

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

An EasyEnglish Bible Version and Commentary (2800 word vocabulary), by Marion Adams

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About the book of Acts

The writer of Acts

Most people agree that Luke wrote Acts. Luke also wrote the third *Gospel. In Acts, he told how the good news about Jesus *Christ spread. It spread to the world beyond *Jerusalem.

Luke was a *Gentile and he was a doctor (Colossians 4:14). He worked with Paul and he travelled with Paul (Philemon 1:24).

Luke was very careful about what he wrote. He knew that some things were true. And he wrote only those things. At the beginning of his *Gospel, he wrote this. 'You have heard many things. I am writing this account so that you will know the truth about them' (Luke 1:4). In Acts, he continued with this account.

Luke was travelling with Paul. Luke wrote about what happened during that time (Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16). In these verses, he used 'we' instead of 'they' or 'he'. So, we know that Luke was there at those times.

After Luke had arrived in *Jerusalem (Acts 21:17), he stayed in *Judea. He stayed there for two years. Then he left to travel to *Rome (Acts 27:1). He went to *Rome with Paul. While Luke was in *Judea, he probably spoke to other witnesses. They told him about the other events that he describes.

The purpose of the book of Acts

Luke had several reasons why he wrote Acts. People were telling false stories about *Christians. They were afraid that *Christians wanted to make trouble. Luke wanted the *Roman rulers to know that this was not true. *Christians helped other people to behave well. He wanted to show that to the rulers. It was good for the *Roman government.

Luke wrote about many *miracles. God gave to *Christians the power to cure people, for example. Also, God rescued Peter from prison by a *miracle. So, anyone who opposed the Christians was opposing God. He also wanted to show to the *Jews that the *Christian *faith was not a separate religion. Instead, it made *Judaism complete, because Jesus is the *Messiah.

However, Luke had one main reason why he wrote this book. The good news about Jesus had travelled from *Jerusalem to *Rome. Luke wanted to record how that happened. *Rome was the most important city in the world. Luke showed that the *gospel was for all people in every nation. It was for *Jews and it was also for *Gentiles.

Contents of Acts

We can divide Acts into 6 parts. Each part ends with a report that more people were joining the *church.

1. Acts 1:1-6:7

In the first part, Luke describes how the *church grew in *Jerusalem. This part ends like this: 'So, God's message spread. The *disciples in Jerusalem continued to increase quickly in number. And very many priests obeyed the *faith.'

2. Acts 6:8-9:31

From this part, we learn how the good news reached *Samaria because of Stephen's death. This part ends like this: 'Meanwhile, the *church all over *Judea, *Galilee and *Samaria enjoyed a peaceful period. The *Holy Spirit made the *church strong and he encouraged the *Christians. They respected the *Lord and more people joined the *church.'

3. Acts 9:32-12:24

In this part, the writer tells us how Paul met Jesus. This happened on the road to Damascus. Damascus is a city in Syria. We learn how the *gospel reached Antioch, the capital city in Syria. Also, we learn how Peter accepted Cornelius into the *church. Cornelius was a *Gentile. This part ends like this: 'God's message continued to grow and it continued to spread.'

4. Acts 12:25-16:5

In this part, Luke describes how the *gospel spread through more countries. It ends like this: 'So, the Christians became stronger in the *faith and more people joined the *churches daily.'

5. Acts 16:6-19:20

We learn from this part how the good news about Jesus reached Europe. Paul started a

new *church in Corinth, a city in Greece. He also started a new *church in Ephesus. Ephesus was a very important city. It was in the same country that is called Turkey today. It is near Greece. This part ends like this: 'In this manner, the *Lord's message continued to increase in power and it spread widely.'

6. Acts 19:21-28:31

In the final part, Luke tells us that Paul reached *Rome. When it ends, Paul is in prison. There, 'he *preached boldly about God's *kingdom. He taught the facts about the *Lord Jesus *Christ and nobody tried to stop him.'

When Luke wrote Acts

When the book ends, Paul is in *Rome. The *Romans had arrested him. Luke does not say what happened to Paul next. So, many students think that Luke completed Acts very soon after this. Also, he said nothing about Nero. Nero was an *Emperor. He killed many *Christians in *AD 64. Probably Luke had finished the book in *AD 62. But we do not know the exact date.

Chapter 1

Why Luke is writing this book, 1:1-3

*v1 Dear Theophilus, Jesus began to do many things and he began to teach many things. In my first book, I wrote about all those things. v2 He spoke to the *apostles that he had chosen. Then he went up to heaven. He told them what he wanted them to do. He did this by the *Holy Spirit's power. v3 After he had suffered, he showed himself to these men. He showed himself to them in many ways. This proved that he was alive. He appeared in front of them many times. This was during a period of 40 days. He talked to them about God's *kingdom.*

Verse 1 Luke referred to his *Gospel here as 'my first book'. Acts is the second book in the history that Luke wrote. He wrote both books for Theophilus. This *Greek name means 'someone who loves God'. Perhaps Luke was using it to mean any *Christian reader. But it is more likely that Theophilus was a real person. In Luke 1:3, Luke called him 'most

excellent'. Therefore, Theophilus might have been an important man that worked for the government.

Verse 2 Luke wrote that his *Gospel was about everything that Jesus began to do. And it was about everything that Jesus began to teach. After he had returned to his Father, Jesus continued to do things. And he continued to teach. Luke's second book describes these things. Jesus continued his work by his *Holy Spirit, by means of his *apostles. The *Greek word 'apostolos' means a person with a message. That person (an *apostle) had special authority from the person who had sent him. Therefore an *apostle could act for the person who sent him. So, the *apostles too would be leaders of *Christians, as Jesus was their leader. Jesus chose his 12 *disciples to be his *apostles.

Verse 3 The *disciples were sure that Jesus had overcome death. He had proved to them many times that he was still alive. His *resurrection had really happened. It was true. This was the most important part in their message.

Jesus continued to teach them about his favourite subject. This was God's *kingdom. God's *kingdom had come by means of Jesus' life, death and *resurrection.

God's promise that he would give the *Holy Spirit, 1:4-8

*v4 One time, while he was staying with them, he told them not to leave *Jerusalem. He said, 'You must wait for the gift that I told you about. My Father promised to give this gift. v5 As you know, John *baptised with water. But after a few days, you will receive *baptism with the *Holy Spirit.'*

Verse 4 Jesus was 'staying with them'. The *Greek word for this can also mean that he was 'eating with them'. Jesus was eating with his *disciples after his *resurrection. He also did this on other occasions after the *resurrection (Luke 24:30-31, 42-43). This was not because he needed food. It was to prove that he was real.

In his *Gospel, Luke recorded the Father's (God's) promise. The Father had promised

that power from above would come to the *disciples (Luke 24:49).

Verse 5 In this verse, Luke reminds us about John the *Baptist's words. John said this about Jesus: 'He will *baptise you with the *Holy Spirit and he will *baptise you with fire' (Luke 3:16).

v6 *So, when they were all together, they asked him this: '*Lord, will you now give back the *kingdom to *Israel?'* **v7** *He said to them, 'The Father has fixed these times and dates. They are under his control. You cannot know them. v8 But you will receive power when the *Holy Spirit comes upon you. You will be my witnesses in *Jerusalem. You will also be my witnesses in all *Judea and *Samaria and all over the earth.'*

Verse 6 The *Jews were proud that God had chosen them as his people. They wanted other nations to know that they (the *Jews) were important. But other nations had defeated them. The *Jews seemed weak and the *Romans ruled over them. The *Jews wanted God to prove that they were superior. They wanted him to give them power over all the other nations. So, the *disciples asked Jesus, '*Lord, will you now give back the *kingdom to *Israel?'

Verse 7 Jesus did not answer 'yes' or 'no' to the *disciples' question. Instead, he said that this information belonged to the Father only. He did not want them to think about political power. He wanted them to *preach the *gospel. He wanted them to concentrate on that.

Verse 8 The power that they would receive was not power over other people. Instead, it was power from heaven. This power would make them able to continue *Christ's work on earth.

'You will be my witnesses in *Jerusalem. You will also be my witnesses in all *Judea and *Samaria, and all over the earth.' A witness has seen something with his own eyes. Therefore, he knows that it is true. The *Greek word for 'witness' is 'martus'. It also means '*martyr' (a person who is willing to die for his or her beliefs). A witness must be willing to die for *Christ if this is necessary. In

verse 8, Luke tells us what the whole book is about. In the first 7 chapters, he describes how the good news spread in *Jerusalem. In Acts 8:11-11:18, he describes what happened in *Judea and *Samaria. In the last part, he describes how the *gospel spread through the *Gentile world.

Of course, the story did not end there. Today, *Christians must continue to tell people in every nation about Jesus. God wants everyone in the world to hear the good news.

Jesus returns to heaven, 1:9-11

v9 *After he said this, he returned to heaven. They watched as he went there. A cloud hid him, so then they could not see him. v10 While he went, they were staring up at the sky. Immediately, two men in white clothes stood next to them. v11 They said, 'Men from *Galilee, you should not stand here and you should not look at the sky. This Jesus has left you and he has gone up to heaven. But he will come again. He will come in the same way as you have seen him go.'*

Verse 9 Luke also described this event in his *Gospel (Luke 24:50-53). Jesus had showed his *disciples that he was alive. He had done this during a period of 40 days. At the end of that period, this event happened. The cloud contained God's *glory. The last time when the *disciples saw Jesus on earth, God's *glory surrounded him.

Verse 10 They were 'staring up at the sky'. Some students say that Jesus did not actually rise up to heaven. But Luke uses words like 'watched', 'see', 'staring', 'look' and 'seen'. With their own eyes, the *disciples saw everything that happened!

The 'two men in white clothes' were *angels with a message. Two men also appeared in front of the women in Luke 24:4. These men in Acts were like them. Luke wants us to consider them as witnesses. There had to be two witnesses that saw an event. (Two was the minimum number.) Only then, people would believe that the event had happened (Deuteronomy 19:15).

Verse 11 Jesus went from the earth in power. And he went with *glory. He will return to the earth in power. And he will return with

*glory. Nobody knows when that will be. Until then, the *Holy Spirit is here. Some people believe in Jesus and they trust in him. The *Holy Spirit lives in all those people. Our *Lord is alive and he is in heaven. We can talk to him. We can do this by means of the *Holy Spirit.

The *apostles together in *Jerusalem, 1:12-14

v12 Then the *apostles returned to *Jerusalem. They returned from the hill that was called the *Mount of *Olives. This is a *Sabbath day's walk away from the city. **v13** They entered the city. And they went up to the room where they were staying. Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, Matthew, James (Alphaeus's son), Simon the Zealot and Judas (James's son) were there. (A zealot was an enemy of the *Roman government.) **v14** They were always gathering to pray as a group. Certain women were with them. Also, Jesus' mother Mary and his brothers were there.

Verse 12 'The Mount of *Olives' was a hill where *olives grew. 'Mount' here means 'hill'. Olives were fruits that were important for food. People made oil from them. They used the oil to cook with. There were many olive trees on this hill.

'A *Sabbath day's walk' was the distance that *Jews could walk on the *Sabbath day. The *Sabbath is the day when *Jews rest. On that day, they must not walk further than 2000 cubits. (This is about a kilometre or two thirds of a mile.)

Verse 13 The *disciples had eaten the *Passover meal with Jesus in a room upstairs (Luke 22:7-13). This was probably the same room.

Here Luke names all the *disciples except Judas Iscariot. But he mentions only Peter, James and John again in Acts.

Verse 14 Luke shows that women were important. These women had travelled to *Jerusalem from *Galilee with Jesus and his *disciples (Luke 8:2-3, 23-55). Mary, Jesus' mother, was also there. This is the last time that anyone mentions her in the *New Testament. For the first time, Jesus' brothers were together with the *disciples. Jesus'

brother James became a leader in the *church in *Jerusalem (Acts 12:17; 15:13-21; 21:18).

Judas's death, 1:15-20

v15 At this time, Peter stood up and he spoke to the *believers. About 120 people were there. **v16** He said, 'Brothers, the things that the *Holy Spirit said about Judas have happened. The *Holy Spirit said these things by means of David's mouth. Judas led men to Jesus and they arrested Jesus. **v17** He was a *disciple with us and he worked with us.' **v18** (Judas received money for his wicked act. With this money, he bought a field. He fell down and he died there. His stomach burst open. And the parts that were there inside his body fell out. **v19** Everyone in *Jerusalem heard about this. So, they called the field 'Akeldama'. In their language, this means 'Field of Blood'.) **v20** Peter said, 'In the book called Psalms, the writer says, "Let his house become empty. Let nobody live in it" (Psalm 69:25). He also says, "Let someone else do his work" (Psalm 109:8).'

Verse 15 Luke records that there were about 120 *believers there. The *church began with only a few people. It is good for us to remember this. You may be the only *Christian in your family. Or you may be the only *Christian in the place where you work. There may be only a few *Christians in your country. But God will use you to spread the good news.

Verses 16 -17 Jesus had chosen 12 *disciples to work with him. The number 12 was important because there were 12 important families in *Israel. Now there were only 11 *disciples. So, they needed to replace Judas.

Verses 18-19 Peter did not speak the words in these two verses. Everyone in the room knew what Judas had done. Luke probably heard this story when he went to *Jerusalem in *AD 57. He tells it to us here.

'His wicked act' happened like this. Judas Iscariot went to the chief priests. They wanted to arrest Jesus. They gave Judas 30 pieces of silver and he led them to Jesus. He greeted Jesus with a kiss. In this way, he

showed the people whom to arrest. (Luke 22:3-6; 47-48).

In Matthew's *Gospel too, we can read about Judas's death. The details are not exactly the same as they are in Acts. But we can be sure that Judas killed himself (Matthew 27:1-10).

Verse 19 Here, 'their language' means the *Aramaic language.

Verse 20 Here, Peter began to speak again. He said some words from Psalm 69 and Psalm 109. The famous king David wrote these psalms. Peter had said that 'the *Holy Spirit said these things by means of David's mouth' (verse 16). David wrote them many hundreds (100s) of years before. But they are about Judas. In his *Gospel, Luke tells us that Jesus helped the *disciples to understand the *scriptures. He taught them these things after his *resurrection (Luke 24:25-27, 32, 45-49). They began to understand that the *Old Testament had many *prophecies about the *Messiah. Psalm 69 is about Jesus. We learn this from 5 verses in the *New Testament (John 2:17; John 15:25; Romans 11:9-10; and here, Acts 1:20).

A new *disciple, 1:21-26

v21-22 'So, then, we must choose someone. That man must be someone who saw the *Lord Jesus with us. It must be someone who was there from the beginning. He must have been at Jesus' *baptism. That man must have seen Jesus rise up to heaven. That man must have been with us all the time, between these two events. One such man must become a witness, with us, that Jesus has become alive again after death.' **v23** They decided to choose between two men. One man was Joseph, who was called Barsabbas. He was also called Justus. The other man was Matthias. **v24** Then they prayed, '*Lord, you know everything about everyone. Here are these two men. Show us which man you have chosen **v25** to serve as an *apostle. Judas would go to where he belongs. So, he has gone away from us.' **v26** Then they cast lots. (Look at the note below.) Matthias won. So, he too became an *apostle. Then there were 12 *apostles in total.

Verses 21-22 The 11 *disciples that remained had been very close to Jesus all the time. He had taught them when they were away from the crowds. They had helped him in his special work on earth. Also, they had seen him many times after his *resurrection. They had watched him leave the earth. And they had watched him go up to heaven. They wanted the new *disciple to be someone who had known Jesus like this. With them, he must tell everyone that Jesus had beaten death. So, he needed to have seen with his own eyes that Jesus was alive.

Verse 23 Barsabbas means 'son of the *Sabbath'. Maybe he was born on the *Sabbath day. Justus is a *Gentile name. Many *Jews had both a *Jewish name and a *Gentile name.

Eusebius lived from about *AD 260 to *AD 340. He was a writer, who wrote history. He said that the 70 *disciples in Luke 10:1 included Matthias and Barsabbas. But we do not really know that. Luke does not write about Matthias and Barsabbas again.

Verse 24 'Then they prayed'. The *disciples asked God to choose between Matthias and Barsabbas. God always knows what is best. Therefore, we should pray about everything that we do.

Verse 25 Judas chose to leave his life as a *disciple. Therefore, the place 'where he belongs' was not with the *disciples. And it was not with Jesus. It was with *Satan. God does not force us to do what he wants. God allows us to choose what we do.

Verse 26 'Then they cast lots.' This was the usual way for *Jews to make a choice. It was used many times in the *Old Testament.

When people 'cast lots', they wrote people's names on stones. They put the stones in a jar. Then they shook the jar until a stone fell out. The name on the stone was the person that they must choose. This was the last time when they cast lots in the *New Testament. After the *Holy Spirit came, the *disciples did not need to do this. Instead, the *Holy Spirit guided them.

Chapter 2

The *Holy Spirit comes at *Pentecost, 2:1-4

v1 On the day called *Pentecost, the *disciples were all together, in one place. **v2** Immediately, there was a sound from heaven. It seemed as if a very strong wind was blowing. It filled all the house where they were sitting. **v3** They saw tongues that seemed like fire. These tongues separated and they came to each *disciple. And the tongues stayed on them. **v4** The *Holy Spirit filled all the *disciples. Then, as the Spirit gave them power, they began to speak in different languages.

Verse 1 The day called *Pentecost was an important day for the *Jews. It came 50 days after the *Passover. Many *Jews had grown plants for food. Then on *Pentecost day, they gave the best ones to God. They also remembered how God had given the *Law to them. On this special *Pentecost, God gave the *Holy Spirit. Now, the *Holy Spirit lives in every *Christian. The *Holy Spirit helps us to obey God's rules. The *Holy Spirit helps us to do the things that God wants.

Verse 2 Everyone knew when the *Holy Spirit came. Luke says that it was 'as if a very strong wind was blowing'. In the Bible, writers often use the word 'wind' to describe the Spirit's power. (Look at Ezekiel 37:9-14, for example.)

Verse 3 First, they heard the *Holy Spirit. Next, they saw something. It was 'tongues that seemed like fire'. In the book called Exodus, we read that Moses saw a very special bush. We know that God was in the bush. We know it because the bush was burning all the time (Exodus 3:2-5). We can see that God was here in Acts too, because of the fire.

Verse 4 The words 'different languages' here can also be 'other tongues'. People do not always agree about what this means. The *disciples spoke in foreign languages. This was so that all the foreign visitors in *Jerusalem could understand them.

Some people think that Luke is describing the gift called 'tongues' (special languages). (We will explain this below.) Other people

disagree. They think that the *disciples spoke in foreign languages because this was a special day. There were many foreign visitors in *Jerusalem on that day. So, by means of those foreign languages, these visitors could understand the *disciples when they spoke about God.

Paul writes about the gift called 'tongues' in 1 Corinthians chapters 12 and 14. Many Christians believe that the *Holy Spirit still gives this gift to *Christians today. With it, people can speak in special languages. These are languages that they have not learnt. These languages may be human languages or *angels' languages (1 Corinthians 13:1). This gift is for prayer and it is for *prophecy. Usually, when people speak in 'tongues', they cannot understand that language. They cannot understand what they are saying. But sometimes the *Holy Spirit tells another person what the translation is.

*Jews from many nations hear about God, 2:5-13

v5 There were some *Jews who were staying in *Jerusalem. They were *holy men from every nation in the world. **v6** When they heard this noise, a large crowd gathered. They did not know what was happening. When each person heard the *believers, the *believers were speaking in his own language. **v7** They were very surprised. They tried to understand what was happening. They said, 'These men who are speaking like this are from *Galilee! **v8** So, when we all hear them, how can they be speaking in our own languages? **v9** We are from Parthia, Media and Elam. Other people are from Mesopotamia, *Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, **v10** Phrygia, Pamphylia and *Egypt. Some people are from areas in Libya. These areas are near Cyrene. Some people among us are from *Rome. These include *Jews. And they also include *Gentiles that have become *Jews. **v11** Some people among us are from Crete and Arabia. But we all hear the *disciples and they are speaking in our own languages. They are talking about the great things that God has done!' **v12** The

*visitors did not know what to think about it. They did not understand it. They were saying to each other, 'What does this mean?' v13 But some other people laughed at the *believers. They said, 'These people (the *believers) have drunk too much sweet wine.'*

Verse 5 'Every nation in the world' means every nation where there were *Jews. These *Jews had travelled to *Jerusalem because it was *Pentecost.

Verse 6 A large crowd came together because of the noise. The *believers came out into the street. Perhaps they were going to the *Temple.

Verses 7-8 People from *Galilee spoke in an unusual way. People from other places could not always understand them. But now, these *disciples from *Galilee were speaking in different languages. Everyone could understand what the *disciples were saying.

Verses 9-11 More *Jews lived in other countries than in *Judea. Their enemies had taken them there more than 500 years earlier. This list shows that many *Jews from many different nations were in *Jerusalem. They all heard about the wonderful things that God had done on this special *Pentecost day. They would go back to their countries and they would tell other people. The other people in the world were beginning to hear the good news about Jesus.

Verses 12-13 Luke says that they could not explain what was happening. He says it several times. But some people tried to explain things in their own way. They said that the *disciples had drunk too much wine. It is the same nowadays, too. When the *Holy Spirit comes with power, people do not always understand this event. They do not always understand what is happening.

God's day has come, 2:14-21

*v14 Then Peter stood up with the other 11 *apostles. He began to speak loudly to the crowd. 'Listen to me, men from *Judea. Listen, all you who are staying in *Jerusalem. Let me tell you what this means. v15 These people have not drunk too much wine, as you think. It is only 9*

*o'clock in the morning. v16 Instead, this is what the *prophet Joel spoke about.'*

Verse 14-16 Here Peter was full of the *Holy Spirit and he showed his authority. He denied that the *believers had drunk wine. It was too early in the day. He explained that the *prophet Joel had spoken about these events.

*v17 'God says, "In the last period I will send out my Spirit onto everyone. Your sons and daughters will speak God's message. Your young men will see pictures that I give to them. Your old men will have dreams. v18 Yes, I will send out my Spirit onto my servants, onto both men and women. And they will *prophesy. v19 I will show *miracles in the sky above. And I will show wonderful things on the earth below. There will be blood, fire and thick smoke. v20 Before the great and wonderful Day of the *Lord comes, the sun will become dark. The moon will become red like blood. v21 Then, the *Lord will *save whoever calls to him for help."'*

Verses 17-18 Peter spoke verses from the book called Joel (Joel 2:28-32). They describe the Day of the *Lord. For *Jews, this meant the day when God would change the world. They believed that God would give power to *Israel then. (Look at the note about Acts 1:6.) It would also be a day when God would bring terrible judgement. The *Jews divided time into two ages. 'The Present Age' was completely evil. There was also the 'Age that would Come'. This was the time when God would rule over all. The Day of the *Lord separated the two ages. These strange events at *Pentecost happened because God was sending his *Holy Spirit to people. The *Greek word for 'send out' here also means 'pour out'. This was the beginning of the 'last period' before Jesus returns. 'Last period' can also mean 'last days' in *Greek.

Verses 19-20 A few weeks earlier, people in *Jerusalem had seen that the sun became dark. This had happened in the afternoon when Jesus died on the *cross. Maybe the moon had also appeared to be red in the dark sky. Or perhaps these events may still happen in the future.

Verse 21 People cannot save themselves from God's judgement. But God will *save anyone who calls to him. But the person must really want God to help him or her.

Jesus is *Lord and *Christ, 2:22-36

v22 *'Listen, men in *Israel. I am speaking about Jesus, who was from *Nazareth. This man proved that his authority came from God. The proof was this. It was the fact that God did all those *miracles and wonderful things by means of him. You know this. This happened while he was here with you. v23 You had this man in your power. But this was only because God had already decided this. It was in his plan. You killed this man, and bad men helped you to do it. They put him on a *cross. v24 But God freed him from death's power. It was impossible for him to remain dead.'*

Verses 22-23 Even today, many people think that Jesus should not have died on the *cross. They think that it was not in God's plan. But Peter said here that Jesus' death on the *cross was not a mistake. It was the most important part in God's plan! Jesus died to save us. He wanted to save us from the results that come from our *sin. However, the people who killed Jesus were guilty. They did not have to kill him. They chose to kill him. They had proof that God had sent him. But although this was true, they still killed him.

Verse 24 People decided that Jesus must die. That was their judgement about him. But God's judgement was that he should not remain in death's power. Jesus' death was in God's plan. But his *resurrection was also in God's plan.

v25 *'David said about him, "Always, I saw the *Lord in front of me. He is next to me, so I will not be anxious. v26 Therefore I feel happy and I speak happy words. I shall live with hope, v27 because you will not leave me in the grave. You will not let death destroy your *Holy One's body in the grave. v28 You have shown to me the paths that lead to life. I am full of joy when I am with you." v29 Brothers, I tell you this with confidence. David was the*

*head of a famous family. He died and they buried him. His grave is still here. v30 He was a *prophet. He knew what God had promised to him. God had made a serious promise about what he would do in the future. God would make someone from David's family into a king. v31 David saw what God would do. So, David was speaking about *Christ's *resurrection. God did not leave Jesus in the grave and death did not destroy his body. v32 Jesus is the person whom God has raised up from death. We are all witnesses to this fact.'*

Verses 25-28 These words are from Psalm 16:8-11. Peter wanted the people to understand that this *prophecy is about Jesus.

Verse 29 The *prophecy cannot be about David, because David died. His grave was in a famous place near *Jerusalem.

Verse 30 *Jews knew that the *Messiah would be a 'son of David'. This did not mean that David would be his father. David had lived many hundreds (100s) of years earlier. But it meant that David would be his *ancestor. God had told this to David.

Verse 31 David was a *prophet. In his psalm, he was talking about *Christ's *resurrection. He saw that Jesus did not remain dead. Nor did Jesus' body go bad.

Verse 32 'We are all witnesses to this fact.' Many people saw Jesus after his *resurrection. Peter wanted everyone to know this.

v33 *'God has raised Jesus, so that Jesus is sitting at God's right side. Jesus has received the *Holy Spirit from the Father, as the Father had promised. That is what you are now seeing. And you are now hearing it! v34 David did not go up to heaven. But certainly he said, "The *Lord said to my *Lord, sit at my right side. v35 Sit there until I put your enemies under your feet." v36 All the people in *Israel can be sure about this: You killed this Jesus on a *cross. But God has made him both *Lord and *Christ.'*

Verse 33 Forty (40) days after Jesus became alive again, he went to heaven. He is sitting at God's right side.

Verses 34-35 Peter used another proof from the *scriptures. This showed that Peter was speaking the truth. The proof is Psalm 110:1. Jesus had already said that this verse was about himself (Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44). Jesus had said that this would happen. He had said, "Now the Son of Man will sit down and he will continue to sit. He will sit at the right side of the great and powerful God" (Luke 22:69). *Jews believed that the word '*Lord' here meant God and 'my *Lord' referred to the *Messiah. Certainly, it did not mean David. David did not go straight up to heaven to sit next to God. Jesus is the *Messiah. He rules over everything in heaven and on earth.

Verse 36 Here, Peter did not call Jesus '*Lord' to be polite. In the *Greek Bible, '*Lord' is the name that *Israel's people gave to their God. This was the most important part in Peter's message. Jesus is *Lord. He rules over all things.

3000 new *believers! 2:37-41

v37 *The people were very worried when they heard this. 'Brothers, what shall we do?' they asked Peter and the other *apostles. v38 Peter answered, 'You must be sorry for the wrong things that you have done. Choose to do good things instead of evil things. You must each receive *baptism in the name of Jesus *Christ. This is so that God will forgive your *sins. Then you will receive God's gift. This gift is the *Holy Spirit. v39 This promise is for you and it is for your children. It is also for all those who are far away. It is for everyone whom the *Lord our God will call to come to him.'*

v40 *Peter said much more. He warned them. And he tried very hard to persuade them. He said, 'Save yourselves from the punishment that is coming to these wicked people!'* **v41** *Many people believed his message and they received *baptism. About 3000 people came to be with them on that day.*

Verse 37 The people knew that they had killed Jesus. So, they were very sad. He was their *Messiah. He was the only person who could save them. Only he could save them from the results that came from their *sins. They felt very guilty. And they wanted to know what they should do.

Verse 38 Peter told them that they must recognise Jesus as the *Messiah. *Baptism would be difficult for them. But it would show that now they had genuine *faith in Jesus.

'In the name of Jesus *Christ' meant that they believed in his authority. They trusted him to *save them. And they accepted him as their *Lord. If they did this, they would receive two gifts. God would forgive them for the things that they had done wrong. This was the first gift. The *Holy Spirit would come and he would live in them. The Spirit would make them into new people. This was the second gift.

Verse 39 'This promise' means the gift that God has promised. This gift is the *Holy Spirit. It is for everyone. It was not just for the *disciples at *Pentecost.

'All those who are far away' means *Jews in different countries and *Gentiles also.

'Everyone whom the *Lord our God will call to come to him' actually meant everyone. It included people who were not born yet. Of course, this includes people who are living now. When God calls us, he wants to give us these gifts too.

Verse 40 A person can begin to believe in Jesus. And he or she can begin to trust in him. When a person does this, it must not be a secret. Some groups of people do wicked things. So, the person must not belong to such a group. To show that the person has changed, he or she must come to be with other *believers.

Verse 41 The group of *believers in *Jerusalem increased. They increased from 120 people to over 3000 people. They became the first *Christian *church.

The first *church, 2:42-47

v42 *The *believers learnt from the *apostles all the time. They met together with other *believers. They broke up bread together and they prayed together.*

v43 *The *apostles did many *miracles and they did wonderful things. Everyone felt both excitement and fear. v44 All the *believers were together. And they shared all that they had. v45 They sold the things that belonged to them. And they shared the money. They shared everything when they sold things. So, everyone had what they needed. v46 Every day, they met as a group in the *Temple. They broke up bread. (Look at the note.) And they shared it together in their homes. When they ate together, they were happy and generous. v47 They *praised God always. Everyone liked them. And every day, the *Lord added people to their group. Those people were people who had found *salvation.*

In verses 42-47, Luke describes the people in the first *church. He describes what their daily life was like. *Christians today can learn much from what he writes.

Verse 42 The *apostles continued to teach the new *believers. As *Christians, we must continue to learn about our *faith always. We have the *Holy Spirit to teach us. But we must also listen to wise human teachers. It is also very important to have regular meetings with other *Christians.

'They broke up bread'. *Jews did this before they ate a meal. *Jewish people did not cut their bread. They broke it into pieces and then they shared it. On the night before Jesus died, he ate a meal with his *disciples. He broke up the bread and he gave it to them. He said, 'Take this and eat it. This is my body.' Then he gave to them a cup of wine. He said, 'This is my blood in the new *covenant. It is poured out for many people.' So, to break up bread has a special meaning for *Christians.

'And they prayed together.' The first *Christians always prayed before they did anything. They spoke to God about everything. They asked him to help them. And they asked him to guide them.

Verse 43 *Miracles happened in the first *church. *Miracles still happen now. When people expect God to do wonderful things, he will do wonderful things.

'Everyone felt both excitement and fear.' In the *Old Testament, writers often used the words 'the fear of the *Lord'. This does not mean that people were afraid of God. (The reason for such fear would be because he might hurt them.) 'The fear of the *Lord' meant that people respected God. They respected him because he is good, powerful and *holy.

Verses 44-45 'They sold the things that belonged to them.' These things were land and possessions. The *Christians showed that they were taking care of each other. So, no *Christian was rich and no *Christian was poor. Each person had what he or she needed.

Verse 46 The first *Christians met together every day. It is very important for us now to meet often with other *believers. They met in a public place to *worship God. They also met in their homes as friends. The people who were richer provided a meal for the poorer people. They ate together. They broke up the bread and they *worshipped God.

Verse 47 The first *Christians were kind and generous. They were happy and they showed God's love in their daily lives. People wanted to come to be with them.

Chapter 3

Peter cures a man who cannot walk, 3:1-10

v1 *One day, Peter and John were going to the *Temple to pray. This was at three o'clock in the afternoon. v2 People were carrying a man. He had never been able to walk. Every day, they put him down by the gate of the *Temple. This gate was called the Beautiful Gate. He asked people for money as they went in. v3 He saw Peter and John when they were going in. Then he asked them to give money to him. v4 Peter looked straight at him. John looked at him also. Then Peter said, 'Look at us!' v5 So, the man looked at them. He expected to get something from them. v6 But Peter said, 'I do not have any money. But I give to you what I have. I am speaking to you in the name of Jesus *Christ from *Nazareth. And I say to you, walk!' v7 Then he held the man's right hand and he pulled him up. Immediately*

*the man's feet and ankles became strong. v8 He jumped up and he stood on his feet. He began to walk. Then he went into the *Temple with them. He was walking and he was jumping. And he was *praising God. v9 The people there saw him when he was walking. And they saw him when he was *praising God.*

v10 They recognised him as the man who sat at the Beautiful Gate. They were all surprised. And they were very excited because of what had happened to him.

