The Spread of Christianity

What factors contributed to the rapid growth of Christianity from 40 - 350 AD?
How quickly did Christianity grow and how far did it spread in its first 350 years?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Christians</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40 AD</td>
<td>less than 1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>350 AD</td>
<td>5 to 8 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
something about the cities playing a big role—being the places that heard about it first.
Matthew 5: 3-10

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain, and when he was set down, his disciples came unto him. 2 And opening his mouth he taught them, saying:

3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
4 Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land.
5 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
6 Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill.
7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.
8 Blessed are the clean of heart: they shall see God.
9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.
10 Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
11 Blessed are you when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you, untruly, for my sake:
12 Be glad and rejoice for your reward is very great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets that were before you.”
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I. The Message of Jesus (and Christianity)
   A. HEAVEN- all people, including poor, weak, sick, and persecuted, are promised a better life in Heaven
   B. LOVE- everyone is loved equally and should love each other
   C. CHURCHES- gave people a sense of belonging
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II. Paul of Tarsus (5 - 67 AD)
   A. Who was Paul of Tarsus?
      1. Born in Tarsus (in Turkey)
      2. Converted from Judaism to Christianity as an adult
      3. Became one of the first Christian missionaries
Judging by the map, what types of areas were most likely to accept Christianity first? Why?
What factors contributed to the rapid growth of Christianity from 40 - 350 AD?

B. Where/why did Paul travel?
   1. Traveled 10,000 miles around the Mediterranean area (stopped in cities)
   2. Converted gentiles (non-Jews) to Christianity
   3. Set up churches
   4. Wrote letters, AKA epistles to new churches with advice about how to be Christian
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C. How did Paul shape Christianity?

1. Decided that some Jewish practices were unnecessary for Christians (example: keeping kosher)
2. Defined Christianity as a separate religion from Judaism
3. His letters with his opinions on spiritual matters make up much of the Christian New Testament
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III. Policies of Roman Emperors

A. Emperor Decius (r. 249-251 AD)

1. Created a Roman policy of persecution of Christians, because it threatened Roman culture
2. Martyrs (people who died while standing up for their faith) became heroes and attracted people to the faith
What factors contributed to the rapid growth of Christianity from 40 - 350 AD?

B. Emperor Constantine (r. 306-337 AD)
   1. Had a vision during battle- decided to support the Christian church and converted
   2. Issued the Edict of Milan in 313- made Christianity legal in the Roman Empire
   3. Donated lots of money to the church
   4. Held the Council of Nicea where church leaders decided that Jesus was himself God
What factors contributed to the rapid growth of Christianity from 40 - 350 AD?

C. Emperor Theodosius (r. 379-395 AD)
   1. In 380, he declared Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire
   2. By the early 390s, he made it illegal to practice polytheism (called paganism)
What factors contributed to the rapid growth of Christianity from 40 - 350 AD?

IV. Characteristics of the Roman Empire

A. Roman roads made travel easy and safe
B. Roman armies traveled all over empire- spreading ideas
C. Most Romans would have known Latin and Greek- allowing for effortless communication
Which factor do you believe contributed the most to the rapid growth of Christianity from 40 - 350 AD?