

UNITED BIBLE SOCIETIES

<http://www.unitedbiblesocieties.org/>

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Outline of Contents

Preparation for the witness 1.1–26

- a. Jesus' last command and promise 1.1–14
- b. The successor of Judas 1.15–26

The Witness in Jerusalem 2.1–8.3

The Witness in Judaea and Samaria 8.4–12.25

The ministry of Paul 13.1–28.31

- a. The first missionary journey 13.1–14.28
- b. The conference in Jerusalem 15.1–35
- c. The second missionary journey 15.36–18.22
- d. The third missionary journey 18.23–21.16
- e. Paul a prisoner in Jerusalem, Caesarea, and Rome 21.17–28.31

ACTS 1

¹ Dear Theophilus:

In my first book I wrote about all the things that Jesus did and taught from the time he began his work ² until the day he was taken up to heaven. Before he was taken up, he gave instructions by the power of the Holy Spirit to the men he had chosen as his apostles. ³ For forty days after his death he appeared to them many times in ways that proved beyond doubt that he was alive. They saw him, and he talked with them about the Kingdom of God. ⁴ And when they came together, he gave them this order: “Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift I told you about, the gift my Father promised. ⁵ John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”

Jesus Is Taken Up to Heaven

⁶ When the apostles met together with Jesus, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time give the Kingdom back to Israel?”

⁷ Jesus said to them, “The times and occasions are set by my Father's own authority, and it is not for you to know when they will be. ⁸ But when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with power, and you will be witnesses for me in Jerusalem, in all of Judaea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” ⁹ After saying this, he was taken up to heaven as they watched him, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

¹⁰ They still had their eyes fixed on the sky as he went away, when two men dressed in white suddenly stood beside them ¹¹ and said, “Galileans, why are you standing there looking up at the sky? This Jesus, who was taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way that you saw him go to heaven.”

Judas' Successor

¹² Then the apostles went back to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which is about a kilometre away from the city. ¹³ They entered the city and went up to the room where they were staying: Peter, John, James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James son of Alphaeus, Simon the Patriot, and Judas son of James. ¹⁴ They gathered frequently to pray as a group, together with the women and with Mary the mother of Jesus and with his brothers.

¹⁵ A few days later there was a meeting of the believers, about a hundred and twenty in all, and Peter stood up to speak. ¹⁶ “My brothers,” he said, “the scripture had to come true in which the Holy Spirit, speaking through David, made a prediction about Judas, who was the

guide for those who arrested Jesus. ¹⁷ Judas was a member of our group, for he had been chosen to have a part in our work.”

¹⁸ (With the money that Judas got for his evil act he bought a field, where he fell to his death; he burst open and all his bowels spilt out. ¹⁹ All the people living in Jerusalem heard about it, and so in their own language they call that field Akeldama, which means “Field of Blood.”)

²⁰ “For it is written in the book of Psalms,

‘May his house become empty;

may no one live in it.’

It is also written,

‘May someone else take his place of service.’

²¹⁻²² “So then, someone must join us as a witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. He must be one of the men who were in our group during the whole time that the Lord Jesus travelled about with us, beginning from the time John preached his message of baptism until the day Jesus was taken up from us to heaven.”

²³ So they proposed two men: Joseph, who was called Barsabbas (also known as Justus), and Matthias. ²⁴ Then they prayed, “Lord, you know the thoughts of everyone, so show us which of these two you have chosen ²⁵ to serve as an apostle in the place of Judas, who left to go to the place where he belongs.” ²⁶ Then they drew lots to choose between the two men, and the one chosen was Matthias, who was added to the group of eleven apostles.

ACTS 2

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

¹ When the day of Pentecost came, all the believers were gathered together in one place. ² Suddenly there was a noise from the sky which sounded like a strong wind blowing, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. ³ Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire which spread out and touched each person there. ⁴ They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak.

⁵ There were Jews living in Jerusalem, religious men who had come from every country in the world. ⁶ When they heard this noise, a large crowd gathered. They were all excited, because each one of them heard the believers speaking in his own languages. ⁷ In amazement and wonder they exclaimed, “These people who are talking like this are Galileans! ⁸ How is it, then, that all of us hear them speaking in our own native languages? ⁹ We are from Parthia, Media, and Elam; from Mesopotamia, Judaea, and Cappadocia; from Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰ from Phrygia and Pamphylia, from Egypt and the regions of Libya near Cyrene. Some of us are from Rome, ¹¹ both Jews and Gentiles converted to Judaism, and some of us are from Crete and Arabia—yet all of us hear them speaking in our own languages about the great things that God has done!” ¹² Amazed and confused, they kept asking each other, “What does this mean?”

¹³ But others made fun of the believers, saying, “These people are drunk!”

Peter's Message

¹⁴ Then Peter stood up with the other eleven apostles and in a loud voice began to speak to the crowd: “Fellow-Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, listen to me and let me tell you what this means. ¹⁵ These people are not drunk, as you suppose; it is only nine o'clock in the morning. ¹⁶ Instead, this is what the prophet Joel spoke about:

¹⁷ ‘This is what I will do in the last days, God says:

I will pour out my Spirit on everyone.

Your sons and daughters will proclaim my message;

your young men will see visions,

and your old men will have dreams.

¹⁸ Yes, even on my servants, both men and women,

I will pour out my Spirit in those days,

and they will proclaim my message.

¹⁹ I will perform miracles in the sky above

and wonders on the earth below.

There will be blood, fire, and thick smoke;

²⁰ the sun will be darkened,

and the moon will turn red as blood,

before the great and glorious Day of the Lord comes.

²¹ And then, whoever calls out to the Lord for help will be saved.’

²² Listen to these words, fellow-Israelites! Jesus of Nazareth was a man whose divine authority was clearly proven to you by all the miracles and wonders which God performed through him. You yourselves know this, for it happened here among you. ²³ In accordance with his own plan God had already decided that Jesus would be handed over to you; and you killed him by letting sinful men crucify him. ²⁴ But God raised him from death, setting him free from its power, because it was impossible that death should hold him prisoner. ²⁵ For David said about him,

‘I saw the Lord before me at all times;

he is near me, and I will not be troubled.

²⁶ And so I am filled with gladness,

and my words are full of joy.

And I, mortal though I am,

will rest assured in hope,

²⁷ because you will not abandon me in the world of the dead;

you will not allow your faithful servant to rot in the grave.

²⁸ You have shown me the paths that lead to life,

and your presence will fill me with joy.’

²⁹ My brothers, I must speak to you plainly about our famous ancestor King David. He died and was buried, and his grave is here with us to this very day. ³⁰ He was a prophet, and he knew what God had promised him: God had made a vow that he would make one of David's descendants a king, just as David was. ³¹ David saw what God was going to do in the future, and so he spoke about the resurrection of the Messiah when he said,

‘He was not abandoned in the world of the dead;

his body did not rot in the grave.’

³² God has raised this very Jesus from death, and we are all witnesses to this fact. ³³ He has been raised to the right-hand side of God, his Father, and has received from him the Holy Spirit, as he had promised. What you now see and hear is his gift that he has poured out on us.

³⁴ For it was not David who went up into heaven; rather he said,

‘The Lord said to my Lord:

Sit here at my right

³⁵ until I put your enemies as a footstool under your feet.’

³⁶ “All the people of Israel, then, are to know for sure that this Jesus, whom you crucified, is the one that God has made Lord and Messiah!”

³⁷ When the people heard this, they were deeply troubled and said to Peter and the other apostles, “What shall we do, brothers?”

³⁸ Peter said to them, “Each one of you must turn away from his sins and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that your sins will be forgiven; and you will receive God's gift, the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For God's promise was made to you and your children, and to all who are far away—all whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

⁴⁰ Peter made his appeal to them and with many other words he urged them, saying, “Save yourselves from the punishment coming on this wicked people!” ⁴¹ Many of them believed his message and were baptized, and about three thousand people were added to the group that day. ⁴² They spent their time in learning from the apostles, taking part in the fellowship, and sharing in the fellowship meals and the prayers.

Life among the Believers

⁴³ Many miracles and wonders were being done through the apostles, and everyone was filled with awe. ⁴⁴ All the believers continued together in close fellowship and shared their belongings with one another. ⁴⁵ They would sell their property and possessions, and distribute the money among all, according to what each one needed. ⁴⁶ Day after day they met as a group in the Temple, and they had their meals together in their homes, eating with glad and humble hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God, and enjoying the good will of all the people. And every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved.

ACTS 3

A Lame Man Is Healed

¹ One day Peter and John went to the Temple at three o'clock in the afternoon, the hour for prayer. ² There at the Beautiful Gate, as it was called, was a man who had been lame all his life. Every day he was carried to the gate to beg for money from the people who were going into the Temple. ³ When he saw Peter and John going in, he begged them to give him something. ⁴ They looked straight at him, and Peter said, "Look at us!" ⁵ So he looked at them, expecting to get something from them. ⁶ But Peter said to him, "I have no money at all, but I give you what I have: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth I order you to get up and walk!" ⁷ Then he took him by his right hand and helped him up. At once the man's feet and ankles became strong; ⁸ he jumped up, stood on his feet, and started walking around. Then he went into the Temple with them, walking and jumping and praising God. ⁹ The people there saw him walking and praising God, ¹⁰ and when they recognized him as the beggar who had sat at the Beautiful Gate, they were all surprised and amazed at what had happened to him.

Peter's Message in the Temple

¹¹ As the man held on to Peter and John in Solomon's Porch, as it was called, the people were amazed and ran to them. ¹² When Peter saw the people, he said to them, "Fellow-Israelites, why are you surprised at this, and why do you stare at us? Do you think that it was by means of our own power or godliness that we made this man walk? ¹³ The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our ancestors, has given divine glory to his Servant Jesus. But you handed him over to the authorities, and you rejected him in Pilate's presence, even after Pilate had decided to set him free. ¹⁴ He was holy and good, but you rejected him, and instead you asked Pilate to do you the favour of turning loose a murderer. ¹⁵ You killed the one who leads to life, but God raised him from death—and we are witnesses to this. ¹⁶ It was the power of his name that gave strength to this lame man. What you see and know was done by faith in his name; it was faith in Jesus that has made him well, as you can all see.

¹⁷ "And now, my brothers, I know that what you and your leaders did to Jesus was due to your ignorance. ¹⁸ God announced long ago through all the prophets that his Messiah had to suffer; and he made it come true in this way. ¹⁹ Repent, then, and turn to God, so that he will forgive your sins. If you do, ²⁰ times of spiritual strength will come from the Lord, and he will send Jesus, who is the Messiah he has already chosen for you. ²¹ He must remain in heaven until the time comes for all things to be made new, as God announced through his holy prophets who lived long ago. ²² For Moses said, 'The Lord your God will send you a prophet, just as he sent me, and he will be one of your own people. You are to obey everything that he

tells you to do. ²³ Anyone who does not obey that prophet shall be separated from God's people and destroyed.' ²⁴ And all the prophets who had a message, including Samuel and those who came after him, also announced what has been happening these days. ²⁵ The promises of God through his prophets are for you, and you share in the covenant which God made with your ancestors. As he said to Abraham, "Through your descendants I will bless all the people on earth." ²⁶ And so God chose his Servant and sent him first to you, to bless you by making every one of you turn away from his wicked ways."

ACTS 4

Peter and John before the Council

¹ Peter and John were still speaking to the people when some priests, the officer in charge of the temple guards, and some Sadducees arrived. ² They were annoyed because the two apostles were teaching the people that Jesus had risen from death, which proved that the dead will rise to life. ³ So they arrested them and put them in jail until the next day, since it was already late. ⁴ But many who heard the message believed; and the number of men grew to about five thousand.

⁵ The next day the Jewish leaders, the elders, and the teachers of the Law gathered in Jerusalem. ⁶ They met with the High Priest Annas and with Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and the others who belonged to the High Priest's family. ⁷ They made the apostles stand before them and asked them, “How did you do this? What power have you got or whose name did you use?”

⁸ Peter, full of the Holy Spirit, answered them, “Leaders of the people and elders: ⁹ if we are being questioned today about the good deed done to the lame man and how he was healed, ¹⁰ then you should all know, and all the people of Israel should know, that this man stands here before you completely well through the power of the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth—whom you crucified and whom God raised from death. ¹¹ Jesus is the one of whom the scripture says,

‘The stone that you the builders despised
turned out to be the most important of all.’

¹² Salvation is to be found through him alone; in all the world there is no one else whom God has given who can save us.”

¹³ The members of the Council were amazed to see how bold Peter and John were and to learn that they were ordinary men of no education. They realized then that they had been companions of Jesus. ¹⁴ But there was nothing that they could say, because they saw the man who had been healed standing there with Peter and John. ¹⁵ So they told them to leave the Council room, and then they started discussing among themselves. ¹⁶ “What shall we do with these men?” they asked “Everyone in Jerusalem knows that this extraordinary miracle has been performed by them, and we cannot deny it. ¹⁷ But to keep this matter from spreading any further among the people, let us warn these men never again to speak to anyone in the name of Jesus.”

¹⁸ So they called them back in and told them that on no condition were they to speak or to teach in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John answered them, “You yourselves judge which is right in God's sight—to obey you or to obey God. ²⁰ For we cannot stop speaking of

what we ourselves have seen and heard.”²¹ So the Council warned them even more strongly and then set them free. They saw that it was impossible to punish them, because the people were all praising God for what had happened.²² The man on whom this miracle of healing had been performed was over forty years old.

The Believers Pray for Boldness

²³ As soon as Peter and John were set free, they returned to their group and told them what the chief priests and the elders had said.²⁴ When the believers heard it, they all joined together in prayer to God: “Master and Creator of heaven, earth, and sea, and all that is in them!²⁵ By means of the Holy Spirit you spoke through our ancestor David, your servant, when he said,

‘Why were the Gentiles furious;
why did people make their useless plots?

²⁶ The kings of the earth prepared themselves,
and the rulers met together
against the Lord and his Messiah.’