Verse 1 The *apostles did many *miracles (2:43). Here, Luke describes one *miracle that they did. Many people saw this *miracle.

The *apostles had a new *faith. But they remained loyal *Jews. So, they went to pray together in the *Temple with other *Jews. There were three special times when they prayed together. They prayed in the morning and they prayed at noon. And they also prayed in the afternoon.

Verse 2 Poor and sick people often waited at the entrance to a holy place. They asked for money there. This was a custom. Perhaps people might be more generous when they were going to *worship God.

The Beautiful Gate was one gate of the *Temple. The *Temple probably had 9 gates in total. Josephus, who was a writer in the first century, describes a beautiful bronze gate in the *Temple. (Bronze is a metal that shines.) Perhaps this was the Beautiful Gate.

Verse 3 Peter was with John. This was probably the John who was Zebedee's son (Luke 5:10).

Verses 4-6 Peter stared at the man. Peter told him to look at them. The man thought that they would give money to him. But Peter gave to him something much better. Peter cured him 'in the name of Jesus *Christ'. This meant that he cured the man by *Christ's power and authority.

Verse 7-8 Peter did not just watch the man. He helped the man to stand up. Peter had seen Jesus when Jesus held the hand of Jairus's daughter (Luke 8:54). Like Jesus, Peter wanted to show that he cared. Peter wanted to encourage the man to walk by *faith.

'Immediately the man's feet and ankles became strong.' The man had never been able to walk. His legs were probably very weak. But they became strong immediately. Luke was a doctor. He carefully described everything that happened. The man walked and he jumped. This was a real *miracle.

Verses 9-10 Again, Luke wrote that the man was walking. He wanted to emphasise that the man's feet and legs were working for the first time ever. People recognised him as the man who had never been able to walk. They could not understand how he was able to walk at that time. They thought that this was impossible. But nothing is impossible for God.

Peter speaks to the *Jews in the *Temple, 3:11-26

*v11 While the beggar held on to Peter and John, all the people ran to them. (A beggar is a poor person that asks people for money.) The people ran to the place called Solomon's *Porch. This *miracle had astonished them. v12 When Peter saw them, he said this to them: 'Men from *Israel, this should not surprise you. Do not stare at us. You should not think that we have made this man walk by our own power or goodness! v13 The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, our fathers' God, has *glorified Jesus, who is his servant. But you took him to those who have authority. You *rejected him in front of Pilate. This was when Pilate had decided to let him go. v14 Yes, he was *holy and good. But you *rejected him. There was a man who had murdered someone. You asked Pilate to let that man go free. v15 And you killed the person who gives life. But God made him alive again. We are witnesses that this is true. v16 You see this man here and you know him. He became strong by *faith in Jesus' authority. This *faith in Jesus has made the man completely well. You can all see that.'*

Verse 11 Solomon's *Porch was like a long path with a wooden roof. It was on the east side of the *Temple. Jesus had walked there and he had taught there (John 10:23).

Verse 12 The people were staring at Peter and John. They thought that Peter and John had cured the man. But Peter gave all the *glory to God. God may use us to help someone. But we must remember to give all the *glory to God.

Verses 13-15 Peter used the words 'The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob'. These are the same words that God used in Exodus 3:6, 15. This was when God introduced himself to Moses. The *miracle here in Acts had happened because God had *glorified Jesus. Jesus was in a special place in heaven. He had given power to his *disciples to act in his name. When Jesus was on earth, he had done *miracles. Now the *disciples had his authority to do *miracles like those.

Peter wanted to convince the *Jews that Jesus was their *Messiah. So, he used language from the book called Isaiah in the *Old Testament. It was from a part where the writer describes the *Lord. He describes him as a Servant who suffers (Isaiah 52:13-53:12). Like Isaiah, Peter said first that God had *glorified his Servant (Jesus). Then Peter talked about how the Servant had suffered. He blamed the people for this. They were responsible. Pilate (a *Roman ruler) had wanted to free Jesus. But the people had asked for Barabbas instead. They had wanted Jesus to die. Jesus was their *Saviour. He was completely good. But they had not wanted him to live. They had chosen a criminal instead.

The *Jews had not expected the *Messiah to die like a criminal. But Peter was saying that Jesus was innocent. God had known already how Jesus would die. The *prophet Isaiah had described it all when he wrote about the Servant. This was the Servant who suffered. (See Isaiah chapters 42, 49, 50, 52 and 53.) The Servant who suffered was Jesus, the *Messiah. God had proved this. He had made Jesus alive again after he had died. Peter and the *apostles knew that this was true. They knew because they had seen it.

Verse 16 Everyone could see that the man's legs were now strong. The man had not been able to walk. But Peter had told the man to walk by Jesus' authority. And the man had done this. *Christ's power had made the man strong because of the man's *faith. Jesus was

the Servant that God had *glorified. This was evidence that they could all see.

v17 'Now, brothers, you and your leaders did not realise what you were doing. I know this. **v18** But many years ago, God had said that his *Christ would suffer. He had said it by the words that his *prophets spoke. These words were true and these things have happened. **v19** Now you must *repent. Ask God for help, so that he will forgive your *sins. If you do it, this will happen: The *Lord will give to you times when you have *spiritual strength. **v20** And he will send Jesus. Jesus is the *Messiah whom he has already chosen for you. **v21** Jesus must remain in heaven until a certain time. Then God will put all things back as they should be. He promised this by his *holy *prophets many years ago. **v22** Moses said, "The *Lord your God will send a *prophet to you. He will be a *prophet like me. He will be someone from among your own people. You must listen to him. Do everything that he tells you. **v23** Every person who does not listen to that *prophet must leave God's people for always." **v24** All the *prophets since Samuel have talked about what has happened now. **v25** You are the sons of the *prophets. And you share in the *covenant that God made with your fathers. As he said to Abraham, "I shall *bless all the people on earth. I shall *bless them by means of your children." **v26** God chose his Servant and he sent him to you first. He sent him to *bless you. He will *bless you like this: You will not behave wickedly because he will stop you.'

Verses 17-18 The people in *Jerusalem had killed their *Messiah. But they had not known that he was their *Messiah. Even their rulers had not realised this. They had not expected that their *Messiah would suffer. Jesus' death on a *cross was one part in God's purpose. Peter needed to convince them about this. Isaiah spoke about God's Servant who suffered. The *Old Testament also contains the stories about men like Joseph (Jacob's

son) and Elijah. These are examples of God's servants who suffered. So, it should not surprise the people that the *Messiah should suffer too.

Verses 19-21 They knew that they had done a terrible thing. They did not have an excuse. God wanted to forgive them. But first, they had to *repent.

To *repent means to be sorry. It means that we apologise to God. We apologise for the bad things that we have done. And we decide not to do any more bad things. We do what God wants. We change how we think and we change how we live.

Peter said that if the *Jews *repented, three good things would happen.

1. God would forgive their *sins (verse 19). The *Greek word here for 'forgive' means that God will 'wipe off' their *sins. William Barclay explains this. (He was a writer in the 20th century.) He says that people a very long time ago wrote on papyrus (a special paper). Their ink was not the same as modern ink. With a wet cloth, they could wipe off what they had written. It is like this when God forgives our *sins. He 'wipes them off'. They have gone completely.

2. The *Lord will give to you times when you have *spiritual strength (verse 19). God would not just take away their *sins. He would give rest to their *spirits. And he would give relief to them.

3. He would send Jesus. Jesus was the *Messiah that God had already chosen for them (verse 20). Jesus will forgive them and he will give them strength. But he 'must remain in heaven until a certain time. Then God will put all things back as they should be' (verse 21). *Christ would return. Then God would do wonderful things (Romans 8:19-21; Isaiah 11:6-9).

Verses 22-23 Moses was the first *prophet for the *Israelites. He was a very great *prophet. The words here are from Deuteronomy 18:15. People believed that these verses were a *prophecy about one particular *prophet. This *prophet would be like Moses. He would be like a bridge between God and the people. He would tell the people what God was saying. And he would tell God what the people wanted to say.

Verse 24 Samuel was the *prophet who *anointed David as king. To *anoint means to mark a person with oil. And this shows that God has chosen that person. God made promises to David about a new *kingdom. These promises became true when Jesus came. Many things that the other *prophets had said about God's *kingdom happened, too.

Verses 25-26 Peter called the *Jews the 'sons of the *prophets'. He meant that God's promises belonged to them too. Abraham's 'children' meant the *Jews. Jesus, the Servant who came to *save all the people on earth, was a *Jew. He had gone to the *Jews first but they had *rejected him. God was giving a second chance to them. They had to accept Jesus as their *Saviour. Otherwise they would not share in the *blessing that God had promised.

Chapter 4

The *Jewish leaders arrest Peter and John, 4:1-4

*v1 Peter and John were speaking to the people. As they spoke, the priests, the captain of the *Temple guard and some *Sadducees arrived. v2 They were angry. Peter and John were teaching the people that Jesus had become alive again. This proved that dead people will become alive again. v3 So, they arrested Peter and John. They put them in prison until the next day. This was because it was already evening. v4 But many people who heard the message believed. The men grew in number to about 5000.*

Verses 1-2 The *Temple guard were like the police. Their captain's job was to stop people, if those people were making trouble in the *Temple. The *Temple guard came because a large crowd had gathered. The crowd had gathered to listen to Peter and John. The *Sadducees came because Peter and John were speaking to the people. And they wanted to stop Peter and John. They had two important reasons for this.

1. The *Sadducees did not believe that dead people could become alive again. This was what Peter and John were talking about.

2. The *Sadducees were chief priests. These people were rich and important. That was because they helped the *Roman rulers. The *Sadducees wanted to keep their power. So, they needed to stay friendly with the *Romans. They did not want any trouble in a public place. They wanted to keep their jobs more than they wanted to hear the truth.

Verses 3-4 Peter and John were speaking, but those other men stopped them. And they put Peter and John in prison. But they could not stop the good news about Jesus. Luke says that 'the men grew in number to about 5000'. This number does not include the women and children!

Peter speaks to the *Sanhedrin, 4:5-12

v5 The next day, the *Jewish rulers and leaders met in *Jerusalem. And the teachers who taught people about the *Law met with them. **v6** Annas, the *high priest, was there. So, were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and the other men in the *high priest's family. **v7** They made Peter and John stand in front of them. Then they asked, 'How did you do this? What power do you have? Or whose authority do you use?'

v8 Peter, by the *Holy Spirit, answered, 'Rulers and leaders of the people, **v9** we did a kind act to a man who could not walk. Probably you are asking us about this. Probably you are asking us how he got well. **v10** If you are, then you and all the people in *Israel should know this. We did it by Jesus' authority. That is, Jesus *Christ from *Nazareth. You killed him on a *cross. But God made him alive again. This man stands in front of you and he is completely well. This is because of Jesus' power. **v11** In the *scriptures, we read that Jesus is like a stone. He is like "the stone that you builders threw away. This stone has now become the most important stone" (Psalm 118:22). **v12** You can have *salvation by him only. God has not given to us anyone else who can *save us. Nobody else in the whole world can do it.'

Verses 5-6 The most important *Jewish rulers met in *Jerusalem. Together, the *high priest and 70 other men formed the *Sanhedrin. The men in the *Sanhedrin had to decide whether a person was guilty of a crime. People from the Sanhedrin had sent Jesus to die. Both Annas and Caiaphas had been at the courts then (John 18:12-14, 24). Here, the men in the *Sanhedrin met to decide whether Peter and John should have a punishment.

Verse 7 Peter and John stood in front of the most clever and powerful men in the country. This was a very serious matter. The men in the *Sanhedrin knew that a *miracle had happened. They wanted to know how Peter and John had done it.

Verse 8 Jesus had made a promise to *believers. He had said that they must not worry when important people asked them about Jesus. They would know what to say. So, they need not worry (Luke 21:14-15). The *Holy Spirit would help them. This is true today, too. Today we talk about our *faith in Jesus. And we must not worry when we talk about it. The *Holy Spirit will help us, too.

The *Holy Spirit helped Peter when he spoke to the rulers. He was bold. And his words were wise and true.

Verses 9-10 Peter reminded them that they should be happy. A sick man was completely well. Everyone could see him. He was standing in front of them. That *miracle was 'a kind act'. But Peter and John had not cured the man by themselves. They had done it 'by Jesus' authority. That is, Jesus *Christ from *Nazareth.' Jesus had cured the man.

Peter said, 'You killed him on a *cross' (verse 10). Peter was speaking to the men who really were responsible for Jesus' death. Caiaphas was there. He had sent Jesus to Pontius Pilate, the *Roman ruler. Caiaphas had wanted the *Romans to kill Jesus.

'But God made him alive again' (verse 10). The people had done bad things to Jesus. They had killed him. God had shown to them that they were very wrong. He had made Jesus alive again.

Verse 11 Peter used the word 'stone' to describe Jesus. The 'builders' were like *Israel's rulers. They did not think that Jesus was important. So, they had *rejected him.

But he was 'the most important stone'. He was the *Messiah. Now he sits next to God and he has the most important position in heaven.

Verse 12 The *Romans and the *Greeks had many gods. The *Jews had their *Law. But these could not *save people. Today, there are many other religions. But there is still only one *Saviour. Only Jesus can save us from the results of our *sin. If we believe him, we have *salvation.

The men in the *Sanhedrin warn Peter and John, 4:13-22

v13 *The men in the *Sanhedrin knew that Peter and John were simple men. Peter and John had never gone to school. So, the men in the *Sanhedrin were completely surprised. They saw how bold the *apostles were. That is why they were surprised. They realised then that Peter and John had been with Jesus. v14* *But there was nothing that they could say. The man that Peter and John had cured was standing with them. v15* *So, they told Peter and John to leave the court. Then the members in the *Sanhedrin talked together.*

v16 *'What shall we do with these men?' they asked. 'All inhabitants in *Jerusalem know that they have done an extraordinary *miracle. We cannot say that it did not happen. v17* *We must stop this matter so that it will not spread any further among the people. So, we must warn these men. They must never speak to anyone again with Jesus' authority.'*

v18 *So, they called them to come in again. Then they ordered them never to speak with Jesus' authority. Neither should they ever teach with his authority.*

v19 *But Peter and John replied, 'You must decide what God considers as right. It is right to obey God, rather than to obey you. v20* *We cannot stop talking about what we have seen. And we cannot stop talking about what we have heard.'* **v21**

*So, the men in the *Sanhedrin warned them again. Then they let them go. The men in the *Sanhedrin saw that it was*

impossible to punish Peter and John. Everybody was praising God because of what had happened. v22 *The man who could walk because of this *miracle was more than 40 years old.*

Verse 13 Before Peter and John met Jesus, they were fishermen. (Fishermen are people whose job is to catch fish.) The members in the *Sanhedrin had gone to special schools. There, '*rabbis' (special teachers) had taught them everything about the *Jewish religion and Moses' *Law. They thought that they were cleverer than Peter and John. So, they were very surprised. Peter and John were very confident when they answered the *Sanhedrin's question. Peter and John even explained the *scriptures. Usually, only *rabbis did this.

Then the men in the *Sanhedrin remembered that Jesus had taught Peter and John. Jesus had not gone to a special school either (John 7:15). But everyone had listened to him. He had explained the *scriptures too. It does not matter to God whether we have gone to school or not. It does not matter to God whether we are clever or not. What does matter is that we obey God. He will show his power by means of us, if we let him do it.

Verse 14 People could see that Peter's words about Jesus were true. The man who could now walk was standing in the court. He was the proof.

Verse 15 The men in the *Sanhedrin told Peter and John to leave the room. They wanted to talk privately about what to do. Some students have asked this question. How did Luke know what they said? Perhaps Paul was there. Or maybe Gamaliel, who was Paul's teacher, was there. Perhaps Gamaliel told Paul what happened.

Verse 16 The man who was standing in court had never been able to walk. Everyone in *Jerusalem knew that. But he was walking! A *miracle had happened. The men in the *Sanhedrin could not argue about this.

Verses 17-18 Peter and John had not said anything wrong. Nor had they done anything wrong. The men in the *Sanhedrin knew this. They could not keep Peter and John in prison. But they did not want the *apostles to tell everyone that Jesus was alive. And they did

not want the people to see the power that there was in Jesus' name. So, they decided to warn Peter and John that they must not speak in Jesus' name. Nor must they teach in his name. If they did this, bad things would happen to them.

Verses 19-20 Peter and John had to do what God wanted. Jesus had told them to go to people everywhere. And he had told them to make people into his *disciples (Matthew 28:19). Anyway, they could not stop talking about what they had seen. And they could not stop talking about what they had heard.

It is the same for *Christians now. We know that the *Lord Jesus is alive. We know him as our friend and our *Saviour. We must share the good news, so that other people can know him too. We must not be afraid of what people might say about us.

Verses 21-22 The people in the court were *praising God because he had done a wonderful thing. The man was more than 40 years old. Nobody had expected him to get well.

The men in the *Sanhedrin knew that they must let Peter and John go. The only thing that they could do was to warn them again. They could not do anything else!

The *believers pray together, 4:23-31

v23 When the *Sanhedrin had freed them, Peter and John returned to their own people. They told the people what the chief priests and leaders had said. **v24** When the *believers heard it, they all prayed to God together. They said, *"*Lord of everything, you made heaven, the earth and the sea. And you made everything that is in them. v25 You spoke by the *Holy Spirit, by means of our father David, your servant. You said this: "The *Gentiles were very angry. But they could not stop what happened.*

People made other plans, but these could not happen.

v26 The kings on the earth prepared themselves.

The rulers met together

*to oppose the *Lord and his *Messiah."*

v27 *In this city, the rulers have united to oppose your *holy servant Jesus. This is true. They have united against the man whom you made *Messiah. Yes, Herod, Pontius Pilate, the *Gentiles and the people in *Israel gathered together. v28 You had already decided that this would happen. It would happen by your power and purpose. v29 Now, *Lord, notice what they are saying. They will do bad things to us. But we are your servants. Let us be brave when we tell your message to people. v30 And reach out your hand to cure. Do *miracles and wonderful things by the name of your *holy servant Jesus.'* **v31** *They finished praying. Then, the place where they were meeting shook.*

Verses 23-24 Peter and John went back to the other *believers. They told them what had happened. Then they prayed together. We can learn from what they did. When we have a problem, we should always pray about it.

Also, we can learn from the manner in which the *believers prayed. First, they called God the *"*Lord of everything'*. They were reminding themselves that he made everything. God rules over everything. Often we need to remind ourselves about this. He is bigger than any problem and he can do anything. But we must ask him.

Verses 25-28 The *believers were *Jews. So, they called David their 'father' because he was a famous king in *Israel. They said words from a psalm that David wrote (Psalm 2:1-2). He wrote this psalm about 1000 years before Jesus' birth. His *prophecy there about the *Messiah had now happened. The *"*Gentiles'* in the psalm were the *Romans. And some people in the psalm wanted to stop Jesus. This was so that he would not *preach. And it was so that he would not teach. So, they had made plans to stop him. The *Jews were those people. Together, with their king (Herod Antipas) and their ruler (Pontius Pilate), they had killed Jesus. But they had not stopped his message. He had become alive again. The *apostles were curing people in his name. His *church was growing and many people were hearing the good news. What had happened had been in God's plan.

Verses 29-30 The *Sanhedrin had done bad things to the *believers. But the *believers did not pray that God would stop the *Sanhedrin's actions. Instead, the *believers asked God to give courage to them when they continued to tell people about Jesus. They asked God to show his power when they spoke with Jesus' authority.

Verse 31 At *Pentecost, the *Holy Spirit had come and he had filled everyone. Here, the *Holy Spirit came and he filled everyone again. God answered their prayer immediately. They all spoke God's message in a bold manner.

*Christians can ask the *Holy Spirit to fill them many times like that. It does not just happen once. When the *Holy Spirit has filled a person, we know it. We know it by how they behave. The *Holy Spirit makes us more like Jesus. The *Holy Spirit helps us to do things for God that we could not do alone.

The *believers share their possessions, 4:32-37

v32 All the *believers thought the same way about how they should live. People did not keep their possessions just for themselves. They shared with each other everything that they had. **v33** The *apostles spoke about the *resurrection of the *Lord Jesus. They spoke about it with great power. And they were very generous to each other. **v34** Everyone in their group had what they needed. Those who owned fields or houses would sell them. They would bring the money that they had got from this. **v35** They would give it to the *apostles. Then the *apostles would share it among people who needed it. Everyone had as much as they needed.

v36 Joseph was from the large group that were relatives of Levi's family. Joseph was born in *Cyprus. The *apostles called him Barnabas. (This name means 'a person who encourages'.) **v37** He owned a field. He sold it. He brought the money and he gave it to the *apostles.

Verses 32-34 The members of the first *church cared about each other. They did not just say that they cared. They showed their love by what they did. People still owned

things. But they would share these things with anyone who needed them. Some *believers owned land or houses. If anyone needed money, these people sold their land or houses. Nobody forced them to do this. They wanted to help each other.

In verse 33, Luke reminds us about Jesus' *resurrection. This was the reason why the *church began. It is the reason why the *church is here today. Jesus is alive!

Verses 35-37 The *Greek words here mean that people would put the money down 'at the *apostles' feet'. This showed that people were offering it to God.

Luke mentions Barnabas's gift. Barnabas was from the large group that were all Levi's relatives. Each *Israelite belonged to a large group like this. There were 12 such large families. Levi's group served God in the *Temple. Later in 'Acts', we can read more about Barnabas. He travelled with Paul and he worked with him.

Chapter 5

Ananias and Sapphira, 5:1-11

v1 But there was a man whose name was Ananias. He and his wife, Sapphira, sold a building and some land. The building and land had belonged to them. **v2** Ananias kept some of the money for himself. His wife knew everything that he had done. He gave to the *apostles the money that remained.

v3 Then Peter said to him, 'Ananias, you should not have let *Satan control you. He has forced you to lie to the *Holy Spirit. You have kept some of the money that you received for this land! **v4** Before you sold the land, it belonged to you. And, after you sold it, the money belonged to you. You should not have decided to do this thing. You have not lied to people. You have lied to God!' **v5** When Ananias heard this, he fell down. He died. Everyone who heard about this was very afraid. **v6** The young men came in and they wrapped up his body. They carried him out and they buried him.

Verses 1-5 The story about Ananias and Sapphira is strange. It is not easy for us to

understand what happened. But it is a very important story. Luke might have decided not to write it. Later, people might have decided not to keep it in the Bible. But what is in the Bible is always the truth. *Christians are not perfect! Some Christians can do very bad things. Even in the first *church, there were *Christians who were not honest.

Like Barnabas, Ananias and Sapphira sold their land for money. But Barnabas had given all the money to the *apostles. Ananias brought only some of the money to them. But that was not the problem. As Peter said, the money belonged to Ananias and Sapphira. The *Greek word for 'kept' here can also mean 'stole'. Perhaps, before they sold the land, they had agreed to give all the money.

But they had also lied. They did not give all the money to help the poor people. Instead, they wanted to seem generous. Nobody forced them to sell their land. It belonged to them. They did not need to lie. But Ananias had let *Satan tell him what to do. He had promised to give all the money to God. Because he did not do this, he had lied to the *Holy Spirit. The *Holy Spirit is God. So, he had lied to God.

Ananias knew that he had done a very wicked thing. Sometimes, people just pretend to be good. They do this so that they look important. God hates this. Jesus talked about this many times. (For example, look at Luke 6:42; 12:1, 56; 13:15.) When Ananias died, everyone was afraid. They buried him immediately.

v7 *About three hours later, his wife came in. She did not know what had happened.*

v8 *Peter asked her, 'Tell me. Was that all the money that you and Ananias received for the land?'*

'Yes', she said, 'that was all the money.'

v9 *Peter said to her, 'You both should not have decided to tempt the *Lord's *Spirit. Look! The men who buried your husband are at the door. They will carry you out also.'*

v10 *Immediately, she fell down at his feet and she died. The young men came in. They saw that she was dead. So, they carried her out and they buried her next*

*to her husband. v11 Everyone in the *church was very afraid. And all who heard about this were very afraid.*

Verses 7-11 Peter gave to Sapphira a chance to tell the truth. He asked her how much money she and Ananias had received for the land. But she lied. Ananias had lied. In this way, they had tried to 'tempt' the *Lord's *Spirit. We are not sure what Peter meant by this. Perhaps they were 'tempting' God not to punish them for their lies. Like Ananias, Sapphira fell down and she died. Again, everyone was very afraid.

Some students think that Peter was too unkind. They think that Jesus would not have spoken to Ananias and Sapphira like this. The *church had only just started. In verse 11, Luke uses the *Greek word for '*church' (ekklesia). This is the first time that he uses it in Acts. *Christians needed to trust each other. If they did not do this, maybe the *church could not continue. *Satan was trying to destroy the *church. Already, the *believers had enemies who were attacking them from outside the *church. But now, *Satan was working by means of their own members.

God hates lies. He wants his *church to be pure (with nothing bad in it). Peter knew this. The *church was in danger if *believers were not honest. He gave to both Ananias and Sapphira a chance to *repent. But they did not *repent. So, by his words, Peter showed that this was a very serious thing. He showed it to everyone. It is very important to be honest always.

The *apostles cure many people, 5:12-16

v12 *The *apostles did many *miracles among the people. They did many wonderful things among the people. All the *believers met together in Solomon's *Porch. v13 Nobody outside the group dared to join their group. But people said good things about them. v14 More and more people believed in the *Lord. Lots of men and women joined the group of *believers. v15 People carried those who were ill into the streets. This was because of what the *apostles were doing. They put the ill people on beds and mats. So, when Peter came by, even his shadow*

*might come onto some ill people. v16 A large crowd also gathered from the towns near *Jerusalem. They brought people who were ill. And they brought people who had evil *spirits in them. All those people became well.*

Verses 12-14 The *believers were meeting in the place where the *Sanhedrin had arrested Peter. The *apostles' message was more than just words. It included actions too. *Miracles were happening.

People did two different things because of these *miracles. Some people did not want to mix with the *believers. They kept away from the *believers. Those people were afraid. Perhaps they had also heard what had happened to Ananias and Sapphira. But those people respected the *believers. However, many other people joined the *church.

It is often like that today. Some people do not want to go to *church. They do not want to mix with *Christians. But they are not the *church's enemies. Sometimes, they are afraid. They do not want their lives to change. Perhaps they do not realise that their lives could be so much better! Other people are bolder. They are not afraid to give their lives to the *Lord. When they have done this, they have his joy. And they are quiet inside themselves. Then they see the wonderful things that he can do.

Verse 15 In his *Gospel, Luke told how a sick woman touched Jesus' clothes. Immediately, she got well. Jesus said that her *faith had cured her (Luke 8:48). The *apostles were continuing Jesus' work. People believed that God would cure them, even by means of Peter's shadow. Like the sick woman, they had *faith in Jesus' power.

Verse 16 People from outside *Jerusalem heard about the *miracles. They brought people who needed help. Some people were ill. Other people had evil *spirits in them. They all became well. God showed his power to cure people's bodies and minds. He also showed his power to free them from evil *spirits. Whatever is wrong with us, God can make us well.

The *apostles in prison again, 5:17-21a

*v17 Then the *high priest became angry. And all those men who were with him (the local group of *Sadducees) became angry. The *high priest and the *Sadducees were very jealous. v18 They arrested the *apostles and they put them in the public prison. v19 But that night, an *angel of the *Lord opened the prison doors. The *angel led the *apostles out. He said to them, v20 'Go. Stand in the *Temple and tell the people everything about this new life!' v21a When the *apostles heard this, they went into the *Temple. They went there at dawn and they began to teach the people.*

Verses 17-18 The *high priest and the *Sadducees were angry for several reasons. They had told the *apostles not to speak in Jesus' name any more. But the *apostles had not obeyed them. The *Sadducees did not like the *apostles' message about Jesus' *resurrection. Also, they were jealous because the people liked the *apostles. Large crowds came to see the *apostles. So, this time, the *Sadducees arrested all the *apostles. They did not arrest only Peter and John.

Verses 19-21a But God helped the *apostles to escape. He sent an *angel to open the prison doors. The *Greek word for 'angel' (aggelos) means someone who brings a message. This *angel told them to go back to the *Temple. They had to *preach there again. The *apostles obeyed immediately. They were very brave. They knew that this was a dangerous thing to do. It was dangerous because the *Sadducees would probably put them into prison again. But they knew that they must obey God.

'This new life' (verse 20) means the new life that only Jesus can give to us. We can have this new life if we believe in him.

*Jewish leaders search for the *apostles, 5:21b-26

*v21b The *high priest and those who were with him came. They called together the *Sanhedrin. And they called together all the *Jewish leaders, too. Then they*

sent officers to the prison to fetch the *apostles. **v22** But when the officers arrived, they did not find the *apostles in the prison. They returned and they reported this. **v23** 'When we arrived at the prison, there were strong locks on the doors. And the guards were standing by the doors. But when we opened them, we found nobody inside!' **v24** The captain of the guards that guarded the *Temple did not understand. He did not understand what had happened. Neither did the chief priests understand. They thought about what might happen next.

v25 Then a man arrived. He said, 'Look! The men that you put into prison are standing in the *Temple. And they are teaching the people.'

v26 So, the officer went with his men and they fetched the *apostles. The officer and his men did not use force. They were afraid that the people might try to kill the officer and his men with stones. That is why they did not use force.

Verses 21b-24 Everyone expected that the *apostles would be in the prison. The doors were not open. The guards had not seen anyone go. The *apostles' escape was a surprise. The men in the *Sanhedrin were worried. And they did not understand how the *apostles could have escaped.

Verses 25-26 The *apostles were not hiding. They were in the *Temple again! They were teaching the people. So, the officer and his men arrested them again. But the officer and his men were afraid of the crowd. They did not want to make the people angry. So, they were polite to the *apostles and they did not hurt them. They did not use that method to make them come.

The *apostles answer the *high priest, 5:27-32

v27 So, they brought the *apostles in. And they made them stand in front of the *Sanhedrin. The *high priest asked them questions.

v28 'We gave you a definite order. We said that you must not teach in this man's name', he said. 'But look what you have done! You have filled *Jerusalem with

what you are teaching. You want to blame us for this man's death!'

v29 Peter and the *apostles replied, 'We must obey God rather than people. **v30** It was our fathers' God who raised Jesus from death. After you had killed Jesus on a wooden *cross, our fathers' God raised him.

v31 God has put this man (Jesus) up in a high position. He has put Jesus at his right side, so that Jesus is Ruler and *Saviour. So, the people in *Israel had the chance to *repent. God could forgive them, if they let him do it. **v32** We are witnesses that these things are true. The *Holy Spirit is a witness, too. God gives the *Holy Spirit to those who obey him.'

Verses 27-28 The men in the *Sanhedrin did not want people to hear about Jesus. The *apostles were spreading the good news. The *Sanhedrin could not stop them. However, the *Sanhedrin did not want the *Romans to know that. The *Romans let the *Sanhedrin rule over their own people (the *Jews). But the *Romans might not allow this to continue because the *Sanhedrin could not control the people. The *Sanhedrin could not stop the good news about Jesus' *resurrection. All the people in *Jerusalem knew about it.

The *high priest said 'in this man's name'. Because he did not want to say the name 'Jesus', he called him 'this man'. Perhaps he knew that the *Sanhedrin really caused Jesus' death. Perhaps he felt guilty. Some people today do not like to say the name 'Jesus'. But *Christians should be happy to say it. And they should be proud to say it. It is the most beautiful name.

Verse 29 Peter spoke for the whole group. They were only doing what God had told them. Sometimes, when we obey God, people do not like it. We must not worry about this. We must always obey God.

Verses 30-32 Again, Peter repeated the message that the *apostles were *preaching. It had 5 parts.

1. God had sent Jesus. God was 'our fathers' God'. 'Our fathers' were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. They had started the nation called *Israel.

2. The *Jewish leaders had killed Jesus, the person whom God had sent.
3. God had put Jesus up in a high position, so that Jesus was now sitting at God's right side. Jesus was now Ruler and *Saviour.
4. Now, people would have to *repent. If they did that, God would forgive them. That was because of what Jesus had done.
5. The *apostles knew that this message was true. They had to tell it to everyone. People would have to believe the message and they would have to *repent. Then they would receive the *Holy Spirit.

