

HOME BIBLE STUDY SERIES

*A Study of
Conversions
in the
Acts of Apostles (#2)*

- 1 -- Conversion to God**
- 2 -- Conversions in General**
- 3 -- Conversion of the Samaritans**
- 4 -- Conversion of 12 People at Ephesus**
- 5 -- Felix: A Case of Non-Conversion**
- 6 -- My Response to God's Offer**

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Lesson One***"Conversion to God"***

Please notice the following absolutes in Scripture:

John 3:3 _____

Luke 13:3 _____

Heb. 11:6 _____

Matt. 18:3 _____

These are very strong statements from God that demand and deserve our careful study! The Necessity of Conversion is an obvious fact! Our problem is not so much on the "what," but the "how" of Conversion. There are religious groups that still admit the necessity of Conversion, but the "how" is not agreed upon. One possible reason for this may be the unwillingness to accept all that the Bible states concerning this subject. Conversion to God should be a most significant event in a person's life. It should be meaningful and affect the inner person. But to be a true conversion, it must conform to God's directions.

What is Conversion?

The Greek word "**Strepho**" occurs 59 times in the New Testament and is translated by the following expressions: "**Convert**," "**Conversion**," "**to be Converted**," "**Turn**," "**Turn Again**," "**Turn About**," "**Turn back**," "**Return**." The idea can involve a person who helps to bring about the Conversion of the person or it can refer to the person "**Converting**" him or herself.

There is a strong emphasis upon man turning himself! He is a responsible being and can do something to Convert. God commands man to be converted:

Acts 3:19 _____

Matt. 18:3 _____

God has provided the "**Means of Forgiveness**," the "**Way of Conversion**," and the "**Motivation**" to man to be Converted! Man is expected to act upon such!

1 Thess. 1:9 _____

Conversion is the process that brings about our pardon or forgiveness from God!

Acts 3:19 _____

Upon man's proper response to God, he is forgiven by God. Conversion is **not** pardon, but it brings about pardon!

The Conversion Process

1. Conversion involves the heart of man. It involves that part of man that thinks, reasons, understands, desires, believes, obeys—his heart or mind! There is a good reason why the heart of man has to be involved!

Jer. 17:9 _____

The heart needs:

1. Its thinking changed where it is wrong;
2. Its reasoning changed where it is wrong;
3. Its understanding changed where it is wrong;
4. Its desire changed where it is wrong;
5. Its belief changed where it is wrong;
6. Its obedience changed where it is wrong!

The heart loves sin! It must be turned to love God, righteousness, and holiness. Until man is willing to have his heart changed, there can be no conversion....no forgiveness....no forgiveness! He must have his eyes, ears, and understanding opened!

Matt. 13:15 _____

This is accomplished by hearing God's truth and accepting it.

Rom. 1:16 _____

Acts 26:18 _____

This belief of the Gospel leads man to dethrone sin and enthroned God in his heart! The outcome of this change is called **REPENTANCE!** Repentance is a change of our mind or heart. It is to change from loving sin to loving God.

Luke 13:3 _____

2. Conversion involves the Conduct of man! A change of heart should lead to a change of behavior or conduct. It is a change from being a disobedient person to becoming an obedient person. Serving and following sin got him into his unsaved or lost condition. Why shouldn't he want to turn from that which is destroying him? Man is called upon to die to the way of sin!

Rom. 6:2 _____

Rom. 6:16 _____

Rom. 6:17-18 _____

Man needs to turn his abilities, time, energy, and possessions into channels of righteousness!

Illustration: A worldly person has no time for God. But for some reason his child dies and he is shaken. He hears the Word of God saying: "*What shall it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?*" and that "*the wages of sin leads to death.*" He becomes concerned about his soul. He loses interest in worldly things and seeks to know and wants to do the will of God. Love for God is beginning to replace love for sin in his life. He cries out: "*What must I do to be saved?*" The reason for his asking is that he has not yet been pardoned by God. Pardon is something that God does when we are converted to God. A change of heart is the 1st major step in the process of conversion. The 2nd step is a change of behavior.

Matt. 3:8

A true change of heart leads to an obedient submissive life unto God.

3. Conversion also involves a change of state! Why is there a need for a change of state or relationship? It is because:

- 1) Outside of Christ, there is condemnation (Rom. 8:1);
- 2) All spiritual blessings are in Christ (Eph. 1:3);
- 3) Forgiveness is found in the kingdom of God (Col. 1:13-14);
- 4) The saved are in the church (Eph. 5:23; Acts 20:28).