²⁷ For indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together in this city with the Gentiles and the people of Israel against Jesus, your holy Servant, whom you made Messiah.²⁸ They gathered to do everything that you by your power and will had already decided would happen.²⁹ And now, Lord, take notice of the threats they have made, and allow us, your servants, to speak your message with all boldness.³⁰ Stretch out your hand to heal, and grant that wonders and miracles may be performed through the name of your holy Servant Jesus.”

³¹ When they finished praying, the place where they were meeting was shaken. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to proclaim God's message with boldness.

The Believers Share Their Possessions

³² The group of believers was one in mind and heart. No one said that any of his belongings was his own, but they all shared with one another everything they had.³³ With great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God poured rich blessings on them all.³⁴ There was no one in the group who was in need. Those who owned fields or houses would sell them, bring the money received from the sale,³⁵ and hand it over to the apostles; and the money was distributed to each one according to his need.

³⁶ And so it was that Joseph, a Levite born in Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means “One who Encourages”),³⁷ sold a field he owned, brought the money, and handed it over to the apostles.

ACTS 5

Ananias and Sapphira

¹ But there was a man named Ananias, who with his wife Sapphira sold some property that belonged to them. ² But with his wife's agreement he kept part of the money for himself and handed the rest over to the apostles. ³ Peter said to him, "Ananias, why did you let Satan take control of you and make you lie to the Holy Spirit by keeping part of the money you received for the property? ⁴ Before you sold the property, it belonged to you; and after you sold it, the money was yours. Why, then, did you decide to do such a thing? You have not lied to men—you have lied to God!" ⁵ As soon as Ananias heard this, he fell down dead; and all who heard about it were terrified. ⁶ The young men came in, wrapped up his body, carried him out, and buried him.

⁷ About three hours later his wife, not knowing what had happened, came in. ⁸ Peter asked her, "Tell me, was this the full amount you and your husband received for your property?"

"Yes," she answered, "the full amount."

⁹ So Peter said to her, "Why did you and your husband decide to put the Lord's Spirit to the test? The men who buried your husband are now at the door, and they will carry you out too!"

¹⁰ At once she fell down at his feet and died. The young men came in and saw that she was dead, so they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. ¹¹ The whole church and all the others who heard of this were terrified.

Miracles and Wonders

¹² Many miracles and wonders were being performed among the people by the apostles. All the believers met together in Solomon's Porch. ¹³ Nobody outside the group dared to join them, even though the people spoke highly of them. ¹⁴ But more and more people were added to the group—a crowd of men and women who believed in the Lord. ¹⁵ As a result of what the apostles were doing, sick people were carried out into the streets and placed on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. ¹⁶ And crowds of people came in from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing those who were ill or who had evil spirits in them; and they were all healed.

The Apostles Are Persecuted

¹⁷ Then the High Priest and all his companions, members of the local party of the Sadducees, became extremely jealous of the apostles; so they decided to take action. ¹⁸ They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. ¹⁹ But that night an angel of the Lord opened the prison gates, led the apostles out, and said to them, ²⁰ "Go and stand in the Temple,

and tell the people all about this new life.”²¹ The apostles obeyed, and at dawn they entered the Temple and started teaching.

The High Priest and his companions called together all the Jewish elders for a full meeting of the Council; then they sent orders to the prison to have the apostles brought before them.²² But when the officials arrived, they did not find the apostles in prison, so they returned to the Council and reported,²³ “When we arrived at the jail, we found it locked up tight and all the guards on watch at the gates; but when we opened the gates, we found no one inside!”²⁴ When the chief priests and the officer in charge of the temple guards heard this, they wondered what had happened to the apostles.²⁵ Then a man came in and said to them, “Listen! The men you put in prison are in the Temple teaching the people!”²⁶ So the officer went off with his men and brought the apostles back. They did not use force, however, because they were afraid that the people might stone them.

²⁷ They brought the apostles in, made them stand before the Council, and the High Priest questioned them.²⁸ “We gave you strict orders not to teach in the name of this man,” he said; “but see what you have done! You have spread your teaching all over Jerusalem, and you want to make us responsible for his death!”

²⁹ Peter and the other apostles replied, “We must obey God, not men.”³⁰ The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from death, after you had killed him by nailing him to a cross.³¹ God raised him to his right-hand side as Leader and Saviour, to give the people of Israel the opportunity to repent and have their sins forgiven.³² We are witnesses to these things—we and the Holy Spirit, who is God's gift to those who obey him.”

³³ When the members of the Council heard this, they were so furious that they wanted to have the apostles put to death.³⁴ But one of them, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, who was a teacher of the Law and was highly respected by all the people, stood up in the Council. He ordered the apostles to be taken out,³⁵ and then he said to the Council, “Fellow-Israelites, be careful what you do to these men.³⁶ You remember that Theudas appeared some time ago, claiming to be somebody great, and about four hundred men joined him. But he was killed, all his followers were scattered, and his movement died out.³⁷ After that, Judas the Galilean appeared during the time of the census; he drew a crowd after him, but he also was killed, and all his followers were scattered.³⁸ And so in this case, I tell you, do not take any action against these men. Leave them alone! If what they have planned and done is of human origin, it will disappear,³⁹ but if it comes from God, you cannot possibly defeat them. You could find yourselves fighting against God!”

The Council followed Gamaliel's advice.⁴⁰ They called the apostles in, had them whipped, and ordered them never again to speak in the name of Jesus; and then they set them free.⁴¹ As

the apostles left the Council, they were happy, because God had considered them worthy to suffer disgrace for the sake of Jesus. ⁴² And every day in the Temple and in people's homes they continued to teach and preach the Good News about Jesus the Messiah.

ACTS 6

The Seven Helpers

¹ Some time later, as the number of disciples kept growing, there was a quarrel between the Greek-speaking Jews and the native Jews. The Greek-speaking Jews claimed that their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of funds. ² So the twelve apostles called the whole group of believers together and said, “It is not right for us to neglect the preaching of God's word in order to handle finances. ³ So then, friends, choose seven men among you who are known to be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, and we will put them in charge of this matter. ⁴ We ourselves, then, will give our full time to prayer and the work of preaching.”

⁵ The whole group was pleased with the apostles' proposal, so they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a Gentile from Antioch who had earlier been converted to Judaism. ⁶ The group presented them to the apostles, who prayed and placed their hands on them.

⁷ And so the word of God continued to spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem grew larger and larger, and a great number of priests accepted the faith.

The Arrest of Stephen

⁸ Stephen, a man richly blessed by God and full of power, performed great miracles and wonders among the people. ⁹ But he was opposed by some men who were members of the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), which included Jews from Cyrene and Alexandria. They and other Jews from the provinces of Cilicia and Asia started arguing with Stephen. ¹⁰ But the Spirit gave Stephen such wisdom that when he spoke, they could not refute him. ¹¹ So they bribed some men to say, “We heard him speaking against Moses and against God!” ¹² In this way they stirred up the people, the elders, and the teachers of the Law. They seized Stephen and took him before the Council. ¹³ Then they brought in some men to tell lies about him. “This man,” they said, “is always talking against our sacred Temple and the Law of Moses. ¹⁴ We heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will tear down the Temple and change all the customs which have come down to us from Moses!” ¹⁵ All those sitting in the Council fixed their eyes on Stephen and saw that his face looked like the face of an angel.

ACTS 7

Stephen's Speech

¹ The High Priest asked Stephen, "Is this true?"

² Stephen answered, "Brothers and fathers, listen to me! Before our ancestor Abraham had gone to live in Haran, the God of glory appeared to him in Mesopotamia ³ and said to him, "Leave your family and country and go to the land that I will show you." ⁴ And so he left his country and went to live in Haran. After Abraham's father died, God made him move to this land where you now live. ⁵ God did not then give Abraham any part of it as his own, not even a square metre of ground, but God promised to give it to him, and that it would belong to him and to his descendants. At the time God made this promise, Abraham had no children. ⁶ This is what God said to him: 'Your descendants will live in a foreign country, where they will be slaves and will be badly treated for four hundred years. ⁷ But I will pass judgment on the people that they will serve, and afterward they will come out of that country and will worship me in this place.' ⁸ Then God gave to Abraham the ceremony of circumcision as a sign of the covenant. So Abraham circumcised Isaac a week after he was born; Isaac circumcised his son Jacob, and Jacob circumcised his twelve sons, the famous ancestors of our race.

⁹ "Jacob's sons became jealous of their brother Joseph and sold him to be a slave in Egypt. But God was with him ¹⁰ and brought him safely through all his troubles. When Joseph appeared before the king of Egypt, God gave him a pleasing manner and wisdom, and the king made Joseph governor over the country and the royal household. ¹¹ Then there was a famine all over Egypt and Canaan, which caused much suffering. Our ancestors could not find any food, ¹² and when Jacob heard that there was corn in Egypt, he sent his sons, our ancestors, on their first visit there. ¹³ On the second visit Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and the king of Egypt came to know about Joseph's family. ¹⁴ So Joseph sent a message to his father Jacob, telling him and the whole family, seventy-five people in all, to come to Egypt. ¹⁵ Then Jacob went to Egypt, where he and his sons died. ¹⁶ Their bodies were taken to Shechem, where they were buried in the grave which Abraham had bought from the clan of Hamor for a sum of money.

¹⁷ When the time drew near for God to keep the promise he had made to Abraham, the number of our people in Egypt had grown much larger. ¹⁸ At last a king who did not know about Joseph began to rule in Egypt. ¹⁹ He tricked our ancestors and was cruel to them, forcing them to put their babies out of their homes, so that they would die. ²⁰ It was at this time that Moses was born, a very beautiful child. He was cared for at home for three months, ²¹ and when he was put out of his home, the king's daughter adopted him and brought him up as her

own son. ²² He was taught all the wisdom of the Egyptians and became a great man in words and deeds.

²³ “When Moses was forty years old, he decided to find out how his fellow Israelites were being treated. ²⁴ He saw one of them being ill-treated by an Egyptian, so he went to his help and took revenge on the Egyptian by killing him. ²⁵ (He thought that his own people would understand that God was going to use him to set them free, but they did not understand.) ²⁶The next day he saw two Israelites fighting, and he tried to make peace between them. ‘Listen, men,’ he said, ‘you are fellow-Israelites; why are you fighting like this?’ ²⁷ But the one who was ill-treating the other pushed Moses aside. ‘Who made you ruler and judge over us?’ he asked. ²⁸ ‘Do you want to kill me, just as you killed that Egyptian yesterday?’ ²⁹When Moses heard this, he fled from Egypt and went to live in the land of Midian. There he had two sons.

³⁰ “After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai. ³¹ Moses was amazed by what he saw, and went near the bush to get a better look. But he heard the Lord's voice: ³² ‘I am the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.’ Moses trembled with fear and dared not look. ³³ The Lord said to him, ‘Take your sandals off, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. ³⁴I have seen the cruel suffering of my people in Egypt. I have heard their groans, and I have come down to set them free. Come now; I will send you to Egypt.’

³⁵ “Moses is the one who was rejected by the people of Israel. ‘Who made you ruler and judge over us?’ they asked. He is the one whom God sent to rule the people and set them free with the help of the angel who appeared to him in the burning bush. ³⁶ He led the people out of Egypt, performing miracles and wonders in Egypt and at the Red Sea and for forty years in the desert. ³⁷ Moses is the one who said to the people of Israel, ‘God will send you a prophet, just as he sent me, and he will be one of your own people.’ ³⁸ He is the one who was with the people of Israel assembled in the desert; he was there with our ancestors and with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and he received God's living messages to pass on to us.

³⁹ “But our ancestors refused to obey him; they pushed him aside and wished that they could go back to Egypt. ⁴⁰ So they said to Aaron, ‘Make us some gods who will lead us. We do not know what has happened to that man Moses, who brought us out of Egypt.’ ⁴¹ It was then that they made an idol in the shape of a bull, offered sacrifice to it, and had a feast in honour of what they themselves had made. ⁴² So God turned away from them and gave them over to worship the stars of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets:

‘People of Israel! It was not to me
that you slaughtered and sacrificed animals

for forty years in the desert.

⁴³ It was the tent of the god Molech that you carried,
and the image of Rephan, your star god;
they were idols that you had made to worship.

And so I will send you into exile beyond Babylon.’

⁴⁴ Our ancestors had the Tent of God's presence with them in the desert. It had been made as God had told Moses to make it, according to the pattern that Moses had been shown.

⁴⁵ Later on, our ancestors who received the tent from their fathers carried it with them when they went with Joshua and took over the land from the nations that God drove out as they advanced. And it stayed there until the time of David. ⁴⁶ He won God's favour and asked God to allow him to provide a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. ⁴⁷ But it was Solomon who built him a house.

⁴⁸ “But the Most High God does not live in houses built by men; as the prophet says,

⁴⁹ ‘Heaven is my throne, says the Lord,
and the earth is my footstool.

What kind of house would you build for me?

Where is the place for me to live in?

⁵⁰ Did not I myself make all these things?’

⁵¹ “How stubborn you are!” Stephen went on to say. “How heathen your hearts, how deaf you are to God's message! You are just like your ancestors: you too have always resisted the Holy Spirit! ⁵² Was there any prophet that your ancestors did not persecute? They killed God's messengers, who long ago announced the coming of his righteous Servant. And now you have betrayed and murdered him. ⁵³ You are the ones who received God's law, that was handed down by angels—yet you have not obeyed it!”

The Stoning of Stephen

⁵⁴ As the members of the Council listened to Stephen, they became furious and ground their teeth at him in anger. ⁵⁵ But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw God's glory and Jesus standing at the right-hand side of God. ⁵⁶ “Look!” he said. “I see heaven opened and the Son of Man standing at the right-hand side of God!”

⁵⁷ With a loud cry the members of the Council covered their ears with their hands. Then they all rushed at him at once, ⁵⁸ threw him out of the city, and stoned him. The witnesses left their cloaks in the care of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹ They kept on stoning Stephen as he called out to the Lord, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!” ⁶⁰ He knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, “Lord! Do not remember this sin against them!” He said this and died.

ACTS 8

¹ And Saul approved of his murder.