Gamaliel's advice, 5:33-39

v33 When the men in the *Sanhedrin heard this, they were very angry. They wanted to kill the *apostles. **v34** But Gamaliel stood up. He was a member in the *Sanhedrin and he was a *Pharisee. He was a teacher who taught the *Jewish *Law. The people respected him very much. He ordered people to take the *apostles outside. **v35** Then he said this to the *Sanhedrin: 'Men in *Israel, be careful about what you do to these men. **v36** You remember Theudas. Some time ago, he pretended to be someone important. About 400 men joined his group. But people killed him and all his men went away to different places. **v37** After that, Judas from *Galilee came. This was at the time when people made the *census. He persuaded a crowd to join his group. But people killed him, too. And all his men went away to different places. **v38** So, now, I tell you this. Do not do anything to these men. Let them go free. If their plans and actions come from human ideas, it will all disappear. **v39** But if it comes from God, it will not disappear. You might realise that you are fighting against God.'

Verse 33 The *Sadducees were very angry. They thought that they knew everything about the *Jewish religion. But Peter said that they had made a bad mistake. They had not recognised the *Messiah. And there was something worse than that. They had killed him. Now they wanted to kill the *apostles.

But there were also some *Pharisees in the *Sanhedrin. *Pharisees were experts who knew the *Jewish *Law well. The people respected the *Pharisees more than they respected the *Sadducees. So, the *Sadducees had to listen to the *Pharisees. Then the men in the whole *Sanhedrin could decide what to do.

Verses 34-39 Gamaliel was a very important *Pharisee and he was a famous teacher. He taught Paul (Acts 22:3). Gamaliel was a sensible man and he was a clever man. The *apostles went outside. So, then Gamaliel could talk to the *Sanhedrin in private.

Gamaliel talked about two examples to explain his opinion. He talked about two men. These men said that they were important leaders. One man lived 'at the time when people made the *census'. The *census was a list that contained all the people's names. The *Romans made it. Then they could force the people to pay tax to the government. The people hated this. Many men led the *Jews in order to fight against the *Romans. Theudas and 'Judas from *Galilee' were *Jews like that. But both Theudas and Judas were dead. Nobody remained in their groups. The same thing would happen to the *apostles if their message was not from God. But if it was from God, the men in the *Sanhedrin could not stop them. If the *Sanhedrin did try to stop the *apostles, its members would be fighting against God!

The *Pharisees believed that God controlled everything. But they also believed that people had a choice. People could choose what they did.

The *apostles suffer for Jesus' name, 5:40-42

v40 Gamaliel persuaded the other men in the *Sanhedrin that he was right. They brought the *apostles in. They ordered people to whip the *apostles. Then they told the *apostles not to speak in Jesus' name again. Then they let the *apostles go.

v41 The *apostles went away from the *Sanhedrin. They were happy. God had chosen them to suffer shame because of Jesus' name. **v42** Every day, they continued to teach. They taught in the

**Temple and they taught in people's homes. They *preached the good news that Jesus is the *Messiah.*

Verses 40-41 The *Sadducees agreed with Gamaliel. They let the *apostles go. But first, they punished the *apostles. As their punishment, someone probably hit the *apostles 39 times with a whip. (Look at Deuteronomy 25:3.) Afterwards, they were not sad and afraid. They were happy! Their bodies hurt, but in their *spirits they had great joy. They knew that God was *blessing them. They would have a great reward in heaven. Jesus had said this (in Matthew 5:10-12 and Luke 6:22-23).

Verse 42 The *Sanhedrin had tried to stop the *apostles. But they could not stop them. Since then, many people have tried to destroy the *church. But they could not destroy it. Today, more people than ever before are suffering because they are *Christians. But the *church continues to grow in numbers.

*Satan will always attack the *church. But Jesus has defeated *Satan already, on the *cross. *Christians must not be worried and they must not be afraid. The *church will continue. Nothing can destroy it.

Chapter 6

The *apostles choose 7 men to help them, 6:1-7

*v1 At this time, the *disciples grew in number. Some *Jews spoke *Greek and other *Jews spoke *Hebrew. A quarrel started. The *Greek *Jews said that the *Hebrew widows were receiving more food than the other widows. This happened when people distributed it among them every day. v2 So, the 12 *apostles called the whole group of *believers together. The *apostles said, 'It is not right for *apostles to distribute the food. We should be *preaching God's message. v3 So, brothers, choose 7 men from among you. You should be sure that they are full of the Spirit. And you should be sure that they are wise. We shall give this responsibility to them and they can distribute the food. v4 Then we shall be*

able to concentrate on prayer and the service of God's word.'

*v5 The whole group agreed to do this. They chose Stephen. He was a man who had great *faith. He was also full of the *Holy Spirit. They also chose Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolaus. Nicolaus was a *Gentile from Antioch who had followed the *Jewish religion. v6 The group brought those men to the *apostles. The *apostles said a prayer and they put their hands on the men. v7 So, God's message spread. The *disciples in *Jerusalem continued to increase quickly in number. And very many priests obeyed the *faith.*

Verse 1 There were two groups of *Jews in the first *church. We will describe the two groups here.

1. One group of *Jews spoke *Greek. They had come from different countries. Probably they had travelled to *Jerusalem for *Pentecost. And then they had joined the *church there. Many such *Jews had been born in foreign countries. Their *ancestors had also lived far away from *Israel. So, they did not know how to speak *Hebrew. They spoke *Greek because it was the most common language. Probably, they also thought like *Greeks and they behaved like *Greeks.

2. The other group of *Jews spoke *Hebrew. They spoke the *Jews' language and they were very proud about *Jewish traditions. They lived in *Jerusalem or they lived in the areas round it.

The *church was growing quickly. Soon there was a problem between the two groups of *Jews. It was an argument about the *Jewish custom to help widows. (Look at Exodus 22:22 and Deuteronomy 10:18.) Women whose husbands had died did not have a regular income. Those women could not buy food. So, in the first *church, they continued the custom to help them. Some people wanted to help, so they gave money or possessions. Every day they gave something to the widows among them. They gave to them whatever they needed. But the *Jews who spoke *Greek complained. They complained that the

*Hebrew widows were receiving more than the other widows. Perhaps the two groups did not like each other much. Or perhaps they did not trust each other much. Perhaps that was why they quarrelled.

Verse 2 The 12 *apostles realised that this small problem might become much bigger. They did not have time to organise practical matters. They needed time to *preach. Jesus had told his 12 *disciples that their work was to *preach. If they did not do this, the *church would not grow bigger. They knew that they must do something about this problem quickly.

But the 12 *apostles did not just tell everyone what to do. Instead, they 'called the whole group of *believers together'. They told the whole *church about the problem.

The 12 *apostles said, 'It is not right for *apostles to distribute the food.' But they did not think that they were too important for this task. They did not mean that to *preach is better than practical help. To give practical help is also good. God calls people to do different things. God had called the 12 *apostles to tell everyone the good news about Jesus.

Verses 3-4 So, the *apostles suggested a solution. They wanted the Christians to choose 7 helpers. These must be *spiritual men who were also sensible. Then the 12 *apostles would not have to worry about this responsibility. They could continue to *preach and they could continue to pray.

Verses 5-6 The *believers chose 7 men. These men all had *Greek names. Because of this, some students think that they all spoke *Greek. Perhaps this is right. Then it would show that the Christians wanted to be fair to the Greek *Jews and their widows.

'The *apostles said a prayer and they put their hands on the men' (verse 6). This showed that they were giving authority to the 7 helpers. And also, God was giving authority to the helpers. This work was very important. So, the helpers needed authority to do it.

Verse 7 This verse shows that the first part in 'Acts' has ended. (Look at 'Contents'. This is in the section called 'About this book'.) The first part is about how the *church in *Jerusalem grew.

Some *Jews arrest Stephen, 6:8-15

v8 Stephen was a man who was full of God's *grace and power. He did great *miracles and he did wonderful things among the people. **v9** But some men opposed him. They were members from the Freedmen's *synagogue. (Look at the note below.) The members included *Jews from Cyrene and Alexandria. They also included other *Jews from the *provinces called Cilicia and Asia. The members began to argue with Stephen. **v10** But they could not win the arguments. This was because Stephen spoke with wisdom. The Spirit gave this wisdom to him. **v11** So, those *Jews paid money to some men. They told the men to say this: 'We heard Stephen speak against Moses. And we heard him speak against God!' **v12** In this way, these *Jews made the people and the leaders angry. They also made the teachers that taught the *Law angry. Immediately the *Jews seized Stephen. They took him in front of the *Sanhedrin. **v13** They brought in some men to tell lies about him. These men said, 'This man is always saying bad things about our *holy *Temple and Moses' *Law. **v14** We heard him say that Jesus from *Nazareth will destroy the *Temple. Stephen said that Jesus will change all the customs that Moses gave to us!' **v15** Everyone in the *Sanhedrin stared at Stephen. They saw that his face looked like an *angel's face.

Verse 8 Stephen was a *Jew who spoke *Greek. He was one of the 7 helpers. His job was to give food to the poor *believers. God was showing his truth and power by means of Stephen. God can use us in any way that he wants. He can use us even when we are doing a practical job, like Stephen.

Verse 9-10 The 'Freedmen' were slaves once. But their masters had freed them. The 'Freedmen' included also *Jews whose *ancestors had been slaves. We think that the 'Freedmen' were foreign *Jews that had come to *Jerusalem. The 'Freedmen' did not like what Stephen was saying. But they could not defeat him in an argument. This was because his message came from the *Holy Spirit. Jesus

had promised that he would give words and wisdom to his *disciples. He had promised that their enemies would not win arguments against them (Luke 21:15).

Verse 11 Stephen's enemies could not defeat him with their own arguments. So, they paid some men to lie. These men said that Stephen was speaking against Moses. And they said that Stephen was even speaking against God. This was a very serious matter.

Verses 12-14 Some men said that Stephen had insulted the *Temple and the *Law. This would make the *Jews that lived in *Jerusalem especially angry. The *Temple was the centre for their *worship. They were very proud about it. Also, many *Jews had jobs that depended on the *Temple. It was important for businesses in *Jerusalem. The *Jews were also very proud about their *Law. They believed that they should obey the *Law. They believed that this was the way to please God.

Jesus' enemies also paid men to tell lies about him. These men lied about him in front of the *Sanhedrin. However, the lies that they told were not completely false. They took something that Jesus had said. But they changed it slightly. This is what Stephen's enemies did. Jesus had said that men would knock the *Temple down (Mark 13:2). But then the *Jews wanted proof that Jesus had authority from God. Jesus told them to 'destroy this *temple' (John 2:19). He promised to build it up again in three days. Jesus was talking about his body. His body was like a *temple. That was because Jesus lived to please God the Father. Perhaps Stephen had repeated Jesus' words. People had built the *Jewish *Temple with their hands. But now Jesus had come, and he was greater than the *Temple. So, 'something greater than the *Temple' had come (Matthew 12:6). Stephen knew what Jesus had really meant. Jesus has replaced the *Temple. He has completed the *Law. He is the only way to God. People may *worship God in a particular way. But the particular way in itself cannot bring them close to him. They cannot please God if they just follow rules. They must believe in his Son, the *Lord Jesus *Christ, and they must trust in him. That is the only way to God. If we obey Jesus, we are obeying God.

Verse 15 Stephen's face shone like an *angel's face when he stood in front of the *Sanhedrin. Moses' face also shone when he brought the *Law down from the mountain (Exodus 34:29). Both Stephen's and Moses' face shone. This showed that God approved of them. Luke makes it clear that Stephen had God's *blessing. Stephen had *grace and power (verse 8). He had special wisdom (verse 10). And his face shone like an *angel's face (verse 15).

Chapter 7

Stephen's speech, part 1: Abraham's *faith in God, 7:1-8

v1 The *high priest asked Stephen, 'Is this true?' **v2** Stephen replied, 'Listen, brothers and fathers. The God who has *glory appeared in front of our *ancestor Abraham. It happened in Mesopotamia. This was before he lived in Haran. **v3** God said to Abraham, "Leave your family and country. Go to the country that I will show you." **v4** So, Abraham left his country, where people called Chaldeans lived. And he lived in Haran. Abraham's father died. Then God made Abraham move to this country. You live here now. **v5** God did not give any part in it to him. Abraham received no part in it as his own. He did not even receive as much as his foot could cover. But God promised to give the country to him and his *descendants. At the time when God made this promise, Abraham had no children. **v6** This is what God said to him. "Your *descendants will live in a foreign country. There, they will be slaves. The people will do bad things to them for 400 years. **v7** But I will punish the nation that they serve. After that, they will come out from that nation. Then they will *worship me in this place." **v8** And God gave to Abraham the *covenant about *circumcision. So, a week after Abraham's son Isaac was born, Abraham *circumcised him. Isaac *circumcised his son Jacob. And Jacob *circumcised his 12 sons, our famous *ancestors.'

Verse 1 Stephen's answer to the *high priest's question is the longest speech in 'Acts'. It is a

very important speech. In it, Stephen showed that God wants people to *worship him everywhere, not just in one special place. God is everywhere. Stephen talked about people whose stories are in the *Old Testament. The men in the *Sanhedrin already knew these stories very well. But Stephen was not just repeating the stories. He was using the stories to teach new things. Stephen used examples from *Jewish history to teach about real *faith and *worship. The *Old Testament showed that Jesus, the *Messiah, would come. Stephen told the men how it showed this. Jesus used the *Old Testament like that, too (for example, Luke 24:27).

Verses 2-4 Stephen began his speech with a greeting that was polite and friendly. He called his audience 'brothers and fathers'. This reminded them that he was a *Jew too. Then he started his lesson from history. Abraham was among the earliest people in all the *Jewish history. And he was among the most important people in it. Stephen showed how Abraham had great *faith. When Abraham lived, the *Jews did not have their own nation or *Temple. They did not get those until many hundreds (100s) of years later. But God showed himself to Abraham. God told him to leave his country. Abraham did not know where he was going. But he obeyed God. People who want to obey God must always be willing to leave. They must go wherever God leads them. Stephen showed that God can appear in front of people anywhere. They do not have to be in a special place.

Verses 5-7 Abraham arrived in the country that God had promised to him. He trusted God again. Abraham had no children. But God said that Abraham's *descendants would own the country. Abraham believed all God's promises. And all God's promises became true. Abraham did have children and their *descendants were slaves in *Egypt. They did leave *Egypt and they did live in the *Promised Land.

Verse 8 *Circumcision was a *sign that showed God's *covenant with Abraham. It was the only *sign that people could see for that *covenant. So, *circumcision was very important to the *Jews. Here, Stephen was reminding them why it was so important. God

had given this *sign to them. Abraham had a special friendship with God. God had made this *covenant because Abraham had trusted him. And Abraham had obeyed him.

'Our famous *ancestors' means Jacob's 12 sons. These were the *ancestors of the 12 great families in *Israel.

Stephen's speech, part 2: Joseph, 7:9-16

*v9 'Jacob's sons became jealous of their brother Joseph. So, they sold Joseph as a slave. He would be a slave in *Egypt. But God was with him. v10 And God rescued him from all his troubles. God gave wisdom to Joseph, so that Pharaoh, the king of *Egypt, liked Joseph. And Pharaoh made Joseph ruler over *Egypt. And he made Joseph ruler over all the people in his palace. v11 Then there was a *famine in all *Egypt and Canaan. Many people suffered and our *ancestors could not find any food. v12 But Jacob heard that there was food in *Egypt. So, he sent his sons, our *ancestors, to go for their first visit there. v13 On their second visit, Joseph let his brothers recognise him. So, Pharaoh also knew who Joseph's family were. v14 After that, Joseph sent someone to fetch his father Jacob and his whole family. They were 75 in number. v15 Then Jacob went down to *Egypt. He and our *ancestors died there. v16 People brought their bodies back to Shechem. And they buried them in the grave that Abraham had bought. He had bought it from Shechem's sons. He had paid a certain sum of money for it.'*

Verse 9 Stephen continued his lesson about history. He told the story about Joseph. Joseph was Jacob's favourite son (Genesis 37:3). Joseph had dreams that he was superior to his brothers. His dreams showed that later he would rule over them (Genesis 37:5-11). His brothers were jealous of him. They hated him and they sold him as a slave.

Verse 10 But Stephen showed that nothing could stop God's plan for Joseph. Although Joseph was in a foreign country, God was with him. 'Pharaoh' was the name that people always called the kings of *Egypt. Pharaoh did not believe in God but God used him. Pharaoh

gave to Joseph what he needed. Joseph became an important ruler, too.

Verses 11-16 The men in the *Sanhedrin knew this story about Joseph very well. But Stephen told it in a new way. He showed how well God looked after his people. God told Joseph to get ready for the *famine. God told him about it 7 years before it happened (Genesis 41:25-32). At the right time, Jacob (Joseph's father) heard that there was food in *Egypt (Genesis 42:2). There, God provided food for the *Jews' *ancestors. It was in a country that was not their own country. To emphasise this, Stephen mentioned *Egypt 8 times in this story. God had promised that the *Jews would have their own country. But that promise had become too important to them. They could not make God stay in one place. They could not do that, even if that place was special to them. God is with his people wherever they live. Stephen was teaching this wonderful fact to them.

Stephen's speech, part 3: Moses, 7:17-43

v17 'God had promised to Abraham that he (God) would do something. And it was nearly time for God to do that thing. Our people in *Egypt had increased in number. **v18** At last, another king became the ruler of *Egypt. He did not know about Joseph. **v19** That king plotted against our people. He did wicked things to our *ancestors. He forced them to leave their babies outside, so that the babies died. **v20** At this time, Moses was born and God was pleased with him. Moses lived in his father's house for three months. **v21** When someone put him outside, the king of *Egypt's daughter took him in. She adopted him. She looked after him as if he was her own son. **v22** Moses learned all the knowledge that the *Egyptians knew. And his words and actions were powerful. **v23** When Moses was 40 years old, he decided to visit his own people, the *Israelites. **v24** He saw an *Egyptian who was hurting an *Israelite. So, he defended this *Israelite and he killed the *Egyptian. **v25** God was using Moses to rescue his own people. Moses thought that they would

understand this. But they did not understand. **v26** The next day, Moses saw two *Israelites who were fighting. He tried to make them become friends again. He said, "Men, you are both *Israelites. You should not hurt each other." **v27** But the man who was hurting the other one pushed Moses aside. The man said, "You are not a ruler over us. And you are not a judge over us. **v28** Perhaps you want to kill me, as you killed that *Egyptian yesterday." **v29** When Moses heard this, he went quickly to Midian. He lived there as a foreigner and he had two sons.'

Verse 17 God had warned Abraham about what would happen. And what God told him had become true (Acts 7:6). The *Israelites were slaves in *Egypt for 400 years. But God had not forgotten his promise. This promise had two parts.

1. God had promised that Abraham would have many *descendants. This had already happened. 'Our people in *Egypt had increased in number.'
2. God had promised to give to his people their own country. This had not happened. And it did not seem likely now, because they were slaves in *Egypt. Things had become worse.

Verses 18-19 The new king did not know about Joseph and he did not respect the *Israelites. He thought that they were too many in number. So, the king made them kill their male babies. (Look also at Exodus 1:22.) And he forced them to work.

Verses 20-22 Stephen now introduced Moses into the story. Moses was a very special child. God had chosen him to rescue the *Israelites. So, God had saved his life by a *miracle (Exodus 2:1-10). Stephen said good things about Moses here. The *Jews had accused him of talk 'against Moses' (Acts 6:11). Perhaps that is why he said those good things now. Stephen wanted to show that he admired Moses very much.

Verses 23-28 Stephen told this part of the story in a new way. He showed that the *Israelites had tried to stop God's plan. They did not realise that Moses would save them from the *Egyptians. They did not realise that

God had chosen him. Later, the *Jews *rejected God's other *prophets. Then they *rejected their *Messiah, the *Lord Jesus. In the first century, *Jews were very proud of their nation and their culture. They thought that they were superior to all other nations and cultures. But Stephen showed that the *Jews' great leader Moses had been born in a foreign country. When Moses was a child, a foreign woman brought him up. He learned from a foreign culture. Stephen praised this culture. He called it 'the knowledge that the *Egyptians knew' (verse 22). Not everything that the *Egyptians did was right. Stephen was not saying that. But not everything that they did was wrong. So, he was not saying that, either. In the first century, *Jews wanted to keep themselves completely separate from *Gentiles. This caused arguments in the first *church. Stephen was showing that *Jews could mix with *Gentiles. It did not make the *Jews less *holy.

Verse 29 Moses had killed an *Egyptian. He was defending someone who was from his own people, the *Israelites. So, he ran away from *Egypt. Like his *ancestors, Abraham and Jacob, Moses left his home and he lived 'as a foreigner' (verse 29). (Look also at Exodus 2:22.)

v30 *'After 40 years, an *angel came to him. A bush was on fire. And the *angel appeared in the flames in the bush. v31 Moses felt very surprised. He came closer to look at it and then he heard the *Lord's voice. The *Lord said, v32 "I am your *ancestors' God. I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." Moses trembled and he did not dare to look.*

v33 *Then the *Lord said to him, "Take off your shoes because you are standing on *holy ground. v34 Cruel things have happened to my people in *Egypt. I have certainly seen those things and I have heard their groans. (Groans are noises. People make these noises when they are suffering.) I have come down to bring them out. Come now and I will send you back to *Egypt."'*

Verses 30-34 God spoke to Abraham and Joseph when they were far from their own

country. Moses was far from the country that God had promised to the *Israelites. But now, this *Gentile land was '*holy ground' (verse 33). This was because God had spoken to Moses there. A long time before God's people (the *Jews) built their *Temple, God had shown himself to them. He had shown himself to them in foreign countries. *Holy places are *holy because God is there. They are not *holy because of the country that they are in. God can show himself to people anywhere.

God showed that he had not forgotten his *covenant with Moses' *ancestors. He was still 'the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob' (verse 32). God's people were suffering as slaves in *Egypt. He cared about that and he would rescue them. God told Moses that he was sending him. Moses would act with God's authority.

v35 *'This Moses is the same man that the *Israelites *rejected. They said, "You are not a ruler over us. And you are not a judge over us." But Moses was the person that God sent. Moses would lead the people and he would rescue them. God's *angel helped him. This *angel had spoken to Moses from the bush. v36 Moses led the *Israelites out from *Egypt. In *Egypt, he did *miracles and wonderful things. He did such things at the Red Sea. And he did them in the desert for 40 years. v37 Moses is the man who said this to the *Israelites. "God will choose someone from among your people to be a *prophet. God will choose him, exactly as he chose me." v38 Moses was with the *Israelites when they were in the desert together. He was with the *angel on *Mount Sinai. And the *angel spoke to him there. And Moses was with our *ancestors. He received messages from God to give to us. v39 But our *ancestors would not obey him. Instead, they *rejected him. They wished that they could go back to *Egypt. v40 They said to Aaron, "Make some gods that will lead us. That man Moses led us out from *Egypt. But we do not know what has happened to him." v41 Then they made an *idol that was like a young cow. They*

brought *sacrifices to it. And they were very pleased with something that they had made with their hands. **v42** But God turned away from them. He left them and he let them *worship the stars. That same thing is in the book that contains the *prophets' messages. In that book, someone has written this.

*"People of *Israel!*

*You did not really bring *sacrifices to me.*

You did not really make offerings (gifts that are food or drink) to me.

You did not really do those things for 40 years in the desert.

v43 *You have lifted up *Molech's tent.*

And you have lifted up the star of your god Rephan.

*Those are *idols. You made them in order to *worship them!*

So, I will send you away.

I will make you go to live beyond Babylon."

Verses 35-36 Again, Stephen emphasised that the *Jews had *rejected Moses as their ruler at first. But he had led them out from *Egypt. God showed the people that he had chosen Moses. The proof was that Moses did *miracles. He did not do *miracles in just one place. He did them in *Egypt. He did them at the Red Sea. And he did them in the desert. God showed that he was with Moses wherever he went.

Verse 37 Stephen repeated Moses' words about a *prophet (the *Messiah). This *prophet would be 'someone from among your people', like Moses. (Look also at Acts 3:22.) As those people had *rejected Moses, so Jesus' own people *rejected Jesus.

Verses 38-39 The *Israelites were in the desert. They were far away from the *Promised Land. But God was there with them. He was speaking to them by means of Moses. But they did not obey God. They *rejected the leader whom God had chosen. They were very ungrateful.

Verses 40-41 Then the *Israelites *rejected God. God was giving the *Law to Moses on *Mount Sinai. But while he was doing that, the

*Israelites made an *idol. They *worshipped something that they had made. They stopped *worshipping God, who had made them!

Verses 42-43 'The book that contains the *prophets' messages' includes the book by the *prophet Amos. The verses that Stephen uses here are from Amos 5:25-27. These verses show how the *Israelites *worshipped many false gods. At first, they had *worshipped one *idol in the desert. God allowed them to do what they wanted. God always allows us to choose what we do. We can choose to do good things. Or we can choose to do bad things. The Bible shows to us what is right. And it shows to us what is wrong. The *Holy Spirit guides us. But we are free to choose. God never forces us to obey him.

Stephen's speech, part 4: People who do not obey, 7:44-53

v44 *'Our *ancestors had a tent where they *worshipped God. The tent was with them in the desert. God had told Moses how to make it. It was like the model that Moses had seen. v45 Our *ancestors received it. And they took it with them when they followed Joshua. They carried the tent when they came into this country. They took control of the country. And they replaced those people that God chased away. The tent remained in this country until David became king. v46 David pleased God. David asked God if he (David) could provide a place to *worship him, Jacob's God. v47 But it was Solomon who built the house for God. v48 However, the Most High God does not live in houses that people build. It is as the *prophet says. He says this.*

v49 *"My *throne is heaven, and my feet rest on the earth.*

You cannot really build a house for me.

You do not know what sort of place I could stay in.

v50 *I have made everything!"*

v51 *You *stubborn people, you think like *pagans. And you do not hear God's message. You are exactly like your *ancestors. You always fight against the *Holy Spirit! v52 There is not one*

**prophet that your *ancestors did not *persecute. They killed some *prophets. Those *prophets said that God's *righteous Servant was coming. Now you have opposed that Servant and you have killed him. v53 You are the people who received God's *Law. The *angels gave it to you. But still you do not obey it.'*

Verses 44-50 This tent was called the 'tabernacle'. The 'tabernacle' was like a *temple that people could carry with them. God had given the *Law to Moses on *Mount Sinai. Its words were on two pieces of stone. These pieces of stone were big and flat. They were in a special box inside the tent. The people believed that they must have this special tent with them. Then God would be there too. They carried it in the desert. They took it with them into the *Promised Land. And they had it for several hundred years. King David wanted to build a *temple instead of the tent. At that time, the *Jews had their own country. They thought that they would always stay there. They did not need to carry the tent with them. It was Solomon, David's son, who built the first *Temple. The *Jews' enemies destroyed it in 587 *BC. Then the *Jews built a second one. The *Romans destroyed the second *Temple in 63 *BC. The *Temple in this book called Acts was the third *Temple. King Herod the Great had built it. He started it in 19 *BC. But it took many years to finish. It was the most magnificent *Temple. But Stephen reminded the *Jews that God was bigger than any *Temple. Stephen said some words from the book by the *prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 66:1-2). God is bigger than heaven and earth. He made all things. He cannot stay in one place only.

Both the *Law and the *Temple were very important to the *Jews. Stephen showed that although the *Law and the *Temple were important, God was more important. And God was much bigger. Their idea about God was too small!

Verses 51-53 The people in Stephen's audience were proud about their religion. They thought that they were very *holy people. They studied the *scriptures. But they did not hear what God was saying. They thought like people who do not know God.

They were exactly like their *ancestors. Their *ancestors had *rejected the *prophets. Now the *Jewish leaders here had *rejected 'God's *righteous Servant', the *Messiah. And there was something even worse than that. They had killed him. Peter had already said twice that they had killed the *Messiah (Acts 4:10; 5:30). Stephen also said that they had not obeyed the *Law (verse 53). God had chosen the *Jews for his special purposes. He had given the *Law to them. He had sent his *Messiah. But they had opposed both the *Law and the *Messiah.

The people kill Stephen, 7:54-60

*v54 When the men in the *Sanhedrin heard this, they became very angry. They were so angry that they made noises at Stephen. They made the noises with their teeth. v55 But Stephen was full of the *Holy Spirit and he looked up to heaven. He saw God's *glory. And he saw Jesus, who was standing at God's right side. v56 'Look', Stephen said. 'I see heaven. It is open. And I see the Son of Man, who is standing at God's right side.' (For 'Son of Man', read the note below.) v57 When he said this, those men put their hands over their ears. They shouted with anger and they all rushed towards him. v58 They dragged him out from the city. And they began to throw stones at him. The witnesses put their coats down at a young man's feet. His name was Saul. v59 People continued to throw stones at Stephen as he prayed to the *Lord. '*Lord Jesus', he said, 'receive my *spirit.' v60 He knelt. And he shouted in a loud voice, '*Lord! Do not blame them for what they are doing.' Then he slept (see note).*

Verses 54-56 The men in the *Sanhedrin were very angry. They had very much hate and their faces showed this hate. But Stephen was full of the *Holy Spirit. He turned his face towards heaven. He saw a wonderful *vision and he described the *vision to those men. 'The Son of Man' (verse 56) was a special name that Jesus used for himself. It had many meanings. In Mark 14:61-62, Jesus used it to answer the *high priest's question. The *high priest asked him if he was the *Messiah, the

Son of God. Jesus said, 'I am.' Then he added, 'You will all see the Son of Man. He will be sitting at Almighty God's right side. ('Almighty' means 'the *Lord of everything'. Or it means 'totally powerful'.) The Son of Man will come with the clouds that are in heaven.' There is a similar description in the *Old Testament, in the book called Daniel. There, Daniel describes 'someone like a son of man' (Daniel 7:13-14). The *prophecy in Psalm 110 is also similar. In Psalm 110:1, God invites *Israel's king to sit at his right side. Stephen's *vision showed that Jesus' words about himself were true. Jesus was at God's right side. But when Stephen saw Jesus, Jesus was standing. Jesus was not sitting then. Some students say that this was because Jesus was giving another chance to the *Jews. They could accept him as their king before he sat down on his *throne. Other students say that Jesus had stood up to welcome Stephen. This was because Stephen would be in heaven soon. Or perhaps Jesus was standing because he agreed with Stephen's words. Perhaps in that way Jesus was showing that he agreed.

Verse 57 Stephen's *vision annoyed the men in the *Sanhedrin even more. They did not want to listen to Stephen. So, they covered their ears with their hands. To them, Jesus was a criminal. And there was something even worse than that. He had died on a *cross. *Jews believed that God *rejected a person, if that person died on a *cross. But Stephen saw that Jesus was at God's right side. This meant that Jesus had the same authority as God.

Verse 58 The *Jews killed people who had done very bad crimes. In order to kill such a person, the *Jews threw big stones at that person. The witnesses were the first people that threw the stones. That was what happened to Stephen. Some students think that the *Jews acted against the *Roman law when they killed Stephen. This was because the *Jews had not asked the *Roman rulers about it first. But the *Jews did not always have to ask the *Roman rulers before *Jews did such things. For some crimes, the *Romans allowed them to decide whether the person should die. Those were some crimes that people did against the *Temple. It was probably legal to kill Stephen. If it was not legal, probably Luke would not have

mentioned the witnesses. Luke also mentioned Saul. This was the first time when Luke mentioned him. Saul took care of the witnesses' coats. So, he approved of what was happening.

Verses 59-60 As Stephen was dying, he said a prayer. Before Jesus died, he also said a prayer. Stephen's prayer was like Jesus' prayer. Jesus said, 'Father, I put my *spirit into your hands.' ('Into your hands' means 'into your care'.) Stephen asked Jesus to receive his *spirit. Jesus asked his Father (God) to forgive the people who were killing him. Stephen also asked for this. But when Stephen said '*Lord' (verse 60), he probably meant Jesus again.

Stephen died in much pain. But he was calm. He did not speak words that were angry or unkind. He saw the *Lord Jesus. Jesus was waiting for him in heaven. So, Luke wrote that Stephen 'slept' (verse 60).

Stephen was the first Christian *martyr. There have been many *martyrs since then and there are even more *martyrs today. Tertullian was a man who wrote books in about *AD 150. He wrote that 'the blood of the *martyrs is the seed of the *church'. Often, when people kill *martyrs, the *martyrs lose blood. The blood may fall to the ground, like a seed falls. But when a seed falls to the ground, a plant can grow from it. Similarly, when people *persecute Christians, the *church grows. People kill *Christians because they want to destroy the *church. But instead, the *church becomes stronger. This has always been true and it is true today.