Then, what puts one into Christ, into the kingdom, into the church, into a saved state? It is a belief that leads one to "Repent" and "be baptized!" Look at this illustration.....

- 1)A man dies one day before the marriage ceremony & the signing of the papers.
- 2)A man dies one day after the marriage ceremony & the signing of the papers.
- 3)Which man is married?

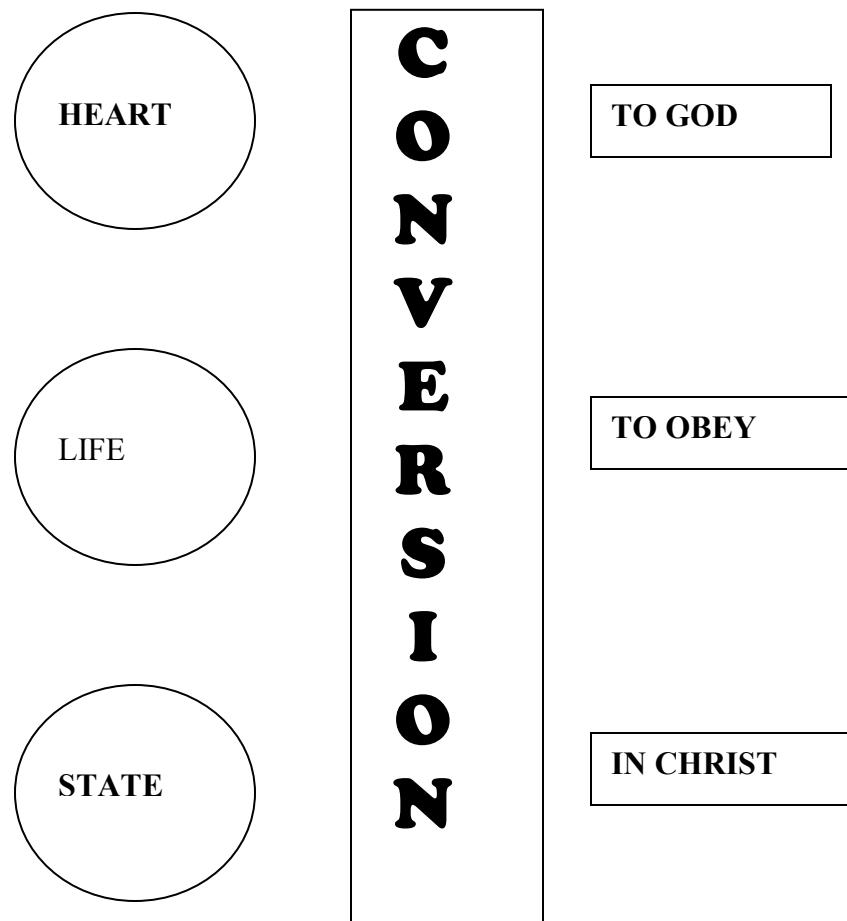
External acts are significant because they tend to reflect what is within! Before baptism, one is still in the world or out of Christ! After baptism, one is in Christ or in a relationship with God! In the act of baptism, the sinner is translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God's dear son (Col. 1:13). He is changed from a lost state to a saved state. He is changed from being called a sinner to be called a saint or a child of God.

Concluding Thoughts

Some advocate that with a change of heart and life one does not need to

be baptized. But this is the **very person** and the **only person** that can be baptized (immersed) and be made right with God. He is the one ready for a change of state where one is cleansed, forgiven, and saved. Immersion does not change the heart, nor the person's life, but the state of the relationship with God. Jesus said: "*Except you are converted, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.*" God is willing to forgive, if we will convert to Him!

Can you explain this chart?



Lesson Two***"Conversions in General"***

There are several accounts of conversions that go somewhat into detail as to what was required of the person and/or it tells what he did in order to be converted to God. Our first six lessons mainly dealt with these accounts of conversion. There are two more accounts we will look at in this series of lessons, plus an account of a non-conversion, and close with a lesson on our response to God's offer. This lesson will deal with the "general" statements of conversion in the book of Acts. There are at least fourteen of these general statements that we will ask questions about that will give an overview of what it means to be converted.

General Accounts of Conversions

Acts 3:11-26—The Apostle Peter healed a lame man and then preached to the Jewish people about Christ.

