then turned into a shouting match. It tells us that the spirit ~~still~~ produces peace, patience, and gentleness, but that God has use for people even with feet of clay.

5-29-83. Rome. Many years ago when my daughter was still young enough to be read to I bought a book for her; it was one of those marvellous stories of golden childhood, of interesting people & much laughter and delight. We read it through a number of times, and parts of it we read over & over, but every time I got to the last chapter she made me stop before I finished it. I did not underst it then, and I may not underst it yet, but I think she wanted to leave the book unfinished, for then it would always be alive somewhere over the rainbow, down that yellow brick road, lost in that secret garden. And that maybe why the Book of Acts stops abruptly, without finishing the story. We are left wondering what happened, how it ended, what became of Paul and Peter and those friends we made in that exciting account, and all we can do is guess. And in that may be the message of the author--it has not ended, it is not over, it is still taking place in our day and our town and to us. For whatever reason the author stopped his story with no concluding line, no summing up, no word as to the outcome of Paul's trial before the Roman officials. Today we bring to a close a study of the writings of Lk, a series of lessons that began 6 months ago, in December. For 3 months we read from the gospel of Lk, and then we continued the story of the church in the Acts of the Apostles. That means that we have spent the past half-year reading the writings of one man. It is generally agreed that the same author wrote Lk-Acts as a 2 vol work, to be read as if there were no break betw them. And the best guess of the scholars is that Lk the gospel was written 1900 yrs ago this year, in AD 83, so it is a kind of celebration we have been enjoying, a birthday celebrat. And it is appopr, for Lk was the only one of the gospel-writers to contin his acct past the crucif and the resurrection/ascension. For that reason his time-span is much larger, and his underst of the Chr event is much wider than of the other 3 synoptic gospels, ~~and~~ His writing almost as voluminous as that of Paul; together the two Bks attributed to Lk comprise the largest single part of NT, almost 1/4 of the total space in it; and if Paul be not the author of Hbwr, as many schols believe, then it is the largest contrib to our NT. It begins w/birth of John/Bapt, when as Paul would later write, the whole creation was groaning in travail, awaiting the redemption, and it ends w/Paul in Rome, teaching and preaching with all confidence, w/no man forbidding him. That completed Lk's aim in writing his acct to his friend Theophilus, who asked him to find out and then write down the truth about those things he had heard about. What Theophilus had heard about did not end w/resurrection, but was working like the leaven in the dough of the whole world. How did that happen, he wanted to know; conduct an investigat--the Grk word historia means investigat--and tell me how it came to be that something that happened in an obscure province of the empire should now be battering at the door of the empire itself. That is the story Lk told, and now we come to the end of it as he wrote it, the end that was itself another beginning. Text Acts 28. I wish it were possib to read all of that trip to Rome, for it is the most exciting climax to an exciting book. Read it for yourselves, beginning w/Chap 27. Remember that Paul made a journey thru Grce, collecting contribs from the Chs to take to the brethren in need in Jerus. Though he was warned of the danger, he went himself to Jerus to deliver the gifts, and there the Roman sols had to intervene to protect him from violence. He defended himself before the Jewish supreme court, the Sanhedrin, about which we read last week. Paul's nephew, son of his sister, told the Romans of a plot to murder the apostle, so the tribune sent him secretly to Casearea under heavy guard. There he argued his case before governors Felix and Festus and then to King Herod Agrippa. None of them could find any fault in him, but none of them had the courage to act on his own initiative, and so they bumped him along to Rome, where the buck stopped. Beginning w/Acts 27 is the acct of that journey, the 4th and last of the "we" passages in Acts; Lk was a member of the party, so he could write in the first person. He included a number of details which give a good description of sea travel in 1st Cen. There was a storm which blew the ship aground on the island of Malta, where the travelling group spent three months. The natives were hospitable though they did not speak Grk--and were therefore called barbarians, barbarous not in their behavior but in their speech--and Paul healed and preached to them. As we read the acct of that journey we see Lk's theme, that altho he was a prisoner on his way to trial and perhaps punishmt he was in complete control of all that happened. He told the shipcaptain of the mutiny plot among the crew, he recommended against taking to the sea after the date of safety had passed, he ordered the casting away of the cargo to save the ship, he collected the firewood to build a fire to warm and dry the shipwrecked travellers. The three months of winter passed--it was perhaps AD 60 /61--and the group resumed its journey. Acts 28: 11-16. Acts 27:9 tells us that it was October when the ship was in Crete, already two weeks past the safety date for Medit sailing. The fast had already gone by, it says, which would be the feast of atonemt, Yom Kippur, that came at the end of Sept / beginning ~~Sept~~ Oct; despite Paul's advice not to risk going on in the stormy season the ship sent anyway. Two wks later it was wrecked at Malta, which gives us marly November; 3 months after that puts is about mid-Feb, still too soon. But there was a boat that had wintered at Malta, bound for Rome, and that one took the group to Italy. It was named for the twin brothers, which in older translat are named as Castor and Pollux; these were the patron gods of sailors, who are in the heavens in a constellat and in the zodiac as the twins, gemini; they were thought to bring good luck at sea. It is not far from Malta to Sicily, where they landed at Syracuse, the old Grk city at the