Chapter 8

Saul *persecutes the Christians, 8:1-4

v1 Saul approved of Stephen's murder. That same day, the Christians in *Jerusalem suffered very much. All the *believers left the city, except the *apostles. The *believers went through the *provinces called *Judea and *Samaria. **v2** Some *holy men buried Stephen. They remembered him as they cried out sadly with loud voices. **v3** But Saul continued to cause trouble for the Christians. He went from house to house. He dragged out the *believers, both men

*and women and he sent them to prison. v4 The *believers who had left the city went everywhere. And they told the good news to people.*

Verses 1-4 Three important things happened because of Stephen's death.

1. Immediately, Saul began to *persecute the Christians in *Jerusalem. He was very cruel. The *Greek word for 'cause trouble' shows this. He even searched in people's houses to find the *believers.

2. Many *believers left *Jerusalem. Probably many of them were *Jews who spoke *Greek, like Stephen. They travelled far across *Judea. They also went to *Samaria, in the north. They went in many different directions. But the *apostles stayed in *Jerusalem.

3. People outside *Jerusalem heard the good news about Jesus. The *believers who had left *Jerusalem did not hide. They were bold. And they *preached the *gospel wherever they went.

The '*holy men' (verse 2) who buried Stephen were probably not *believers. Some students think that they were *Jews. There were many *Jews who were not *believers. Not all such *Jews hated the *Christians.

Philip in *Samaria, 8:5-8

*v5 Philip went to a city in *Samaria. He *preached about the *Messiah there. v6 The crowds heard what Philip said. And they saw that he did *miracles. They listened carefully to him. v7 Evil *spirits screamed when they came out from many people. Many people who could not move became well. Many people who had something wrong with their legs became well too. v8 So, the people in that city were very happy.*

Verses 6-8 Philip was one of the 7 helpers (Acts 6:5). The *apostles had chosen them to distribute food to the poorer *believers. So, then, because the helpers distributed the food, the *apostles did not have to do it any longer. Therefore, the *apostles had much more time to *preach. Philip had worked with Stephen. The *apostles had chosen them to do practical work. But God also used them to *preach. Stephen had *preached to the

*Sanhedrin. Now Philip was *preaching to the people in *Samaria. This was a brave thing to do.

*Jews and *Samaritans had been enemies for 1000 years. A long time ago, they had lived in the same country. But the *Samaritans' *ancestors had moved north. They had made *Samaria their capital city. They had married local people, who *worshipped false gods. The *Samaritans *worshipped God on *Mount Gerizim, not at *Jerusalem. They read only the first five books in the *Old Testament. *Jews and *Samaritans hated each other. They did not usually speak to each other. But Jesus had talked with a woman who was a *Samaritan (John 4:4-30). And he had told a story about a good *Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37). Now Philip was telling the good news about Jesus to the *Samaritans.

When Philip *preached, the evil *spirits left people. They were not able to control people any longer. Also, many sick people became well. *Miracles happened when Philip spoke about Jesus, the *Messiah. People knew that the message in the *gospel is true. Jesus *saves everyone who believes in him. He protects them from evil things. He cures their diseases and he gives joy to people.

A man who does magic believes in *Christ, 8:9-13

*v9 A man called Simon lived in that city. Before Philip came, Simon had done magic. He had astonished the people in *Samaria with this magic. He said that he was a very important person. v10 Everyone in the city, both rich people and poor people, took notice of him. They said, 'This man has power from God. He is called "The Great Power".' v11 They took notice of him for a very long time. That was because he used magic to astonish them. v12 But then, they believed Philip's message. They believed the good news about God's *kingdom and about Jesus *Christ. They all received *baptism, both men and women. v13 Simon also believed and he received *baptism. Afterwards, he followed Philip everywhere. He saw great *signs and *miracles that astonished him.*

Verses 9-11 Simon, who lived in *Samaria, did magic. People thought that he had God's power. But Simon's power did not come from God, because God does not allow people to do magic (Deuteronomy 18:10-12). Simon used magic to make people follow him. He wanted them to think that he was an important person.

But Philip did *miracles by God's power. Philip did not want people to follow him (Philip). And he did not want them to think that he was special. Instead, he wanted people to believe in Jesus.

Verses 12-13 Many people did believe in Jesus when Philip *preached. They all received *baptism. Even Simon believed and he received *baptism too. We do not know whether Simon really believed in Jesus. Perhaps he was jealous because the people did not follow him now. So, perhaps he pretended to believe in Jesus because he wanted to be close to Philip. Perhaps Simon wanted to do *miracles. Perhaps he wanted Philip to teach him! Of course, this could not happen. The power to do *miracles comes from God. It does not come from people.

Peter and John go to *Samaria, 8:14-17

v14 The *apostles in *Jerusalem heard that people in *Samaria had believed God's message. So, they sent Peter and John to them. **v15** When these two *apostles arrived, they prayed. They asked that the *believers would receive the *Holy Spirit. **v16** They did this because the *Holy Spirit had not come onto anyone among them yet. They had only received *baptism into the name of the *Lord Jesus. **v17** Then Peter and John put their hands on the *believers. And then the *believers received the *Holy Spirit.

Verse 14 John came to *Samaria with Peter. That is interesting because, once before, John had wanted God to destroy a village in *Samaria (Luke 9:51-56). But now he wanted God to *save the *Samaritans.

Verses 15-17 These verses can be difficult to understand. This is because all *Christians have the *Holy Spirit. They receive the *Holy Spirit when they first believe.

Students have different ideas about what Luke meant here. Perhaps what happened to the *Samaritans was very unusual. Perhaps the *Samaritans who were *Christians needed to meet the *Jewish *Christians. They needed to receive *baptism into one body. ('One body' here means one group, the *church. Look at 1 Corinthians 12:13.) Otherwise they might have started a separate *church, just for *Samaritans.

But many Christians believe that *Christians can have another experience from the *Holy Spirit. This is sometimes called 'the *baptism with the *Holy Spirit'. A similar thing happened to the *believers at *Pentecost. Often, when people are having this experience, they speak with 'tongues'. (Look at the note about Acts 2:4.) They may show that they have other gifts from the *Holy Spirit, like *prophecy.

We may have different opinions about what Luke meant. But this must not cause bad feelings towards other *Christians. We agree that all *believers have the *Holy Spirit in them. But *believers can have different experiences from the *Holy Spirit.

The writer mentions '*baptism into the name of the *Lord Jesus' (verse 16). People used the *Greek words for 'into the name' in business. Those words meant that something had belonged to one person. But now someone else owned it. That thing had come 'into the name' of this other person. So, when a person receives *baptism into the name of the *Lord Jesus, that person now belongs to Jesus. Jesus is now that person's *Lord and master.

Peter and Simon, 8:18-25

v18 Simon saw when the *believers received the *Holy Spirit. It happened when the *apostles put their hands on them. He offered money to Peter and John. **v19** He said, 'Give this power to me, too. I want people to receive the *Holy Spirit when I put my hands on them.' **v20** But Peter replied, 'You and your money should go to hell! You thought that you could buy God's gift with money! **v21** You cannot do our work with us. You cannot have a part in it. God sees that you are not honest. **v22** *Repent about your evil

*plan and pray to the *Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you that you had such bad thoughts. v23 I can see that you are very bitter and jealous. You are like a prisoner in your own *sin.’ v24 Simon said to Peter and John, ‘Please pray to the *Lord for me. Then nothing that you have said will happen to me.’ v25 Peter and John told what they had seen the *Lord do. And they *preached his message. Then they returned to *Jerusalem. As they went, they *preached the good news. They *preached it in many villages in *Samaria.*

Verses 18-21 As the *believers received the *Holy Spirit, something happened. Everyone could see the *Holy Spirit’s power. Luke does not say what people saw. He does not say whether they heard anything. Perhaps the *believers spoke with ‘tongues’. (Look at the note about Acts 2:4.) Or maybe they showed great joy. But whatever happened, it was real. Simon, too, could see the Holy Spirit’s power. But he thought that the power came from Peter and John. He wanted it too. He had become a *Christian for the wrong reasons. And he had received *baptism for the wrong reasons. He wanted power over people. He wanted people to think that he was important. So, he tried to buy the power. But we cannot buy God’s gifts with money. They are free. *Believers must use them to show God’s power to people. They must not use God’s gifts to make themselves look important. Peter was very angry with Simon. This was because Simon’s *faith was not real. Peter reminded him that God knew this. God knows everything about a person. Other people see the things that we do. But only God knows the reason why we do those things.

Verses 22-24 However, there was still hope for Simon. Peter told him to *repent. Simon would have to pray to God. Simon would have to change. He could not use God’s power for selfish reasons any longer. Peter said, ‘Perhaps he (God) will forgive you.’ Simon could say ‘sorry’ to God. But if Simon did not mean it, God would not forgive him. However, God always forgives people if they are sincere. Peter could see that Simon was jealous. Simon wanted the power that the *apostles had. His

bad thoughts made him unhappy. So, it was as if those thoughts were keeping him in a prison. His *sin was like a prison. That is what *sin does to us. It hurts God. It hurts other people. And it hurts us. Only Jesus can save us from the results that *sin causes.

Jesus said, ‘Everyone who *sins is a slave to *sin. The slave does not belong to a family for always. But a son belongs there for always. If the Son frees you, then you will be really free’ (John 8:34-35). So, *sin is like a prison, but there is a way out from that prison. Simon saw that there was a way out from it. So, he asked the *apostles to pray for him.

Verse 25 Peter and John returned south to *Jerusalem. As they travelled through *Samaria, they talked about Jesus. They talked about him in many more villages there.

Philip meets an important man from Ethiopia, 8:26-29

*v26 An *angel of the *Lord spoke to Philip. ‘Get ready’, he said. ‘Go south, to the road called the desert road. It is between *Jerusalem and Gaza.’ v27 So, Philip got ready and he went. On the way, he met a man from Ethiopia. This man was an official. He did an important job for Candace, the queen of Ethiopia. He took care of all her money and valuable things. He had gone to *Jerusalem to *worship God. v28 Now he was going home and he was sitting in his carriage. He was reading the book that the *prophet Isaiah wrote. v29 The *Holy Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go over to that carriage and stay close to it.’*

Verse 26 Philip himself probably told this story to Luke. He may have told it when Luke and Paul stayed in Philip’s house (Acts 21:8). God ordered Philip to go south. The road from *Jerusalem to Gaza was very busy. It continued past Gaza to Africa.

Verses 27-29 Ethiopia was in North Africa. The man that Philip met was probably a black person from Africa. This man had a very important job. He worked for the queen. ‘Candace’ was the name that people always called the king’s mother.

Luke wrote that ‘he (the official) had gone to *Jerusalem to *worship God’ (verse 27). The

official may have been born as a *Jew. Or he may have decided to follow the *Jewish religion. Many people did that even if they were not born as *Jews. They did not want to *worship false gods. They wanted to follow the *Law. So, they *worshipped with the *Jews and they read the *scriptures.

As he travelled home, this official was reading the *scriptures. He was reading the book called Isaiah. Again, God told Philip what to do. And Philip obeyed. *Christians must always listen to the *Holy Spirit. This is especially true when we want to tell people about Jesus. The *Holy Spirit tells us where to go. He tells us what to do. And he tells us what to say. But we must be willing to listen and we must always obey.

Philip tells the good news, 8:30-35

v30 Philip ran over to the carriage. The man was reading from the book that the *prophet Isaiah wrote. And Philip heard him. Philip asked him, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' **v31** The man answered, 'I cannot understand it unless someone explains it to me.' The man invited Philip to get into the carriage. Philip was sitting by his side. **v32** The passage that he was reading from *scripture was this.

'They led him like a sheep that they would kill.

He did not say even one word.

He was like a lamb (very young sheep) that makes no sound.

It makes no sound when they cut off its wool.

v33 They made him feel ashamed and they were unfair to him.

*Nobody can speak about his *descendants*

because his life on earth has finished.'

v34 The official asked Philip, 'Tell me. Was this *prophet talking about himself? Or was he talking about someone else?'

v35 So, Philip began to speak. He started from that passage in *scripture. And he told the good news about Jesus to the official.

Verses 30-31 The official was reading aloud and Philip heard him. That was not unusual. Everyone read aloud at that time. The passage from Isaiah was a *prophecy about the *Messiah. This was an opportunity for Philip to talk about Jesus. And Philip realised it. So, he asked the official whether he understood the passage. The official did not understand that *prophecy. He needed help to understand it. So, although he was important and clever, he asked Philip to help him. This shows that the official was a humble man.

We must be humble like this, too. We may need help to understand *spiritual things. Then, especially, we must be humble enough to ask for help. And we must be willing to help other people. God wants us to learn more about him all the time. He wants us to know him better. It is good to talk to other *Christians about God.

Verses 32-35 The passage from the *Old Testament is Isaiah 53:7-8. It is about the Servant who suffered. That Servant is Jesus, the *Messiah. (Look at the note about Acts 3:13-15.) Philip used the passage so that he could begin to talk about the good news. *Jews who lived in the first century did not expect their *Messiah to suffer. They expected him to beat the *Romans. But Jesus had described himself as a Servant, who would suffer. (For example, look at Mark 10:45.) When Jesus had risen from death, he met two *disciples. They were going to a town called Emmaus. As they walked, Jesus explained the *Old Testament *prophecies to them. He showed how these *prophecies referred to the *Messiah (Luke 24:13-27). Philip did that also. He answered the official's questions. The *prophecy was about Jesus. So, Philip could use it to explain the good news to the official.

Philip *baptises the official, 8:36-40

v36 As they went along the road, they came to some water. The official said, 'Look! Here is some water. I can receive *baptism.' **v37** Philip said, 'You may receive *baptism if you really believe.' 'I do believe', the official replied. 'I believe that Jesus *Christ is God's Son.' **v38** The official gave orders to stop the carriage. Then both Philip and the official went down into the water. And Philip *baptised

*the official. v39 When they came up from the water, the *Lord's Spirit took Philip away. The official did not see him again. But the official had very much joy as he continued his journey. v40 Philip appeared in Azotus and he travelled in the area. Along the way, he *preached the good news about Jesus. He *preached it in every town until he reached Caesarea.*

Verses 36-38 The *Holy Spirit had already prepared the official to hear the good news about Jesus. Then the *Holy Spirit sent Philip to him. As soon as the official heard the good news, he believed it. He wanted Philip to *baptise him immediately.

We cannot force a person to believe in Jesus. The person has to be ready. The *Holy Spirit prepares a person. But the person has to hear the good news about Jesus. Otherwise, he or she cannot believe it. So, we must also be ready. We must be ready to tell people about Jesus. We must be ready to answer questions about our *faith.

Some people are like the official. They believe the good news about Jesus immediately. Other people need more time to think about it. People become *Christians by means of the *Holy Spirit's work. But we can help. We must ask God how we can help.

Another writer may have added verse 37 after Luke had finished Acts. *Believers said the words in verse 37 when they received *baptism. The official also said those words. Those words show that he was a real *believer. He was not like Simon who lived in *Samaria (verses 9-24).

Verses 39-40 After Philip had *baptised the official, the *Holy Spirit took Philip away. The *Greek word for 'took away' (harpazo) means 'to seize'. It happened suddenly. Philip appeared again in the north and he continued to *preach there.

Luke does not mention the official again. Irenaeus, a writer in the second century, wrote that the official went back to Ethiopia. He wrote that the official *preached to the people there. We do not know whether this is true. But certainly, the good news about Jesus had started to spread to the *Gentiles.

Chapter 9

Jesus appears in front of Saul, 9:1-9

*v1 Saul was still saying that he would hurt the *Lord's *disciples. He said that he would kill them. He went to the *high priest. v2 Saul wanted to go to the *synagogues in Damascus. So, he asked the high priest for letters to introduce Saul to them. Saul was looking for people who belonged to the Way. He wanted to arrest them. He wanted to bring them back to *Jerusalem, both men and women. v3 As Saul approached Damascus, there was a sudden flash of light. The light came from heaven and it flashed round him. v4 He fell down on the ground and he heard a voice. The voice said, 'Saul, Saul, you should not *persecute me.' v5 'Who are you, *Lord?' Saul asked. 'I am Jesus, whom you are *persecuting', the voice replied. v6 'Now get up and go into the city. There, someone will tell you what to do.' v7 The men who were travelling with Saul stood there. They did not say anything. They heard the voice but they did not see anyone. v8 Saul got up from the ground. He opened his eyes but he could not see anything. So, the men who were with him held his hand. And they led him into Damascus. v9 He was blind for 3 days. He did not eat anything, nor did he drink anything.*

Verses 1-2 Saul had watched Stephen die. He had seen that Stephen was brave and good. Stephen did not hate the people who were killing him. He asked God to forgive them. But Saul was still angry. He wanted to destroy the *church completely now. He did not want to destroy it just in *Jerusalem. He wanted to destroy it in the city called Damascus, too. Damascus was in Syria, a country in the north. The *Sanhedrin did not have any political power there. But the *Romans allowed the *Sanhedrin to arrest *Jews in other countries. Then the *Sanhedrin had to bring those *Jews back to *Jerusalem. Saul knew that some *believers had escaped to Damascus after Stephen's death. Many *Jews lived in Damascus already. It would take about a week

to walk there. But Saul wanted to go. So, he needed letters from the *high priest. The letters would show that he had authority from the *high priest.

'The Way' was the name for the new *faith. That name appears several times in Acts. For example, it appears in Acts 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22. The early Christians used it. The name shows that they followed the way by which people receive *salvation.

Verses 3-6 Saul hated all *Christians. He was very angry. Later, he said this about himself. He said, 'I was very angry with them. I even went to foreign cities in order to *persecute them' (Acts 26:11). Then something special happened on the Damascus road. Luke included the story about that three times in Acts. Paul himself told the story twice, in his speeches (Acts 22:6-16; 26:12-18). But here, the story is in Luke's own words.

We know that it happened at about noon (Acts 22:6). The light from heaven was brighter than the sun (Acts 26:13). It was so bright that Saul could not see. The force from the light was so strong that it knocked him down. He realised that the voice was from God. But the voice asked Saul a question, and that question confused him. He thought that he was working for God. That is why it confused him. So, he asked who was speaking. The answer was a shock to him. Now he knew that Jesus really was alive. What the *believers said about Jesus was true! When Saul *persecuted them, he was *persecuting Jesus. Whenever *Christians suffer, Jesus feels their pain, too.

Saul had always done what he wanted. He had told other people what to do. Now, the *Lord Jesus said that Saul must go into the city. Someone else would tell him what to do now. Before, Saul had opposed Jesus. But now, he would obey Jesus for the rest of his life. This was not because Jesus had forced him. It was because Saul wanted to serve Jesus now. Now he knew that Jesus really is God's Son.

Verse 7 The men with Saul were officers from the *Sanhedrin. They were like the police.

Verses 8-9 Jesus *Christ had appeared in front of Saul. It was not a dream. Saul had seen a bright light. This was *Christ's *glory. He had heard *Christ's voice. Jesus *Christ had shown

to Saul that he (Jesus) was alive. Jesus had appeared in front of the other *apostles. Now he had appeared in front of Saul. Saul would become an *apostle, too (1 Corinthians 15:8-9). Saul had hated *Christians and he had *persecuted them. It did not seem possible that Saul could become an *apostle. But God's *grace had made it possible.

This can encourage us. We must pray for people who hate us. And we must bless people who hurt us. We must pray for leaders who *persecute *Christians. Jesus changed Saul. Jesus can do anything.

But Saul needed help. He was blind. His companions led him into Damascus. He could not see for three days. He did not eat and he did not drink. Probably he was thinking about many things.

Saul and Ananias, 9:10-19

v10 There was a *disciple called Ananias in Damascus. The *Lord spoke to him in a *vision. 'Ananias!' he said. 'Here I am, *Lord', answered Ananias. **v11** The *Lord told him, 'Go to the street called Straight Street. Go to Judas's house. And ask for a man from Tarsus. He is called Saul. He is praying. **v12** He has seen a man called Ananias in a *vision. In the *vision, he saw Ananias come in. He saw Ananias put his hands on him. This was to make Saul see again.' **v13** Ananias answered, '*Lord, many people have told me about this man. He has done evil things to your people in *Jerusalem. **v14** He has authority from the chief priests. And he can arrest anyone who calls on your name.' (Look at the note.) **v15** The *Lord said to Ananias, 'Go! I have chosen this man. He will tell *Gentiles, kings and the people from *Israel about me. **v16** I will show to him how much he must suffer. He must suffer a lot because he *worships me.' **v17** Ananias left. He went to the house where Saul was. He put his hands on Saul. 'Brother Saul', he said, 'the *Lord Jesus himself has sent me. You were coming here. And while you were on the road, he appeared in front of you. He sent me to you. He wants you to see again. Also, he wants the *Holy Spirit to fill you.'

v18 Immediately, something like a fish's scales fell from Saul's eyes. (The scales are the outer part of a fish's skin.) Saul could see again. He stood up and he received *baptism. **v19** Then he ate and he felt stronger.

Verses 10-14 Many *believers had escaped from *Jerusalem. Ananias was one such *believer. Luke tells us more about him in Acts 22:12. But Ananias knew that Saul had *persecuted *Christians in *Jerusalem. He also knew why Saul had come to Damascus. Saul had come to arrest *believers! People had told Ananias some very bad things about Saul. Ananias was probably very afraid of him.

The *Lord was telling Ananias to go to Saul. (We can see from verse 17 that the *Lord was Jesus.) Ananias was probably surprised. He thought that Saul was an enemy, who was powerful and dangerous.

The *Lord said, 'Go to the street called Straight Street' (verse 11). Straight Street was very long. It went across Damascus from the east to the west.

Ananias used the words 'anyone who calls on your name' (verse 14). This means anyone who believes in Jesus and also trusts in him. So, that person calls to Jesus for help. Those words are like the words that the *prophet Joel wrote. Also Peter said similar words in Acts 2:21. 'Then, the *Lord will *save whoever calls to him for help.'

Verses 15-16 Saul was a very clever man. He had gone to a school for *rabbis. He was a citizen of Rome. People respected him. He spoke well in public. He also travelled a lot, so he was used to that too.

Jesus had chosen him for a special job. He would tell many people in different countries about the good news. But it would not always be easy. Saul would suffer because he followed Jesus. This was not a punishment. Everyone who follows Jesus must be willing to suffer. Jesus himself warned us that people would *persecute *believers (for example, Luke 21:12-19).

Verses 17-19 Ananias obeyed immediately. He found Saul. When he greeted Saul, he called Saul 'brother'. Ananias showed that he

forgave Saul. He welcomed Saul and he accepted Saul into God's family.

Saul had already seen Ananias in a *vision (verse 12). So, he was expecting Ananias to come. Saul knew again that Jesus had chosen him. Ananias put his hands on Saul. Then Saul could see again. The *Holy Spirit filled him. Then Saul received *baptism in water, probably from Ananias.

The *believers in *Samaria also received *baptism in water. But they received it first, before the *Holy Spirit filled them (Acts 8:16-17). For them, those two events happened in a different order. That did not matter. But it mattered that the *believers were sincere. This was more important than the order in which the two events happened.

Saul could not have served Jesus without the *Holy Spirit in him. God would help Saul by means of the Spirit. And God would guide him by the Spirit. Saul received *spiritual strength. And he ate again; so then he had strength in his body, too.

Saul *preaches in Damascus, 9:20-25

v20 Immediately, Saul went to the *synagogues. And he began to *preach that Jesus was God's Son. **v21** All the people who heard him were very surprised. They asked, 'Is this really the man who caused trouble in *Jerusalem? Is it really the man who *persecuted people? Did this man not *persecute people who call on this Jesus' name? (Look at the note about verse 14.) Did he not come here to arrest them? And did he not want to take them as prisoners to the chief priests?' **v22** But Saul's words grew more powerful all the time. He proved that Jesus was the *Messiah. He convinced people very well by what he said. So, he completely confused the *Jews who were living in Damascus. And the *Jews could not answer him. **v23** After many days, the *Jews plotted to kill him. **v24** But Saul heard about their plan. They watched the city gates carefully, every day and every night. This was so that they could kill him. **v25** But one night, Saul hid in a basket. Then his

**disciples let the basket down over the walls of the city.*

Verses 20-21 How Saul had changed! He was telling the *Jews that Jesus was the *Messiah. Saul had hated *Christians because they believed this. So, it should not surprise us that people were confused. But Saul had met Jesus himself. Now he was certain that Jesus was the *Messiah.

Verse 22 Saul was a *Pharisee. At school, he had learnt how to speak well in public. What he said about Jesus was true. And he had the *Holy Spirit to help him. So, his words 'grew more powerful all the time'. He gave evidence to people that Jesus was the *Messiah. And the *Jews who opposed him could not deny this proof.

Verses 23-25 The *Jews became angry. Once, Saul had opposed *Christians, as these *Jews did. Now, suddenly, he was opposing the *Jews! So, they wanted to kill him. But Saul escaped. His *disciples helped him. *Rabbis usually had *disciples. *Disciples followed their *rabbi and they learned from him.

In verse 23, we read 'after many days'. We know that Saul went to Arabia for three years (Galatians 1:17). But we do not know exactly when he went. Perhaps it was at this time. The north-west part of Arabia was very near to Damascus.

Saul in *Jerusalem, 9:26-31

v26 When Saul came to *Jerusalem, he tried to join the group of *disciples there. But they were all afraid of him. They did not really believe that he was a *disciple. **v27** But Barnabas helped him. He took Saul to the *disciples. Barnabas told them how Saul had seen the *Lord. Saul had seen the *Lord during his (Saul's) journey to Damascus. Barnabas told the *disciples that Saul had spoken boldly in Jesus' name. **v28** So, Saul stayed with them. He went all over *Jerusalem with them. And he *preached boldly in the *Lord's name. **v29** He talked with the *Jews who spoke *Greek. And he argued with them. But they were trying to kill him. **v30** When the *believers discovered this, they took Saul to Caesarea. Then they sent him away to Tarsus. **v31** Meanwhile, the *church all

*over *Judea, *Galilee and *Samaria enjoyed a peaceful period. The *Holy Spirit made the *church strong and he encouraged the *Christians. They respected the *Lord and more people joined the *church.*

Verse 26 Saul had been away from *Jerusalem for about three years (Galatians 1:17-18). But the *believers had not forgotten him. They were afraid. They did not trust him.

Verse 27 The name 'Barnabas' means a person who encourages. People called this *Jewish *Christian from *Cyprus 'Barnabas'. He was generous and he was helpful (Acts 4:36-37). That is why they called him Barnabas. Perhaps he already knew Saul. So, he knew that Saul was a real *disciple. Or perhaps he just decided to trust Saul. The two men became very good friends.

'He took Saul to the *disciples.' Saul met Peter and James, who was Jesus' brother (Galatians 1:18-20). They were two leaders of the *church in *Jerusalem.

Verses 28-29 The *believers in *Jerusalem accepted Saul. So, he continued to *preach about Jesus.

'He talked with the *Jews who spoke *Greek. And he argued with them.' These were probably the *Jews who had wanted to kill Stephen. Luke used the same *Greek word for 'argued' here as in Acts 6:9. In that verse, the foreign *Jews argued with Stephen. Luke did not use this word anywhere else in Acts. Saul's *preaching had the same effect on them as Stephen's *preaching. They had killed Stephen and now they wanted to kill Saul.

Verse 30 Again, Saul had to escape because people wanted to kill him. He was born in Tarsus and he had lived there. So, he went there. First, he went with the *believers to Caesarea. Then he sailed in a boat to Tarsus. Tarsus was an important place for culture and education.

Verse 31 This verse is where the second part of Acts ends. (Look at the section called 'About this book'.) Saul was now a *disciple. So, the *church was safer. Saul had been the main leader that *persecuted *believers. Now the *church was able to grow and the good news could spread.

Peter and Aeneas, 9:32-35

v32 Peter travelled all over the country. He went to visit God's people in Lydda. **v33** There he met a man called Aeneas. Aeneas was *paralysed. He had not been able to get out of bed for 8 years. **v34** Peter said to him, 'Aeneas, Jesus *Christ is curing you. Get up and make your bed neat.' Immediately, Aeneas got up. **v35** Everyone who lived in Lydda and Sharon saw him. And they all trusted the *Lord.

Verse 32 Here Luke continues the story about Peter. The *church was not in danger now. So, Peter could leave *Jerusalem. He could *preach in other places. Lydda was a town about 30 miles (48 kilometres) north-west from *Jerusalem.

Verses 33-34 Jesus cured a paralysed man in the town called Capernaum (Mark 2:1-12). ('Paralysed' means 'unable to move'.) Here, Luke describes how Jesus cured another paralysed man called Aeneas. This time, Jesus did it by means of Peter's prayers. Peter did not say, 'I am curing you' to Aeneas. Peter said, 'Jesus *Christ is curing you.' Peter knew that he (Peter) did not have the power to cure. Jesus has that power. Jesus cured people when he was on the earth. And he continued to cure people after he went to be with God, his Father. He cures people today when *Christians pray in his name.

Jesus told the *paralysed man in Capernaum to pick up his bed (Mark 2:11). Peter told Aeneas, 'make your bed neat'. Aeneas would need his bed only at night now!

Verse 35 Sharon was the northern plain near the coast. The news about Aeneas spread round the neighbourhood. Many *Gentiles lived there.

A dead woman comes back to life, 9:36-43

v36 In Joppa, there was a *disciple called Tabitha. In *Greek, her name was Dorcas. She always did good things and she helped people. **v37** About that time when Peter was travelling, Tabitha was ill. Then she died. They washed her body and they laid it in a room upstairs. **v38** Lydda was near Joppa. Peter was in Lydda. The *disciples in Joppa heard that he was

there. So, they sent two men to him. They asked him, 'Please come immediately!'

v39 Peter went with them. When Peter arrived, the *disciples took him to the room upstairs. All the widows stood round him and they were crying. They showed to him all the dresses and coats that Dorcas had made for them. She had made these when she was still with them.

v40 Peter sent them all out of the room. He knelt down and he prayed. He turned towards the dead woman and he said, 'Tabitha, get up.' Then she opened her eyes. And when she saw Peter, she sat up. **v41** He held her hand and he helped her to stand. Then he called the *believers and the widows and he showed Tabitha to them. She was alive! **v42** This news spread all over Joppa and many people believed in the *Lord. **v43** Peter stayed in Joppa for many days. He stayed with a man called Simon. Simon made things with leather.

Verses 36-38 Joppa is called Jaffa today. It is on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. It is about 16 kilometres (10 miles) north-west from Lydda.

The *Greek name 'Dorcas' means 'gazelle'. (A gazelle is a beautiful wild animal with feet like a horse has. It runs fast and it jumps high.) Perhaps Dorcas was always running fast because she was busy! She helped many people. So, she was very popular. But she died suddenly. Everyone was very upset.

Verse 39 Widows were very poor. They had no money. So, they needed people to help them. Dorcas made clothes for them. She helped them in that way. Probably, the widows were wearing those clothes when Peter arrived.

Verses 40-41 When Jesus made Jairus's daughter become alive again, he had sent most people out of the room (Mark 5:38-42). Only Peter, John and James stayed. Also, Jairus and his wife stayed. Probably Peter remembered this. Now he sent the people here outside, too. He knelt down and he prayed. Then he said some words in *Aramaic. He said, 'Tabitha, get up.' Jesus had said to Jairus's daughter, 'Little girl, get up.'

The same thing had happened then too. Dorcas, like Jairus's daughter, became alive again! Then Peter showed her to two groups of people. He showed her to the *believers. He did this to make their *faith even stronger. He also showed her to the widows. So, then they would know that they still had help.

Verses 42-43 When Jesus had made Lazarus become alive again, more people believed in him (John 12:10-11). The same thing happened here. Peter probably stayed in Joppa to teach the new *believers. He probably continued to tell the good news about Jesus to people. He even stayed with Simon, a man whom the *Jews *rejected. They *rejected him because he did a dirty job. He touched skins from dead animals when he worked. The *Jews said that he was '*unclean'. But Peter did not seem to care about this. Perhaps God was preparing Peter for what happened next.

Chapter 10

Cornelius the soldier, 10:1-8

v1 There was a man called Cornelius in Caesarea. He was a captain in the *Roman army. He was the captain of a group of soldiers called the 'Italian Unit'.
v2 Cornelius and all his family were good and they *worshipped God. He gave generously to people who needed help. And he prayed to God. He prayed about everything that he did. **v3** It was about 3 o'clock in the afternoon when he had a *vision. He clearly saw an *angel from God and the *angel came into his house. The *angel said, 'Cornelius!' **v4** Cornelius was afraid and he stared at the *angel. Cornelius said, 'What is it, sir?' The *angel answered, 'God has heard your prayers. And he knows about your gifts to poor people. He is pleased. **v5** Now send some men to Joppa to fetch a certain man. His name is Simon Peter. **v6** He is staying with the Simon who makes things from leather. This Simon's house is by the sea.'
v7 Then the *angel went away. Cornelius called two servants that were his. He also called a soldier who *worshipped God. This soldier worked for him. **v8** Cornelius

told them what had happened. Then he sent them to Joppa.