- 1. What were they told to do to have their sins blotted out? (3:19)**
- 2. How was Jesus to bless these people? (3:26)**

Acts 4:1-4—The Apostles (Peter and John) were arrested, but there was a response to their preaching.

- 1. What did the people do who heard the preaching? (4:4)**
- 2. What was the growth of the church up to this point? (4:4)**

Acts 4:29; 5:11-14—The Apostles boldly preached the Gospel continually in Jerusalem. Ananias & Sapphira were punished by God for lying to the Holy Spirit. Fear came upon the people, but it also led to a response to the preaching.

- 1. Who were added to the Lord? (5:14)**
- 2. How many were added? (5:14)**

Acts 5:32—God blessed those who were willing to listen and respond to the preaching of the Gospel.

- 1. To whom was the Holy Spirit given? (5:32)**

Acts 6:7—A problem arose in the church, but was handled quickly by the Apostles so the preaching of the Gospel would not be hindered.

1. What caused the disciples to multiply greatly in Jerusalem?
(6:7)

2. What did a great number of the priests do? (6:7)

Acts 11:19-21—The Gospel was now being preached by others beside the Apostles. Some went as far as Antioch in their preaching to the Grecian Jews.

1. What did a great number do? (11:21)

Acts 13:38-43—Paul, Barnabas, and John Mark went on their first mission trip to other countries. They went as far as "Antioch of Pisidia" in their preaching.

1. How did Saul (Paul) say the people could be justified? (13:39)
2. What did the preachers persuade the people to do? (13:43)

Acts 13:48-49—They continued to preach at Antioch of Pisidia and had results.

1. What did the Gentiles do to receive eternal life? (13:48)

Acts 14:27—When Paul and Barnabas returned to "Antioch of Syria" they reported the results of their trip to the church.

1. What does the expression mean—"God opened the door of faith to the Gentiles?" (14:27)

Acts 17:1-4—Paul is on another mission trip to preach the Gospel. This time is in Thessalonica.

1. Why did a great multitude of devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women join with Paul and Silas? (17:4)

Acts 17:11-12—Paul is now in Berea preaching the Gospel.

1. What was said about the attitude and acts of the Bereans in contrast to the Thessalonians? (17:11)
2. What did the Bereans do about what they heard? (17:12)

Acts 17:30-34—Paul goes further South on his preaching tour to the city of Athens.

- 1. What does God command of all men? (17:30)**
- 2. What did some people do about the preaching? (17:34)**

Acts 18:4—Paul next journeys to the city of Corinth where he preached in a synagogue of the Jews.

- 1. Why were both Jews and Greeks persuaded by Paul's preaching? (18:4)**

Acts 18:8—Paul continued to preach in the city of Corinth.

- 1. What was the response to his preaching? (18:8)**

Concluding Thoughts

Did you notice that in many of these instances that one word was used to represent the whole process that is involved in the people's conversion to God. Can you tell me what that one word is?

Did you also notice the emphasis placed on preaching the Word of the Lord to the people and calling upon or expecting a response on their part to the preaching—whether positive or negative? What two things did they preach to the people that had to be obvious?

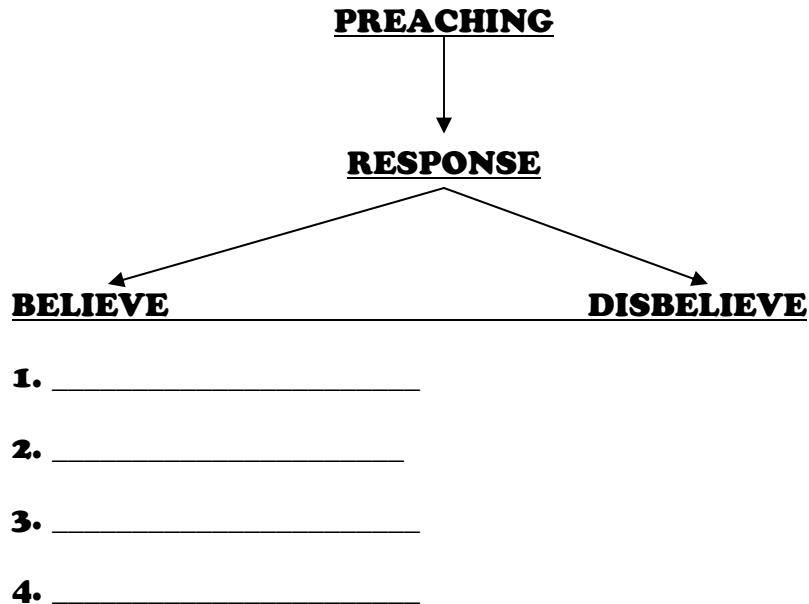
1. _____
2. _____

Of what value are these 14 plus general accounts of conversion to God?