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eastern end

of the island. V.13 has some awkward words in older tanslat, from thence we fetched a compass. That is approximately what the original means, but since 17th cen the words have changed their meaning in Engl, so newer version is the more correct: we made a circuit, we cast off, we slipped anchor, and went to Reggio on the coast of Italy, and then to Pozzuoli on the bay of Naples, which was the usual port for passengers and supplies bound for Rome, for ships that could not use ports closer to Rome. There they stayed 7 days w/brethren, w/fellow believers, while a letter went to the believers in Rome that they were on the way. And then, v.14, that climactic phrase, so we came to Rome. This is the climax, the goal toward which Paul has aimed, the objective for which Lk has written his book. It was the capital of the world, it was the largest city among the ancients, with an estimated one million population in 1st Cen. All roads led to Rome, and to her gates came the world's people and the best of its production. It was a cosmopolitan center, of teeming masses, of crowded tenements ~~crowded~~ ^{packed} together along narrow twisting streets, with steps for the hillsides and aqueducts for the fountains that brought water. There was the forum, and there was the great colisseum, and the large circus, there were the palaces, the govt bldgs on the Capitoline Hill, which is why even yet we call the seat of govt the capitol, there were the shops and markets and baths. But far more important than Rome the city was Rome the symbol. Getting Paul, the missionary to the gentiles, to Rome, meant that the break w/Judaism, w/cradle out of which messiah ^{was} ~~came~~ ^{came}, ^{it} ~~meant~~ ^{meant} that the new faith had outgrown its infancy, it had survived its early years, its wings were now strong and were spread for flight into the whole world. The rest of the story, the 20 years or so after Paul's arrival in Rome, Theophilus knew--how there were converts in the capital, how Nero used Xns as scapegoats for the disastrous fire of AD 64, how Xns were burned alive, and compelled to do battle w/lions in the arena, and how every martyr strengthened the Ch, for to a pagan world the way those Xns died made more sense than the way other people lived. They died singing hymns, they died w/light of eternity in their eyes. And this, Lk seems to be saying, is what the whole story was about. It was for this reason that John/Bapt was born, for this reason the angels sang to the shepherds, keeping watch over their flocks by night, it was for this that J taught those beautiful parables that the other gospels omitted--the lost sheep, the lost coin, the prodigal son, the good Samaritan who knew how to be neighbor to that one who was in need. It was for this reason that he was obedient even unto death, and then God intervened and raised him from the dead. He walked and taught and ate broiled fish with them; and when he went away he sent them the gift of the spirit, and gave them a mission, to go into all the world and make disciples of all people, be witnesses to the end of the world, the end of the age. And it is just there that Lk made his contrib to our underst of the Xr-event; those who heard him command them to go into all the world did not underst what that would mean, in terms of human contact w/people they considered unclean, immoral, beneath contempt and certainly beyond the love of God. But from the Grk-speak Jews whose widows were pushed aside in the daily distribution of food, to the Roman army official Cornelius in Caesarea, to the gentile church at Antioch, the growing circle of believers broke every barrier put down to try to contain it. And that is important to us here today, for that made the revelat of God in Xr available to us. Whosoever surely meaneth me, as the old hymn said. Lk made it clear in his history of that growth that at every step of the way the direction came from the spirit of the risen Lord, that it was not of man's doing or intent. And another thing he made clear--that it was not Paul's fault, nor was it the intent of the gentile Ch, that he and it failed to reconcile the devout and God-fearing Jews ~~that~~ that which was the fulfillment of their faith. And now, having gotten Paul to Rome, which is his figurative climactic triumph of the Ch, he related an incident to show that the Jews were given every opportunity. Acts 28: 17-22. He allowed himself 3 days to rest up from his journey--it was 140 miles of walking from the port near Naples to the city, getting settled in his apartment with his guard. Being under house arrest he could not as was his custom visit the synagog, so he invited the Jewish leaders to visit him. Note it carefully, cherish it devotedly, for this is our last glimpse of that great man Paul. And as we would expect, we see him pleading earnestly for the Jews to recognize in Jesus the promised Christ. He said it was not his fault that he was under guard and facing trial; he had no charge to bring against his own nation and his own people. Instead, he was bound with that chain because he preached that the hope which had been the inspirat of his people had now become a reality in J. Later they returned to his house and he taught them from morning till evening, from the scriptures, trying to convince them about J from the law of Moses and the prophets. When most were unmoved, he quoted a passage from Isaiah, the same one J quoted about them (Lk 8): this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are heavy of hearing; you should know that this salvation of God has been sent to the gentiles; they will listen. And there Lk ends his story. Two yrs Paul preached and taught openly in Rome, and no man hindered him. That, O Theophilus, is how it all came about. Paul's story was unfinished, for ~~he~~ ^{he} is still at work teaching and preaching thru his written word; the story of the Xn Ch is unfinished, for it too is keeping the faith in the interim between the resurrection, the first day of the new life, and the last day when the Kgdms shall reign.