Verses 1-2 For the *Romans, Caesarea was the capital city in *Judea. It was about 104 kilometres (65 miles) north-west from *Jerusalem. The government was in Caesarea and many soldiers guarded the city. The word 'unit' here means a group of about 600 men. Cornelius was the captain of such a unit. He was a *Gentile but he *worshipped the one real God. And he helped *Jewish poor people. There were many *Gentiles like Cornelius. They did not *worship *Roman gods. They *worshipped God. But they did not follow the *Jewish religion completely. This was because they had not received *circumcision. The *Jews called them 'God-fearers'. This did not mean that they were afraid of God. It meant that they respected God. And they obeyed him. But they were still *Gentiles.

It is important to remember this. The *Samaritans were half *Jewish. The official from Ethiopia followed the *Jewish religion. But Cornelius was the first real *Gentile that joined the *church.

Verses 3-6 One afternoon, an *angel spoke to Cornelius. Cornelius was praying. 3 o'clock was one time when *Jews prayed. (*Jews prayed at certain times in the day. That was usual for them. Look at Acts 3:1.) The *angel said that God had noticed Cornelius's prayers and gifts. God wanted Cornelius to meet Simon Peter. Simon Peter was in Joppa, which was about 51 kilometres (32 miles) south, on the coast.

Cornelius was probably very surprised. He did not know why he had to meet Simon Peter. He did not know what would happen.

Verse 7 Cornelius obeyed the *angel immediately. We know that all his family believed in God (verse 2). When some writers translate the word for 'family', it means everyone in the house. So, Cornelius could trust his servants when he told them about the *vision. He also told one soldier about it. This was one of the soldiers who worked for him. The soldier also *worshipped God. Then Cornelius sent the three men to fetch Peter.

Peter's *vision, 10:9-16

v9 *The next day, at about noon, these men were coming near to Joppa. Peter went up onto the roof of the house. He went there to pray. v10* He became hungry and he wanted to eat. While people were preparing the meal, he saw a *vision. **v11** *He saw that heaven opened. And something came down. It was like a large sheet. It seemed as if someone was holding its four corners. And it seemed as if they were bringing it down to the earth. v12* There were all kinds of animals, *reptiles and birds in it. **v13** *A voice said to him, 'Peter, get up. Kill these and eat them.'* **v14** *But Peter said, 'I will certainly not do that, *Lord! I have never eaten anything that is *unclean. And I have never eaten anything that it is not proper to eat.'* **v15** *The voice spoke to him again. It said, 'God says that these animals are clean. Do not say that they are *unclean.'* **v16** *This happened three times. Then suddenly the sheet rose up and it went back to heaven.*

Verses 9-16 God was preparing Peter to meet Cornelius. Peter was a *Jew. And *Jews believed that God did not care about *Gentiles. They thought that God only cared about *Jews. *Jews refused even to enter a *Gentile's house. Even if the *Gentile *worshipped God, they would not enter. So, it would be very difficult for Peter to visit Cornelius.

But God taught a very important lesson to Peter. That lesson also surprised Peter a lot. Peter's family had taught him to follow the *Jewish laws about food. Those laws are in Leviticus 11. They are a very important part of the *Jewish religion. In those laws, there is a list. The list shows which animals and birds the *Jews can eat. Those animals and birds are 'clean'. But the *Jews have to kill the animals in a special way. All other animals are '*unclean'. For example, pigs are '*unclean'. *Jews would never eat them.

God spoke to Peter about this. God spoke about it in a *vision. Peter saw all kinds of animals and birds. Some of them were clean but other animals were *unclean. But the

voice in the *vision told Peter that he could eat any animal or bird. The voice said that all animals were clean.

Peter did not want to obey the voice. He had always obeyed the *Jewish laws about food. That is why he did not want to eat the '*unclean' animals and birds. But the voice answered him, 'God says that these animals are clean. Do not say that they are *unclean' (verse 15). That lesson was so important that the same *vision happened three times. Certainly, Peter would never forget it!

But the *vision was not just about food. *Gentiles ate kinds of meat that *Jews thought were *unclean. That was the main reason why *Jews did not go to *Gentiles' homes. And they would never eat with them. God showed to Peter that *Gentiles' food was clean. This meant that Peter could now welcome *Gentiles into the *church. He had to accept them, exactly as God accepted them.

Peter meets Cornelius, 10:17-33

v17 *Cornelius's men arrived and they stood by the gate. Peter was thinking about what the *vision meant. v18* They called out. They asked, 'Is Simon, who is called Peter, staying here?' **v19** *While Peter was still thinking about the *vision, the *Holy Spirit spoke to him. The Spirit said, 'Simon, three men are here and they are looking for you. v20* So, get up and go downstairs. I have sent them. So, do not hesitate and do not worry. Go with them.' **v21** *Peter went downstairs. He said to the men, 'You are looking for me. Why have you come?' v22* 'Captain Cornelius sent us', they replied. 'He is a good man and he *worships God. All the *Jewish people respect him very much. God's *angel told Cornelius to invite you to his house. Then Cornelius can listen to your message.' **v23** *Peter invited the men to stay as guests for the night.*

*The next day he got ready and he went with them. Some *believers from Joppa went with him. v24* The day after that, he arrived in Caesarea. Cornelius was waiting for him there. Cornelius had invited his own relatives and best friends and they were with him. **v25** *As Peter*

went in, Cornelius met him. Cornelius kneeled at Peter's feet and he *worshipped Peter. **v26** But Peter made him get up. Peter said, 'Stand up! I am only a man, like you are.' **v27** Peter continued to talk to Cornelius as he went into the house. Many people were there. **v28** He said to them, 'Our rules do not allow *Jews to visit *Gentiles. And they do not allow them to be with *Gentiles. But God has shown to me that I must not consider anyone as *unclean or unsuitable. **v29** So, when you invited me, I agreed to come. Now I want to know this. Why did you invite me?' **v30** Cornelius answered, '4 days ago, I was praying at home. It was about this time. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon. Suddenly, a man stood in front of me. His clothes shone. **v31** He said, "Cornelius! God has heard your prayers. He knows about your gifts to poor people. **v32** Now send someone to Joppa to fetch Simon. He is the Simon who is also called Peter. He is staying with the Simon who makes things from leather. He is staying in this Simon's home. This Simon lives near the sea.'" **v33** I sent someone to you immediately. You were kind and you came. Now we are all here with God. We can listen to everything that the *Lord has told you to say.'

Verses 17-20 The *vision confused Peter. But God had already sent people to help him. They would help him to understand it better. They were waiting outside because *Jews would not allow *Gentiles to enter *Jews' houses.

The *Holy Spirit spoke to Peter. Peter was worried. But the *Holy Spirit told Peter not to worry. The *Holy Spirit had sent the three *Gentile men to Peter. So, Peter had to go with them.

Verses 21-23 Peter went downstairs to meet the *Gentile visitors. He told them who he was. And they told him why they had come. 'Peter invited the men to stay as guests for the night' (verse 23). He ate a meal with *Gentiles, who had not received *circumcision. They

slept in the same house. Before the *vision, Peter would not have done this. But now, he was beginning to understand that God accepted *Gentiles. God did not think that *Gentiles were *unclean. So, Peter, too, should accept *Gentiles.

The next day, Peter and 6 other *believers went with the men. (Look at Acts 11:12.) They went north along the coast to Caesarea. It would take about 9 or 10 hours to walk there. They had to stop in order to rest, too. So, they did not arrive until the day after this.

Verses 24-26 Many people were waiting to see Peter. When Peter arrived, Cornelius kneeled at his feet. He kneeled as if Peter was a god. Peter was bringing God's message. At that time, some people very much respected any person who brought God's message. They believed that such a person also had the same qualities as a god. But immediately Peter made Cornelius get up. He told Cornelius that he (Peter) was only human.

Verses 27-29 This speech to a *Gentile audience changed what would happen in the future. Peter, a *Jew, entered a *Gentile's home. When he was doing this, he was acting against the *Jewish rules. He came because God accepted all people. Nobody was *unclean. So, he obeyed God. When they invited him, he came. He did not complain about it. Now he wanted to know why they had invited him.

Verses 30-32 Cornelius told Peter what had happened. When something important happens, Luke often repeats the story. Also, he leaves out details that are not important.

Verse 33 Cornelius thanked Peter that he (Peter) had come. Cornelius was not just being polite. He was also very grateful. Probably, he did not expect Peter to enter his house. But Peter had come in. So, Cornelius asked him to tell God's message to everyone.

The good news is for everyone! 10:34-43

v34 Peter began to speak. He said, 'I realise now that God does not have favourite people. **v35** Many people *worship him and they do the right things. He accepts all such people. It does not matter which nation they come from. **v36** God sent this same message to the

people in **Israel*. It is the good news about the **peace* that Jesus **Christ* offers. He is the **Lord* over all. **v37** You know about what happened everywhere in **Judea*. It began in **Galilee*, after John **preached* his message about **baptism*. **v38** You know about Jesus from **Nazareth*. You know how God **anointed* him with the **Holy Spirit* and power. You know that he went about to many places. And as he went about, he did good things. He cured all people who were under the devil's power. He could do this because God was with him.

v39 We all saw what he did in the **Jews'* country. We all saw what he did in **Jerusalem* city. But people killed Jesus. They hung him on a **cross*. That was how they killed him. **v40** But three days after this, God raised Jesus from death. God let people see him. **v41** Not everyone saw Jesus. The witnesses were people that God had already chosen. Only those witnesses saw Jesus. We are those witnesses. We ate with him after he rose from death. And we drank with him then. We are the people who did those things. **v42** Jesus told us to **preach* the good news to the people. He told us to announce clearly that God has chosen him as the judge. Jesus is the judge over all people, whether they are alive or dead. **v43** Every **prophet* spoke about him. The **prophets* said that God will forgive the **sins* of all people who believe in Jesus. This is by the power that is in Jesus' name.'

Verses 34-35 The **Jews* believed that they were God's favourite people. But Peter's **vision* showed to him that God loves everyone. Peter said that 'Many people **worship* him (God) and they do the right things. He accepts all such people' (verse 35). Peter did not mean that if people do these things, then they have **salvation*. Only Jesus can **save* us from the results that **sin* causes. Peter meant that God loves people from every nation in the world. Where you were born does not matter to God. It does not matter to God what colour your skin is. His **salvation* is

a gift. He offers that gift by means of Jesus to all people.

Verse 36 Peter probably said much more in this speech. But Luke wrote down the most important details. God's message to the **Gentiles* was the same as his message to the **Jews*. That message was 'the good news about the peace that Jesus **Christ* offers'. (Peace means freedom from mental or **spiritual* troubles.) The good news was for **Gentiles* too. **Sin* had separated people from God. This was a result that **sin* had caused. But Jesus came to rescue people from **sin*'s results. So, now, there is peace between people and God. This only happens by means of **faith* in Jesus. Many people believe in Jesus and they trust in him. Everyone who does those things can be God's friend.

Verse 37-38 Here, Peter described the main things that happened in Jesus' life and work. It is likely that these **Gentiles* knew something about Jesus. But they probably did not know very much about him. Jesus was a **Jew*. Before this, the **Christian* **faith* was just a part of **Judaism*. But now, everything had changed!

So, Peter gave to these **Gentiles* the same message that the **apostles* **preached*. (Look at the note about Acts 5:30-32.) There is no doubt that Jesus was human. Peter called him 'Jesus from **Nazareth*'. But Peter also said that Jesus is 'the **Lord* over all' (verse 36). That is a name that we give to God only. Jesus is a man and he is also God. Even when he lived on earth, God's power was in him. Peter said that 'as he (Jesus) went about, he did good things' (verse 38). Peter also told these **Gentiles* that Jesus cured people. Jesus had power over the devil. He freed people from evil **spirits*. He did this 'because God was with him' (verse 38).

Verse 39 Peter told his audience that he and the other **apostles* had seen all this. The **apostles* saw what Jesus did in 'the **Jews'* country'. 'The **Jews'* country' was the **Roman* **province* called **Judea*. The **apostles* also saw what happened in **Jerusalem* city. Peter had already told the **Jews* about Jesus' death. Now, Peter told these **Gentiles* how Jesus died. The **Jewish* leaders had wanted Jesus to die. But it was the **Romans* who had actually

killed him. *Roman soldiers had put nails through Jesus' hands and feet. They had hung him on a wooden *cross. Now Peter was describing that terrible death to a *Roman audience.

Verses 40-41 But then Peter told the good news to them. Jesus had beaten death! Peter and the other *apostles had seen this too. The *apostles had spent time with Jesus after he had come back to life. God had carefully chosen the people who would see Jesus. They would tell the truth about who Jesus really is. They would tell it to everyone. They could not doubt that he was alive. The *apostles had even seen him eat. And they had seen him drink. Everything that Peter said about Jesus was true. Jesus' *resurrection proved it.

Verses 42-43 Jesus had told the *apostles to '*preach the good news to the people'. The 'people' meant both *Jews and *Gentiles. (Look at Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:19.) The *apostles also had to say that Jesus will be the judge of every person. Nobody can escape from this. He will be the judge of everything that we do. And he will be the judge of everything that we say. But we must not be afraid. Jesus can save us from punishment. If we believe in Jesus, God will forgive us. This is the promise that God gave to all the *prophets.

The *Gentiles receive the *Holy Spirit, 10:44-48

v44 Peter was still speaking when the *Holy Spirit came down. The Spirit came down onto everyone who was listening. **v45** Some *Jewish *believers had come from Joppa with Peter. The *Jewish *believers were surprised. This was because God was giving the *Holy Spirit to the *Gentiles. **v46** Now they heard the *Gentiles when they (the *Gentiles) were speaking in different languages. And the *Gentiles were *praising God. Peter said, **v47** 'God has given the *Holy Spirit to these *Gentiles. It is the same as when we received the Spirit. So, I am sure that we can *baptise them with water. I am sure that nobody should stop us.' **v48** So, he ordered that they received *baptism in Jesus *Christ's name. Then they asked Peter to stay with them for a few days.

Verses 44-45 The *Holy Spirit interrupted Peter. Nobody had put their hands on the *Gentiles and nobody had prayed aloud for them. Peter did not even pray aloud that the *Holy Spirit would come. The Spirit came because the *Gentiles were willing to believe God's message. Peter had told them about *salvation by means of Jesus. In other words, God forgives people who believe Jesus. God forgives people who trust him. There can be no doubt that the *Gentiles believed immediately. So, the *Holy Spirit came down onto them. Anyone can receive the *Holy Spirit if he or she has real *faith in Jesus.

Peter had already said that God accepted *Gentiles. But the *Jewish *believers were still surprised when the *Gentiles received the *Holy Spirit. Perhaps they needed this proof that God accepted *Gentiles!

Verses 46-48 The *Gentiles spoke in 'different languages' or 'tongues'. (Look at the note about Acts 2:4.) The same thing also happened at *Pentecost, when the *Holy Spirit came down onto the *Jews. But now, this thing proved to the *Jews here that the *Gentiles had received the Spirit too. God had accepted the *Gentiles. They were not '*unclean' to him. Now the *church, too, had to accept them. So, all those *Gentiles received *baptism in water.

The *Gentiles asked Peter to stay with them for a longer time. He had entered a *Gentile house. Now he was their guest. They would talk together. They would eat together and they would drink together. *Jews and *Gentiles could be true friends. They were all in God's family.

Chapter 11

Peter's report to the *church in *Jerusalem, 11:1-18

v1 The *apostles and the *believers in *Judea heard that the *Gentiles also had received God's message. **v2** So, when Peter went to *Jerusalem, some *Jewish *believers there argued with him. These *believers wanted *Gentiles to receive *circumcision. They said, **v3** 'You stayed in *Gentiles' homes. You even ate with them!' **v4** Then Peter began to tell them

everything that had happened. He started from the beginning.

v5 *'I was in Joppa city. I was praying. I started to sleep and I had a *vision. I saw something like a large sheet. It seemed as if someone was holding its four corners. The sheet came down from heaven. It came down to where I was. v6 I looked into it and I saw tame animals and wild animals. I saw *reptiles and birds. v7 I heard a voice. The voice said to me, "Peter, get up! Kill these and eat them." v8 But I said, "I will certainly not do that, *Lord! Nothing *unclean has ever gone into my mouth. Nor has anything gone in that it is not proper to eat." v9 The voice spoke to me again. It came from heaven. It replied, "If God considers something as clean, you must not call it *unclean." v10 This happened three times. Then the sheet rose up and it went back into heaven.'*

Verse 1 Peter probably stayed in Caesarea for several weeks. Probably, he stayed to teach the new *Gentile *believers. The journey from Caesarea to *Jerusalem would take one week. But the *believers in *Jerusalem had already heard what had happened to the *Gentiles. They had heard the news before Peter arrived!

Verses 2-3 Some *Jewish *believers in *Jerusalem seemed angry. They were surprised that Peter had stayed with *Gentiles. Those *Gentiles had not received *circumcision. The *Jewish *believers said that the *Gentiles must receive *circumcision. Then they (the *Gentiles) could join the *church. Otherwise, they could not join it. *Circumcision was the most important *Jewish tradition. So, these *Jewish *believers wanted to keep it in the *church.

Verses 4-10 Probably, the people in the *church in *Jerusalem had not heard everything. They had probably heard only part of what had happened. Peter wanted to tell them everything. He started his story with his *vision at Joppa. Luke now recorded that event again, in Peter's words. This was because it was such an important event.

The first *Christians were *Jews. Some of them wanted to keep the *Jewish traditions. They wanted *Gentiles to follow *Judaism. In the *Jews' opinion, if the *Gentiles did that, then they (the *Gentiles) could join the *church. By means of Peter's *vision, God told the *Jews to accept *Gentiles without *circumcision. *Salvation was for *Gentiles too, even if they had not received *circumcision.

v11 *'Suddenly three men from Caesarea arrived. They stood in front of the house where I was staying. v12 The *Holy Spirit told me to go with them. The Spirit told me not to hesitate. And the Spirit told me not to worry. These 6 *believers from Joppa also went with me. We went into Cornelius's house. v13 He told us that he had seen an *angel appear in his house. The *angel had said, "Send someone to Joppa to fetch Simon. He is the Simon who is also called Peter. v14 He will bring a message to you. He will tell you how you and everyone in your house can receive *salvation." v15 When I began to speak, the *Holy Spirit came down onto them. The Spirit had come down onto us similarly before, in the beginning. It was like that. v16 Then I remembered what the *Lord had said. He had said, "John *baptised with water. But you will receive *baptism in the *Holy Spirit." v17 God gave to these *Gentiles the same gift that he gave to us. We received this same gift when we believed in the *Lord Jesus! So, I could not oppose God!'*

v18 *The *Jews heard Peter say that. They did not argue any more. They *praised God. They said, 'God has given to the *Gentiles the chance to *repent! They can repent so that they can have life!'*

Verses 11-12 The *Greek word for 'hesitate' here is the same as in Acts 10:20. But the grammar is different. This changes the meaning. Here, it means that Peter must not make distinctions between *Jews and *Gentiles.

Peter said, 'These 6 *believers from Joppa also went with me' (verse 12). So, there were 7 men in total. The *Jews knew both *Egyptian

law and *Roman law. In *Egyptian law, when people wanted to prove something important, they brought 7 witnesses. This proved that the thing was true. When the *Romans wrote something important, they put 7 special marks on the paper. This showed that it was true. So, Peter did not argue with the *Jewish *believers. He told them the facts. They knew that he was speaking the truth. They knew that because there were 7 witnesses. That was how he proved it.

Verses 13-14 The *angel used the word '*salvation'. This was important. Cornelius was a good man. But this did not mean that he had received *salvation. He received *salvation after he heard the *gospel. He believed in Jesus and he trusted in him. That is how he received *salvation. This is the only way in which people can receive *salvation. People do not receive *salvation because they do good things. They must *repent. They must decide that they do not want to *sin any longer. They must accept Jesus as their *Lord and *Saviour.

Verses 15-17 This part of Peter's report caused the most excitement. The *Holy Spirit had come down onto the *Gentiles! Peter remembered what Jesus had promised (verse 16). Jesus had made that promise before he returned to heaven (Acts 1:5). Now Peter understood that the promise was for *Gentiles too. God gave the *Holy Spirit to them when they believed in the *Lord Jesus. Peter could not argue with God!

Verse 18 Peter convinced the *Jewish *believers that God had given the *Holy Spirit to the *Gentiles. They could not argue with God either! Instead, they *praised God.

The first *Gentile *church, 11:19-30

v19 When Stephen died, there was *persecution. Some *believers went away. They went everywhere. Some went as far as Phoenicia, *Cyprus and Antioch. They told the message to the *Jews only. **v20** But other *believers from *Cyprus and Cyrene went to Antioch. They began to speak to the *Greeks also. They told the good news about the *Lord Jesus to the *Greeks. **v21** The *Lord's power was with the *believers. Many people believed

the good news and those people decided to trust the *Lord. **v22** The Christians in *Jerusalem heard about this. They sent Barnabas to Antioch. **v23** Barnabas saw that God had done good things for the people. He was happy about that. He encouraged them all to stay completely loyal to the *Lord. **v24** Barnabas was a good man. He was full of the *Holy Spirit and he had much *faith. Many people decided to trust the *Lord.

v25 Barnabas went to Tarsus. He went to search for Saul. **v26** And when he had found Saul, he brought Saul to Antioch. Saul and Barnabas met with the *church there for a whole year. And they taught many people. At Antioch, the *believers were called *Christians for the first time.

v27 During this time, some *prophets went from *Jerusalem to Antioch. **v28** One *prophet was called Agabus. He stood up. And he said that there would be a very bad *famine. It would happen all over the world. He knew this by means of the Spirit's power. (The *famine happened when Claudius was the *Emperor.) **v29** So, the *disciples decided to send help to their brothers (other Christians) in *Judea. Each *disciple would send whatever he was able to send. **v30** So, they did this and they gave the money to Barnabas and Saul. Barnabas and Saul took it to the *church's leaders in *Jerusalem.

Verses 19-21 Antioch was in Syria. It was in the north. It was an important city for trade. People from many different countries did business there together. Many *Gentiles went to *Jewish *synagogues there. Some such *Gentiles received *circumcision. But some such *Gentiles did not receive *circumcision. They were '*God-fearers' like Cornelius. The differences between *Jews and *Gentiles mattered a lot in *Jerusalem. But in Antioch, they did not matter as much. So, there, some *Jews who spoke *Greek *preached about Jesus to *Greek *Gentiles also. This probably happened when they met together in the *synagogues. Many *Gentiles followed the new *faith.

Verses 22-24 The Christians in *Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch. They wanted to know what was happening. This does not mean that they were angry. Barnabas was a *Jew who spoke *Greek. His name meant 'someone who encourages'. The *church in Antioch was a new one. Probably, the Christians in *Jerusalem wanted to be friendly to those new Christians. So, that was why they sent Barnabas there.

'Barnabas saw that God had done good things for the people' (verse 23). Barnabas saw proof that God had done this. Perhaps they had changed the way that they lived. Many people in Antioch did bad things. Perhaps the new *believers did not do those bad things any longer now. Maybe they surprised people in that way. Perhaps they were using the gifts from the *Holy Spirit, like *prophecy.

Barnabas was pleased. He did not need to teach those people who had already become *believers. But he told them that they must continue to follow Jesus. Nothing must stop them. It seems that Barnabas became a leader in the *church at Antioch. He was a good man. This was because he was full of the *Holy Spirit and *faith. When a person is like this, God works by means of him or her. God worked by means of Barnabas. Because of Barnabas, 'many people decided to trust the *Lord' (verse 24).

Verses 25-26 Barnabas had done great things. However, he knew when to ask for help. Now, because there were many more new *believers, Barnabas needed someone to help him. It did not worry him that he would be sharing his work. He considered that the *church was most important. Leaders of *churches today should try to be like him.

Barnabas remembered Saul. Saul was the right person for this work with the *Gentiles (Acts 9:15, 27). Saul was in Tarsus. The *believers in *Jerusalem had sent him there for safety (Acts 9:28-30). That was about 7 or 8 years before. Now Barnabas fetched him. Together, they taught the many new *believers in Antioch.

The *pagans in Antioch were famous because they used words in clever ways. So, they made up a name for the *believers. They called the *believers '*Christians'. (The *Greek word is

'Christianoi'.) The *pagans probably meant this to be a joke. It was probably because the *believers were always talking about *Christ. Certainly, the *believers did not call themselves '*Christians'. But this name showed that people considered the new *faith as different from *Judaism.

Verses 27-30 Claudius was the *Emperor from *AD 41-54. During this time, there were 5 *famines in the *Roman *empire. They happened in different parts of it. Actually, 5 writers recorded that they happened. One was the *Jewish writer Josephus (*AD 37-100). He wrote about a *famine in *Judea. It happened between *AD 44 and 48. But the *believers in Antioch knew that it would happen. They knew because Agabus had told them about it. So, they could prepare for it. They had not met the *believers in *Judea. But the *believers in Antioch knew that both the groups belonged to God's family now. So, they helped the *believers in Judea.

*Christians today have sisters and brothers all over the world. Everyone who obeys Jesus is our brother or sister. That is why we must help each other. Although we may never meet some Christians on earth, they are our brothers or sisters.

So, Barnabas and Saul went back to *Jerusalem. They took money to help the *believers there.

Chapter 12

Peter in prison again, 12:1-5

v1 At that time, King Herod arrested some members of the *church. He made them suffer very badly. **v2** He ordered soldiers to kill James, John's brother, with a sword. **v3** The *Jews were pleased about that. Herod saw that they were pleased. So, he arrested Peter also. (This happened during the *Festival of *Unleavened Bread.) **v4** After Herod had arrested Peter, he put Peter in prison. Four groups of soldiers guarded Peter. And each group had four soldiers in it. Herod wanted to bring Peter out after the *Passover because he wanted Peter to have a public *trial then.

v5 *So, Herod kept Peter in prison. But the Christians prayed to God about Peter. They did not stop praying.*

Verse 1 Herod was the name that people called all the *Jewish rulers. It was the name of the rulers' family. This Herod was Herod Agrippa the First (the first Herod that had the name Agrippa). He was Herod the Great's grandson. Herod the Great was ruling when Jesus was born (Matthew 2:1). Herod Agrippa the First was a friend of the *Roman rulers, Caligula and Claudius. When Claudius became the *Emperor in *AD 41, he gave *Judea to Herod Agrippa. Before, a *Roman had ruled over it.

Herod Agrippa the First wanted to stay popular with the *Jews. Many *Jewish leaders now opposed the *church. So, Herod opposed the *church too. He used his authority to *persecute *believers. He arrested the leaders of the *church. He wanted to destroy the *church.

Verse 2 James was an important *disciple. He was John's brother. In the *Gospels, the writers mention James and John many times. Soldiers killed James 'with a sword'. This means that they cut off his head. This was the punishment for political crimes.

Verses 3-5 'The *Jews were pleased.' 'The *Jews' here probably meant the *Jewish rulers, who were the *Pharisees and the *Sadducees. Herod wanted to be even more popular. He wanted to show that he was loyal to the *Jewish religion. So, he arrested Peter.

Herod wanted to arrange a public *trial for Peter. But Herod could not do this immediately. He had to wait until the *Passover had finished. The *Passover lasted 7 days. So, he had to keep Peter in prison in the meanwhile.

However, the *apostles had many friends. Also, many people were secret *believers. So, Herod made sure that Peter could not escape. Guards were with Peter all day and all night. They guarded him in turn, so that there were always four soldiers there. It seemed impossible for Peter to get away.

But nothing is impossible for God. While Peter was in prison, the *believers prayed for him.

They did not pray only once. They continued to pray. Then a *miracle happened!

Peter escapes! 12:6-10

v6 *It was the night before Peter's *trial. He was asleep between two soldiers. They had tied him up with two chains. There were some other soldiers, who were guarding the exit of the prison. v7 Suddenly, an *angel of the *Lord appeared. A light shone everywhere in Peter's room in the prison. The *angel hit Peter on his side. The *angel woke Peter up. 'Be quick! Get up!' said the *angel. The chains fell off Peter's hands. v8 Then the *angel said, 'Put on your clothes and shoes.' Peter did this. Then the *angel said, 'Put on your coat and follow me.' v9 Peter followed the *angel out of the prison. But Peter thought that he was dreaming. He did not know that it was real. v10 They passed the first guards. They passed the second guards. Then they came to the iron gate. To get out into the city, one had to go through this gate. It opened by itself! So, they went out. They went along the street. Suddenly, the *angel disappeared.*

Verses 6-10 Peter was sleeping. He felt calm, because he always trusted God. Probably, he thought that he would die the next day. He did not know that he would escape. But he was calm.

Suddenly, an *angel appeared in Peter's room. The *Greek word for '*angel' (aggelos) can just mean a person who brings a message. So, some students say that this *angel was human. They say that it was not an *angel from heaven. But Luke mentioned *angels from heaven many times in his *Gospel. He also mentioned them at the beginning of Acts. In total, he mentioned them about 15 times. And here, Luke writes that 'a light shone everywhere in Peter's room' (verse 7). Luke meant that the *angel was not human. Peter's escape was a *miracle. Even Peter thought that he was dreaming!

Peter and the *angel had to pass through three gates to get out. Perhaps the soldiers who were guarding the first two gates were asleep. Or maybe they thought that Peter was

a servant. It was dark. They did not expect to see him. But the third gate (the iron one) was the main gate. Servants would not go out of the main gate at night. So, God made a wonderful thing happen. The iron gate just opened by itself. When they were outside, the *angel disappeared.

A surprise! 12:11-19

v11 Then Peter realised what had happened. He said, 'I am sure now that the *Lord sent his *angel to me. He sent the *angel to rescue me from Herod. He rescued me from everything that the *Jews decided to do to me.'

v12 When he understood this, he went to Mary's home. Mary was John Mark's mother. Many people had gathered there and they were praying. **v13** Peter knocked on the gate. A servant girl called Rhoda came. **v14** She recognised Peter's voice. But she did not open the gate. She was so happy that she ran back inside. She told the people that Peter was standing outside.

v15 'You are crazy!' they all told her. But she continued to say that it was true. So, they said, 'It is his *angel, then.'

v16 But Peter continued to knock. So, they opened the gate. When they saw him, they were very surprised. **v17** Peter gave a signal with his hand. He wanted them to be quiet. Then he described how the *Lord had brought him out of prison. 'Tell James and all the other *believers what has happened', he said. Then he left and he went to another place.

v18 The next morning, the guards did not know what had happened to Peter. So, they were very worried. **v19** Herod ordered his soldiers to search for Peter. But they could not find him. So, Herod asked the guards questions. Then he ordered soldiers to kill the guards. After this, Herod left *Judea. He went to Caesarea and he stayed there for some time.

Verses 11-12 Peter knew now that he was not dreaming. What had happened was real. He was free. But he knew that he must hide

quickly. So, he went to a house where *Christians met.

The *church in *Jerusalem was too big to meet in one building. So, groups of its members met in big houses. Some members met in the house of John Mark's mother. This is the first time that Luke mentions John Mark. John Mark wrote the second *Gospel. He travelled with Paul. We shall read more about him later in 'Acts'. Luke does not mention his father. Perhaps John Mark's mother was a widow. She was rich. We know that because she owned a big house. It had a gate (verse 13). This gate was the entrance to a yard. Also, she had a servant. Possibly, she had more than one servant.

Verses 13-16 The servant, Rhoda, was so happy that she forgot to open the door! The *believers inside were praying for Peter. But they did not believe that he was there, outside! Perhaps they did not think that God would answer their prayers so quickly. They thought that Rhoda was crazy. Or they thought that Peter's *angel was outside.

People believed that each person had an *angel, who looked after him or her. But they refused to believe that it was really Peter himself.

Peter probably felt very impatient. He needed to get off the street, so that nobody could see him there. So, he continued to knock until they answered.

Verse 17 Peter wanted them to be quiet, because he was still in danger. When Herod's guards searched for him, they would come to this house first. This was because his *Christian friends met there. He told his friends what had happened. He told them to tell James (Jesus' brother) and the other *believers. This James became a leader of the *church in *Jerusalem (Acts 15:13; 21:18).