Saul Persecutes the Church

That very day the church in Jerusalem began to suffer cruel persecution. All the believers, except the apostles, were scattered throughout the provinces of Judaea and Samaria. ² Some devout men buried Stephen, mourning for him with loud cries.

³ But Saul tried to destroy the church; going from house to house, he dragged out the believers, both men and women, and threw them into jail.

The Gospel Is Preached in Samaria

⁴ The believers who were scattered went everywhere, preaching the message. ⁵ Philip went to the principal city in Samaria and preached the Messiah to the people there. ⁶ The crowds paid close attention to what Philip said, as they listened to him and saw the miracles that he performed. ⁷ Evil spirits came out from many people with a loud cry, and many paralysed and lame people were healed. ⁸ So there was great joy in that city.

⁹ A man named Simon lived there, who for some time had astounded the Samaritans with his magic. He claimed that he was someone great, ¹⁰ and everyone in the city, from all classes of society, paid close attention to him. “He is that power of God known as ‘The Great Power’,” they said. ¹¹ They paid this attention to him because for such a long time he had astonished them with his magic. ¹² But when they believed Philip's message about the good news of the Kingdom of God and about Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. ¹³ Simon himself also believed; and after being baptized, he stayed close to Philip and was astounded when he saw the great wonders and miracles that were being performed.

¹⁴ The apostles in Jerusalem heard that the people of Samaria had received the word of God, so they sent Peter and John to them. ¹⁵ When they arrived, they prayed for the believers that they might receive the Holy Spirit. ¹⁶ For the Holy Spirit had not yet come down on any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷ Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

¹⁸ Simon saw that the Spirit had been given to the believers when the apostles placed their hands on them. So he offered money to Peter and John, ¹⁹ and said, “Give this power to me too, so that anyone I place my hands on will receive the Holy Spirit.”

²⁰ But Peter answered him, “May you and your money go to hell, for thinking that you can buy God's gift with money! ²¹ You have no part or share in our work, because your heart is not right in God's sight. ²² Repent, then, of this evil plan of yours, and pray to the Lord that he will

forgive you for thinking such a thing as this. ²³ For I see that you are full of bitter envy and are a prisoner of sin.”

²⁴ Simon said to Peter and John, “Please pray to the Lord for me, so that none of these things you spoke of will happen to me.”

²⁵ After they had given their testimony and proclaimed the Lord's message, Peter and John went back to Jerusalem. On their way they preached the Good News in many villages of Samaria.

Philip and the Ethiopian Official

²⁶ An angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Get ready and go south to the road that goes from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This road is not used nowadays.) ²⁷⁻²⁸ So Philip got ready and went. Now an Ethiopian eunuch, who was an important official in charge of the treasury of the queen of Ethiopia, was on his way home. He had been to Jerusalem to worship God and was going back home in his carriage. As he rode along, he was reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹ The Holy Spirit said to Philip, “Go over to that carriage and stay close to it.” ³⁰ Philip ran over and heard him reading from the book of the prophet Isaiah. He asked him, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

³¹ The official replied, “How can I understand unless someone explains it to me?” And he invited Philip to climb up and sit in the carriage with him. ³² The passage of scripture which he was reading was this:

“Like a sheep that is taken to be slaughtered,
like a lamb that makes no sound when its wool is cut off,
he did not say a word.

³³ He was humiliated, and justice was denied him.

No one will be able to tell about his descendants,
because his life on earth has come to an end.”

³⁴ The official asked Philip, “Tell me, of whom is the prophet saying this? Of himself or of someone else?” ³⁵ Then Philip began to speak; starting from this passage of scripture, he told him the Good News about Jesus. ³⁶ As they travelled down the road, they came to a place where there was some water, and the official said, “Here is some water. What is to keep me from being baptized?”

³⁸ The official ordered the carriage to stop, and both Philip and the official went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. ³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord took Philip away. The official did not see him again, but continued on his way, full of

joy. ⁴⁰ Philip found himself in Ashdod; he went on to Caesarea, and on the way he preached the Good News in every town.

ACTS 9

The Conversion of Saul (Acts 22.6-16; 26.12-18)

¹ In the meantime Saul kept up his violent threats of murder against the followers of the Lord. He went to the High Priest ² and asked for letters of introduction to the synagogues in Damascus, so that if he should find there any followers of the Way of the Lord, he would be able to arrest them, both men and women, and bring them back to Jerusalem.

³ As Saul was coming near the city of Damascus, suddenly a light from the sky flashed round him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul! Why do you persecute me?”

⁵ “Who are you, Lord?” he asked.

“I am Jesus, whom you persecute,” the voice said. ⁶ “But get up and go into the city, where you will be told what you must do.”

⁷ The men who were travelling with Saul had stopped, not saying a word; they heard the voice but could not see anyone. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground and opened his eyes, but could not see a thing. So they took him by the hand and led him into Damascus. ⁹ For three days he was not able to see, and during that time he did not eat or drink anything.

¹⁰ There was a Christian in Damascus named Ananias. He had a vision, in which the Lord said to him, “Ananias!”

“Here I am, Lord,” he answered.

¹¹ The Lord said to him, “Get ready and go to Straight Street, and at the house of Judas ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul. He is praying, ¹² and in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come in and place his hands on him so that he might see again.”

¹³ Ananias answered, “Lord, many people have told me about this man and about all the terrible things he has done to your people in Jerusalem. ¹⁴ And he has come to Damascus with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who worship you.”

¹⁵ The Lord said to him, “Go, because I have chosen him to serve me, to make my name known to Gentiles and kings and to the people of Israel. ¹⁶ And I myself will show him all that he must suffer for my sake.”

¹⁷ So Ananias went, entered the house where Saul was, and placed his hands on him. “Brother Saul,” he said, “the Lord has sent me—Jesus himself, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here. He sent me so that you might see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” ¹⁸ At once something like fish scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he was able to see again. He stood up and was baptized; ¹⁹ and after he had eaten, his strength came back.

Saul Preaches in Damascus

Saul stayed for a few days with the believers in Damascus. ²⁰ He went straight to the synagogues and began to preach that Jesus was the Son of God.

²¹ All who heard him were amazed and asked, “Isn't he the one who in Jerusalem was killing those who worship that man Jesus? And didn't he come here for the very purpose of arresting those people and taking them back to the chief priests?”

²² But Saul's preaching became even more powerful, and his proofs that Jesus was the Messiah were so convincing that the Jews who lived in Damascus could not answer him.

²³ After many days had gone by, the Jews met together and made plans to kill Saul, ²⁴but he was told of their plan. Day and night they watched the city gates in order to kill him. ²⁵But one night Saul's followers took him and let him down through an opening in the wall, lowering him in a basket.

Saul in Jerusalem

²⁶ Saul went to Jerusalem and tried to join the disciples. But they would not believe that he was a disciple, and they were all afraid of him. ²⁷ Then Barnabas came to his help and took him to the apostles. He explained to them how Saul had seen the Lord on the road and that the Lord had spoken to him. He also told them how boldly Saul had preached in the name of Jesus in Damascus. ²⁸ And so Saul stayed with them and went all over Jerusalem, preaching boldly in the name of the Lord. ²⁹ He also talked and disputed with the Greek-speaking Jews, but they tried to kill him. ³⁰ When the believers found out about this, they took Saul to Caesarea and sent him away to Tarsus.

³¹ And so it was that the church throughout Judaea, Galilee, and Samaria had a time of peace. Through the help of the Holy Spirit it was strengthened and grew in numbers, as it lived in reverence for the Lord.

Peter in Lydda and Joppa

³² Peter travelled everywhere, and on one occasion he went to visit God's people who lived in Lydda. ³³ There he met a man named Aeneas, who was paralysed and had not been able to get out of bed for eight years. ³⁴ “Aeneas,” Peter said to him, “Jesus Christ makes you well. Get up and make your bed.” At once Aeneas got up. ³⁵ All the people living in Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

³⁶ In Joppa there was a woman named Tabitha, who was a believer. (Her name in Greek is Dorcas, meaning “a deer.”) She spent all her time doing good and helping the poor. ³⁷ At that

time she become ill and died. Her body was washed and laid in a room upstairs.³⁸ Joppa was not very far from Lydda, and when the believers in Joppa heard that Peter was in Lydda, they sent two men to him with the message, “Please hurry and come to us.”³⁹ So Peter got ready and went with them. When he arrived, he was taken to the room upstairs, where all the widows crowded around him, crying and showing him all the shirts and coats that Dorcas had made while she was alive.⁴⁰ Peter put them all out of the room, and knelt down and prayed; then he turned to the body and said, “Tabitha, get up!” She opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter, she sat up.⁴¹ Peter reached over and helped her get up. Then he called all the believers, including the widows, and presented her alive to them.⁴² The news about this spread all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord.⁴³ Peter stayed on in Joppa for many days with a leather-worker named Simon.

ACTS 10

Peter and Cornelius

¹ There was a man in Caesarea named Cornelius, who was a captain in the Roman army regiment called “The Italian Regiment.” ² He was a religious man; he and his whole family worshipped God. He also did much to help the Jewish poor people and was constantly praying to God. ³ It was about three o'clock one afternoon when he had a vision, in which he clearly saw an angel of God come in and say to him, “Cornelius!”

⁴ He stared at the angel in fear and said, “What is it, sir?”

The angel answered, “God is pleased with your prayers and works of charity, and is ready to answer you. ⁵ And now send some men to Joppa for a certain man whose full name is Simon Peter. ⁶ He is a guest in the home of a leather-worker named Simon, who lives by the sea.” ⁷ Then the angel went away, and Cornelius called two of his house servants and a soldier, a religious man who was one of his personal attendants. ⁸ He told them what had happened and sent them off to Joppa.

⁹ The next day, as they were on their way and coming near Joppa, Peter went up on the roof of the house about noon in order to pray. ¹⁰ He became hungry and wanted something to eat; while the food was being prepared, he had a vision. ¹¹ He saw heaven opened and something coming down that looked like a large sheet being lowered by its four corners to the earth. ¹² In it were all kinds of animals, reptiles, and wild birds. ¹³ A voice said to him, “Get up, Peter; kill and eat!”

¹⁴ But Peter said, “Certainly not, Lord! I have never eaten anything ritually unclean or defiled.”

¹⁵ The voice spoke to him again, “Do not consider anything unclean that God has declared clean.” ¹⁶ This happened three times, and then the thing was taken back up into heaven.

¹⁷ While Peter was wondering about the meaning of this vision, the men sent by Cornelius had learnt where Simon's house was, and they were now standing in front of the gate. ¹⁸ They called out and asked, “Is there a guest here by the name of Simon Peter?”

¹⁹ Peter was still trying to understand what the vision meant, when the Spirit said, “Listen! Three men are here looking for you. ²⁰ So get ready and go down, and do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them.” ²¹ So Peter went down and said to the men, “I am the man you are looking for. Why have you come?”

²² “Captain Cornelius sent us,” they answered. “He is a good man who worships God and is highly respected by all the Jewish people. An angel of God told him to invite you to his house, so that he could hear what you have to say.” ²³ Peter invited the men in and persuaded them to spend the night there.

The next day he got ready and went with them; and some of the believers from Joppa went along with him. ²⁴ The following day he arrived in Caesarea, where Cornelius was waiting for him, together with relatives and close friends that he had invited. ²⁵ As Peter was about to go in, Cornelius met him, fell at his feet, and bowed down before him. ²⁶ But Peter made him rise. “Stand up,” he said, “I myself am only a man.” ²⁷ Peter kept on talking to Cornelius as he went into the house, where he found many people gathered. ²⁸ He said to them, “You yourselves know very well that a Jew is not allowed by his religion to visit or associate with Gentiles. But God has shown me that I must not consider any person ritually unclean or defiled. ²⁹ And so when you sent for me, I came without any objection. I ask you, then, why did you send for me?”

³⁰ Cornelius said, “It was about this time three days ago that I was praying in my house at three o'clock in the afternoon. Suddenly a man dressed in shining clothes stood in front of me ³¹and said: ‘Cornelius! God has heard your prayer and has taken notice of your works of charity. ³² Send someone to Joppa for a man whose full name is Simon Peter. He is a guest in the home of Simon the leather-worker, who lives by the sea.’ ³³ And so I sent for you at once, and you have been good enough to come. Now we are all here in the presence of God, waiting to hear anything that the Lord has instructed you to say.”

Peter's Speech

³⁴ Peter began to speak: “I now realize that it is true that God treats everyone on the same basis. ³⁵ Whoever worships him and does what is right are acceptable to him, no matter what race they belong to. ³⁶ You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, proclaiming the Good News of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. ³⁷ You know of the great event that took place throughout the land of Israel, beginning in Galilee after John preached his message of baptism. ³⁸ You know about Jesus of Nazareth and how God poured out on him the Holy Spirit and power. He went everywhere, doing good and healing all who were under the power of the Devil, for God was with him. ³⁹ We are witnesses of everything that he did in the land of Israel and in Jerusalem. Then they put him to death by nailing him to a cross. ⁴⁰ But God raised him from death three days later and caused him to appear, ⁴¹ not to everyone, but only to the witnesses that God had already chosen, that is, to us who ate and drank with him after he rose from death. ⁴² And he commanded us to preach the gospel to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God has appointed judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ All the prophets spoke about him, saying that everyone who believes in him will have his sins forgiven through the power of his name.”

The Gentiles Receive the Holy Spirit

⁴⁴ While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit came down on all those who were listening to his message. ⁴⁵ The Jewish believers who had come from Joppa with Peter were amazed that God had poured out his gift of the Holy Spirit on the Gentiles also. ⁴⁶ For they heard them speaking in strange tongues and praising God's greatness. Peter spoke up: ⁴⁷“These people have received the Holy Spirit, just as we also did. Can anyone, then, stop them from being baptized with water?” ⁴⁸ So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to stay with them for a few days.