If you had been writing these accounts in a book, would you have recorded these events differently? If so, Why?

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Can you fill out this Chart?



*Lesson Three**"Conversion of the Samaritans"*

The first efforts at preaching the Gospel were in the city of Jerusalem to Jewish people. When persecution came and scattered the disciples, they began preaching to others besides "pure" Jews (Acts 8:4). Acts 8 records Philip preaching to the Samaritan people. This was generally a mix-raced of Jew and Gentile, but many held to belief in the one true God and went by their copy of the Samaritan Pentateuch—which had been changed somewhat to suit the Samaritan people. Many of the Samaritan people had been exposed to Jesus during his earthly ministry (John 4:1-42). *"Many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, 'He told me all that I ever did.'"*

Questions for Study and Discussion

- 1. What did Philip preach to the Samaritans? (8:5)**
- 2. What helped the Samaritans to believe the preaching of Philip? (8:6-8)**
- 3. What was the sorcery that Simon practiced? (8:9)**
- 4. Why was Simon able to deceive the people into believing that he was someone great? (8:9)**
- 5. What was the response of the Samaritans to Philip's preaching? (8:12)**
- 6. What caused Simon to also respond to Philip's preaching? (8:13)**

7. Why did the Apostles send Peter and John to Samaria? (8:14-15)

8. What does the expression mean: "He had fallen upon none of them?" (8:16)

9. When did the believers in Samaria receive the Holy Spirit? (8:17)

10. Why didn't Philip lay hands on them and give the Holy Spirit?

11. What did Simon see when the Apostles' hands was laid on the people? (8:18)

12. Why did Simon say he wanted to give money to the Apostles? (8:18-19)

13. What was Simon sin? (8:20-21)

14. What was Simon told to do to have his sin forgiven? (8:22)

15. What was Simon's request? (8:23-24)

16. What else did the Apostles do in Samaria? (8:25)

Questions to Challenge your Thinking!

1. Why can false people like Simon deceive people so easily?

2. What were three things do the Scriptures say that Philip preached? (8:5, 12)

3. Do we need to hear this same kind of preaching?

4. Was Simon sincere in his believing and being baptized?

5. If he was, why did Peter use such strong terms to describe his sinful condition after he was baptized?

6. Is there any way that human's can judge the sincerity of a person's actions?

7. Are there two different ways to have our sins forgiven?

8. Why didn't Peter tell Simon to be baptized again?

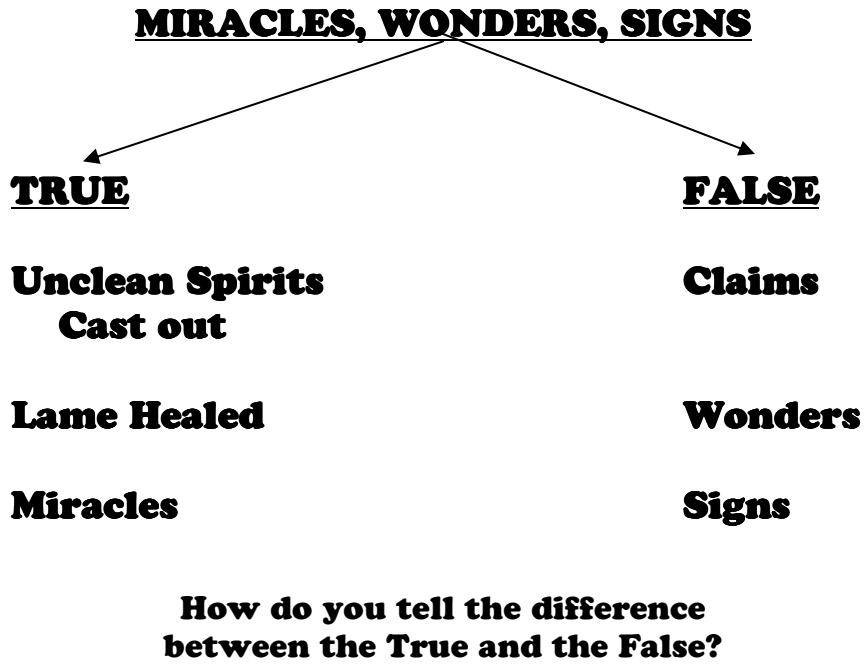
9. Could only the Apostles lay hands on people to impart the miraculous gifts?