'He went to another place' (verse 17). Peter had to go far away from *Jerusalem. We do not know where he went. Probably, he went to a country where Herod was not the ruler. Later, he returned to *Jerusalem (Acts 15:7).

Verses 18-19 Herod probably thought that the guards had helped Peter to escape. Now there would not be a public *trial. Herod was very angry. So, he punished the guards by death. Then Herod left *Jerusalem.

Herod Agrippa the First dies, 12:20-25

v20 Herod was very angry with the people who lived in Tyre and Sidon. So, a group of them went to see Blastus. Blastus was one of Herod's most important officials. The group of people persuaded Blastus to help them. Then they went to Herod. They asked Herod for peace between him and their cities. This was because their country got much food from Herod's country.

v21 They arranged to meet on a certain day. Herod put on his royal clothes and he sat on his *throne. He made a speech to the people.

v22 'This is not a man's voice. It is the voice of a god!' shouted the people.

v23 Immediately, an *angel of the *Lord knocked Herod down. Herod had taken the honour that belonged to God. That was why the *angel knocked him down. *Worms ate Herod and he died.

v24 God's message continued to grow and it continued to spread. **v25** Barnabas and Saul finished the work that they had to do. After this, they returned from *Jerusalem. They took John Mark with them.

Verse 20 When Herod left *Jerusalem, he went to Caesarea. Caesarea was on the coast. Tyre and Sidon were ports by the Mediterranean Sea. They were close to Caesarea, which was also a port. Perhaps the traders in Tyre and Sidon took trade away from Caesarea. Perhaps that is why Herod was angry with Tyre's people and Sidon's people.

However, we do not know exactly why Herod argued with them. But the people from Tyre and Sidon wanted to make peace with Herod. Wheat grew in *Galilee and those people needed this wheat for food. Herod was ruling over *Galilee. So, they persuaded Blastus, Herod's official, to help them.

Verses 21-23 Herod and the people from Tyre and Sidon wanted to be friends again. They wanted to do this in public. Perhaps Herod was trying to be popular again. So, they chose

a day when they would meet. It was probably a special day, like the *Emperor's birthday.

The *Jewish writer Josephus also wrote an account of this occasion. He described the clothes that Herod wore. Someone had made them from silver cloth. They shone in the sun. For that reason, the people shouted that Herod was a god. Josephus wrote that Herod did not stop them. Josephus also described Herod's death.

Suddenly, Herod had a bad pain in his bowels. (The bowels are part of the body. Food passes through the bowels and then it goes out of the body.)

Herod was very ill for 5 days before he died. In Acts, Luke tells us what was making Herod so ill. '*Worms ate Herod and he died.' *Worms can damage the bowels and in this way they can cause death. Luke shows that Herod's death was God's punishment of Herod.

Verse 25 Barnabas and Saul had gone to *Jerusalem with money. (Look at Acts 11:30.) This money would be a help to the *Jewish *Christians during the *famine. John Mark was Barnabas's cousin (Colossians 4:10). John Mark returned to Antioch with Barnabas and Saul.

Chapter 13**The *Holy Spirit chooses Barnabas and Saul, 13:1-3**

v1 There were some *prophets and teachers in the *church at Antioch. They were Barnabas, Simeon (called 'Black') and Lucius from Cyrene. There was also Manaen. He had lived with Herod (Antipas) when he (Manaen) was growing up. Also, there was Saul. **v2** They were *worshipping the *Lord and they were *fasting. The *Holy Spirit told those men, 'I have chosen Barnabas and Saul to do special tasks for me. Separate them from the other *believers so that they can do this work.' **v3** The men *fasted and they prayed. Then, they put their hands on Barnabas and Saul and they sent these two men off.

Verse 1 These teachers and *prophets were probably the leaders of the *church in

Antioch. Barnabas and Saul were the most famous ones. But the other leaders were also important in the early *church. That is why Luke mentions them. Their names show that they were from different places.

Simeon (or Simon) is a *Jewish name. Simeon was also called 'Niger', which is the Latin word for 'black'. (At that time, Latin was the language that people spoke in Rome.) So, Simeon was a black man. He probably came from Africa. Some students say that he was Simon from Cyrene. Simon from Cyrene carried Jesus' *cross (Luke 23:26). But here, Luke spells the name 'Simeon'. And in Luke's *Gospel, Simon from Cyrene is not called 'Black'.

Lucius is a *Roman name. Some men spoke to the *Greek *Gentiles about Jesus. This Lucius may have been one of those men. (Look at Acts 11:20. And look at the note about it.)

Manaen is the *Greek word for the *Hebrew name Menahem. The name means 'someone who gives comfort'. During Manaen's childhood, he had lived with Herod Antipas. Antipas was the Herod who killed John the *Baptist (Luke 9:9). Antipas was also at Jesus' *trial (Luke 23:6-12).

Verse 2 *Christians *fast for several reasons. It helps them to think about *spiritual things instead of physical things. It can help them to hear what God is saying. To *fast was important in the early *church. Probably, all the Christians in Antioch were *fasting. This meant that they expected God to say something to them.

'The *Lord' here means Jesus. Those words show that Christians were now *worshipping Jesus as *Lord and God. Here in verse 2, they were *worshipping and they were also *fasting. While they were doing those things, the *Holy Spirit spoke to them. Probably, the *Holy Spirit gave the message by means of one of their *prophets. The *Holy Spirit chose Barnabas and Saul to be *missionaries.

Verse 3 The members of the *church *fasted again and they prayed again. They knew that something very important was happening. Barnabas and Saul were obeying Jesus' command in Matthew 28:19. Jesus had told them, 'Go to the people in all nations. Make them my *disciples. *Baptise them in the

Father's name, the Son's name and the *Holy Spirit's name.' The whole *church sent Barnabas and Saul off to do this. The *prophets and teachers put their hands on the two men to bless them before their journey.

The *missionaries go to *Cyprus, 13:4-12

v4 The *Holy Spirit sent Barnabas and Saul off on their journey. They went to Seleucia. Then they sailed to the island called *Cyprus. **v5** They arrived at Salamis and they *preached God's message in the *synagogues. John Mark was with them and he helped them.

v6 They travelled across the island to the city called Paphos. There, they met Bar-Jesus. He was a *Jewish *magician. He was also a false *prophet. **v7** He was a friend of Sergius Paulus, the ruler of the island. Sergius Paulus was a very clever man. He wanted to hear God's message. So, he sent for Barnabas and Saul. **v8** But Bar-Jesus, whose *Greek name was Elymas, opposed them. He tried to persuade the ruler not to follow the *faith. **v9** Then Saul, whose *Greek name was Paul, became full of the *Holy Spirit. Paul looked straight at Elymas. **v10** Paul said to him, 'You are the devil's child. You are an enemy of everything that is good. You tell lies. You tell people wrong things. You are always trying to change the *Lord's truths into lies! **v11** The *Lord will punish you and now you will be blind for some time.' Immediately, a dark mist covered Elymas's eyes. He searched for people who could help him. He wanted them to take his hand. And he wanted them to lead him. **v12** The ruler saw what had happened. The ruler was surprised because of what he learned about the *Lord. So, the ruler trusted the *Lord and he had *faith in the *Lord.

Verses 4-5 Here, Luke describes how the first *missionary journey started. The island called *Cyprus was Barnabas's home. So, he could guide Saul and he could introduce Saul to people there.

Salamis was on that island's east coast. It was an important city for trade. Many *Jews lived

there. So, Barnabas and Saul *preached to them first. They usually *preached to the *Jews first when they came to a new place.

Luke also records that John Mark was with Barnabas and Saul. Perhaps John Mark went to give them practical help. Then they could concentrate on their main task, which was to *preach the good news.

Verses 6-8 Paphos was the capital of *Cyprus. People there *worshipped Aphrodite, the *Greek *goddess of love and sex. The city was famous because the people there were so wicked. Often, when people do wicked things, they have connections with magic. Even Sergius Paulus, the ruler of Cyprus, had a private *magician. This *magician was a *Jew. Usually, the *Jews did not do magic. God had said that people must not do magic (Deuteronomy 18:10-12). But Bar-Jesus did magic. His other name, Elymas, meant '*magician'. If his master became a *Christian, Elymas would lose his job as *magician. Elymas knew that. So, he opposed the *missionaries, Barnabas and Saul. He tried to persuade his master not to believe the *Christian *faith.

Verses 9-12 Often, *Jews had a second name, which was a *Greek or *Roman one. Now, Luke calls Saul by his *Greek name, Paul. This seems more suitable. This is because Paul had become a *missionary to *Gentile countries.

Paul became full of the *Holy Spirit, so that Paul spoke with God's power and authority. Paul understood that the devil was attacking the *missionaries by means of Elymas. Elymas's other name, 'Bar-Jesus', meant 'son of Jesus'. That is, 'son of a *saviour'. But this man was the devil's child! He had tried to prevent people so that they would not receive *salvation. So, God punished Elymas. Elymas became blind. This was a *sign. The *sign showed that he was blind *spiritually. But it would only last 'for some time' (verse 11). Perhaps this meant that if Elymas *repented, he would see again. Like Simon the *magician (Acts 8:9-13), Elymas had power. But again, we see here that God's power is greater.

The ruler saw what happened. But this did not convince him completely. Paul and Barnabas taught him about Jesus. Only then,

'the ruler trusted the *Lord and he had *faith in the *Lord' (verse 12).

Paul and Barnabas go to Pisidian Antioch, 13:13-15

v13 Paul and his companions left Paphos and they sailed to Perga in Pamphylia. Then John left them and he returned to *Jerusalem. **v14** They travelled from Perga to Pisidian Antioch. On the *Sabbath day, they went to the *synagogue. And they sat down inside. **v15** Someone read from the *scriptures. That is, someone read from the *Law and the *Prophets. Afterwards, the leaders of the *synagogue sent a message to Paul and Barnabas. The leaders said, 'Brothers, maybe you have a message that will encourage the people. If you have such a message, please speak.'

Verse 13 The *missionaries travelled north to Perga in Pamphylia. Then, John Mark left them and he went back to *Jerusalem. It seems that there was an argument. In Acts 15:38, Paul seems annoyed that John Mark had left them. We do not know why John Mark left. Perhaps he thought that the journey was too hard for him. Pamphylia was a very damp, unhealthy place. People often became ill there. Or perhaps John Mark was unhappy because Paul now seemed more important. When the *missionaries started their journey, Luke wrote about 'Barnabas and Saul'. But when they left *Cyprus, Luke wrote Paul's name first. Luke wrote about 'Paul and his companions'. He did not even mention Barnabas then. Barnabas was John Mark's cousin.

Verse 14 Pisidian Antioch was not actually in Pisidia. It was in Phrygia, which was near Pisidia. But there were several cities called Antioch. Paul and Barnabas had come from Antioch in Syria. Also, there were two Antiochs in Phrygia. So, this one was called Pisidian Antioch. This distinguished it from the other Antioch that was in Phrygia.

Verse 15 On the *Sabbath, people went to the *synagogue. There, they heard someone read the *scriptures. Readers read twice, from two different parts of the scriptures. First, they read from the books that contain the *Law.

Then, they read from the books that contain the *prophets' messages. After that, someone would explain what those *scriptures meant. The leaders of this *synagogue invited the *missionaries to do this. Perhaps they saw that Paul was wearing a *rabbi's clothes. This is the first time that Luke records a public speech by Paul.

Paul talks about *Jewish history, 13:16-25

v16 Paul stood up and he waved his hand. And he said, 'Listen, people from *Israel! Listen, all *Gentiles that *worship God! **v17** *Israel's God chose our *ancestors. They lived as foreigners in *Egypt. But God changed them into a great nation during that time. Then, he brought them out from *Egypt by his great power. **v18** He looked after them in the desert. He did that for about 40 years. **v19** God destroyed 7 nations in the country called Canaan. Then he gave that country to our people. **v20** All this happened over a period of 450 years. Afterwards, God gave judges to our people. This was until the time when the *prophet Samuel lived. **v21** But the people asked for a king. So, God gave Saul, Kish's son, from Benjamin's *tribe to them. Saul was king for 40 years. **v22** Then God removed Saul and he made David king over the people. God said this about David: "David, Jesse's son, is the kind of person that I like best. He will do everything that I want him to do." **v23** God promised that someone from David's family would *save *Israel's people. That *Saviour is Jesus. **v24** John told everyone in *Israel to *repent. And he told them to receive *baptism. That was before Jesus came. **v25** When John had almost finished his work, he said this: "Think about who I am. I am not the person for whom you wait. No, I am not that person! But he will come later, after me. I am not good enough to remove his shoes."'

Verse 16 When someone wanted to speak in public, he waved his hand first. That was the custom. (Look also at Acts 12:17; 19:23;

21:40; 26:1.) The person probably did that to get people's attention.

Paul greeted both the *Jews and the *God-fearers' that were in the *synagogue. (Look at the note about Acts 10:1-2.)

Verses 17-25 Like Stephen (Acts chapter 7), Paul reminded the *Jews about their history. He reminded them that God had chosen them. God had protected them and he had looked after them. He had given to their *ancestors the country that he had promised. He had given to them judges, who would guide them. God had warned the people that it would be bad for them to have a king (1 Samuel 8). He had warned them by means of Samuel. But when they demanded to have a king, God chose Saul for them.

But King Saul did not obey God. So, God *rejected him (1 Samuel 15). God chose David instead. David became *Israel's most famous king. Although David had done some very bad things, he pleased God. David always loved God and he wanted to serve God. That was why he pleased God. David was sorry for the bad things that he had done.

Paul showed how God had always helped the *Jews. God had helped them for hundreds (100s) of years. He had always looked after them. He chose their leaders. He controlled everything. He had given to them the country that he had promised. He had also promised to give them a *Saviour.

Here, Paul introduced Jesus. Paul mentioned John the *Baptist first. But John did not want people to think that he was important. He only wanted to show to them that Jesus would come. This was what Paul wanted to do, too. He wanted to do it because Jesus was the most important.

Jesus is the *Saviour! 13:26-41

v26 'Listen, my brothers, sons of Abraham! Listen, you *Gentiles who *worship God! This message about *salvation is for us all! **v27** The people in *Jerusalem and their leaders did not know that Jesus is the *Saviour. They did not understand the *prophets' words, which they still read every *Sabbath. The people and their leaders *condemned Jesus. So, they proved that those words

were true. **v28** They had no reason to kill him. But they asked Pilate to order Jesus' death. **v29** In the *scriptures, the writers wrote many things that people would do to Jesus. And those people and their leaders did all those things to him. Afterwards, they took him down from the *cross. And they put him in a grave. **v30** But God raised him from death.

v31 Jesus appeared in front of those who had followed him from *Galilee to *Jerusalem. This happened on many days. And these people are now witnesses for him to the *Israelites. **v32** We are here to tell the good news to you! God made a promise to our *ancestors. **v33** For us, their children, that promise has become true! This is because he has raised Jesus up. In the second Psalm, we read this: "You are my Son. Today I have given you the honour that belongs to someone with that name." **v34** God raised Jesus from death. He will never let Jesus' body go bad in the grave. This is what God said about that: "I will give to you the *holy and certain *blessings that I promised to David." **v35** In another psalm, the writer says this: "God will not let his *Holy One's body go bad in the grave."

v36 When David was alive, he did good things. He did what God wanted him to do. After he died, people buried him in the family's grave. Then his body went bad.

v37 But God raised Jesus from death. And Jesus' body did not go bad.

v38 My brothers, I want you to know this: Jesus can forgive your *sins. **v39** The *Law that Moses received could not free you from all your *sins. But people can believe in Jesus and they can trust in him. Everyone who does those things is free!

v40 Be careful! The *prophets have warned you. They have said this: Do not let this happen to you:

v41 "Look, you people who joke about God!

Be surprised and die!

I will do something today
that you will not believe.

You would not believe it
even if someone told you." "

Verse 26 The second part of Paul's speech is all about Jesus. It is similar to Peter's speeches in Acts chapters 2 and 4. But Paul was not talking to *Jews only. He said, 'this message about *salvation is for us all'. That meant the 'sons of Abraham' (the *Jews) and the *Gentiles.

Verse 27 Like Peter, Paul blamed the *Jews for Jesus' death. Paul said that they did not know what they were doing. This, too, was like what Peter said. (Look also at Acts 3:17.) The most important fact was that the *prophecies about Jesus became true. The *Jewish leaders and teachers knew the *scriptures very well. But they did not understand the real meaning.

Verses 28-29 Paul described Jesus' death. He also said that people put Jesus' body in a grave. He wanted his audience to know that Jesus had really died. So, then they would know that his *resurrection was real. They would know that something really surprising and wonderful had happened.

Verses 30-31 Paul showed how people had *condemned Jesus. But God had proved that they were wrong. The *resurrection was a real *miracle. Jesus appeared in front of his *disciples after God had raised him from death. Jesus did this for 40 days (Acts 1:3).

Verses 32-33 Paul used words from the *scriptures. In this way, he showed what God had done. Paul said that God had 'raised Jesus up' (verse 33). This meant that God had given Jesus to be his *Messiah. Paul said words from Psalm 2:7. This is a psalm about the king that God chooses. It reminds us about God's promise to David. Someone from among David's family would be the *Saviour.

Verses 34-37 David died and his body went bad. But Jesus died and his body did not go bad. This was because God raised him from death. Paul spoke those words from Psalm 16:10. Peter had also spoken them in Acts 2:27. But Paul linked them with Isaiah 55:3, where we read about God's *blessings. God's *blessings are certain because Jesus is alive! His *resurrection means that God's *kingdom is here.

Verses 38-39 Again, Paul called his audience 'brothers'. He means that they are *Jews like himself. Now he gave to them the main part of his message. Jesus forgives *sins! *Sin is like a prison. There is only one way out of that prison. Jesus is the way. People can try to do the right things. They can obey the *Law. But that will not make them free. Paul said that 'people can believe in Jesus and they can trust in him. Everyone who does those things is free.'

Verses 40-41 Paul had spoken about those people who believe. Then he warned those who would not believe. He used words that the *prophet Habakkuk had written (Habakkuk 1:5). Habakkuk said that God was doing something special at the time when he lived. But he said that the people did not recognise what God was doing then. At the time when Paul lived, the *Jews were in a similar situation. They, too, needed to recognise what God was doing. God controls what happens to people at different times.

The *Jews oppose Paul and Barnabas, 13:42-52

v42 Paul and Barnabas left the *synagogue. As they left, the people invited them to come back on the next *Sabbath. The people wanted them to speak more about these things. **v43** After the meeting, many *Jews and '*God-fearers' followed them. Paul and Barnabas talked with them. They urged them to continue to live in God's *grace. **v44** The next *Sabbath, nearly everyone in the city came to hear God's message. **v45** But the *Jews were jealous when they saw the crowds. They insulted Paul. And they opposed everything that he said. **v46** But Paul and Barnabas answered bravely. 'We had to tell God's message to you before we told everyone else. But you *rejected it! So, you do not think that you deserve *everlasting life! Therefore we shall go to the *Gentiles. **v47** This is what the *Lord ordered us to do. He said this: "I have put you here to be a light for the *Gentiles. This is so that you can bring *salvation to people all over the world."'

v48 The *Gentiles were happy when they heard this. And they *praised the *Lord's message. God had chosen people to receive *everlasting life. And those people became *believers.

v49 The message about the *Lord spread through the whole region. **v50** But the *Jews spoke to some important men in the town. The *Jews also spoke to important *Gentile women who *worshipped God. The *Jews persuaded the people to oppose Paul and Barnabas. So, people started to *persecute Paul and Barnabas. The *Jews ordered Paul and Barnabas to leave that part of the country. **v51** Paul and Barnabas shook the dust from that place off their feet. And they went to Iconium. **v52** But the *believers in Antioch were very happy. They were full of the *Holy Spirit.

Verses 42-43 *Jews and '*God-fearers' wanted to hear more about the good news. It seems that some already believed. Luke writes that Paul and Barnabas 'urged them to continue to live in God's *grace' (verse 43). This is good advice for every *believer. When we have accepted Jesus as our *Saviour, God's *grace helps us to live for him. God's grace is a gift. But we must accept this gift and we must use it. We must not trust in our own strength. We must obey God and we must serve him. But God will give to us all that we need for that.

Verses 44-48 The people who heard Paul and Barnabas's message probably told many other people about it. So, 'nearly everyone in the city came to hear God's message' (verse 44).

But the *Jews were jealous. Perhaps it was because the *missionaries were so popular. More probably, the *Jews did not like the *missionaries' message. The *Jews were God's special people. Paul and Barnabas's message was about God's *grace. And that *grace was for everyone who believes in Jesus (verse 39). Many *Gentiles had come to the *synagogue to hear about this. Perhaps the *Jews did not like them to come. The *Jews did not believe that God accepts *Gentiles. They did not want *Gentiles to be equal with *Jews in front of God. So, the *Jews insulted Paul and they opposed his message.

Paul and Barnabas were not afraid to answer the *Jews. They agreed that the *Jews should hear God's message first. When the *Jews *rejected it, they were making themselves guilty. This was because they had *rejected *everlasting life. So, they could not enter God's *kingdom.

Then Paul and Barnabas would *preach the message to the *Gentiles. This was what God wanted. Paul proved this with words from Isaiah 49:6. Wherever they went, Paul and the other *missionaries *preached to the *Jews first. Then they went to the *Gentiles. (Look at Romans 1:16.)

The *Gentiles did not *reject the message. They believed it. And it made them happy. People are very happy after they accept Jesus as their *Saviour. Even if that causes trouble for them, they still have joy.

Verse 49-50 The *Jews could not stop the good news about Jesus. So, they made it difficult for Paul and Barnabas to stay. They persuaded the leaders of the city to oppose the *missionaries.

In many *Roman cities, people did wicked things. Some women sold their bodies to men for sex. Men had sex with women who were not their wives. As a result, many women suffered. Their families also suffered. Many *Gentile women wanted to live in the right way. So, some *Gentile women followed *Judaism, because it had rules about sex. The *Jewish *Law taught also that people should not steal. They should not lie, nor should they do other bad things.

Some such *Gentile women in Pisidian Antioch were married to important men. The *Jews persuaded them to make their husbands oppose Paul and Barnabas. The *Jews forced the *missionaries to leave.

Verses 51-52 'Paul and Barnabas shook the dust from that place off their feet' (verse 51). Jesus told his *disciples to do this in places where people did not welcome them (Luke 9:5; 10:11). Paul and Barnabas travelled to Iconium. This ancient city was 129 kilometres (80 miles) away to the south-east. The *believers in Pisidian Antioch were not worried, nor were they upset. They were still happy. They had the *Holy Spirit to help them. When *Christians are full of the *Holy Spirit,

their circumstances do not matter. Bad things may happen to them. But the *Holy Spirit gives joy inside them. It is joy that nobody can take away.

Chapter 14

Paul and Barnabas in Iconium, 14:1-7

v1 What happened in Pisidian Antioch also happened in Iconium. Paul and Barnabas went to the *synagogue. Because of the manner in which they spoke, they persuaded many *Jews and *Gentile *believers. **v2** But the *Jews who did not believe made the other *Gentiles get angry. They persuaded those *Gentiles to oppose the brothers. **v3** Paul and Barnabas stayed there for a long time. And they spoke bravely about the *Lord. The *Lord gave to them power to do *miracles and wonderful things. By that means, he proved that their message about his *grace was true. **v4** But the people in the city divided themselves into two groups. One group was on the *Jews' side. The other group was on the *apostles' side. **v5** Then some *Gentiles and *Jews, with their leaders, decided to cause trouble. They wanted to throw rocks at Paul and Barnabas. They wanted to kill Paul and Barnabas in that way. **v6** The *apostles heard about that and they got away. They went to the cities called Lystra and Derbe in Lycaonia. They also went to the region round these cities. **v7** And they continued to *preach the good news.

Verses 1-3 Again, Paul and Barnabas *preached in the *synagogue first. Many *Jews became *believers. So, did many *Gentiles. But again, some *Jews were jealous and they opposed Paul and Barnabas. Luke calls Paul and Barnabas 'the brothers' here, because *believers are like one big family. So, Paul and Barnabas were like brothers in that family. Some *Gentiles did not believe. The *Jews said bad things about Paul and Barnabas to those *Gentiles. But Paul and Barnabas did not run away. They stayed and they continued to *preach. *Miracles proved that their message was true. When people *preach God's

message with *faith, *miracles can happen today, too. God cures sick people. Evil *spirits leave people.

Verses 4-7 This time, Paul and Barnabas's enemies planned to kill them. *Jews usually punished people who blasphemed. (To blaspheme means to insult God.) *Jews threw rocks at such people until the people died. They had killed Stephen like that (Acts 7:58-60). The *Jews said that he had blasphemed. He had said that Jesus had the same authority as God. And they thought that he should not have said that. (Look at the note about Acts 7:57.) They organised a *trial for Stephen. But they did not organise a *trial for Paul and Barnabas. Instead, they tried to make the crowd murder the *missionaries. Paul and Barnabas knew that they could not stay there any longer. So, they went to Lystra and Derbe. Lystra was about 29 kilometres (18 miles) south-west from Iconium.

A *miracle happens in Lystra, 14:8-13

v8 In Lystra, a man was sitting in his usual place. When he was born, there was something wrong with his feet. He had never been able to walk. **v9** He sat. And he listened as Paul spoke. Paul looked straight at him. Paul saw that the man had *faith. So, God could cure him. **v10** Paul shouted, 'Stand up!' The man jumped up and he started to walk about. **v11** The crowds saw what Paul had done. So, they shouted in the Lycaonian language, 'The gods have become human. They have come down to us!' **v12** They gave Barnabas the name 'Zeus'. And they gave Paul the name 'Hermes'. This was because Paul was the chief speaker. **v13** Zeus's *temple was very near to the city. Zeus's priest brought bulls (male cows) to the gates of the city. And he brought flowers there. He and the crowd wanted to offer *sacrifices to Paul and Barnabas.

Verses 8-10 Lystra was a *Roman city. Paul was a *Roman citizen. Perhaps Paul thought that he would be safe there. But the people there were simple people from the country. There were not many *Jews. It seems that there was no *synagogue. So, Paul *preached in the street. He saw a man who could not

walk. Luke, who was a doctor, describes this well. What happened next astonished the crowd. Paul saw that the man had *faith. He told him to stand up. The man stood up.

Verses 11-12 But Paul and Barnabas did not expect what happened next. The crowd saw that a *miracle had happened. The miracle had been powerful. But the crowd thought that the power came from Paul and Barnabas. The crowd thought that these *missionaries were gods. The people understood *Greek, the language that Paul and Barnabas spoke. But the people were so excited that they shouted in their own language. They called Barnabas 'Zeus'. This was the chief *Greek god. They called Paul 'Hermes'. Hermes was Zeus's son. He was the god who brought messages. But Paul and Barnabas did not understand the people's language. So, at this time, they did not understand what the people were saying.

Verse 13 Zeus and Hermes were important gods to the people in Lystra. The people told a story about them. In this story, Zeus and Hermes once visited the region. Those gods pretended to be human. They wanted a place to stay. But the people would not invite them into their homes. There was an old man who was poor. He and his wife had a small cottage. At last, that man and his wife let the gods stay in that cottage. The gods gave a reward to them. But the gods destroyed the other peoples' homes.

That is why the people in Lystra were so excited. They thought that Zeus and Hermes had come back to visit them again. This time, they wanted to welcome them. They wanted to give *sacrifices to them. They did not want Zeus and Hermes to destroy their homes!

Paul in danger again, 14:14-20

v14 The *apostles heard about what had happened. They tore their clothes and they ran out into the crowd. They shouted, **v15** 'Men, you must not do this. We are human, like you. We are here to tell you the good news. Do not give attention to these foolish things any longer! Start to trust the God who is alive. He is the God who made the sky, the earth and the sea. And he made

*everything that is in them. v16 In the past, God allowed all nations to do things in their own way. v17 But he did good things. In this way, he showed that he was there. God gives to you rain from heaven. Your crops grow at the right time. He gives to you plenty of food. He makes you very happy.’ v18 However, the people still wanted to offer a *sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas. It was difficult for Paul and Barnabas to stop them. v19 But some *Jewish leaders came from Antioch and Iconium. And they persuaded the crowds to oppose Paul. The *Jews threw rocks at him. Then they dragged him out of the city. They thought that he was dead. v20 But when the *disciples had gathered round him, he stood up. And he went back into the city. The next day, Paul and Barnabas went to Derbe.*

Verse 14 The people thought that Paul and Barnabas were gods. Before, Paul and Barnabas had not realised that the people thought this. Paul and Barnabas had not understood the Lycaonian language. But now, they did realise what was happening! It seems that the people had brought animals for *sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas. (Look at verse 13.)

Paul and Barnabas were very upset. They tore their clothes. *Jews usually did this to show disgust. They did it when people insulted God. Now, these people were insulting God. They were *worshipping Paul and Barnabas as *idols.

Verses 15-18 Paul and Barnabas quickly explained that they were not gods. They were human. But they had a special message from God.

Then Paul started to *preach. His audience were all *pagans. They were not *Jews or *Gentile ‘*God-fearers’. They did not know anything about the *prophets in the *Old Testament. So, Paul did not talk about the *prophets. Instead, he spoke about the real God, who had made everything.

Paul told them not to *worship false gods (‘these foolish things’) any longer (verse 15). God had let people choose to do things in their own way. But God always cared about

them. He showed that he was there. He provided everything that they needed for their lives. He gave to them happiness, too.

It is still the same today. God allows people to *reject him. He allows them not to believe in him. But he still shows that he cares about them. He provides food for them. He is the reason that they are happy. There is so much proof that God is there! But even then, they do not know it. They do not believe that God does those things.

The people wanted to offer a *sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas. Paul and Barnabas managed to stop them. But it was not easy. Paul’s message was very new to them.

Verse 19 Perhaps some time had passed when the *Jewish leaders arrived. Perhaps Paul and Barnabas had persuaded some people to become *Christians. The *Jewish leaders may have followed Paul and Barnabas. They may have planned to stop them. Or they may have come to buy corn for their cities. Much corn grew round Lystra.

The *Jewish leaders would have been very angry that Paul continued to *preach there.

They persuaded the crowd to oppose him. The *Jews threw rocks at him. Then they were afraid. They thought that he was dead. They could get into trouble for murder. So, they dragged his body out of Lystra.

Verse 20 Paul was very brave. When he recovered, he did not leave the region. Instead, he went straight back to Lystra! When *Christians suffer because of their *faith, God gives them great courage. Often, people ask why *Christians are so brave. They want to know more about God because of this.

Paul stayed in Lystra for one night. Then, he went to Derbe with Barnabas. Derbe was 70 miles away. Paul had a very strong body. He also had a very strong mind. He wanted to tell as many people as possible about Jesus. Nothing could stop him.

Paul and Barnabas return to Antioch in Syria, 14:21-28

*v21 Paul and Barnabas *preached the good news in Derbe. They persuaded many people to believe. And those people became *disciples. Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra. Then, they went back*

to Iconium and they went on to Pisidian Antioch. **v22** They encouraged the *believers. And they urged the *believers to stay true to the *faith. They told the *believers, 'We must suffer a lot before we can enter God's *kingdom.' **v23** Paul and Barnabas chose leaders in each *church. Paul and Barnabas *fasted and they prayed. They trusted the *Lord. They prayed that he would look after those leaders. **v24** Paul and Barnabas travelled through Pisidia to Pamphylia. **v25** There, they *preached in the town called Perga. Then, they went to Attalia. **v26** And they sailed to Antioch in Syria. There, the *believers had put Paul and Barnabas into God's care for this work. Now, Paul and Barnabas had finished the work. **v27** When they arrived in Antioch, they called the *church together. They told the people everything that God had helped them to do. They told the people how God had made it possible for the *Gentiles to believe. **v28** They stayed there with the *believers for a long time.

Verses 21-23 Paul and Barnabas returned to Lystra again. Not everyone there opposed them. A *church had started there. *Churches had also started in Iconium and Pisidian Antioch. So, Paul and Barnabas went back to encourage the new Christians.

The new Christians needed to learn more about the *gospel. Then they would recognise when false teachers came. Then the people in those *churches would only believe what was true. They also needed good leaders to guide them.

Paul and Barnabas also warned them that they must expect to suffer. The *Jews who had opposed Paul were probably *persecuting them.

When we follow Jesus *Christ, we too must expect to suffer in some way. People may insult us or they may laugh at us. They may hurt us or they may even kill us. But God gives to us his *grace by means of the *Holy Spirit. His *grace helps us. We are not alone. Jesus is with us always. He promised that (Matthew 28:20). After we have suffered, we will enter

God's *kingdom. This is worth more than anything!