ACTS 11

Peter's Report to the Church at Jerusalem

¹ The apostles and the other believers throughout Judaea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God. ² When Peter went to Jerusalem, those who were in favour of circumcising Gentiles criticized him, saying, ³ “You were a guest in the home of uncircumcised Gentiles, and you even ate with them!” ⁴ So Peter gave them a complete account of what had happened from the very beginning:

⁵ “While I was praying in the city of Joppa, I had a vision. I saw something coming down that looked like a large sheet being lowered by its four corners from heaven, and it stopped next to me. ⁶ I looked closely inside and saw domesticated and wild animals, reptiles, and wild birds. ⁷ Then I heard a voice saying to me, ‘Get up, Peter; kill and eat!’ ⁸ But I said, ‘Certainly not, Lord! No ritually unclean or defiled food has ever entered my mouth.’ ⁹ The voice spoke again from heaven, ‘Do not consider anything unclean that God has declared clean.’ ¹⁰ This happened three times, and finally the whole thing was drawn back up into heaven. ¹¹ At that very moment three men who had been sent to me from Caesarea arrived at the house where I was staying. ¹² The Spirit told me to go with them without hesitation. These six fellow-believers from Joppa accompanied me to Caesarea, and we all went into the house of Cornelius. ¹³ He told us how he had seen an angel standing in his house, who said to him, ‘Send someone to Joppa for a man whose full name is Simon Peter. ¹⁴ He will speak words to you by which you and all your family will be saved.’ ¹⁵ And when I began to speak, the Holy Spirit came down on them just as on us at the beginning. ¹⁶ Then I remembered what the Lord had said: “John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” ¹⁷ It is clear that God gave those Gentiles the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ; who was I, then, to try to stop God!”

¹⁸ When they heard this, they stopped their criticism and praised God, saying, “Then God has given to the Gentiles also the opportunity to repent and live!”

The Church at Antioch

¹⁹ Some of the believers who were scattered by the persecution which took place when Stephen was killed went as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, telling the message to Jews only. ²⁰ But other believers, who were from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and proclaimed the message to Gentiles also, telling them the Good News about the Lord Jesus. ²¹ The Lord's power was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.

²² The news about this reached the church in Jerusalem, so they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³When he arrived and saw how God had blessed the people, he was glad and urged them all to be faithful and true to the Lord with all their hearts. ²⁴ Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith, and many people were brought to the Lord.

²⁵ Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul. ²⁶ When he found him, he took him to Antioch, and for a whole year the two met with the people of the church and taught a large group. It was at Antioch that the believers were first called Christians.

²⁷ About that time some prophets went from Jerusalem to Antioch. ²⁸ One of them, named Agabus, stood up and by the power of the Spirit predicted that a severe famine was about to come over all the earth. (It came when Claudius was emperor.) ²⁹ The disciples decided that each of them would send as much as they could to help their fellow-believers who lived in Judaea. ³⁰ They did this, then, and sent the money to the church elders by Barnabas and Saul.

ACTS 12

More Persecution

¹ About this time King Herod began to persecute some members of the church. ² He had James, the brother of John, put to death by the sword. ³ When he saw that this pleased the Jews, he went on to arrest Peter. (This happened during the time of the Festival of Unleavened Bread.) ⁴ After his arrest Peter was put in jail, where he was handed over to be guarded by four groups of four soldiers each. Herod planned to put him on trial in public after Passover. ⁵ So Peter was kept in jail, but the people of the church were praying earnestly to God for him.

Peter Is Set Free from Prison

⁶ The night before Herod was going to bring him out to the people, Peter was sleeping between two guards. He was tied with two chains, and there were guards on duty at the prison gate. ⁷ Suddenly an angel of the Lord stood there, and a light shone in the cell. The angel shook Peter by the shoulder, woke him up, and said, "Hurry! Get up!" At once the chains fell off Peter's hands. ⁸ Then the angel said, "Fasten your belt and put on your sandals." Peter did so, and the angel said, "Put your cloak around you and come with me." ⁹ Peter followed him out of the prison, not knowing, however, if what the angel was doing was real; he thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰ They passed by the first guard post and then the second, and came at last to the iron gate leading into the city. The gate opened for them by itself, and they went out. They walked down a street, and suddenly the angel left Peter.

¹¹ Then Peter realized what had happened to him, and said, "Now I know that it is really true! The Lord sent his angel to rescue me from Herod's power and from everything the Jewish people expected to happen."

¹² Aware of his situation, he went to the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying. ¹³ Peter knocked at the outside door, and a servant-girl named Rhoda came to answer it. ¹⁴ She recognized Peter's voice and was so happy that she ran back in without opening the door, and announced that Peter was standing outside. ¹⁵ "You are mad!" they told her. But she insisted that it was true. So they answered, "It is his angel."

¹⁶ Meanwhile Peter kept on knocking. At last they opened the door, and when they saw him, they were amazed. ¹⁷ He motioned with his hand for them to be quiet, and he explained to them how the Lord had brought him out of prison. "Tell this to James and the rest of the believers," he said; then he left and went somewhere else.

¹⁸ When morning came, there was a tremendous confusion among the guards—what had happened to Peter? ¹⁹ Herod gave orders to search for him, but they could not find him. So he had the guards questioned and ordered them to be put to death.

After this, Herod left Judaea and spent some time in Caesarea.

The Death of Herod

²⁰ Herod was very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon, so they went in a group to see him. First they convinced Blastus, the man in charge of the palace, that he should help them. Then they went to Herod and asked him for peace, because their country got its food supplies from the king's country.

²¹ On a chosen day Herod put on his royal robes, sat on his throne, and made a speech to the people. ²² “It isn't a man speaking, but a god!” they shouted. ²³ At once the angel of the Lord struck Herod down, because he did not give honour to God. He was eaten by worms and died.

²⁴ Meanwhile the word of God continued to spread and grow.

²⁵ Barnabas and Saul finished their mission and returned from Jerusalem, taking John Mark with them.

ACTS 13

Barnabas and Saul Are Chosen and Sent

¹ In the church at Antioch there were some prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon (called the Black), Lucius (from Cyrene), Manaen (who had been brought up with Herod the Governor), and Saul. ² While they were serving the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said to them, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul, to do the work to which I have called them.”

³ They fasted and prayed, placed their hands on them, and sent them off.

In Cyprus

⁴ Having been sent by the Holy Spirit, Barnabas and Saul went to Seleucia and sailed from there to the island of Cyprus. ⁵ When they arrived at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues. They had John Mark with them to help in the work.

⁶ They went all the way across the island to Paphos, where they met a certain magician named Bar-Jesus, a Jew who claimed to be a prophet. ⁷ He was a friend of the governor of the island, Sergius Paulus, who was an intelligent man. The governor called Barnabas and Saul before him because he wanted to hear the word of God. ⁸ But they were opposed by the magician Elymas (that is his name in Greek), who tried to turn the governor away from the faith. ⁹ Then Saul—also known as Paul—was filled with the Holy Spirit; he looked straight at the magician ¹⁰ and said, “You son of the Devil! You are the enemy of everything that is good. You are full of all kinds of evil tricks, and you always keep trying to turn the Lord's truths into lies! ¹¹ The Lord's hand will come down on you now; you will be blind and will not see the light of day for a time.”

At once Elymas felt a dark mist cover his eyes, and he walked around trying to find someone to lead him by the hand. ¹² When the governor saw what had happened, he believed; for he was greatly amazed at the teaching about the Lord.

In Antioch in Pisidia

¹³ Paul and his companions sailed from Paphos and came to Perga, a city in Pamphylia, where John Mark left them and went back to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ They went on from Perga and arrived in Antioch in Pisidia, and on the Sabbath they went into the synagogue and sat down. ¹⁵ After the reading from the Law of Moses and from the writings of the prophets, the officials of the synagogue sent them a message: “Brothers, we want you to speak to the people if you have a message of encouragement for them.” ¹⁶ Paul stood up, motioned with his hand, and began to speak:

“Fellow-Israelites and all Gentiles here who worship God: hear me! ¹⁷ The God of the people of Israel chose our ancestors and made the people a great nation during the time they lived as foreigners in Egypt. God brought them out of Egypt by his great power, ¹⁸ and for forty years he endured them in the desert. ¹⁹ He destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan and made his people the owners of the land. ²⁰ All of this took about four hundred and fifty years.

“After this he gave them judges until the time of the prophet Samuel. ²¹ And when they asked for a king, God gave them Saul son of Kish from the tribe of Benjamin, to be their king for forty years. ²² After removing him, God made David their king. This is what God said about him: ‘I have found that David son of Jesse is the kind of man I like, a man who will do all I want him to do.’ ²³ It was Jesus, a descendant of David, whom God made the Saviour of the people of Israel, as he had promised. ²⁴ Before Jesus began his work, John preached to all the people of Israel that they should turn from their sins and be baptized. ²⁵ And as John was about to finish his mission, he said to the people, ‘Who do you think I am? I am not the one you are waiting for. But listen! He is coming after me, and I am not good enough to take his sandals off his feet.’”

²⁶ My fellow-Israelites, descendants of Abraham, and all Gentiles here who worship God: it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent! ²⁷ For the people who live in Jerusalem and their leaders did not know that he is the Saviour, nor did they understand the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath. Yet they made the prophets' words come true by condemning Jesus. ²⁸ And even though they could find no reason to pass the death sentence on him, they asked Pilate to have him put to death. ²⁹ And after they had done everything that the Scriptures say about him, they took him down from the cross and placed him in a tomb. ³⁰ But God raised him from death, ³¹ and for many days he appeared to those who had travelled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now witnesses for him to the people of Israel. ³²⁻³³ And we are here to bring the Good News to you: what God promised our ancestors he would do, he has now done for us, who are their descendants, by raising Jesus to life. As it is written in the second Psalm,

‘You are my Son;
today I have become your Father.’

³⁴ And this is what God said about raising him from death, never to rot away in the grave:

‘I will give you the sacred and sure blessings
that I promised to David.’

³⁵ As indeed he says in another passage,

‘You will not allow your devoted servant to rot in the grave.’”

³⁶ For David served God's purposes in his own time, and then he died, was buried with his ancestors, and his body rotted in the grave. ³⁷ But this did not happen to the one whom God raised from death. ³⁸⁻³⁹ We want you to know, my fellow-Israelites, that it is through Jesus that the message about forgiveness of sins is preached to you; and that everyone who believes in him is set free from all the sins from which the Law of Moses could not set you free. ⁴⁰ Take care, then, so that what the prophets said may not happen to you:

⁴¹ ‘Look, you scoffers! Be astonished and die!

For what I am doing today

is something that you will not believe,

even when someone explains it to you!’”

⁴² As Paul and Barnabas were leaving the synagogue, the people invited them to come back the next Sabbath and tell them more about these things. ⁴³ After the people had left the meeting, Paul and Barnabas were followed by many Jews and by many Gentiles who had been converted to Judaism. The apostles spoke to them and encouraged them to keep on living in the grace of God.

⁴⁴ The next Sabbath nearly everyone in the town came to hear the word of the Lord. ⁴⁵ When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy; they disputed what Paul was saying and insulted him. ⁴⁶ But Paul and Barnabas spoke out even more boldly: “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken first to you. But since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we will leave you and go to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ For this is the commandment that the Lord has given us:

‘I have made you a light for the Gentiles,

so that all the world may be saved.’”

⁴⁸ When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and praised the Lord's message; and those who had been chosen for eternal life became believers.

⁴⁹ The word of the Lord spread everywhere in that region. ⁵⁰ But the Jews stirred up the leading men of the city and the Gentile women of high social standing who worshiped God. They started a persecution against Paul and Barnabas and threw them out of their region.

⁵¹ The apostles shook the dust off their feet in protest against them and went on to Iconium.

⁵² The believers in Antioch were full of joy and the Holy Spirit.

ACTS 14

In Iconium

¹ The same thing happened in Iconium: Paul and Barnabas went to the synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of Jews and Gentiles became believers. ² But the Jews who would not believe stirred up the Gentiles and turned them against the believers. ³ The apostles stayed there for a long time, speaking boldly about the Lord, who proved that their message about his grace was true by giving them the power to perform miracles and wonders. ⁴ The people of the city were divided: some were for the Jews, others for the apostles.

⁵ Then some Gentiles and Jews, together with their leaders, decided to ill-treat the apostles and stone them. ⁶ When the apostles learnt about it, they fled to the cities of Lystra and Derbe in Lycaonia and to the surrounding territory. ⁷ There they preached the Good News.

In Lystra and Derbe

⁸ In Lystra there was a man who had been lame from birth and had never been able to walk. ⁹ He sat there and listened to Paul's words. Paul saw that he believed and could be healed, so he looked straight at him ¹⁰ and said in a loud voice, "Stand up straight on your feet!" The man jumped up and started walking around. ¹¹ When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they started shouting in their own Lycaonian language, "The gods have become like men and have come down to us!" ¹² They gave Barnabas the name Zeus, and Paul the name Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. ¹³ The priest of the god Zeus, whose temple stood just outside the town, brought bulls and flowers to the gate, for he and the crowds wanted to offer sacrifice to the apostles.

¹⁴ When Barnabas and Paul heard what they were about to do, they tore their clothes and ran into the middle of the crowd, shouting, ¹⁵ "Why are you doing this? We ourselves are only human beings like you! We are here to announce the Good News, to turn you away from these worthless things to the living God, who made heaven, earth, sea, and all that is in them. ¹⁶ In the past he allowed all people to go their own way. ¹⁷ But he has always given evidence of his existence by the good things he does: he gives you rain from heaven and crops at the right times; he gives you food and fills your hearts with happiness." ¹⁸ Even with these words the apostles could hardly keep the crowd from offering a sacrifice to them.

¹⁹ Some Jews came from Antioch in Pisidia and from Iconium; they won the crowd over to their side, stoned Paul and dragged him out of the town, thinking that he was dead. ²⁰ But when the believers gathered round him, he got up and went back into the town. The next day he and Barnabas went to Derbe.

The Return to Antioch in Syria

²¹ Paul and Barnabas preached the Good News in Derbe and won many disciples. Then they went back to Lystra, to Iconium, and on to Antioch in Pisidia. ²² They strengthened the believers and encouraged them to remain true to the faith. “We must pass through many troubles to enter the Kingdom of God,” they taught. ²³ In each church they appointed elders, and with prayers and fasting they commended them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust.