10. How could Simon know that these people had received the Holy Spirit?

11. Why do you suppose Simon really wanted the power to give these gifts to people?

12. Can a person, who is not a Christian, pray to God for forgiveness and receive it?

Can You Explain This Chart?



*Lesson Four***"Conversion of the 12 Men at Ephesus"**

Many have asked the question: "*If I have been 'baptized' once, do I need to be 'baptized' again?*" This question often faces sincere people who are striving to learn and do God's Will. The answer to this question is not an easy "yes" or "no." There are factors that determine whether the person should be baptized again or not. To help us with an answer to this question, the Holy Spirit directed and had recorded this account of the conversion of 12 men at Ephesus.

Background to their Conversion

This account took place in the city of Ephesus, a chief city of "little" Asia (not Asia Minor). This situation primarily was concerned with Jewish people who had a synagogue in the city. Apollos had been converted just before this incident with the 12 men. Some facts about Apollos:

1. His original home was Alexandria, which was a strong center of Judaism.
2. He was traveling and came to Ephesus where he met together with the Jews on the Sabbath.
3. Somewhere, before this, he had come into contact with John's teaching and his baptism.
4. However, he seems to have thoroughly convinced that Jesus was the long waited-for Messiah.
5. He could show mightily from the Scriptures that this was true!
6. He was an eloquent person that taught boldly in the Synagogue.
7. Aquilla and Priscilla heard him, but realized that he was lacking in some of his understanding of Christianity.
8. They taught him the way of the Lord more perfectly.
9. Shortly after this, Apollos left for Achaia (Corinth) and was not present when Paul arrived in Ephesus.
10. He had been given a letter from the church so that he would be accepted in Achaia.
11. He was very effective among the Jews at Corinth.

Paul, now, comes to Ephesus and for some reason runs into these 12 men who were called "disciples." We are not told how he made contact, but there is a possibility that they were meeting together.

- 1. Where was "home" for Apollos? (18:24)**
- 2. In what sense had he been instructed in the way of the Lord? (18:25)**
- 3. What was he teaching in the Synagogue of the Jews? (18:26-26)**
- 4. What was the purpose of Aquila and Priscilla taking Apollos aside from the other people? (18:26)**
- 5. How did Apollos vigorously refute the Jews publicly? (18:28)**
- 6. Where did Apollos desire to go from Ephesus? (18:27)**
- 7. What question did Paul ask the 12 men that he met in Ephesus? (19:2)**
- 8. What was their answer? (19:2)**
- 9. What was Paul's next question? (19:3)**
- 10. What was their answer? (19:3)**
- 11. What was the purpose of John's Baptism? (19:4)**
- 12. What did the 12 men do? (19:5)**
- 13. What happened when Paul laid his hands on them? (19:6)**

Questions to Challenge your Thinking

- 1. How could Apollos have been taught about Christ, but not about the proper baptism?**

- 2. Why did Paul ask them about reception of the Holy Spirit?**

- 3. Why would they not have known about a reception of the Holy Spirit?**

- 4. What connection did baptism have with receiving the Holy Spirit?**

- 5. Was there a reception of the Holy Spirit promised to those who were baptized with John's baptism?**

- 6. When Paul asked them had they received the Holy Spirit when they believe....was he talking about "faith only" or an "obedient faith?"**

- 7. Was it proper for these 12 men to be baptized again?**

- 8. Why did they need to be baptized again?**

- 9. Why were these people baptized with John's baptism rather than Jesus' baptism?**

- 10. Why would a person need to be baptized again today?**

Comparison of the Two Baptisms**John's Baptism**

1. Immersion in water
(Jn. 3:23)
2. For Remission of sins
(Mk. 1:4)
3. Required Repentance
(Mk. 1:4)
4. Required Confession of sins
(Mk. 1:5)
5. Baptized and looking for the Messiah (Mk. 1:3)

Jesus' Baptism

1. Immersion in water (Rom. 6:4; Acts 10:48)
2. For Remission of sins (Acts 2:38)
3. Required Repentance (Acts 2:38)
4. Required Confession of Jesus as Lord and Christ (Rom. 10:9)
5. Baptized because Messiah has come (Acts 19:5)
6. Baptized into the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 2:38)
7. Baptized into the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (obey a form of the Gospel) (Rom. 6:3-4, 17-18).
8. Baptized into the Body (Church) (Acts 2:38, 47; 1 Cor. 12:13).
9. Promised the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; 5:32).