Verses 24-26 Luke gives a very short report about the journey back. Paul and Barnabas *preached wherever they went. They went from the region called Phrygia into Pisidia. Then they went into Pamphylia. They returned to Perga. (Look at Acts 13:13.) Then they went to Attalia, which was the chief port in Pamphylia.

Finally, they sailed to Syria and they returned to Antioch there. They had made a circular journey.

Verses 27-28 The members of their own *church wanted to hear all about their trip. Paul and Barnabas told exciting news to them. The *Gentiles were becoming *Christians! It was God who had made all this possible. It was not Paul and Barnabas. They 'stayed there with the *believers for a long time' (verse 28). They needed to rest after their journey, which had been dangerous and difficult.

Chapter 15

An important meeting in *Jerusalem, 15:1-21

v1 Some men came from *Judea to Antioch. They were teaching the *believers like this. 'You must receive *circumcision, as Moses taught. Otherwise, you cannot receive *salvation.' **v2** Paul and Barnabas argued a lot with those men about this. So, the people decided to send Paul, Barnabas and some other *believers to *Jerusalem. These people would go to talk about that problem. They would talk about it with the *apostles and leaders. **v3** The people sent them on their journey. They travelled through Phoenicia and *Samaria. On the way, they told how the *Gentiles had decided to trust God. All the *believers were very happy about this. **v4** Paul, Barnabas and the other men arrived in *Jerusalem. Then the members of the *church, the *apostles and the leaders welcomed them. Paul and his companions reported everything that God had helped them to do. **v5** Some *Pharisees had become *believers. They stood up and

they said this: ‘*Gentiles who believe in the *Lord must receive *circumcision. We must tell them to obey Moses’ *Law.’

v6 The *apostles and leaders met. And they discussed that problem about the *Gentiles. **v7** They talked for a long time. Afterwards, Peter stood up. He said, ‘Brothers! You know that God chose me from among you. He did it a long time ago. He chose me to *preach the good news to the *Gentiles. He did it so that they could hear the good news. And then they could believe it. **v8** God knows everyone’s thoughts. He gave the *Holy Spirit to the *Gentiles. In this way, he showed that he accepted them. It was the same as when he gave the *Holy Spirit to us. **v9** God made no distinction between them and us. They put their *faith in him. So, he forgave their *sins.

v10 Therefore, do not make God angry. Moses’ *Law is like a heavy load. You will make God angry, if you put this heavy load on these *believers. The *Law was too hard for us. And it was too hard for our *ancestors! **v11** But we believe that we receive *salvation by means of the *Lord Jesus’ *grace. It is the same for the *Gentiles.’

Verses 1-2 This chapter describes a decision. This is among the most important decisions that the *church ever made. The *church had a difficult problem. Some *Gentiles had become *believers, although they had not become *Jews. So, the *church had to decide whether to accept them. If a *Gentile wanted to become a *Jew, he had to receive *circumcision. Also, he had to obey Moses’ *Law. Peter had already struggled with this problem. God had given the answer to him by means of Cornelius (Acts 10). But the *Jews from *Judea did not like this answer. They wanted *Gentiles to become *Jews. The *Jews believed that *Gentiles must become *Jews first. Only then, they thought, could they become *Christians. Paul and Barnabas argued with the *Jews about this.

*Salvation is a free gift from God. We should obey rules. But we cannot earn *salvation in that way, even if those rules are good. We

should do good things. But we cannot earn *salvation in that way. We can receive *salvation by means of Jesus only. We must believe in him and we must have *faith in him. God gives us *salvation because of his own *grace. It is not because of what we do.

So, the Christians in Antioch decided to send Paul and Barnabas to *Jerusalem. That was because those Christians wanted them to discuss the problem with the *apostles and leaders of the first *church. And the first *church was in *Jerusalem.

Verse 3 ‘The people sent them on their journey.’ This means that some members of the *church began the journey with them. Those members came for part of the journey. There had been a disagreement. But the people in the *church showed that they cared about Paul and Barnabas.

*Christians may not agree about some things. But we must always show that we love each other.

The journey was 483 kilometres (300 miles) long. On their way, Paul and Barnabas visited the *churches in Phoenicia and Samaria. The *Jews who spoke *Greek had left *Jerusalem. These *churches had started after that. (Look at Acts 8:1-4.) These *Jews were happy that the *Gentiles believed. For these *Jews, the fact that the *Gentiles did not receive *circumcision was not a problem.

Verse 4 In *Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas told the people in the *church what had happened. The people wanted to hear all about it. So, they listened to Paul and Barnabas’s report. But that did not mean that the people were happy about it all.

Verse 5 ‘Some *Pharisees had become *believers’ means that they had accepted Jesus as the *Messiah. But they had believed that he was the *Messiah for *Jews only. He was the king of *Israel. The *Pharisees were *Jews. In the *Jews opinion, *Gentiles had to become *Jews first, by means of *circumcision. Otherwise, the *Jews believed that *Gentiles could not enter the *Messiah’s *kingdom.

Paul was a *Pharisee too. So, he understood what they believed. The *Law was very important to them. They tried to obey it about everything. They also made up many more

little rules. But Paul had changed. He had met Jesus on the road to Damascus. He knew that although we should obey rules, we cannot please God in that way. But when we have a friendship with God, we want to obey him. We want to obey him because we love him. He gives us the *Holy Spirit. And the *Holy Spirit helps us to obey God. We do not do this by ourselves.

Verse 6 We do not know how many *apostles still lived in *Jerusalem. But, together with the leaders, they made important decisions. This was a very important decision. It might have divided the *church. But nothing should divide the *church.

Verses 7-9 Peter was a very famous *apostle. He remembered what had happened to Cornelius and his family. He knew that God accepted the *Gentiles. He had seen the *Holy Spirit come down onto them. This had happened while they were listening to Peter. They had not yet said that they believed. But God knows what people are thinking. He knew that these *Gentiles had *faith. He had accepted them immediately. He had not made them become *Jews first. Therefore the *Jewish *Christians must accept them too.

Verses 10-11 Peter said that the *Law was like 'a heavy load'. The *Jews thought that it was difficult to obey the *Law. That is why Peter said that. In verse 11, Peter tells what the good news is all about. It is all about *grace! This is what makes the *Christian *faith different from all other religions. We cannot save ourselves from the results of our *sin. To obey rules cannot bring us close to God. There is only one way to receive *salvation. That is by means of the *Lord Jesus' *grace.

v12 Everyone was silent. They listened. Barnabas and Paul told them what God had done for the *Gentiles. Barnabas and Paul told the people how God did *miracles and wonderful things by means of them (Barnabas and Paul). **v13** After they had finished speaking, James said this: 'Listen, brothers. **v14** Simon Peter has told us this. He told us that God first showed that he cared about the *Gentiles in this way. He took some *Gentiles to be his own people. **v15** This is the same as

what the *prophets wrote. They wrote this:

v16 "The *Lord says: After this, I will return.

I will build David's house again, the house that fell.

I will repair it. I will build it up and I will make it strong again.

v17 Then all the other nations will decide to *worship me.

That is, all the *Gentiles that I have chosen to be mine.

v18 I say this. I am the *Lord.

I promised it long ago.''

v19 James continued to speak. 'This is what I think. We should not cause trouble for the *Gentiles who are deciding to trust God. **v20** Instead, we should write a letter to them. We should tell them these things. They must not eat any food that people have offered to *idols. They must not eat animals that people have *strangled. They must not eat meat that has blood in it. They must not *sin in sexual ways. (If something is 'sexual', it has a connection with sex.) **v21** Every *Sabbath, people read Moses' *Law in the *synagogues. People have *preached his words in every city. This has continued for very many years.'

Verse 12 There was a disagreement about the *Gentiles. But *Christians from both sides showed that they respected each other. They listened to what Barnabas and Paul said. They did not interrupt. When there is a disagreement in the *church today, we should do the same. We must never forget that we are brothers and sisters in God's family.

Here, Luke puts Barnabas's name first. This is probably because people in *Jerusalem knew Barnabas better. They knew him better than they knew Paul.

Verse 13 This James was a brother of Jesus. (Look at Mark 6:3.) He wrote another letter that is in the *New Testament. In it, he emphasised the connection between our *faith and our actions. He also talked about wisdom from heaven. Among other things, he

called this wisdom 'kind' and 'genuine' (James 3:17). Here in Acts, he showed that he had this wisdom from heaven. He listened to the *Pharisees. He listened to Peter, Paul and Barnabas. Then he suggested a solution to the problem.

Verses 14-18 James reminded them about what Peter had said. James did not mention Paul and Barnabas's report. Peter's words would have more authority in *Jerusalem because he was a leader there.

'He took some *Gentiles to be his own people' (verse 14). In the *Old Testament, 'God's own people' meant *Israel. So, now James was saying that the Christian *Gentiles now also belonged to God's own people.

He provided proof from the *scriptures. He needed to do this. In its important decisions, the *church must agree with the *scriptures. This is true today too. James spoke words from the book that Amos wrote (Amos 9:11-12). *Christians understand that verse 16 is a *prophecy about *Christ's *resurrection. It is also a *prophecy about the growth of his *church.

God will include people from all nations in his future *kingdom (verse 17).

Verses 19-20 James offered his opinions. *Faith was enough for *Gentiles who were deciding to trust God. The *Jews should not make it difficult for them. The *Gentiles did not have to become *Jews and therefore they did not have to receive *circumcision. But they did have to respect the *Jews. So, they should not do things that would offend *Jews very much.

James asked those *Gentiles not to do these four things.

1. They should not eat food that people had offered to *idols. So, if some people *worshipped *idols, those *Gentiles should not have any connection with that. (Look at 1 Corinthians 8:10.)
2. They should not eat animals that people had *strangled.
3. They should not eat meat with blood in it.
4. They should not do wicked things that have a connection with sex. This often happened when people *worshipped *idols and false gods. The *Law only allowed *Jews

to have sex with their wives or husbands. This is what God wants (Genesis 2:24).

James did not suggest these rules because they were necessary for *salvation. He suggested them so that *Jews could mix with *Gentiles. Some *Jewish *Christians would always want to obey all parts of the *Law. Those 4 rules meant that they could eat with *Gentiles. And they could be friends with *Gentiles. Although the *Law could not give *salvation, it was very important to *Jews. It was part of *Jewish history and tradition. So, *Gentiles must respect this.

A letter to *Gentile *believers, 15:22-29

v22 *The *apostles and leaders, together with the whole *church, made a decision. They chose some people from among their own men. They wanted to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They chose Judas, who was also called Barsabbas. And they chose Silas. The *believers respected these two men very much. v23* They sent a letter with the men. It contained this message.

*'We are writing to the *Gentile *believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia. We, the *apostles and leaders, are your brothers. We send you greetings.*

v24 *We have heard that some men from here have upset you very much. But we did not send them. v25* So, we have met together. And we all agreed to choose some men. We have sent them to you, with Barnabas and Paul. Barnabas and Paul are our good friends. **v26** *They have risked their lives to serve our *Lord Jesus *Christ. v27* So, we send to you Judas and Silas. What we write is true. And they will say this. **v28** *This seemed right to the *Holy Spirit and to us. It seemed right that we should not cause extra difficulties for you. That is, nothing more than these rules. v29* You must not eat food that people have offered to *idols. You must not eat meat with blood in it. You must not eat animals that people have *strangled. You must not do wicked things that have a connection with sex. If

you do not do these things, you will do well.

Goodbye.'

Verses 22-29 All the Christians in *Jerusalem agreed with James's idea. They chose two members of their *church to take the message. Luke does not mention Judas Barsabbas again after this event. But Silas went with Paul to *preach the *gospel in Philippi, Thessalonica and Corinth. We shall read about this later in Acts.

The *apostles and leaders called themselves 'brothers' of the *Gentile *believers because *believers are like one big family.

The *Jews who had upset the *church in Antioch did not have any authority. The leaders in *Jerusalem had not told them to go there. But Judas and Silas did have authority from their leaders. The leaders made this clear in the letter. In it, the leaders also introduced Paul and Barnabas as good men. The leaders then described the 4 rules that James had suggested.

The men go to Antioch, 15:30-35

v30 They sent the men off on their journey and the men went to Antioch. They gathered the members of the *church there together. Then, they gave the letter to the members. **v31** The people read it. And they were happy because the message encouraged them. **v32** Judas and Silas were *prophets. And they said many things that encouraged the *believers. What they said made the *believers' *faith strong. **v33** Judas and Silas stayed in Antioch for some time. Then the *believers there sent the men off on their journey in peace. They blessed the men. The men intended to return to the people who had sent them. **v34** [But Silas decided to stay in Antioch.] **v35** Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch. There, they and many other men taught the *Lord's message and they *preached it.

Verses 30-33 The members of the *church in Antioch were very happy. They were happy because they did not have to become *Jews. And this meant that they did not need to receive *circumcision. They accepted the 4

rules. They did not argue about them. Perhaps already they were not doing those things that they should not do.

Judas and Silas also encouraged the *believers. That is what real *prophets do for the *church. They speak words from God that make the *believers stronger in *faith.

When Judas and Silas left, the *believers prayed for them. The *believers prayed that Judas and Silas would have peace. (Peace means freedom from mental or *spiritual troubles.) So, then Judas and Silas would have a safe journey.

Verse 34 may not have been in the original account. Perhaps someone added it later. In verse 40, we can see that Silas was in Antioch. Verse 34 shows why he was still there.

Verse 35 However, Paul and Barnabas stayed and they taught the *believers. They continued to tell the good news to people who did not yet believe.

Paul and Barnabas separate, 15:36-41

v36 Some time later, Paul said this to Barnabas: 'Let us return to those towns where we *preached the *Lord's message. We could visit the *believers there. And we could see how they are. We could see what they are doing.' **v37** Barnabas wanted to take John Mark with them. **v38** But John Mark had left them in Pamphylia. He had not stayed with them until they finished their work. So, Paul did not want to take him. **v39** Paul and Barnabas argued. Then they separated. Barnabas took Mark and they sailed to *Cyprus. **v40** But Paul chose Silas. The *believers placed them in God's care. Then Paul left, with Silas. **v41** Paul travelled through Syria and Cilicia. He encouraged the Christians and he made them stronger in *faith.

Verses 36-38 'Some time later' probably means several months later. Perhaps when spring came, Paul and Barnabas could travel again. Paul suggested that they should visit the *churches that they had started. They had started those *churches on their first journey as *missionaries. Barnabas agreed with that.

But then there was a problem. Barnabas wanted his cousin, John Mark (also called Mark), to come with them. So, then Mark could help them again. Perhaps Barnabas wanted to give him a second chance because, on their first journey, John Mark had left them. He had given up and they had to finish the work without him (Acts 13:13). But Paul did not trust John Mark. He thought that Mark might do the same thing again. Paul would not give him a second chance.

Verses 39-41 Paul and Barnabas could not agree about John Mark. So, Paul and Barnabas decided to part. And they went in different directions. Barnabas took Mark with him and they went to *Cyprus. That was the country where Barnabas was born. Paul chose Silas to help him.

We know that Paul and Barnabas became friends again later. In two letters, Paul wrote good things about Barnabas (1 Corinthians 9:6 and Colossians 4:10). Paul also became friends with John Mark again. Later, he wrote that Mark had helped him (2 Timothy 4:11 and Philemon 24). Also, when Paul's life was ending, he wanted Mark to be near him (2 Timothy 4:11).

Chapter 16

Timothy works with Paul and Silas, 16:1-5

v1 Paul went to Derbe and then he went to Lystra. A *Christian called Timothy lived there. Timothy's mother was a *Jewish *Christian. But his father was *Greek. **v2** The *believers at Lystra and Iconium said many good things about Timothy. **v3** Paul wanted Timothy to travel with him. So, he *circumcised Timothy. He did this because of the attitude that the *Jews had there. They all knew that Timothy's father was *Greek. **v4** Paul and his helpers went through the towns. And they told the *believers what the *apostles and leaders in *Jerusalem had decided. They told them to obey those rules. **v5** So, the Christians became stronger in the *faith and more people joined the *churches daily.

Verses 1-3 Luke introduces Timothy here. Timothy became a chief helper of Paul. We know that Timothy's mother was called Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5). She probably became a *believer when Paul came to Lystra before. That was two or three years earlier. Timothy was young (1 Timothy 4:12). But the *believers saw that he had a good character. His father was a *Gentile. So, Timothy had received a *Greek education. But he had also learned the *Jewish *scriptures (2 Timothy 3:15). It was easy for him to mix with both *Jews and *Gentiles. He could mix with both because he understood both their cultures. This would be very useful later, when he *preached in different places.

We may want to know why Paul *circumcised Timothy. When a *Jew married a *pagan, their children were *Jewish. That is what the *Jews said. So, the *Jews considered that Timothy was a *Jew. That was because he had a *Jewish mother. He should have received *circumcision when he was a baby. Perhaps his father stopped this. Paul realised that Timothy would be an excellent helper. But Paul did not want to upset the other *Jewish *Christians. He *circumcised Timothy so that they would accept him (Timothy). This did not mean that Paul wanted *Gentile *Christians to receive *circumcision. He opposed this (Galatians 2:3-5). But Timothy was a special case because he had a *Jewish mother.

Verses 4-5 Paul and his helpers told many more Christians about the four rules. He taught them in a way that made their *faith stronger.

Luke's report about how the *gospel spread has 6 parts. (Look at 'Contents'. This is in the section 'About this book'.) The 4th part ends here at verse 5. The next part is about how Paul and his helpers took the good news into Europe.

Paul's *vision about a man from Macedonia, 16:6-10

v6 Paul and his companions went through Phrygia and Galatia. But the *Holy Spirit would not let them *preach the message in Asia. **v7** They came to the border of Mysia. Then they tried to enter Bithynia.

*But the *Spirit of Jesus would not let them do that. v8 So, they travelled through (or by) Mysia. And they went on to Troas. v9 That night, Paul had a *vision. In the *vision, he saw a man from Macedonia. The man was standing there. 'Come over to Macedonia and help us!' said the man. v10 After Paul had this *vision, we got ready. We left for Macedonia immediately. We decided that God had called us to *preach the *gospel there.*

Verses 6-8 These verses show that Paul was always listening to the *Holy Spirit. He planned *missionary journeys carefully. But he was willing to change his plans, if God told him to do it. Paul probably wanted to continue west to Ephesus city. But the *Holy Spirit stopped them. We do not know how he stopped them. It may have been by means of a *vision. Or it may have been by means of a *prophet's words in Lystra.

So, Paul travelled north instead. In the *province called Bithynia, there were *Greek cities and *Jewish towns. But the *Spirit of Jesus would not let them go there. The '*Spirit of Jesus' is another name for the *Holy Spirit. Paul and Silas were both *prophets. Perhaps Jesus himself had spoken by means of them about this. Perhaps that is why Luke calls the *Holy Spirit 'the Spirit of Jesus' here.

So, 'they travelled through (or by) Mysia' (verse 8). The *Greek word here can mean either through or by. So, this might mean that they went round Mysia. But they probably entered it in order to reach Troas. Perhaps they passed through Mysia but they did not *preach there.

Verses 9-10 Troas was an important port. People went there when they travelled between Asia and Macedonia. The man in the *vision asked for help. He wanted *spiritual help. Paul knew that this message was from God. So, he prepared to go where God had said. It was not Paul's plan to go to Macedonia. But it was God's plan.

In verse 10, Luke says that 'we' did things, instead of 'he' or 'they'. This is the first passage where Luke does that in Acts. So, Luke is now writing about events that he saw himself. So, we know that Luke went with Paul on this journey. Perhaps Luke wrote a

diary about it. He may have used this diary when he wrote the passages with 'we'.

A woman in Philippi becomes a *believer, 16:11-15

*v11 We sailed from Troas straight to Samothrace. The next day, we came to Neapolis. v12 From there, we went to Philippi. Philippi is a *Roman *colony. It is a city in the first district in Macedonia. We stayed there for several days. v13 On the *Sabbath, we went outside the city gate. And we went to a place by the river. We thought that the *Jews met there for prayer. Some women came. We sat down and we talked to them. v14 One of those women was Lydia. She was from the city called Thyatira. And she sold expensive purple cloth. She *worshipped God. The *Lord opened her spirit so that she believed Paul's message. v15 She and all the people in her house received *baptism. Afterwards, she invited us into her home. 'You may think that I really have *faith in the *Lord. If you do think so, then come. And stay at my house', she said. So, she persuaded us to accept her invitation.*

Verse 11 The wind was blowing in the right direction for the travellers. So, they sailed quickly across the North Aegean Sea and they finished the voyage in two days. Later, on the way back, it took 5 days (Acts 20:6).

Samothrace was an island with mountains. They did not stay there. They sailed on to Neapolis in Macedonia. Neapolis was the port for Philippi. Philippi was 16 kilometres (10 miles) away from the coast.

Luke kept a careful record about how far they travelled each day.

Verse 12 The *Romans had divided Macedonia into 4 districts with different rulers. Philippi was 'a city in the first district in Macedonia'. It was an important city, but it was not the capital. Thessalonica was the capital of Macedonia. Philippi was on a long road called the Egnatian Way. This road linked Asia with the West.

Luke writes that Philippi was a *Roman *colony. A *Roman *colony used *Roman law.

The *Romans governed it. It is important to understand that. We need to remember it because later something difficult happened to Paul in Philippi. And what happened had a connection with *Roman law.

Verse 13 There did not seem to be a *synagogue in Philippi.

To set up a *synagogue, there had to be 10 men or more. This was a *Jewish rule. But in Philippi, only women met together. They could not set up a *synagogue, so they met by the river. It was probably so that they could wash themselves. This was one of God's commands in the *Jewish *Law.

Paul sat down with the women and he taught them. This was very unusual because the *Jews did not usually teach women. They thought that men were more clever and important.

In his *gospel, Luke tells how Jesus often spoke to women. Jesus cared about women as much as he cared about men. In ancient times, people did not consider women as important. But Luke shows that women are very important to God.

Verse 14 Lydia had her own business. She traded in purple cloth. Purple was a very expensive colour because it was difficult to make. Purple cloth was a luxury. Only rich people could afford it. So, Lydia was probably wealthy too.

'She *worshipped God' means that she was a *God-fearer.

'The *Lord opened her *spirit' means that the *Holy Spirit was working in her. When a person believes the *gospel, the *Holy Spirit makes that happen.

We must tell to people the good news about Jesus. We may be able to do this very well. Or we may think that it is difficult to do. But we must remember this: Paul said that the *gospel comes 'not only with words. But it also comes with power. And it comes with the *Holy Spirit' (1 Thessalonians 1:5).

Verse 15 'She and all the people in her house' means her family. And it also means the people who worked for her. She probably had a large house. So, she invited the *missionaries to stay in her home. That is how the *church in Philippi began. It began with

just one woman, who accepted *Christ as her *Saviour. It grew and it became a large *church (Philippians 1:1). And its members were generous (Philippians 4:15-16).

A female slave with an evil *spirit, 16:16-22

v16 One day we were going to the place where people prayed. A girl who was a slave met us. She had an evil *spirit in her. It gave to her the power to know the future. She told people what would happen to them in the future. So, she earned a lot of money for her owners. **v17** She followed Paul and the rest of us. And she was shouting, 'These men are servants of the Most High God! They are telling you how to receive *salvation.' **v18** She did this for several days. At last, Paul got very upset. So, he turned round and he spoke to the *spirit. He said, 'In Jesus *Christ's name, I order you to come out of her!' Immediately, the evil *spirit left her.

v19 The girl's owners realised that she could not earn money for them in the future. So, they seized Paul and Silas. The girl's owners dragged Paul and Silas into the market-place. There, the girl's owners met the people who had authority. **v20** Her owners brought Paul and Silas in front of the *Roman officials. They said, 'These men are *Jews. They are making trouble in our city. **v21** They are teaching customs that are against *Roman law. We are *Roman citizens and we cannot allow these customs.'

v22 The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas. Then the officials tore the clothes from the two men and they ordered people to whip Paul and Silas.

Verse 16 Luke chose to write about three people in Philippi. Their lives changed completely because of the *gospel.

The first person was Lydia. She was a rich lady and she had her own business.

The second person was very different. She was a slave girl and she had a big problem. An evil *spirit was controlling her. It gave to her the power to see a person's future. Luke uses a special *Greek word for this power. This

word is not anywhere else in the *New Testament. But it is in the *Greek translation of the *Old Testament. There, the writers use this word to describe false *prophets. God does not allow us to use this kind of power. It is very wrong (Deuteronomy 18:10). It is a real power. It seems that the slave girl could really see into the future. Her owners earned money from her. But the power came from *Satan, by an evil *spirit.

Verse 17 Paul and his companions often went to the place where people prayed. The slave girl continued to follow them. The evil *spirit in her recognised that they were God's servants.

Luke writes about two similar situations in his *Gospel. Both times, the evil *spirits recognised who Jesus is (Luke 4:33-34, 41; 8:27-28).

Verse 18 The girl followed them for several days. The *Greek word that Luke uses for 'very upset' is 'diaponeomai'. It also means 'angry' and 'sad'. The girl's words were true. But Paul did not want people to link God's message with an evil *spirit. Also, he was sad and angry that the girl was suffering. But her owners did not care about it.

In the end, Paul had to do something. He ordered the evil *spirit to leave. It left immediately. Paul did this 'in Jesus *Christ's name'. That means that he did it with Jesus' power and authority. (Look also at Acts 3:6, 9, 10.)

Verse 19 The girl's owners were very angry with Paul and Silas. This was because the evil *spirit had gone. This meant that the girl did not have the power to see into the future any longer. The owners' way to make money had gone too! They blamed Paul and Silas for that. Here Luke does not mention himself, nor does he mention Timothy. The first passage where Luke uses the word 'we' has ended already, at verse 17. So, perhaps Luke and Timothy were not there now.

The girl's owners dragged Paul and Silas into the market-place. This was not only a place where people sold things. In a *Roman *colony, it was the centre of public life. Everything important happened there, for everyone to see.

Verses 20-21 A *Roman *colony had two officials who were like judges. They decided whether a person was guilty of a crime. The girl's owners did not tell the officials why they were angry. Instead, they said that Paul and Silas had not obeyed *Roman law. They said that the *missionaries had caused trouble. The *missionaries had introduced a new religion that was not legal. These were serious crimes against *Roman law.

Also, many *Romans did not like the *Jews. The girl's owners reminded the officials that they (the owners) were *Roman citizens (verse 21). People in a *Roman *colony were proud of that. The girl's owners said that Paul and Silas had done bad things. They wanted the officials to hate Paul and Silas, because Paul and Silas were *Jews.

Verse 22 The people in the crowd were angry with Paul and Silas. This was because the people did not like foreigners. The officials ordered people to punish Paul and Silas. People whipped the *missionaries. *Roman whips caused a lot of pain and injuries.

A prison officer becomes a *Christian, 16:23-34

v23 People whipped Paul and Silas very hard. Afterwards, they threw Paul and Silas into prison. They ordered the officer of the prison to guard Paul and Silas carefully. **v24** When he received this order, the officer put Paul and Silas into the inner room. He put chains on their feet. And he tied their feet to heavy pieces of wood. **v25** At about midnight, Paul and Silas were praying. And they were singing to *praise God. The other prisoners were listening to them. **v26** Then a powerful *earthquake shook the strong base of the prison. Immediately, all the doors opened and the chains fell off the prisoners. **v27** The prison officer woke up. He saw that the doors were open. So, he thought that the prisoners had escaped. He took out his sword to kill himself. **v28** But Paul shouted, 'Do not hurt yourself! We are all here!'

v29 The officer of the prison asked someone to fetch a light. The officer rushed into the prison and he knelt at Paul and Silas's feet. His whole body was

*shaking. v30 He led them out. Then he asked, 'Sirs, what must I do to receive *salvation?' v31 They answered, 'Believe in the *Lord Jesus and trust in him. Then you will receive *salvation. This is true for your family. And it is true for everyone who lives with you.' v32 Then Paul and Silas *preached the *Lord's message to the officer of the prison. And they *preached it to everyone in his house. v33 It was still night. The officer took Paul and Silas to another place. He washed their cuts and bruises. At once, he received *baptism and so did everyone in his house. v34 The officer of the prison brought Paul and Silas into his home. He gave a meal to them. He and his family were very happy because they believed in God now.*

Verses 23-24 Luke now describes how a third person from Philippi became a *Christian. This man was neither rich nor poor. He was from the middle class. He did his job well as an officer of the prison. He did not want Paul and Silas to escape. He wanted to prevent their escape. So, he did everything that he could do for that purpose. He did not seem to be a kind man. But then he changed. He changed because he believed in Jesus as his *Saviour and *Lord. Paul and Silas felt much pain because people had whipped them. But the officer tied their feet to heavy pieces of wood. This would cause even more pain.

Verse 25 Paul and Silas were very tired and they felt terrible pain. In their situation, most people would be angry and miserable. But Paul and Silas prayed and they *praised God. They were very happy. This was not because of their circumstances. But it was because they knew Jesus. People who know Jesus are very happy. They are happy even when bad things happen to them.

The other prisoners listened. They were surprised when Paul and Silas *praised God aloud. The other prisoners knew that these men were different. God was the reason that Paul and Silas were happy.

We must always *praise God in difficult circumstances. In that way, we show something to people. We show to them that

we are happy. We know that God is looking after us. That is why we are happy.

Verse 26 *Earthquakes were common in Philippi. But this *earthquake happened at exactly the right time. It was certainly very powerful. It shook the prison so that the doors opened. And the prisoners' chains fell off.

Verse 27 The officer of the prison thought that the prisoners had escaped. So, he tried to kill himself. He wanted to die quickly. By *Roman law, if any prisoner escaped, that prisoner would receive punishment. And the officer of the prison would receive that same punishment, even if the escape was not his fault. (Look at Acts 12:19; 27:42.)

Verses 28-30 But Paul saw the officer. Paul told him that all the prisoners were still there! The officer checked that this was true.

Immediately he asked Paul and Silas how to receive *salvation. Perhaps he had heard the slave girl when she was shouting about it (Acts 16:17). Perhaps he had heard Paul and Silas *preach in Philippi. Or perhaps he had heard them in the prison when they were *praising God. The *earthquake proved to him that their message was true. He was afraid. The *Holy Spirit had shown to him that he needed *salvation. So, he asked Paul and Silas about this.

Verses 31-32 Paul and Silas told the officer what to do. He needed to have *faith in Jesus. Then they explained what this meant. They told the good news about Jesus to him. And they told it to everyone in his house.

Verses 33-34 Everyone there believed the *Lord's message. They believed that Jesus was their *Saviour and *Lord. The officer of the prison showed kindness. He washed Paul and Silas's injuries. Afterwards, they *baptised him and they *baptised the people in his house. He continued to be kind. He invited them into his house and he gave food to them. Luke says that the officer and his family were 'very happy' (verse 34). So, it seems that they also received the *Holy Spirit.

The *Roman officials apologise to Paul and Silas, 16:35-40

v35 Next morning, the officials sent their officers to the prison. The officers had

orders to let Paul and Silas go. **v36** The officer of the prison told Paul, 'The officials have sent orders. I must let you and Silas go. You are free. Go quietly.' **v37** But Paul said to the officers, 'We are *Roman citizens. But the officials ordered people to whip us in public. We had not even had a *trial! Then they threw us into prison. Now they want to send us away in secret. No! The officials must come here. They themselves must let us out!' **v38** The officers told this to the *Roman officials. When they heard this, they became afraid. They were afraid because Paul and Silas were *Roman citizens. **v39** So, they went to Paul and Silas. The officials apologised and they led Paul and Silas out of the prison. They asked Paul and Silas to leave the city. **v40** After Paul and Silas had left the prison, they went to Lydia's house. There, they met the *believers. They encouraged the *believers. Then Paul and Silas left.

Verses 35-37 The officials sent their officers with orders to let Paul and Silas go. The officials thought that Paul and Silas would just leave the city. But Paul and Silas were *Roman citizens. *Roman citizens were a special class of people. There were not many *Roman citizens in that part of the *empire.

Paul was born as a *Roman citizen. (Look at Acts 22:28.) We shall discuss this more later. *Roman law protected *Roman citizens. If people accused them of a crime, they needed to have a *trial. People should not whip them. That was a punishment for ordinary people. But that had happened to Paul and Silas. Perhaps they had already said that they were *Roman citizens. But the people in the market-place had not heard that or they had not understood it. (The female slave's owners had taken Paul and Silas to the officials in the market-place. The officials had ordered that people should punish Paul and Silas.)