²⁴ After going through the territory of Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. ²⁵ There they preached the message in Perga and then went to Attalia, ²⁶ and from there they sailed back to Antioch, the place where they had been commended to the care of God's grace for the work they had now completed.

²⁷ When they arrived in Antioch, they gathered the people of the church together and told them about all that God had done with them and how he had opened the way for the Gentiles to believe. ²⁸ And they stayed a long time there with the believers.

ACTS 15

The Meeting at Jerusalem

¹ Some men came from Judaea to Antioch and started teaching the believers, “You cannot be saved unless you are circumcised as the Law of Moses requires.” ² Paul and Barnabas got into a fierce argument with them about this, so it was decided that Paul and Barnabas and some of the others in Antioch should go to Jerusalem and see the apostles and elders about this matter.

³ They were sent on their way by the church; and as they went through Phoenicia and Samaria, they reported how the Gentiles had turned to God; this news brought great joy to all the believers. ⁴ When they arrived in Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church, the apostles, and the elders, to whom they told all that God had done through them. ⁵ But some of the believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and said, “The Gentiles must be circumcised and told to obey the Law of Moses.”

⁶ The apostles and the elders met together to consider this question. ⁷ After a long debate Peter stood up and said, “My brothers, you know that a long time ago God chose me from among you to preach the Good News to the Gentiles, so that they could hear and believe. ⁸ And God, who knows the thoughts of everyone, showed his approval of the Gentiles by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as he had to us. ⁹ He made no difference between us and them; he forgave their sins because they believed. ¹⁰ So then, why do you now want to put God to the test by laying a load on the backs of the believers which neither our ancestors nor we ourselves were able to carry? ¹¹ No! We believe and are saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they are.”

¹² The whole group was silent as they heard Barnabas and Paul report all the miracles and wonders that God had performed through them among the Gentiles. ¹³ When they had finished speaking, James spoke up: “Listen to me, my brothers! ¹⁴ Simon has just explained how God first showed his care for the Gentiles by taking from among them a people to belong to him. ¹⁵ The words of the prophets agree completely with this. As the scripture says,

¹⁶ ‘After this I will return, says the Lord,
and restore the kingdom of David.

I will rebuild its ruins
and make it strong again.

¹⁷ And so all the rest of the mankind will come to me,
all the Gentiles whom I have called to be my own.

¹⁸ So says the Lord, who made this known long ago.’

¹⁹ “It is my opinion,” James went on, that we should not trouble the Gentiles who are turning to God. ²⁰ Instead, we should write a letter telling them not to eat any food that is ritually unclean because it has been offered to idols; to keep themselves from sexual immorality; and not to eat any animal that has been strangled, or any blood. ²¹ For the Law of Moses has been read for a very long time in the synagogues every Sabbath, and his words are preached in every town.”

The Letter to the Gentile Believers

²² Then the apostles and the elders, together with the whole church, decided to choose some men from the group and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose two men who were highly respected by the believers, Judas, called Barsabbas, and Silas, ²³ and they sent the following letter by them:

“We, the apostles and the elders, your brothers, send greetings to all our brothers of Gentile birth who live in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. ²⁴ We have heard that some who went from our group have troubled and upset you by what they said; they had not, however, received any instruction from us. ²⁵ And so we have met together and have all agreed to choose some messengers and send them to you. They will go with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul, ²⁶ who have risked their lives in the service of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷ We send you, then, Judas and Silas, who will tell you in person the same things we are writing. ²⁸ The Holy Spirit and we have agreed not to put any other burden on you besides these necessary rules: ²⁹ eat no food that has been offered to idols; eat no blood; eat no animal that has been strangled; and keep yourselves from sexual immorality. You will do well if you take care not to do these things. With our best wishes.”

³⁰ The messengers were sent off and went to Antioch, where they gathered the whole group of believers and gave them the letter. ³¹ When the people read it, they were filled with joy by the message of encouragement. ³² Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, spoke a long time with them, giving them courage and strength. ³³ After spending some time there, they were sent off in peace by the believers and went back to those who had sent them.

³⁵ Paul and Barnabas spent some time in Antioch, and together with many others they taught and preached the word of the Lord.

Paul and Barnabas Separate

³⁶ Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us go back and visit the believers in every town where we preached the word of the Lord, and let us find out how they are getting on.” ³⁷ Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them, ³⁸ but Paul did not think it was right to take

him, because he had not stayed with them to the end of their mission, but had turned back and left them in Pamphylia. ³⁹ There was a sharp argument, and they separated: Barnabas took Mark and sailed off for Cyprus, ⁴⁰ while Paul chose Silas and left, commended by the believers to the care of the Lord's grace. ⁴¹ He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

ACTS 16

Timothy Goes with Paul and Silas

¹ Paul travelled on to Derbe and Lystra, where a Christian named Timothy lived. His mother, who was also a Christian, was Jewish, but his father was a Greek. ² All the believers in Lystra and Iconium spoke well of Timothy. ³ Paul wanted to take Timothy along with him, so he circumcised him. He did so because all the Jews who lived in those places knew that Timothy's father was Greek. ⁴ As they went through the towns, they delivered to the believers the rules decided upon by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem, and they told them to obey those rules. ⁵ So the churches were made stronger in the faith and grew in numbers every day.

In Troas: Paul's Vision

⁶ They travelled through the region of Phrygia and Galatia because the Holy Spirit did not let them preach the message in the province of Asia. ⁷ When they reached the border of Mysia, they tried to go into the province of Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them. ⁸ So they travelled right on through Mysia and went to Troas. ⁹ That night Paul had a vision in which he saw a Macedonian standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" ¹⁰ As soon as Paul had this vision, we got ready to leave for Macedonia, because we decided that God had called us to preach the Good News to the people there.

In Philippi: the Conversion of Lydia

¹¹ We left by ship from Troas and sailed straight across to Samothrace, and the next day to Neapolis. ¹² From there we went inland to Philippi, a city of the first district of Macedonia; it is also a Roman colony. We spent several days there. ¹³ On the Sabbath we went out of the city to the river-side, where we thought there would be a place where Jews gathered for prayer. We sat down and talked to the women who gathered there. ¹⁴ One of those who heard us was Lydia from Thyatira, who was a dealer in purple cloth. She was a woman who worshiped God, and the Lord opened her mind to pay attention to what Paul was saying. ¹⁵ After she and the people of her house had been baptized, she invited us, "Come and stay in my house if you have decided that I am a true believer in the Lord." And she persuaded us to go.

In Prison at Philippi

¹⁶ One day as we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave-girl who had an evil spirit that enabled her to predict the future. She earned a lot of money for her owners by telling fortunes. ¹⁷ She followed Paul and us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most

High God! They announce to you how you can be saved!”¹⁸ She did this for many days, until Paul became so upset that he turned around and said to the spirit, “In the name of Jesus Christ I order you to come out of her!” The spirit went out of her that very moment.

¹⁹ When her owners realized that their chance of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them to the authorities in the public square. ²⁰ They brought them before the Roman officials and said, “These men are Jews, and they are causing trouble in our city. ²¹ They are teaching customs that are against our law; we are Roman citizens, and we cannot accept these customs or practice them.” ²² And the crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas.

Then the officials tore the clothes off Paul and Silas and ordered them to be whipped. ²³ After a severe beating, they were thrown into jail, and the jailer was ordered to lock them up tight. ²⁴ Upon receiving this order, the jailer threw them into the inner cell and fastened their feet between heavy blocks of wood.

²⁵ About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly there was a violent earthquake, which shook the prison to its foundations. At once all the doors opened, and the chains fell off all the prisoners. ²⁷ The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he thought that the prisoners had escaped; so he pulled out his sword and was about to kill himself. ²⁸ But Paul shouted at the top of his voice, “Don't harm yourself! We are all here!”

²⁹ The jailer called for a light, rushed in, and fell trembling at the feet of Paul and Silas. ³⁰ Then he led them out and asked, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

³¹ They answered, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved—you and your family.” ³² Then they preached the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house. ³³ At that very hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; and he and all his family were baptized at once. ³⁴ Then he took Paul and Silas up into his house and gave them some food to eat. He and his family were filled with joy, because they now believed in God.

³⁵ The next morning the Roman authorities sent police officers with the order, “Let those men go.”

³⁶ So the jailer told Paul, “The officials have sent an order for you and Silas to be released. You may leave, then, and go in peace.”

³⁷ But Paul said to the police officers, “We were not found guilty of any crime, yet they whipped us in public—and we are Roman citizens! Then they threw us in prison. And now they want to send us away secretly. Not likely! The Roman officials themselves must come here and let us out.”

³⁸ The police officers reported these words to the Roman officials; and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were afraid. ³⁹ So they went and apologized to them; then they led them out of the prison and asked them to leave the city. ⁴⁰ Paul and Silas left the prison and went to Lydia's house. There they met the believers, spoke words of encouragement to them, and left.

ACTS 17

In Thessalonica

¹ Paul and Silas travelled on through Amphipolis and Apollonia and came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue. ² According to his usual habit Paul went to the synagogue. There during three Sabbaths he held discussions with the people, quoting ³ and explaining the Scriptures, and proving from them that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from death. “This Jesus whom I announce to you,” Paul said, “is the Messiah.” ⁴ Some of them were convinced and joined Paul and Silas; so did many of the leading women and a large group of Greeks who worshiped God.

⁵ But the Jews were jealous and gathered some of the worthless loafers from the streets and formed a mob. They set the whole city in an uproar and attacked the home of a man named Jason, in an attempt to find Paul and Silas and bring them out to the people. ⁶ But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other believers before the city authorities and shouted, “These men have caused trouble everywhere! Now they have come to our city, ⁷ and Jason has kept them in his house. They are all breaking the laws of the Emperor, saying that there is another king, whose name is Jesus.” ⁸ With these words they threw the crowd and the city authorities into an uproar. ⁹ The authorities made Jason and the others pay the required amount of money to be released, and then let them go.

In Berea

¹⁰ As soon as night came, the believers sent Paul and Silas to Berea. When they arrived, they went to the synagogue. ¹¹ The people there were more open-minded than the people in Thessalonica. They listened to the message with great eagerness, and every day they studied the Scriptures to see if what Paul said was really true. ¹² Many of them believed; and many Greek women of high social standing and many Greek men also believed. ¹³ But when the Jews in Thessalonica heard that Paul had preached the word of God in Berea also, they came there and started exciting and stirring up the mob. ¹⁴ At once the believers sent Paul away to the coast; but both Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea. ¹⁵ The men who were taking Paul went with him as far as Athens and then returned to Berea with instructions from Paul that Silas and Timothy should join him as soon as possible.

In Athens

¹⁶ While Paul was waiting in Athens for Silas and Timothy, he was greatly upset when he noticed how full of idols the city was. ¹⁷ So he held discussions in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentiles who worshiped God, and also in the public square every day with

the people who happened to pass by. ¹⁸ Certain Epicurean and Stoic teachers also debated with him. Some of them asked, “What is this ignorant show-off trying to say?”

Others answered, “He seems to be talking about foreign gods.” They said this because Paul was preaching about Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹ So they took Paul, brought him before the city council, the Areopagus, and said, “We would like to know what this new teaching is that you are talking about. ²⁰ Some of the things we hear you say sound strange to us, and we would like to know what they mean.” ²¹ (For all the citizens of Athens and the foreigners who lived there liked to spend all their time telling and hearing the latest new thing.)

²² Paul stood up in front of the city council and said, “I see that in every way you Athenians are very religious. ²³ For as I walked through your city and looked at the places where you worship, I found an altar on which is written, ‘To an Unknown God.’ That which you worship, then, even though you do not know it, is what I now proclaim to you. ²⁴ God, who made the world and everything in it, is Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in man-made temples. ²⁵ Nor does he need anything that we can supply by working for him, since it is he himself who gives life and breath and everything else to everyone. ²⁶ From one man he created all races of mankind and made them live throughout the whole earth. He himself fixed beforehand the exact times and the limits of the places where they would live. ²⁷ He did this so that they would look for him, and perhaps find him as they felt about for him. Yet God is actually not far from any one of us; ²⁸ as someone has said,

‘In him we live and move and exist.’

It is as some of your poets have said,

‘We too are his children.’

²⁹ Since we are God's children, we should not suppose that his nature is anything like an image of gold or silver or stone, shaped by the art and skill of man. ³⁰ God has overlooked the times when people did not know him, but now he commands all of them everywhere to turn away from their evil ways. ³¹ For he has fixed a day in which he will judge the whole world with justice by means of a man he has chosen. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising that man from death!”

³² When they heard Paul speak about a raising from death, some of them made fun of him, but others said, “We want to hear you speak about this again.” ³³ And so Paul left the meeting. ³⁴ Some men joined him and believed, among whom was Dionysius, a member of the council; there was also a woman named Damaris, and some other people.

ACTS 18

In Corinth

¹ After this, Paul left Athens and went on to Corinth. ² There he met a Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, for Emperor Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, ³ and stayed and worked with them, because he earned his living by making tents, just as they did. ⁴ He held discussions in the synagogue every Sabbath, trying to convince both Jews and Greeks.

⁵ When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul gave his whole time to preaching the message, testifying to the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah. ⁶ When they opposed him and said evil things about him, he protested by shaking the dust from his clothes and saying to them, “If you are lost, you yourselves must take the blame for it! I am not responsible. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.” ⁷ So he left them and went to live in the house of a Gentile named Titius Justus, who worshiped God; his house was next to the synagogue. ⁸ Crispus, who was the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with all his family; and many other people in Corinth heard the message, believed, and were baptized.

⁹ One night Paul had a vision in which the Lord said to him, “Do not be afraid, but keep on speaking and do not give up, ¹⁰ for I am with you. No one will be able to harm you, for many in this city are my people.” ¹¹ So Paul stayed there for a year and a half, teaching the people the word of God.

¹² When Gallio was made the Roman governor of Achaia, the Jews got together, seized Paul, and took him into court. ¹³ “This man,” they said, “is trying to persuade people to worship God in a way that is against the law!”