Note: These 12 men were baptized again promptly. This shows that they were sincere and only needed to be shown or taught correctly. They made their salvation sure by their obedient faith!

*Lesson Five***"Felix; A case of Non-Conversion"**

The book of Acts is known as a book recording conversions to Christ! There is no question as to the great impact that the preaching of the Gospel had upon the Roman world. But Acts also records quite a few of non-conversions. The Roman Governor, Felix, was one of those who had an opportunity to hear the Gospel message of Hope and rejected it at that time.

Background to the Account

Paul had been taken prisoner in Jerusalem by the Commander of the Roman garrison because of the Jewish upheaval over his preaching. He was later brought before Felix, who was the Governor of Judea in order to give his defense in contrast to the Jewish accusations (Acts 24:10-23). Felix had him remain in jail under the Commander could come down and then he would give his decision. However, while they were awaiting the coming of Lysias, Felix wanted to hear more about the Gospel that Paul was preaching.

Secular history gives us some background information to Felix. Tacitus was considered a fair-minded Roman Historian who stated about Felix: "...*in the practice of all kinds of lust, crime, and cruelty, he exercised the power of a king with the temper of a slave.*" He is pictured as cruel, licentious, greedy, and treacherous. He was steeped in blood, rich in oppression, and unrestrained in conduct. Power was abused in his hands and perverted to his own selfish ends. There were few crimes that he had not been guilty of. His marital situation was ungodly. His wife professed to be a Jew by religion. She was given in marriage at an early age to the King of Emesa. Felix was so enamored with her beauty that he secured the services of Simon the sorcerer to induce her to abandon her husband and come and live with him as his wife.

Questions for Study and Discussion

1. what was Felix's wife's name? (24:24)
2. What did they both want to hear? (24:24)

**3. What were the three main points of Paul's message to Felix?
(24:25)**

4. What effect did the message have on Felix? (24:25)

5. What did Felix do about the message? (24:25-26)

6. What was Felix really after? (24:26)

7. What did Felix do about releasing Paul? (24:27)

Some Thoughts for Discussion

1. The purpose of preaching is to:
 - a) Convince the mind or the intellect;
 - b) To stir the sensibilities;
 - c) To affect the will of man;
 - d) To motivate to proper action!
2. Paul's message brought terror to the heart of Felix, but only for the moment. This could have been the beginning of a changed life, but lust, ambition, and pleasures really controlled his mind and life.
3. Felix was not turned from his ungodly ways to God.....he was not converted! He was convinced of some things, especially of the idea of a judgment to come, but not sufficiently motivated to be converted.
4. Felix felt terror for the punishment to come, but not grief for the sins he had committed in his life.
5. His mind was disturbed for the moment, but there was no deep, abiding, and lasting effect in his life.
6. Felix was a judge over the people and he miss-used his office for his own gain, not others. He was wrong to keep Paul a prisoner for two years, but he hoped to get financial gain from him to be released. His wrong judgments came back to face him—he was accused of misgovernment and was called to Rome to give an account. He was banished to Gaul and died in exile.

Lessons from Felix

- 1. Felix's life helps us to see what sin can do to a man's heart and life.**
- 2. A reason for procrastination is usually sin—unwillingness to give it up.**
- 3. There is a great need for keeping our hearts good and honest, so that we will respond to the Gospel.**
- 4. We need to evaluate our response to the Gospel.**
 - a) Was it with gladness or procrastination?**
 - b) Was it with seriousness or indifference?**
 - c) Was it with concern for may soul or unconcern?**
- 5. How do we deal with people we try to teach the Gospel to and they do not respond positively?**

Use for taking Notes

*Lesson Six***"My Response to God's Offer"**

In Matt. 22:1-14, the story is told about a King preparing a marriage feast for his son. He was delighted that his son was getting married. He sent out servants to call his friends to the wedding feast. But they would not come. Needless to say, he was disappointed! So, he sent his servants to urge them to come—"all is in readiness." But they made light of it. They even mistreated his servants and then slew them. The King sent his army to destroy those murderers and burned their cities.