¹⁴ Paul was about to speak when Gallio said to the Jews, “If this were a matter of some evil crime or wrong that has been committed, it would be reasonable for me to be patient with you Jews. ¹⁵ But since it is an argument about words and names and your own law, you yourselves must settle it. I will not be the judge of such things!” ¹⁶ And he drove them out of the court. ¹⁷ They all seized Sosthenes, the leader of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the court. But that did not bother Gallio a bit.

The Return to Antioch

¹⁸ Paul stayed on with the believers in Corinth for many days, then left them and sailed off with Priscilla and Aquila for Syria. Before sailing from Cenchræe he had his head shaved because of a vow he had taken. ¹⁹ They arrived in Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. He went into the synagogue and held discussions with the Jews. ²⁰ The people asked

him to stay longer, but he would not consent. ²¹ Instead, he told them as he left, “If it is the will of God, I will come back to you.” And so he sailed from Ephesus.

²² When he arrived at Caesarea, he went to Jerusalem and greeted the church, and then went to Antioch. ²³ After spending some time there, he left and went through the region of Galatia and Phrygia, strengthening all the believers.

Apollos in Ephesus and Corinth

²⁴ At that time a Jew named Apollos, who had been born in Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent speaker and had a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. ²⁵ He had been instructed in the Way of the Lord, and with great enthusiasm he proclaimed and taught correctly the facts about Jesus. However, he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶ He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him home with them and explained to him more correctly the Way of God. ²⁷ Apollos then decided to go to Achaia, so the believers in Ephesus helped him by writing to the believers in Achaia, urging them to welcome him. When he arrived, he was a great help to those who through God's grace had become believers. ²⁸ For with his strong arguments he defeated the Jews in public debates by proving from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah.

ACTS 19

Paul in Ephesus

¹ While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul travelled through the interior of the province and arrived in Ephesus. There he found some disciples ² and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you became believers?”

“We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit,” they answered.

³ “Well, then, what kind of baptism did you receive?” Paul asked.

“The baptism of John,” they answered.

⁴ Paul said, “The baptism of John was for those who turned from their sins; and he told the people of Israel to believe in the one who was coming after him—that is, in Jesus.”

⁵ When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. ⁶ Paul placed his hands on them, and the Holy Spirit came upon them; they spoke in strange tongues and also proclaimed God's message. ⁷ They were about twelve men in all.

⁸ Paul went into the synagogue and during three months spoke boldly with the people, holding discussions with them and trying to convince them about the Kingdom of God. ⁹ But some of them were stubborn and would not believe, and before the whole group they said evil things about the Way of the Lord. So Paul left them and took the believers with him, and every day he held discussions in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. ¹⁰ This went on for two years, so that all the people who lived in the province of Asia, both Jews and Gentiles, heard the word of the Lord.

The Sons of Sceva

¹¹ God was performing unusual miracles through Paul. ¹² Even handkerchiefs and aprons he had used were taken to those who were ill, and their diseases were driven away, and the evil spirits would go out of them. ¹³ Some Jews who travelled round and drove out evil spirits also tried to use the name of the Lord Jesus to do this. They said to the evil spirits, “I command you in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches.” ¹⁴ Seven brothers, who were the sons of a Jewish High Priest named Sceva, were doing this.

¹⁵ But the evil spirit said to them, “I know Jesus, and I know about Paul; but you—who are you?”

¹⁶ The man who had the evil spirit in him attacked them with such violence that he overpowered them all. They ran away from his house, wounded and with their clothes torn off. ¹⁷ All the Jews and Gentiles who lived in Ephesus heard about this; they were all filled with fear, and the name of the Lord Jesus was given greater honour. ¹⁸ Many of the believers came, publicly admitting and revealing what they had done. ¹⁹ Many of those who had

practiced magic brought their books together and burnt them in public. They added up the price of the books, and the total came to fifty thousand silver coins.²⁰ In this powerful way the word of the Lord kept spreading and growing stronger.

The Riot in Ephesus

²¹ After these things had happened, Paul made up his mind to travel through Macedonia and Achaia and go on to Jerusalem. “After I go there,” he said, “I must also see Rome.”²² So he sent Timothy and Erastus, two of his helpers, to Macedonia, while he spent more time in the province of Asia.

²³ It was at this time that there was serious trouble in Ephesus because of the Way of the Lord.²⁴ A certain silversmith named Demetrius made silver models of the temple of the goddess Artemis, and his business brought a great deal of profit to the workers.²⁵ So he called them all together with others whose work was like theirs and said to them, “Men, you know that our prosperity comes from this work.²⁶ Now, you can see and hear for yourselves what this fellow Paul is doing. He says that man-made gods are not gods at all, and he has succeeded in convincing many people, both here in Ephesus and in nearly the whole province of Asia.²⁷ There is the danger, then, that this business of ours will get a bad name. Not only that, but there is also the danger that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will come to mean nothing and that her greatness will be destroyed—the goddess worshipped by everyone in Asia and in all the world!”

²⁸ As the crowd heard these words, they became furious and started shouting, “Great is Artemis of Ephesus!”²⁹ The uproar spread throughout the whole city. The mob seized Gaius and Aristarchus, two Macedonians who were travelling with Paul, and rushed with them to the theatre.³⁰ Paul himself wanted to go before the crowd, but the believers would not let him.³¹ Some of the provincial authorities, who were his friends, also sent him a message begging him not to show himself in the theatre.³² Meanwhile the whole meeting was in an uproar: some people were shouting one thing, others were shouting something else, because most of them did not even know why they had come together.³³ Some of the people concluded that Alexander was responsible, since the Jews made him go up to the front. Then Alexander motioned with his hand for the people to be silent, and he tried to make a speech of defence.³⁴ But when they recognized that he was a Jew, they all shouted together the same thing for two hours: “Great is Artemis of Ephesus!”

³⁵ At last the city clerk was able to calm the crowd. “Fellow-Ephesians!” he said. “Everyone knows that the city of Ephesus is the keeper of the temple of the great Artemis and of the sacred stone that fell down from heaven.³⁶ Nobody can deny these things. So then, you

must calm down and not do anything reckless.³⁷ You have brought these men here even though they have not robbed temples or said evil things about our goddess.³⁸ If Demetrius and his workers have an accusation against anyone, we have the authorities and the regular days for court; charges can be made there.³⁹ But if there is something more that you want, it will have to be settled in a legal meeting of citizens.⁴⁰ For after what has happened today, there is the danger that we will be accused of a riot. There is no excuse for all this uproar, and we would not be able to give a good reason for it.”⁴¹ After saying this, he dismissed the meeting.

ACTS 20

To Macedonia and Achaia

¹ After the uproar died down, Paul called together the believers and with words of encouragement said good-bye to them. Then he left and went on to Macedonia. ² He went through those regions and encouraged the people with many messages. Then he came to Achaia, ³ where he stayed three months. He was getting ready to go to Syria when he discovered that the Jews were plotting against him; so he decided to go back through Macedonia. ⁴ Sopater son of Pyrrhus, from Berea, went with him; so did Aristarchus and Secundus, from Thessalonica; Gaius, from Derbe; Tychicus and Trophimus, from the province of Asia; and Timothy. ⁵ They went ahead and waited for us in Troas. ⁶ We sailed from Philippi after the Festival of Unleavened Bread, and five days later we joined them in Troas, where we spent a week.

Paul's Last Visit to Troas

⁷ On Saturday evening we gathered together for the fellowship meal. Paul spoke to the people and kept on speaking until midnight, since he was going to leave the next day. ⁸ Many lamps were burning in the upstairs room where we were meeting. ⁹ A young man named Eutychus was sitting in the window, and as Paul kept on talking, Eutychus got sleepier and sleepier, until he finally went sound asleep and fell from the third storey to the ground. When they picked him up, he was dead. ¹⁰ But Paul went down and threw himself on him and hugged him. "Don't worry," he said, "he is still alive!" ¹¹ Then he went back upstairs, broke bread, and ate. After talking with them for a long time, even until sunrise, Paul left. ¹² They took the young man home alive and were greatly comforted.

From Troas to Miletus

¹³ We went on ahead to the ship and sailed off to Assos, where we were going to take Paul aboard. He had told us to do this, because he was going there by land. ¹⁴ When he met us in Assos, we took him aboard and went on to Mitylene. ¹⁵ We sailed from there and arrived off Chios the next day. A day later we came to Samos, and the following day we reached Miletus. ¹⁶ Paul had decided to sail on past Ephesus, so as not to lose any time in the province of Asia. He was in a hurry to arrive in Jerusalem by the day of Pentecost, if at all possible.

Paul's Farewell Speech to the Elders of Ephesus

¹⁷ From Miletus Paul sent a message to Ephesus, asking the elders of the church to meet him. ¹⁸ When they arrived, he said to them, "You know how I spent the whole time I was with

you, from the first day I arrived in the province of Asia. ¹⁹ With all humility and many tears I did my work as the Lord's servant during the hard times that came to me because of the plots of some Jews. ²⁰ You know that I did not hold back anything that would be of help to you as I preached and taught in public and in your homes. ²¹ To Jews and Gentiles alike I gave solemn warning that they should turn from their sins to God and believe in our Lord Jesus. ²² And now, in obedience to the Holy Spirit I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. ²³ I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit has warned me that prison and troubles wait for me. ²⁴ But I reckon my own life to be worth nothing to me; I only want to complete my mission and finish the work that the Lord Jesus gave me to do, which is to declare the Good News about the grace of God.

²⁵ “I have gone about among all of you, preaching the Kingdom of God. And now I know that none of you will ever see me again. ²⁶ So I solemnly declare to you this very day: if any of you should be lost, I am not responsible. ²⁷ For I have not held back from announcing to you the whole purpose of God. ²⁸ So keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock which the Holy Spirit has placed in your care. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he made his own through the death of his Son. ²⁹ I know that after I leave, fierce wolves will come among you, and they will not spare the flock. ³⁰ The time will come when some men from your own group will tell lies to lead the believers away after them. ³¹ Watch, then, and remember that with many tears, day and night, I taught every one of you for three years.

³² “And now I commend you to the care of God and to the message of his grace, which is able to build you up and give you the blessings God has for all his people. ³³ I have not wanted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. ³⁴ You yourselves know that I have worked with these hands of mine to provide everything that my companions and I have needed. ³⁵ I have shown you in all things that by working hard in this way we must help the weak, remembering the words that the Lord Jesus himself said, ‘There is more happiness in giving than in receiving.’”

³⁶ When Paul finished, he knelt down with them and prayed. ³⁷ They were all crying as they hugged him and kissed him good-bye. ³⁸ They were especially sad because he had said that they would never see him again. And so they went with him to the ship.

ACTS 21

Paul Goes to Jerusalem

¹ We said good-bye to them and left. After sailing straight across, we came to Cos; the next day we reached Rhodes, and from there we went on to Patara. ² There we found a ship that was going to Phoenicia, so we went aboard and sailed away. ³ We came to where we could see Cyprus, and then sailed south of it on to Syria. We went ashore at Tyre, where the ship was going to unload its cargo. ⁴ There we found some believers and stayed with them a week. By the power of the Spirit they told Paul not to go to Jerusalem. ⁵ But when our time with them was over, we left and went on our way. All of them, together with their wives and children, went with us out of the city to the beach, where we all knelt and prayed. ⁶ Then we said good-bye to one another, and we went on board the ship while they went back home.

⁷ We continued our voyage, sailing from Tyre to Ptolemais, where we greeted the believers and stayed with them for a day. ⁸ On the following day we left and arrived in Caesarea. There we stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the seven men who had been chosen as helpers in Jerusalem. ⁹ He had four unmarried daughters who proclaimed God's message. ¹⁰ We had been there for several days when a prophet named Agabus arrived from Judaea. ¹¹ He came to us, took Paul's belt, tied up his own feet and hands with it, and said, "This is what the Holy Spirit says: The owner of this belt will be tied up in this way by the Jews in Jerusalem, and they will hand him over to the Gentiles."

¹² When we heard this, we and the others there begged Paul not to go to Jerusalem. ¹³ But he answered, "What are you doing, crying like this and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be tied up in Jerusalem but even to die there for the sake of the Lord Jesus."

¹⁴ We could not convince him, so we gave up and said, "May the Lord's will be done."

¹⁵ After spending some time there, we got our things ready and left for Jerusalem. ¹⁶ Some of the disciples from Caesarea also went with us and took us to the house of the man we were going to stay with—Mnason, from Cyprus, who had been a believer since the early days.

Paul Visits James

¹⁷ When we arrived in Jerusalem, the believers welcomed us warmly. ¹⁸ The next day Paul went with us to see James; and all the church elders were present. ¹⁹ Paul greeted them and gave a complete report of everything that God had done among the Gentiles through his work. ²⁰ After hearing him, they all praised God. Then they said, "Brother Paul, you can see how many thousands of Jews have become believers, and how devoted they all are to the Law. ²¹ They have been told that you have been teaching all the Jews who live in Gentile countries to abandon the Law of Moses, telling them not to circumcise their children or follow the

Jewish customs. ²² They are sure to hear that you have arrived. What should be done, then? ²³This is what we want you to do. There are four men here who have taken a vow. ²⁴Go along with them and join them in the ceremony of purification and pay their expenses; then they will be able to shave their heads. In this way everyone will know that there is no truth in any of the things that they have been told about you, but that you yourself live in accordance with the Law of Moses. ²⁵ But as for the Gentiles who have become believers, we have sent them a letter telling them we decided that they must not eat any food that has been offered to idols, or any blood, or any animal that has been strangled, and that they must keep themselves from sexual immorality.”

²⁶ So Paul took the men and the next day performed the ceremony of purification with them. Then he went into the Temple and gave notice of how many days it would be until the end of the period of purification, when a sacrifice would be offered for each one of them.

Paul Is Arrested in the Temple

²⁷ But just when the seven days were about to come to an end, some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul in the Temple. They stirred up the whole crowd and seized Paul. ²⁸“Men of Israel!” they shouted. “Help! This is the man who goes everywhere teaching everyone against the people of Israel, the Law of Moses, and this Temple. And now he has even brought some Gentiles into the Temple and defiled this holy place!” ²⁹ (They said this because they had seen Trophimus from Ephesus with Paul in the city, and they thought that Paul had taken him into the Temple.)

³⁰ Confusion spread through the whole city, and the people all ran together, seized Paul, and dragged him out of the Temple. At once the Temple doors were closed. ³¹ The mob was trying to kill Paul, when a report was sent up to the commander of the Roman troops that all of Jerusalem was rioting. ³² At once the commander took some officers and soldiers and rushed down to the crowd. When the people saw him with the soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. ³³ The commander went over to Paul, arrested him, and ordered him to be bound with two chains. Then he asked, “Who is this man, and what has he done?” ³⁴ Some in the crowd shouted one thing, others something else. There was such confusion that the commander could not find out exactly what had happened, so he ordered his men to take Paul up into the fort. ³⁵ They got as far as the steps with him, and then the soldiers had to carry him because the mob was so wild. ³⁶ They were all coming after him and screaming, “Kill him!”

Paul Defends Himself

³⁷ As the soldiers were about to take Paul into the fort, he spoke to the commander: “May I say something to you?”

“You speak Greek, do you?” the commander asked. ³⁸ “Then you are not that Egyptian fellow who some time ago started a revolution and led four thousand armed terrorists out into the desert?”

³⁹ Paul answered, “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of an important city. Please let me speak to the people.”

⁴⁰ The commander gave him permission, so Paul stood on the steps and motioned with his hand for the people to be silent. When they were quiet, Paul spoke to them in Hebrew:

ACTS 22

¹ “Brothers and fathers, listen to me as I make my defence before you!” ² When they heard him speaking to them in Hebrew, they became even quieter; and Paul went on:

³ “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up here in Jerusalem as a student of Gamaliel. I received strict instruction in the Law of our ancestors and was just as dedicated to God as are all of you who are here today. ⁴ I persecuted to the death the people who followed this Way. I arrested men and women and threw them into prison. ⁵ The High Priest and the whole Council can prove that I am telling the truth. I received from them letters written to fellow-Jews in Damascus, so I went there to arrest these people and bring them back in chains to Jerusalem to be punished.

Paul Tells of His Conversion (Acts 9.1-19; 26.12-18)

⁶ “As I was travelling and coming near Damascus, about midday a bright light from the sky flashed suddenly round me. ⁷ I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, “Saul, Saul! Why do you persecute me?” ⁸ “Who are you, Lord?” I asked. “I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you persecute,” he said to me. ⁹ The men with me saw the light, but did not hear the voice of the one who was speaking to me. ¹⁰ I asked, “What shall I do, Lord?” and the Lord said to me, “Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told everything that God has determined for you to do.” ¹¹ I was blind because of the bright light, and so my companions took me by the hand and led me into Damascus.

¹² “In that city was a man named Ananias, a religious man who obeyed our Law and was highly respected by all the Jews living there. ¹³ He came to me, stood by me, and said, ‘Brother Saul, see again!’ At that very moment I saw again and looked at him. ¹⁴ He said, ‘The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will, to see his righteous Servant, and to hear him speaking with his own voice. ¹⁵ For you will be a witness for him to tell everyone what you have seen and heard. ¹⁶ And now, why wait any longer? Get up and be baptized and have your sins washed away by praying to him.’

Paul's Call to Preach to the Gentiles

¹⁷ “I went back to Jerusalem, and while I was praying in the Temple, I had a vision, ¹⁸ in which I saw the Lord, as he said to me, ‘Hurry and leave Jerusalem quickly, because the people here will not accept your witness about me.’ ¹⁹ ‘Lord,’ I answered, ‘they know very well that I went to the synagogues and arrested and beat those who believe in you. ²⁰ And when your witness Stephen was put to death, I myself was there, approving of his murder and

taking care of the cloaks of his murderers.’ ²¹ ‘Go,’ the Lord said to me, ‘for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.’ ”

²² The people listened to Paul until he said this; but then they started shouting at the top of their voices, “Away with him! Kill him! He's not fit to live!” ²³ They were screaming, waving their clothes, and throwing dust up in the air. ²⁴ The Roman commander ordered his men to take Paul into the fort, and he told them to whip him in order to find out why the Jews were screaming like this against him. ²⁵ But when they had tied him up to be whipped, Paul said to the officer standing there, “Is it lawful for you to whip a Roman citizen who hasn't even been tried for any crime?”

²⁶ When the officer heard this, he went to the commander and asked him, “What are you doing? That man is a Roman citizen!”

²⁷ So the commander went to Paul and asked him, “Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?”

“Yes,” answered Paul.

²⁸ The commander said, “I became one by paying a large amount of money.”

“But I am one by birth,” Paul answered.

²⁹ At once the men who were going to question Paul drew back from him; and the commander was frightened when he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had put him in chains.

Paul before the Council

³⁰ The commander wanted to find out for certain what the Jews were accusing Paul of; so the next day he had Paul's chains taken off and ordered the chief priests and the whole Council to meet. Then he took Paul and made him stand before them.

ACTS 23

¹ Paul looked straight at the Council and said, “My fellow-Israelites! My conscience is perfectly clear about the way in which I have lived before God to this very day.” ² The High Priest Ananias ordered those who were standing close to Paul to strike him on the mouth. ³ Paul said to him, “God will certainly strike you—you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the Law, yet you break the Law by ordering them to strike me!”

⁴ The men close to Paul said to him, “You are insulting God's High Priest!”

⁵ Paul answered, “My fellow-Israelites, I did not know that he was the High Priest. The scripture says, ‘You must not speak evil of the ruler of your people.’ ”

⁶ When Paul saw that some of the group were Sadducees and the others were Pharisees, he called out in the Council, “Fellow-Israelites! I am a Pharisee, the son of Pharisees. I am on trial here because of the hope I have that the dead will rise to life!”

⁷ As soon as he said this, the Pharisees and Sadducees started to quarrel, and the group was divided. ⁸ (For the Sadducees say that people will not rise from death and that there are no angels or spirits; but the Pharisees believe in all three.) ⁹ The shouting became louder, and some of the teachers of the Law who belonged to the party of the Pharisees stood up and protested strongly: “We cannot find a thing wrong with this man! Perhaps a spirit or an angel really did speak to him!”

¹⁰ The argument became so violent that the commander was afraid that Paul would be torn to pieces. So he ordered his soldiers to go down into the group, get Paul away from them, and take him into the fort.

¹¹ That night the Lord stood by Paul and said, “Don't be afraid! You have given your witness for me here in Jerusalem, and you must also do the same in Rome.”

The Plot against Paul's Life

¹² The next morning some Jews met together and made a plan. They took a vow that they would not eat or drink anything until they had killed Paul. ¹³ There were more than forty who planned this together. ¹⁴ Then they went to the chief priests and elders and said, “We have taken a solemn vow together not to eat a thing until we have killed Paul. ¹⁵ Now then, you and the Council send word to the Roman commander to bring Paul down to you, pretending that you want to get more accurate information about him. But we will be ready to kill him before he ever gets here.”

¹⁶ But the son of Paul's sister heard about the plot; so he went to the fort and told Paul. ¹⁷ Then Paul called one of the officers and said to him, “Take this young man to the commander; he has something to tell him.” ¹⁸ The officer took him, led him to the

commander, and said, “The prisoner Paul called me and asked me to bring this young man to you, because he has something to say to you.”

¹⁹ The commander took him by the hand, led him off by himself, and asked him, “What have you got to tell me?”

²⁰ He said, “The Jewish authorities have agreed to ask you tomorrow to take Paul down to the Council, pretending that the Council wants to get more accurate information about him.

²¹ But don't listen to them, because there are more than forty men who will be hiding and waiting for him. They have taken a vow not to eat or drink until they have killed him. They are now ready to do it and are waiting for your decision.”

²² The commander said, “Don't tell anyone that you have reported this to me.” And he sent the young man away.

Paul Is Sent to Governor Felix

²³ Then the commander called two of his officers and said, “Get two hundred soldiers ready to go to Caesarea, together with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen, and be ready to leave by nine o'clock tonight. ²⁴ Provide some horses for Paul to ride and get him safely through to Governor Felix.” ²⁵ Then the commander wrote a letter that went like this:

²⁶ “Claudius Lysias to His Excellency, Governor Felix: Greetings. ²⁷ The Jews seized this man and were about to kill him. I learnt that he is a Roman citizen, so I went with my soldiers and rescued him. ²⁸ I wanted to know what they were accusing him of, so I took him down to their Council. ²⁹ I found out that he had not done anything for which he deserved to die or be put in prison; the accusation against him had to do with questions about their own law. ³⁰ And when I was informed that there was a plot against him, at once I decided to send him to you. I have told his accusers to make their charges against him before you.”

³¹ The soldiers carried out their orders. They got Paul and took him that night as far as Antipatris. ³² The next day the foot-soldiers returned to the fort and left the horsemen to go on with him. ³³ They took him to Caesarea, delivered the letter to the governor, and handed Paul over to him. ³⁴ The governor read the letter and asked Paul what province he was from. When he found out that he was from Cilicia, ³⁵ he said, “I will hear you when your accusers arrive.” Then he gave orders for Paul to be kept under guard in the governor's headquarters.

ACTS 24

Paul Is Accused by the Jews

¹ Five days later the High Priest Ananias went to Caesarea with some elders and a lawyer named Tertullus. They appeared before Felix and made their charges against Paul. ² Then Paul was called in, and Tertullus began to make his accusation, as follows:

“Your Excellency! Your wise leadership has brought us a long period of peace, and many necessary reforms are being made for the good of our country. ³ We welcome this everywhere and at all times, and we are deeply grateful to you. ⁴ I do not want to take up too much of your time, however, so I beg you to be kind and listen to our brief account. ⁵ We found this man to be a dangerous nuisance; he starts riots among Jews all over the world and is a leader of the party of the Nazarenes. ⁶ He also tried to defile the Temple, and we arrested him. ⁸ If you question this man, you yourself will be able to learn from him all the things that we are accusing him of.” ⁹ The Jews joined in the accusation and said that all this was true.

Paul's Defence before Felix

¹⁰ The governor then motioned to Paul to speak, and Paul said,

“I know that you have been a judge over this nation for many years, and so I am happy to defend myself before you. ¹¹ As you can find out for yourself, it was no more than twelve days ago that I went to Jerusalem to worship. ¹² The Jews did not find me arguing with anyone in the Temple, nor did they find me stirring up the people, either in the synagogues or anywhere else in the city. ¹³ Nor can they give you proof of the accusations they now bring against me. ¹⁴ I do admit this to you: I worship the God of our ancestors by following that Way which they say is false. But I also believe in everything written in the Law of Moses and the books of the prophets. ¹⁵ I have the same hope in God that these themselves have, namely, that all people, both the good and the bad, will rise from death. ¹⁶ And so I do my best always to have a clear conscience before God and man.

¹⁷ After being away from Jerusalem for several years, I went there to take some money to my own people and to offer sacrifices. ¹⁸ It was while I was doing this that they found me in the Temple after I had completed the ceremony of purification. There was no crowd with me and no disorder. ¹⁹ But some Jews from the province of Asia were there; they themselves ought to come before you and make their accusations if they have anything against me. ²⁰ Or let these men here tell what crime they found me guilty of when I stood before the Council—²¹ except for the one thing I called out when I stood before them: ‘I am being tried by you today for believing that the dead will rise to life.’”

²² Then Felix, who was well informed about the Way, brought the hearing to a close. “When the commander Lysias arrives,” he told them, “I will decide your case.” ²³ He ordered the officer in charge of Paul to keep him under guard, but to give him some freedom and allow his friends to provide for his needs.

Paul before Felix and Drusilla

²⁴ After some days Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he talked about faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁵ But as Paul went on discussing about goodness, self-control, and the coming Day of Judgment, Felix was afraid and said, “You may leave now. I will call you again when I get the chance.” ²⁶ At the same time he was hoping that Paul would give him some money; and for this reason he would often send for him and talk with him.

²⁷ After two years had passed, Porcius Festus succeeded Felix as governor. Felix wanted to gain favour with the Jews so he left Paul in prison.

ACTS 25

Paul Appeals to the Emperor

¹ Three days after Festus arrived in the province, he went from Caesarea to Jerusalem, ²where the chief priests and the Jewish leaders brought their charges against Paul. They begged Festus ³ to do them the favour of bringing Paul come to Jerusalem, for they had made a plot to kill him on the way. ⁴ Festus answered, “Paul is being kept a prisoner in Caesarea, and I myself will be going back there soon. ⁵ Let your leaders go to Caesarea with me and accuse the man if he has done anything wrong.”

⁶ Festus spent another eight or ten days with them and then went to Caesarea. On the next day he sat down in the court of judgment and ordered Paul to be brought in. ⁷ When Paul arrived, the Jews who had come from Jerusalem stood round him and started making many serious charges against him, which they were not able to prove. ⁸ But Paul defended himself: “I have done nothing wrong against the Law of the Jews or against the Temple or against the Roman Emperor.”

⁹ But Festus wanted to gain favour with the Jews, so he asked Paul, “Would you be willing to go to Jerusalem and be tried on these charges before me there?”

¹⁰ Paul said, “I am standing before the Emperor's own court of judgment, where I should be tried. I have done no wrong to the Jews, as you yourself well know. ¹¹ If I have broken the law and done something for which I deserve the death penalty, I do not ask to escape it. But if there is no truth in the charges they bring against me, no one can hand me over to them. I appeal to the Emperor.”

¹² Then Festus, after conferring with his advisers, answered, “You have appealed to the Emperor, so to the Emperor you will go.”