Jesus helps us to see a **Great Truth** in this parable—that men often treat with **indifference** things that are important. They treat things of **significance** very lightly. But men can do so to their own hurt or ruin! There are many things men make light of. Some things do not really matter. But some things they make light of are of **Great Importance!** We must learn to make the proper **distinction** between them.

Questions for Study and Discussion**1. How did the Gentiles treat the hearing of the Word of God? (Acts 13:42, 44).**

Men should not treat lightly the hearing of the Word of God! It is God's "good news" to man. God has spoken to us through His Son (Heb. 1:2). It is also God's final message to mankind (Jude 3). To treat this "good news" lightly leaves us with no other to whom to turn (Jn. 6:68). It is also going to serve as the Divine standard of Judgment some day (Jn. 12:48). Only those who respect and follow God's Word will be prepared for the Judgment Day (Matt. 7:21-23).

We can treat lightly God's Word by:

- a) Total rejection;
- b) Being indifferent to its message;
- c) Accepting only what we want to and ignoring the rest.

We can treat His Word with proper respect by:

- a) Seeking to know His Word;
- b) Making the sacrifice necessary to obey His Word.

**2. How did many of the Jews treat the hearing of the Word of God?
(Acts 13:45).**

Man's **value** is seen in:

- a) The fact that he has been created in the image of God (Gen. 1:26);
- b) What God was willing to do to redeem man from the just penalty of breaking His Law (Jn. 3:16);
- c) What Jesus said about our soul being worth more than all that this world has to offer (Matt. 16:26);
- d) The fact that our soul or spirit will exist after death in Heaven or Hell (Matt. 25:46).

To treat lightly the offer of saving our soul is pure folly on man's part!

**3. When the Jews rejected the Word of God, what else did they do?
(Acts 13:46)**

Because man is a slave of sin, he has no way to get free of it and its eternal penalty by his own means (Tit. 3:5)! God's offer of Liberty or Freedom from sin and its penalty through His Son should not be taken lightly (Jn. 3:16).

A little boy went with his mother to a worship service and heard the preacher talk about the death of Jesus for sinful man. As the preacher described the death of Jesus, the boy began to cry and sob aloud. The mother was embarrassed by such and turned to her son and whispered.....

"Don't take it so seriously." How serious do we take Jesus' death for us? Have we judged ourselves unworthy of eternal life?

**4. What further reaction did the Gentiles show towards the Word of God?
(Acts 13:47-49)****5. How does the Psalmist show us the way we should respect the Word of God?**

Ps. 119:10 _____

Ps. 119:11 _____
_____Ps. 119:15 _____
_____Ps. 119:16 _____
_____Ps. 119:24 _____
_____Ps. 119:31 _____
_____Ps. 119:34 _____
_____**Concluding Thoughts**

The invitation of Jesus to come to Him is not an idle one (Matt. 11:28-30). He is able to fulfill all His promises. His invitation is for us to come to Him for He will not force Himself on us (Rev. 3:20). Thankfully, He is longsuffering in His invitation—He continues to give us opportunity to come to Him. Many have kept the Lord waiting at the door or their heart for a long time. How long would you knock, if the person would not answer? (2 Pet. 3:9). But some day the knocking will cease!

It was 1:00 AM in the morning when Dr. Winters' phone rang. *"Dr. Winters, a young boy is tragically mangled from a car accident—your surgical skills are all that can save him—come quickly!"* He took the quickest route through a bad section of town. He stopped at a red light. Someone in a grey hat and a dirty flannel shirt jerked him out of his car and sped away. It took the Dr. 45 minutes to get a cab and get to the hospital. He hurried through the doors to the nurses station. She shook her head and said: *"The boy died a few minutes ago. His father got here before he died and is in the chapel. He is all torn up—not understanding why you did not get there in time."* As Dr. Winters approached the man, he saw a huddled form of a weeping father. He was in a grey hat and a dirty flannel shirt. Tragically, the father had pushed aside the only one who could have saved his son.

Have we pushed from our lives the only "Physician" that can save our soul? Do we treat lightly God's offer of saving our soul? Have we accepted the Gospel that can save our soul? (Rom. 1:16)

Use for Notes