Paul before Agrippa and Bernice

¹³ Some time later King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea to pay a visit of welcome to Festus. ¹⁴ After they had been there several days, Festus explained Paul's situation to the king: “There is a man here who was left a prisoner by Felix; ¹⁵ and when I went to Jerusalem, the Jewish chief priests and elders brought charges against him and asked me to condemn him. ¹⁶ But I told them that we Romans are not in the habit of handing over any man accused of a crime before he has met his accusers face to face and has had the chance of defending himself against the accusation. ¹⁷ When they came here, then, I lost no time, but on the very next day I sat in the judgment court and ordered the man to be brought in. ¹⁸ His opponents stood up, but they did not accuse him of any of the evil crimes that I thought they would. ¹⁹ All they had were some arguments with him about their own religion and about a man named Jesus, who

has died; but Paul claims that he is alive.²⁰ I was undecided about how I could get information on these matters, so I asked Paul if he would be willing to go to Jerusalem and be tried there on these charges.²¹ But Paul appealed; he asked to be kept under guard and to let the Emperor decide his case. So I gave orders for him to be kept under guard until I could send him to the Emperor.”

²² Agrippa said to Festus, “I would like to hear this man myself.”

“You will hear him tomorrow,” Festus answered.

²³ The next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp and ceremony and entered the audience hall with the military chiefs and the leading men of the city. Festus gave the order, and Paul was brought in.²⁴ Festus said, “King Agrippa and all who are here with us: You see this man against whom all the Jewish people, both here and in Jerusalem, have brought complaints to me. They scream that he should not live any longer.²⁵ But I could not find that he had done anything for which he deserved the death sentence. And since he himself made an appeal to the Emperor, I have decided to send him.²⁶ But I have nothing definite about him to write to the Emperor. So I have brought him here before you—and especially before you, King Agrippa!—so that, after investigating his case, I may have something to write.²⁷ For it seems unreasonable to me to send a prisoner without clearly indicating the charges against him.”

ACTS 26

Paul Defends Himself before Agrippa

¹ Agrippa said to Paul, “You have permission to speak on your own behalf.” Paul stretched out his hand and defended himself as follows:

² “King Agrippa! I consider myself fortunate that today I am to defend myself before you from all the things the Jews accuse me of, ³ particularly since you know so well all the Jewish customs and disputes. I ask you, then, to listen to me with patience.

⁴ “All the Jews know how I have lived ever since I was young. They know how I have spent my whole life, at first in my own country and then in Jerusalem. ⁵ They have always known, if they are willing to testify, that from the very first I have lived as a member of the strictest party of our religion, the Pharisees. ⁶ And now I stand here to be tried because of the hope I have in the promise that God made to our ancestors— ⁷ the very thing that the twelve tribes of our people hope to receive, as they worship God day and night. And it is because of this hope, Your Majesty, that I am being accused by these Jews! ⁸ Why do you who are here find it impossible to believe that God raises the dead?

⁹ “I myself thought that I should do everything I could against the cause of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰ That is what I did in Jerusalem. I received authority from the chief priests and put many of God's people in prison; and when they were sentenced to death, I also voted against them. ¹¹ Many times I had them punished in the synagogues and tried to make them deny their faith. I was so furious with them that I even went to foreign cities to persecute them.

Paul Tells of His Conversion (Act 9.1-19' 22.6-16)

¹² “It was for this purpose that I went to Damascus with authority and orders from the chief priests. ¹³ It was on the road at midday, Your Majesty, that I saw a light much brighter than the sun, coming from the sky and shining round me and the men travelling with me. ¹⁴ All of us fell to the ground, and I heard a voice say to me in Hebrew, ‘Saul, Saul! Why are you persecuting me? You are hurting yourself by hitting back, like an ox kicking against its owner's stick.’ ¹⁵ ‘Who are you, Lord?’ I asked. And the Lord answered, ‘I am Jesus, whom you persecute. ¹⁶ But get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as my servant. You are to tell others what you have seen of me today and what I will show you in the future. ¹⁷ I will rescue you from the people of Israel and from the Gentiles to whom I will send you. ¹⁸ You are to open their eyes and turn them from the darkness to the light and from the power of Satan to God, so that through their faith in me they will have their sins forgiven and receive their place among God's chosen people.’

Paul Tells of His Work

¹⁹ “And so, King Agrippa, I did not disobey the vision I had from heaven. ²⁰ First in Damascus and in Jerusalem and then in all Judaea and among the Gentiles, I preached that they must repent of their sins and turn to God and do the things that would show they had repented. ²¹ It was for this reason that these Jews seized me while I was in the Temple, and they tried to kill me. ²² But to this very day I have been helped by God, and so I stand here giving my witness to all, to small and great alike. What I say is the very same thing which the prophets and Moses said was going to happen: ²³ that the Messiah must suffer and be the first one to rise from death, to announce the light of salvation to the Jews and to the Gentiles.”

²⁴ As Paul defended himself in this way, Festus shouted at him, “You are mad, Paul! Your great learning is driving you mad!”

²⁵ Paul answered, “I am not mad, Your Excellency! I am speaking the sober truth. ²⁶ King Agrippa! I can speak to you with all boldness, because you know about these things. I am sure that you have taken notice of every one of them, for this thing has not happened hidden away in a corner. ²⁷ King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you do!”

²⁸ Agrippa said to Paul, “In this short time do you think you will make me a Christian?”

²⁹ “Whether a short time or a long time,” Paul answered, “my prayer to God is that you and all the rest of you who are listening to me today might become what I am—except, of course, for these chains!”

³⁰ Then the king, the governor, Bernice, and all the others got up, ³¹ and after leaving they said to each other, “This man has not done anything for which he should die or be put in prison.” ³² And Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been released if he had not appealed to the Emperor.”

ACTS 27

Paul Sails for Rome

¹ When it was decided that we should sail to Italy, they handed Paul and some other prisoners over to Julius, an officer in the Roman regiment called “The Emperor's Regiment.”
² We went aboard a ship from Adramyttium, which was ready to leave for the seaports of the province of Asia, and we sailed away. Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica, was with us. ³ The next day we arrived at Sidon. Julius was kind to Paul and allowed him to go and see his friends, to be given what he needed. ⁴ We went on from there, and because the winds were blowing against us, we sailed on the sheltered side of the island of Cyprus. ⁵ We crossed over the sea off Cilicia and Pamphylia and came to Myra in Lycia. ⁶ There the officer found a ship from Alexandria that was going to sail for Italy, so he put us aboard.

⁷ We sailed slowly for several days and with great difficulty finally arrived off the town of Cnidus. The wind would not let us go any farther in that direction, so we sailed down the sheltered side of the island of Crete, passing by Cape Salmone. ⁸ We kept close to the coast and with great difficulty came to a place called Safe Harbours, not far from the town of Lasea. ⁹ We spent a long time there, until it became dangerous to continue the voyage, for by now the Day of Atonement was already past. So Paul gave them this advice: ¹⁰ “Men, I see that our voyage from here on will be dangerous; there will be great damage to the cargo and to the ship, and loss of life as well.” ¹¹ But the army officer was convinced by what the captain and the owner of the ship said, and not by what Paul said. ¹² The harbour was not a good one to spend the winter in; so most of the men were in favour of putting out to sea and trying to reach Phoenix, if possible, in order to spend the winter there. Phoenix is a harbour in Crete that faces south-west and north-west.

The Storm at Sea

¹³ A soft wind from the south began to blow, and the men thought that they could carry out their plan, so they pulled up the anchor and sailed as close as possible along the coast of Crete. ¹⁴ But soon a very strong wind—the one called “North-easter”—blew down from the island. ¹⁵ It hit the ship, and since it was impossible to keep the ship headed into the wind, we gave up trying and let it be carried along by the wind. ¹⁶ We got some shelter when we passed to the south of the little island of Cauda. There, with some difficulty we managed to make the ship's boat secure. ¹⁷ They pulled it aboard and then fastened some ropes tight round the ship. They were afraid that they might run into the sandbanks off the coast of Libya, so they lowered the sail and let the ship be carried by the wind. ¹⁸ The violent storm continued, so on the next day they began to throw some of the ship's cargo overboard, ¹⁹ and on the following

day they threw part of the ship's equipment overboard. ²⁰ For many days we could not see the sun or the stars, and the wind kept on blowing very hard. We finally gave up all hope of being saved.

²¹ After the men had gone a long time without food, Paul stood before them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me and not have sailed from Crete; then we would have avoided all this damage and loss. ²² But now I beg you, take heart! Not one of you will lose his life; only the ship will be lost. ²³ For last night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I worship came to me ²⁴ and said, 'Don't be afraid, Paul! You must stand before the Emperor. And God in his goodness to you has spared the lives of all those who are sailing with you.' ²⁵ So take heart, men! For I trust in God that it will be just as I was told. ²⁶ But we will be driven ashore on some island."

²⁷ It was the fourteenth night, and we were being driven about in the Mediterranean by the storm. About midnight the sailors suspected that we were getting close to land. ²⁸ So they dropped a line with a weight tied to it and found that the water was forty metres deep; a little later they did the same and found that it was thirty metres deep. ²⁹ They were afraid that the ship would go on the rocks, so they lowered four anchors from the back of the ship and prayed for daylight. ³⁰ Then the sailors tried to escape from the ship; they lowered the boat into the water and pretended that they were going to put out some anchors from the front of the ship. ³¹ But Paul said to the army officer and soldiers, "If the sailors don't stay on board, you have no hope of being saved." ³² So the soldiers cut the ropes that held the boat and let it go.

³³ Just before dawn, Paul begged them all to eat some food: "You have been waiting for fourteen days now, and all this time you have not eaten a thing. ³⁴ I beg you, then, eat some food; you need it in order to survive. Not even a hair of your heads will be lost." ³⁵ After saying this, Paul took some bread, gave thanks to God before them all, broke it, and began to eat. ³⁶ They took heart, and every one of them also ate some food. ³⁷ There was a total of 276 of us on board. ³⁸ After everyone had eaten enough, they lightened the ship by throwing all the wheat into the sea.

The Shipwreck

³⁹ When day came, the sailors did not recognize the coast, but they noticed a bay with a beach and decided that, if possible, they would run the ship aground there. ⁴⁰ So they cut off the anchors and let them sink in the sea, and at the same time they untied the ropes that held the steering oars. Then they raised the sail at the front of the ship so that the wind would blow the ship forward, and we headed for shore. ⁴¹ But the ship hit a sandbank and went aground;

the front part of the ship got stuck and could not move, while the back part was being broken to pieces by the violence of the waves.

⁴² The soldiers made a plan to kill all the prisoners, in order to keep them from swimming ashore and escaping. ⁴³ But the army officer wanted to save Paul, so he stopped them from doing this. Instead, he ordered all the men who could swim to jump overboard first and swim ashore; ⁴⁴ the rest were to follow, holding on to the planks or to some broken pieces of the ship. And this was how we all got safely ashore.

ACTS 28

In Malta

¹ When we were safely ashore, we learnt that the island was called Malta. ² The natives there were very friendly to us. It had started to rain and was cold, so they lit a fire and made us all welcome. ³ Paul gathered up a bundle of sticks and was putting them on the fire when a snake came out on account of the heat and fastened itself to his hand. ⁴ The natives saw the snake hanging on Paul's hand and said to one another, "This man must be a murderer, but Fate will not let him live, even though he escaped from the sea." ⁵ But Paul shook the snake off into the fire without being harmed at all. ⁶ They were waiting for him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead. But after waiting for a long time and not seeing anything unusual happening to him, they changed their minds and said, "He is a god!"

⁷ Not far from that place were some fields that belonged to Publius, the chief official of the island. He welcomed us kindly and for three days we were his guests. ⁸ Publius' father was in bed, sick with fever and dysentery. Paul went into his room, prayed, placed his hands on him, and healed him. ⁹ When this happened, all the other sick people on the island came and were healed. ¹⁰ They gave us many gifts, and when we sailed, they put on board what we needed for the voyage.

From Malta to Rome

¹¹ After three months we sailed away on a ship from Alexandria, called "The Twin Gods," which had spent the winter in the island. ¹² We arrived in the city of Syracuse and stayed there for three days. ¹³ From there we sailed on and arrived in the city of Rhegium. The next day a wind began to blow from the south, and in two days we came to the town of Puteoli. ¹⁴ We found some believers there who asked us to stay with them a week. And so we came to Rome. ¹⁵ The believers in Rome heard about us and came as far as the towns of Market of Appius and Three Inns to meet us. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and was greatly encouraged.

In Rome

¹⁶ When we arrived in Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself with a soldier guarding him.

¹⁷ After three days Paul called the local Jewish leaders to a meeting. When they had gathered, he said to them, "My fellow-Israelites, even though I did nothing against our people or the customs that we received from our ancestors, I was made a prisoner in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. ¹⁸ After questioning me, the Romans wanted to release me, because they found that I had done nothing for which I deserved to die. ¹⁹ But when the Jews

opposed this, I was forced to appeal to the Emperor, even though I had no accusation to make against my own people. ²⁰ That is why I asked to see you and talk with you. As a matter of fact, I am bound in chains like this for the sake of him for whom the people of Israel hope.”

²¹ They said to him, “We have not received any letters from Judaea about you, nor have any of our people come from there with any news or anything bad to say about you. ²² But we would like to hear your ideas, because we know that everywhere people speak against this party to which you belong.”

²³ So they fixed a date with Paul, and a large number of them came that day to the place where Paul was staying. From morning till night he explained to them his message about the Kingdom of God, and he tried to convince them about Jesus by quoting from the Law of Moses and the writings of the prophets. ²⁴ Some of them were convinced by his words, but others would not believe. ²⁵ So they left, disagreeing among themselves, after Paul had said this one thing: “How well the Holy Spirit spoke through the prophet Isaiah to your ancestors!

²⁶For he said,

‘Go and say to this people:

You will listen and listen, but not understand;

you will look and look, but not see,

²⁷ because this people's minds are dull,

and they have stopped up their ears

and closed their eyes.

Otherwise, their eyes would see,

their ears would hear,

their minds would understand,

and they would turn to me, says God,

and I would heal them.””

²⁸ And Paul concluded: “You are to know, then, that God's message of salvation has been sent to the Gentiles. They will listen!”

³⁰ For two years Paul lived in a place he rented for himself, and there he welcomed all who came to see him. ³¹ He preached about the Kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ, speaking with all boldness and freedom.

Good News Translation

Scripture taken from the Good News Translation in Today's English Version- Second Edition
Copyright © 1992 by American Bible Society. Used by Permission.

Powered by:
 BIBLESEARCH