Verses 38-39 The previous day the girl's owners had reminded the officials, 'We are *Roman citizens' (verse 21). But the officials did not realise that those two *Jews, Paul and Silas, were *Roman citizens too! The officials knew now that they (the officials themselves) had not obeyed *Roman law. If their leaders

in *Rome knew about it, they would punish the officials. So, they did not want those leaders to hear about it. The officials wanted those two unpopular *Jews to leave. But the officials could not force them to go. That would not be legal.

So, the officials did what Paul and Silas wanted. They came and they apologised to Paul and Silas.

Verse 40 Paul and Silas returned to Lydia's house. They encouraged the members of the new *church that met there.

Then Paul and Silas left Philippi. They went west. Luke probably stayed in Philippi to help with the *church there. Later, people *persecuted the Christians in Philippi (Philippians 1:27-30).

Chapter 17

Paul and Silas go to Thessalonica, 17:1-4

v1 Paul and Silas travelled through Amphipolis and Apollonia. They came to Thessalonica. There was a *Jewish *synagogue in that city. **v2** As he usually did, Paul went to the *synagogue. On three *Sabbath days, he spoke to the people there. He discussed the *scriptures and he explained them. From the *scriptures, **v3** he proved that the *Messiah had to suffer. But Paul also proved that the *Messiah would become alive again. Paul told the people, 'I am telling you about Jesus. He is the *Messiah.' **v4** Some *Jews there believed what Paul said. They joined Paul and Silas's group. Many *Greek *God-fearers also joined the group. So, did many important women.

Verse 1 Paul and his helpers continued their journey along the long road called the Egnatian Way. They went south and then they went west. They travelled to Thessalonica. Thessalonica was a big city and it was an important place for business. People from many different countries lived there and many people travelled there for trade. Many *Jews lived there too.

Verses 2-3 Paul always went to the local *synagogue first. (Look at Acts 13:46.) The people there wanted him to *preach to them.

They discussed the *scriptures (the *Old Testament) together with him. Paul talked about Jesus. Paul explained *prophecies from those *scriptures. Those *prophecies proved that Jesus was the *Messiah. The *prophets said that the *Messiah would suffer. They also said that he would become alive again. All this had happened to Jesus.

Verse 4 Some *Jews believed what Paul said. But the new *believers were mostly *Gentiles. Many *new believers were important women. Perhaps their husbands were the leaders of the city. Or perhaps the women had their own businesses, as Lydia had.

Luke writes that Paul spoke in the *synagogue three times. But we know that Paul stayed in Thessalonica for a longer time. He stayed until they set up a *church there with leaders (1 Thessalonians 5:12). It seems that he did a job there to earn money (1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:8). The Christians at Philippi sent gifts to him there (Philippians 4:16).

Trouble in Thessalonica, 17:5-9

v5 *But the *Jewish leaders were jealous. They gathered some very bad men from the market-place. The leaders formed them into a big, noisy crowd. Then that crowd upset everyone in the city. The leaders wanted to drag Paul and Silas out of the house. They wanted to take Paul and Silas to that crowd. So, they rushed to Jason's house. v6* *But they did not find Paul and Silas there. So, they dragged Jason and some other *believers outside. They took them to the officials of the city. They shouted, 'Paul and Silas have caused trouble everywhere! Now they have come here. v7* *Jason has let them stay in his house. They all do things against the *Emperor's laws. And they say that there is another king. His name is Jesus.' v8* *The officials and the crowd were upset when they heard this. v9* *So, they made Jason and the other *believers pay 'bail' (see note). Then the officials let them go.*

Verse 5 Again, Paul's message upset the *Jewish leaders. They made a plan. The *Roman rulers did not want crowds to cause trouble on the streets. There were laws

against this. It was a very serious crime. The *Jewish leaders wanted the officials of the city to accuse Paul and Silas of that crime. So, they persuaded some local bad men to make trouble. These men made people hate Paul and Silas. So, then the officials could blame the *missionaries for the trouble.

Verses 6-7 But the *Jewish leaders' plan failed. Paul and Silas were staying at Jason's house. So, the *Jewish leaders and the crowd went there. But Paul and Silas were not inside the house. Instead, the crowd dragged Jason outside and they dragged some other *Christians outside. The crowd took them to the officials of the city.

The officials usually decided whether a person was guilty of a crime. It was a crime to have a criminal as a guest. The *Jewish leaders accused Jason of this. They said, 'Paul and Silas have caused trouble everywhere' (verse 6). 'Everywhere' meant through all the *Roman *empire. They had probably heard about what happened during Paul's first journey. They accused Paul and Silas. They said that Paul and Silas did not obey the *Emperor's laws (verse 7). There was only one chief ruler in *Rome. That was the *Emperor!

They did not understand when the *missionaries *preached about God's *kingdom. God's *kingdom is very different from any *kingdom on earth. God's *kingdom will never end. Some people believe Jesus and they trust him. Everyone who does those things can belong to God's *kingdom. Jesus is their king.

Verses 8-9 The officials were responsible for the city. They had to make people obey *Roman law. If people did not obey it, the rulers and the *Emperor in *Rome would be angry.

But these officials were more sensible than the officials in Philippi. They saw that there was not much proof of the crime. Paul and Silas were not even there to answer questions! So, they did not order people to whip Jason and the other *believers. Instead, they made them pay 'bail'. The *believers had to pay money before Paul and Silas could go free. The *believers were responsible for them.

The *missionaries had to leave Thessalonica. The officials did not want them to return.

Many people become *Christians in Berea, 17:10-15

v10 *It was night. Immediately, the *believers sent Paul and Silas to Berea. When Paul and Silas arrived, they went to the *synagogue. v11 The people in Berea had a better attitude than the people in Thessalonica. The people in Berea were eager to listen to the message. They studied the *scriptures every day. They had heard what Paul said. And they wanted to see whether it was true. That is why they searched the *scriptures. v12 Many *Jews there believed. Many important *Greek women also believed and so did many *Greek men. v13 The *Jews in Thessalonica heard about this. They heard that Paul was *preaching God's message in Berea. They went to Berea and they caused trouble. They made the crowds oppose Paul. v14 Immediately, the *believers sent Paul away. He went to the coast but Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea. v15 Some men went with Paul to Athens. Then those men returned to Berea. They had instructions from Paul. He wanted Silas and Timothy to go to him as soon as possible.*

Verse 10 Paul and Silas left at night, in secret. They left the Egnatian Way and they went south to Berea. Berea was in one district in Macedonia. There were four districts in Macedonia in total. Timothy went to be with them there.

Verses 11-12 The *Jews in Berea were different. They were not like the *Jews in Thessalonica. They 'had a better attitude'. The *Greek word here means that they were more willing to receive God's message. But they did not just believe the message. They checked that the message had the same meaning as the *scriptures. We should be like these people. When someone teaches something new, we should do this. We should check that we can learn the same thing from the Bible. So, we must study the Bible often. It is good to read it every day, like the people in Berea.

Many people in Berea, both *Jews and *Gentiles, believed the *gospel. In Acts 20:4, Luke mentions one such person. That person was called Sopater and he was Pyrrhus's son. As in Thessalonica, many important *Gentile women became *Christians.

Verse 13 But Paul was in trouble again. Some *Jews from Thessalonica followed him to Berea. Again, they started to make the crowds oppose Paul. They probably accused him of the same crime. They probably said that he did not obey *Roman law.

Verses 14-15 So, the *believers in Berea helped Paul to get away in secret. It seems that the *Jews from Thessalonica were more angry with Paul. They were not so angry with his helpers. So, Silas and Timothy stayed to help in the new *church. Paul went to Athens. He arranged that Silas and Timothy would go to him later.

Paul *preaches in Athens, 17:16-21

v16 *Paul waited for Silas and Timothy in Athens. During that time he became very upset, because he saw many *idols in the city. v17 He went to the *synagogue and he talked with the *Jews. And he talked with the *Gentiles who *worshipped God. Every day, he also talked to everyone that he met in the market-place. v18 Some Epicureans and Stoics started to argue with him. (Look at the note below.) Some people in their group asked, 'What is this babbling trying to say?' (A 'babbling' is a person who talks a lot.) Other people in their group replied, 'It seems that he is talking about foreign gods.' Those other people said this because Paul talked about Jesus and the *resurrection. v19 So, the group took Paul with them. And they brought him to the rulers of the city. This group of rulers was called the *Areopagus. They said, 'What are these new things that you teach about? v20 We have heard you say some strange things. We want to know what you mean.' v21 Everyone in Athens, both citizens and foreigners, loved to hear new ideas. And they loved to discuss them. They were always doing those things. They spent all*

their time in that way. They did nothing else.

Verse 16 For several centuries, Athens had been the most important city in the world. But it had lost its political power. When Paul was alive, *Rome had become more important. But Athens was still the most important city for culture and art. Many people came there to teach about religion. And many people came there to learn about religion. They also discussed different ideas about life's meaning.

But there were *idols everywhere. They were images whose shape was like false gods. People made them from stone and metal. Today, people look at them because they are beautiful works of art.

But people did not make those images so that they could just look at the images. People made the images in order to *worship them. That was very wicked. Later, in a letter, Paul warned the Christians at Corinth about this. He wrote that 'when *pagans *sacrifice something, they offer it to evil *spirits. They do not offer it to God' (1 Corinthians 10:20). When people *worship false gods, they are really *worshipping evil *spirits!

This made Paul very 'upset'. The *Greek word here is 'paroxyno'. That word appears many times in the *Greek translation of the *Old Testament. With that word, the writers there describe what God thinks about *idols. Paul thought the same as God thinks. But Paul did not leave the city in disgust because of the *idols. Instead, he showed his love for the people. He told the good news about Jesus to them. They needed to hear it very much!

Verse 17 While Paul waited for Silas and Timothy, he continued to *preach. Again, he went to the *synagogue first. But he also went to the busy centre of the city. He talked to the people there too. 450 years before, the famous *Greek teacher Socrates had done that too. Paul knew that the people in Athens liked to discuss new ideas in public. So, that was the best way to tell them about Jesus.

Verse 18 The Epicureans followed what Epicurus taught. (Epicurus lived during 340-270 *BC.) The Epicureans believed in false gods. But they said that those gods had no interest in people's lives. The Epicureans

believed that people should just enjoy themselves as much as possible. They avoided things that caused fear and pain.

The Stoics followed what Zeno taught. (Zeno died in 265 *BC.) The Stoics did believe in a chief god, but they did not believe in the real God. They said that everything happened because of fate. They had no hope for the future. They were not like the Epicureans. They did not try to avoid pain. They believed that people should suffer bravely.

The ideas that the Epicureans and the Stoics had are very old. But many people believe similar false ideas today.

Although the Epicureans and the Stoics had different ideas, they agreed about Paul. The *Greek word for 'babblers' is 'spermologos'. The people in Athens used this word as an insult. It meant a teacher who takes parts of other people's ideas. Then he puts those parts together. And he pretends that those 'new' ideas are his own ideas. The people in Athens did not understand what Paul meant. They thought that he was talking about two gods called Jesus and 'Resurrection'. The people thought that the word '*resurrection' was a god's name.

Verses 19-20 But some people there wanted to know more about what Paul was teaching. They probably thought that people might not believe in the local gods any longer. They brought Paul to the *Areopagus. They asked him to explain what he was teaching.

Verse 21 Luke writes that the people in Athens loved to talk about new ideas. But that is all that they did all day! Luke seems to think that they were wasting time in that way. They talked about new ideas. But they never really learnt anything. If they did learn something, they did not do anything about it! They preferred to talk rather than actually to do anything!

Paul's speech to the *Areopagus, 17:22-34

v22 Paul stood up in front of the *Areopagus. He said, 'People in Athens, I can see that religion interests you a lot.
v23 I can see it because I walked about in your city. I looked at the things that you *worship. I found an *altar. Someone had written this text on it. The text was "to a

God whom we do not know". You **worship this God. But you do not know him. So, I will tell you about him now. v24 He is the God who made the world. He made everything that is in it. He is the *Lord over heaven and earth. He does not live in *temples that people build. v25 And he does not need anyone to help him. This is because he gives to everyone life, breath and everything else. v26 Out of one man he made all the nations, so that they would live all over the whole world. God decided when every nation would exist. And he decided where every nation would be. v27 God did this so that people would search for him. Perhaps they would reach out to him and they would find him. But he is not far from anyone among us. v28 Someone has said, "He gives to us the power to live. He gives to us the power to move. And by means of him, we are the people that we are." Some of your poets have said, "We are his children." v29 We are God's children. So, we must not think that God is like an *idol. People have not made him from gold, silver or stone. He is not like anything that people could design! v30 In past ages, God forgave people who thought such things. They did not know what they were doing. But now, he orders all people everywhere to *repent. v31 God has chosen a day when he will decide everyone's fate. He will do this in a fair way. He has chosen a man to do this for him. He has given proof about this to everyone. He has raised this man from death.'*

*v32 When the people heard Paul speak about a *resurrection, some people laughed. Other people said, 'We want to hear you talk about this again.'* *v33 Then Paul left the meeting. v34 Dionysius (a member of the *Areopagus), Damaris and several other people joined Paul's group. Those people believed in the *Lord.*

Verses 22-23 The *Areopagus was the name for the leaders of Athens city. That group had once possessed much political power. At the time when Paul lived, the *Areopagus still made important decisions. These included

decisions about the law, education and religion.

Paul began his speech to them. The first thing that they talked about was religion. We must remember that Paul's audience were all *pagans. So, he *preached in a new way. He did not mention the *scriptures, nor did he mention *Jewish history. That was because these people did not know about those things.

Instead, he talked about something that was familiar to them. He talked about an *altar that he had seen. It was an *altar 'to a God whom we do not know'. In Athens, there were many *altars like this. Probably, it had been an old, broken *altar. People did not know to which god it belonged. So, when they mended it, they wrote this text on it. They wrote 'to a God whom we do not know'. Paul said that he would now identify that God!

Verse 24 Paul did not mention the *scriptures. But he used certain words to describe God. Those words were similar to words that writers used in the *Old Testament. God made all things and he is the *Lord over all things. Like Stephen, Paul told his audience that God does not live in one place only. God is much bigger than anything that we can build.

Verse 25 God does not need anything from us. We cannot give to him anything that he does not already have. Everything that we have comes from him. He gives us life. And he keeps us alive.

Paul's words here are similar to how the *prophet Isaiah described God (Isaiah 42:5). But Paul meant something else also. The *Greeks linked their word for 'life' ('zoe') with Zeus. Zeus was their chief god. So, Paul was telling them that God gives life, but Zeus does not give life.

Verse 26 God made all people. And he is the ruler over all people. God controls everything that happens in the world.

All people have one common *ancestor, Adam. (Look at Genesis 2:7.) The *Greeks thought that they were superior to other nations. Paul shows to us here that no nation is superior. God made all people from one man. God decided when each person would live on earth. He decided where each person would live.

Verse 27 But God did not make us just so that he could watch us from far away. He wanted us to search for him. And he wanted us to know him. That was his plan.

But Paul used particular *Greek words for 'reach out' and 'find'. Those words mean that God's plan has not happened. *Sin stopped it. *Sin separates us from God. But Paul did not say that. It is possible to know God. And he is very near to us. So, Paul wanted to show those facts to his *pagan audience. The Stoics also believed that their god was in everything. (Look at the note about verse 18.) So, he was near, too. But Paul was speaking about the genuine God. The real God is not the same as the things that he has made. Also, the real God wants to know 'everyone among us'. We can talk to him as a friend. And he wants us to know that. Those things are very different from what the Stoics believed. Their god did not care about them. He was more like an idea.

Verse 28 Paul often used words from the *Jewish *scriptures when he was explaining about God. But he could not do this here. This was because his audience did not know the *scriptures. Instead, he used words that *Greek poets had written about God and people. He used words that the poet Epimenides had written. (Epimenides lived about 600 *BC.) And he used words that the poet Aratus had written. (Aratus was born in 310 *BC.)

Aratus was a Stoic. He was writing about the false god Zeus. Of course, we are not Zeus's children! But we are children of the genuine God. That is because he made us. And he gives us life. Paul used words that his audience had heard before. He took examples from their *pagan culture. In this way, his message would be more real for them. And it would be easier for them to understand.

Verse 29 We are God's children. He designed us. So, we should not design God from metal or stone. It is not possible! God is *Spirit (John 4:24). So, we cannot make an image that can show his form to us.

Paul was careful not to annoy his audience. He did not try to make them seem silly. Because they made *idols, their beliefs were wrong. But he told the truth to them in a kind

and gentle way. He said 'we' instead of 'you'. When we spread the *gospel today, we must always be polite. People will not listen to us if we laugh at them. We must not laugh at them, nor must we insult them. We must not do those things, even when their beliefs are silly and wrong.

Verses 30-31 Then Paul returned to what he had said at the beginning. The people in Athens did not know God. 'But now' (verse 30) means 'now, when *Christ has come'. *Christ offers to people *salvation from *sin's results. To receive this *salvation, they must *repent. They must not *worship *idols any longer. They must start to *worship God. Jesus *Christ has shown what God is like. So, people cannot say that they do not know who the genuine God is now.

God will decide what every person's fate will be. He will decide it for every person that he has made. He has already decided when that will happen. Nobody will avoid God's judgement. God has chosen 'a man' to do this. That man is Jesus *Christ. God raised him from death. This proved that God had chosen Jesus. God wanted to decide about everyone's fate by means of Jesus. That included all the people in the world.

Verses 32-33 Some people in Paul's audience laughed when he mentioned *resurrection. They could not believe that a dead person could return to life. Most *Greeks (except the Epicureans) agreed that a person's *spirit lives for always. (Look at the note about verse 18.) But the *Greek writer Aeschylus, who lived during 525-456 *BC, had written about their god Apollo. In that story, Apollo had said that 'there is no *resurrection'. This would mean that when someone dies, that person cannot come back to life.

Other people in Paul's audience wanted him to explain more at another time. They did not want to make a decision immediately.

When we spread the *gospel today, people's reactions may be similar to those people's reactions. Some people will laugh at us. Other people will want to hear more before they believe. We must pray that they do make a decision. We can discuss about God. We can learn some things about him in that way. But there is only one way to know God certainly.

We must believe in Jesus, his Son. And we must trust in Jesus. That is how we can really know God.

Verse 34 A few people believed Paul's message about Jesus and they went with Paul. Dionysius was a member of the *Areopagus.

Some students say that Damaris may have been a foreigner. That is because the ordinary women in Athens did not attend meetings of the *Areopagus. Other students think that she may have been Dionysius' wife.

After that, Paul left Athens. Nowhere in the *New Testament does a writer mention a new *church in Athens. So, it seems that Paul's speech was not very successful. He had explained the *gospel in a particular way. In some students' opinion, Paul thought that this way had failed. Certainly, when he came to Corinth, he *preached in a different way. Corinth was also a *pagan city. Later, he wrote these words. 'I decided to speak only about Jesus *Christ, whom people *crucified' (1 Corinthians 2:1-2).

Chapter 18

Paul goes to Corinth, 18:1-4

v1 After this, Paul left Athens and he went to Corinth. **v2** In Corinth, he met a *Jew called Aquila. Aquila had been born in Pontus. A short time before he met Paul, he had come from Italy. This was because the *Emperor Claudius had ordered all *Jews to leave Rome. Aquila's wife, Priscilla, had come with him. Paul went to visit Aquila and Priscilla. **v3** He stayed with them and they worked together. Paul was a maker of tents. Aquila and Priscilla were makers of tents too. **v4** Paul went to the *synagogue every *Sabbath. He spoke to the *Jews and *Gentiles and he tried to persuade them.

Verse 1 Paul travelled 145 kilometres (90 miles) west to Corinth. It was on the coast and it had two harbours. Many people travelled there from the east and the west to do business. Corinth was a very important city for trade.

There was a rocky hill behind the city. People built a *temple for the *goddess Aphrodite there. Aphrodite was the *goddess of love and

sex. A thousand female slaves worked in the *temple. At night, they went down to the city. Men paid them for sex. Corinth was famous for the wicked things that happened there.

Verse 2 Aquila and his wife had left Rome because the *Emperor had ordered it. This happened about *AD 49. The *Roman writer Suetonius also mentions that this happened. Suetonius wrote that the *Jews were causing trouble 'because of "Chrestus" '. Although he spelled the name differently, he probably meant *Christ. So, it was probably the *Jewish *Christians who had to leave. Aquila and Priscilla were already *Christians when Paul met them.

Verses 3-4 Paul may have met Aquila and Priscilla in the *synagogue. When Paul needed to work for money, he made tents. Aquila and Priscilla also made tents. So, Paul stayed in their home and he worked with them.

As usual, Paul *preached in the *synagogue first. He spoke to both *Jewish and *Gentile '*God-fearers'. He tried to persuade them that Jesus was the *Messiah. Luke, the author of Acts, does not describe how Paul did this. He probably did it in the same way as Luke described earlier (see Acts 17:2-3).

Paul stays in Corinth for 18 months, 18:5-11

v5 Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia. Then Paul spent all the time *preaching. He *preached to the *Jews. He told them that Jesus was the *Messiah. **v6** But the *Jews opposed him. They said evil things about him. So, he shook the dust from his clothes. He told them, 'Whatever happens to you now is your fault. I am not responsible for it. From now on, I will go to the *Gentiles.' **v7** So, he left them. He went to a house next to the *synagogue. Titius Justus, a man who *worshipped God, lived there. **v8** Crispus, the leader of the *synagogue, believed in the *Lord. So, did everyone in his family. Many other people in Corinth heard Paul's message. They also believed and received *baptism. **v9** One night, Paul had a *vision. In this *vision, the *Lord said, 'Do not be afraid! Continue to *preach. Do not stop! **v10** I am with you. Nobody will attack and hurt

you. Many people in this city belong to me.' v11 Paul stayed in Corinth for 18 months. He taught God's message to the people.

Verse 5 Silas and Timothy came to meet Paul. They had been in Berea (Acts 17:14) and Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 3:2). Now, Paul did not have to make tents for money. This was because Silas and Timothy probably had a gift of money from the Christians in Philippi (Philippians 4:14-17).

Verse 6 Again, some *Jews could not believe that Jesus was their *Messiah. So, Paul 'shook the dust from his clothes'. This showed that he *rejected the people from that *synagogue. He rejected them as they had rejected him. If they would not accept *salvation, Paul was not to blame. So, Paul went to the *Gentiles in Corinth instead.

We must remember this too. We must tell people the *gospel. But if they choose not to believe it, that is not our fault.

Verses 7-8 Paul and the other *Christians met in a house next to the *synagogue. This was a private house. Titius Justus owned it. Some students think that he was a *Roman citizen. Crispus, the leader of the *synagogue, also became a *Christian. Probably, he left the *synagogue with Paul. Many other people also became *Christians.

Verses 9-10 Paul had another *vision. 'The *Lord' here refers to Jesus. Jesus appeared to Paul again and he encouraged him. Paul probably felt afraid in Corinth. Although the new *church was growing, the *Jews opposed him. When the *Jews had opposed him in Thessalonica and Berea, Paul had to leave. But Jesus told Paul to carry on with what he was doing. He told Paul that he must not be afraid. He must *preach boldly.

Jesus reminded Paul that he was with him. He has promised this to everyone who does his work (Matthew 28:19). Jesus said that many people in Corinth would become *Christians. God had already chosen them.

Verse 11 Paul obeyed Jesus. He stayed in Corinth for one and a half years. Probably, he stayed from the autumn of *AD 50 to the spring of *AD 52. We know this because that

was when Gallio governed Achaia. Luke mentions Gallio next.

Paul and Gallio, 18:12-17

*v12 When Gallio governed Achaia, the *Jews met together. They seized Paul and they took him to the court. v13 They said, 'He is persuading our people to *worship God in a way that is against the law!'*

*v14 Before Paul could speak, Gallio spoke to the *Jews. He said, 'If you accused this man of a crime, I would have to listen.*

*v15 But you are arguing about words and names. You are arguing about your own *Law! So, you must settle it. I will not decide about these things.' v16 So, he made them leave the court. v17 They all seized Sosthenes. He was the leader of the *synagogue. They hit him many times. They did this in front of the court and but Gallio did not care about this.*

Verse 12 Probably, Gallio began to govern the region called Achaia when Paul was in Corinth. Corinth was in Achaia. *Roman writers who knew Gallio said that he was kind to everyone. Perhaps the *Jews thought that he would help them. They wanted to make him angry with Paul and the *Christians. So, they took Paul to the court. The court was in the market-place. Gallio was the judge.

Verse 13 *Roman law allowed the *Jews to practise their own religion. But the *Jews said that Paul was not teaching *Judaism. He was teaching a new way to *worship God. And Paul had not asked the *Roman rulers if he could teach this new way. So, they said that it was not legal.

Verses 14-15 But Gallio said that Paul had not acted against *Roman law. He said that they were arguing about *Jewish *Law. He would not do anything about that. So, he forced them to leave the court.

Verses 16-17 It is not certain what 'all' means here. It may mean the *Jews. Or it may refer to the *Gentile crowd. In the first century *AD, many *Gentiles did not like the *Jews. So, perhaps they took this chance to show their hate. Or perhaps the *Jews were angry with their leader, Sosthenes. This was because he had not persuaded Gallio to punish Paul. Or perhaps Sosthenes was a *Christian (see 1

Corinthians 1:1). So, the *Jews attacked him instead of Paul. But Gallio did not help. They did not attack and hurt Paul. Jesus had promised that to Paul (Acts 18:10). *Roman law had protected him. Gallio had made an important decision. He let Paul continue to *preach. It was not a crime to *preach. Gallio showed that this was not against *Roman law. Other judges would have to agree. So, Paul could *preach the *gospel anywhere in the *Roman *empire. Luke always tried to persuade his readers that the *gospel was legal. He showed that the *Christian *faith was good for the *Roman *empire. He showed that *Christians did not cause trouble for the *Roman government.

Paul returns to Antioch, 18:18-23

v18 Paul stayed in Corinth. He stayed with the *believers there for many days. Then he left them and he sailed to Syria. Priscilla and Aquila went with him. Before he sailed from Cenchrea, he cut off his hair. He did this because he had made a special promise to God. **v19** They arrived in Ephesus city. Paul left Priscilla and Aquila and he went into the *synagogue. He talked with the *Jews there. **v20** They asked him to stay longer with them but he refused. **v21** He left but he said, 'If God allows me, I will return to you.' Then he sailed from Ephesus.

v22 He arrived at Caesarea. He went to *Jerusalem and he greeted the members of the *church there. Then he went to Antioch. **v23** He stayed in Antioch for some time then he left. He went to several places in Galatia and Phrygia. He helped the *believers there to have a stronger *faith.

Verse 18 Cenchrea was the name of the harbour at Corinth. Paul started a *church there (Romans 16:1). He probably started other *churches in the region also. In 2 Corinthians 1:1, he writes 'to all God's people in Achaia'.

Before he left Corinth, he cut off his hair. *Jews did this to give thanks to God (see Numbers 6:1-21). They usually did it in *Jerusalem. They burnt the hair as a *sacrifice in the *Temple. This showed that they offered

themselves to God. But if they were far from *Jerusalem, they could keep the pieces of hair. Later, when they went to the *Temple, they brought the hair with them. Perhaps Luke mentions this to show that Paul still practised *Jewish customs. Although the *Jews opposed him, Paul was still a *Jew. They accused him of opposing their traditions.

Priscilla and Aquila sailed with Paul. Probably, Silas and Timothy stayed in Corinth to help the new *believers there.

Verses 19-21 Paul did not stay long in Ephesus. We do not know why he had to leave. Perhaps he wanted to go to the *Temple in *Jerusalem. Then he could offer his *sacrifice (verse 18). He left Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus and he sailed to Caesarea.

Caesarea was over 966 kilometres (600 miles) away. When Paul returned to Ephesus, there was a new *church there.

Verse 22 The word '*Jerusalem' does not appear in the original account. But students think that this is where Paul went. Then Paul returned to Antioch in Syria.

Verse 23 Paul probably stayed from the summer of *AD 52 to the spring of *AD 53. Then he started his third *missionary journey. He went north first. He probably visited the *churches in Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe. He had started these *churches in his first journey (Acts chapters 13-14). He went back to them on his second journey too (Acts 16:6).

Apollos in Ephesus, 18:24-28

v24 Meanwhile, a *Jew called Apollos came to Ephesus. He was born in Alexandria. He was a clever man and he was an excellent speaker. He knew the *scriptures very well. **v25** He had learnt about the Way of the *Lord. He was very excited when he spoke about this. He taught the right things about Jesus. But he only knew about John's *baptism. **v26** He began to speak boldly in the *synagogue. Priscilla and Aquila heard him. They invited him to their home and they explained more about God's way to him. Then, he understood it even better. **v27** Apollos wanted to go to Achaia and the *believers in Ephesus helped him.

*They wrote to the *believers in Achaia and they urged them to greet him. Apollos arrived in Achaia. He was very helpful to everyone who, because of God's *grace, had become *believers. v28 He had some strong arguments with the *Jews. This happened in public. He used the *scriptures to prove that Jesus is the *Messiah.*

Verse 24 Apollos was born in Alexandria, a city in *Egypt. About one million *Jews lived there. It was famous as a place for *Jews to study the *scriptures. In Alexandria, *Jews learned that the *scriptures described events that had special meanings. They learned about what these events meant. This kind of education helped Apollos later to argue with the *Jews (verse 27).

Verse 25 In Acts, the *Christian *faith is often called 'the Way' (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). As *Christians, we must show our beliefs by what we do. We are not just obeying rules. We are obeying a person - Jesus *Christ, God's Son. The 'Way' is a person, not a religion.

Apollos knew about Jesus. He believed in him. But Apollos did not know about *Christian *baptism. *Christian *baptism shows that we have been born again in a *spiritual way. We have started a new life with the *Holy Spirit. Perhaps Apollos did not know that the *Holy Spirit had come to live in all *believers (Acts 2:17-21). He only knew about the message of John the *Baptist. John told people that they needed to *repent and to turn away from *sin. Apollos did not teach wrong things. However, there were things that he did not know.

Verse 26 Priscilla and Aquila heard Apollos *preach. They realised that he did not know some very important things. But they did not tell him this in public. Instead, they invited him to their home. In private, they taught him the things that he did not know. For example, the *Old Testament *prophets had said many things about the *Messiah. These had become true in the life, death and *resurrection of Jesus. This was 'God's Way'. All the early speeches in Acts were about this.

Apollos was very clever. He had a good education. But he was not too proud to learn

more. So, God was able to use him to do important work for the *kingdom.

Verse 27-28 Later, Apollos went to Corinth (in Achaia). He used his knowledge of the *Old Testament and its special meanings. He used what he had learnt in Ephesus. He had a strong *faith in Jesus. He defended that *faith against the *Jews in public.

Chapter 19

Paul in Ephesus, 19:1-10

*v1 While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul was travelling. He travelled through the *province on the higher road. He arrived at Ephesus and he found some *disciples there. v2 He asked them, 'Did you receive the *Holy Spirit when you became *believers?'*

*'No', they replied, 'we have never even heard about a *Holy Spirit!'*

*v3 Paul asked, 'So, what *baptism did you receive?'*

*'John's *baptism', they replied.*

*v4 Paul said, 'John's *baptism was for people to show that they had *repented. John told them that someone else was coming after him. They must believe in that person. That person was Jesus. They must believe in Jesus.'*

*v5 When they heard this, they received *baptism in the name of the *Lord Jesus.*

*v6 Paul put his hands on them and the *Holy Spirit filled them. They spoke in languages that they did not know. They also *prophesied. v7 There were about 12 men in this group.*

*v8 Paul went to the *synagogue. For three months, he spoke boldly to the people there. He discussed God's *kingdom. He argued with them and he tried to convince them. v9 But some of them were *stubborn and they would not believe. They said evil things about the Way of the *Lord to everyone there. So, Paul left them. He took the *believers with him and they went to Tyrannus's lecture hall. Every day, they had discussions there. v10 This continued for two years. It continued until all the *Jews*

*and *Greeks in Asia had heard the *Lord's message.*

Verses 1-2 Paul did not use the main road to Ephesus. He travelled along the higher road. It was shorter but not as busy. He was now in the *province called Asia. He met a group of men in Ephesus. Luke says that they were *believers. But Paul realised that something was very wrong with their *faith. So, he asked them whether they had received the *Holy Spirit. Nobody had told them about the *Holy Spirit!

Verses 3-4 They had received *baptism from John or one of his *disciples. Paul explained that this was not enough. They must follow Jesus now, not John. John's *baptism was to prepare for when Jesus came. Now Jesus had come. He had done his work on earth and he had returned to God, his Father. He had sent the gift of the *Holy Spirit.

Verses 5-7 So, the men received *baptism in water for a second time. It was *Christian *baptism, in the name of the *Lord Jesus. This time, when Paul put his hands on them, the *Holy Spirit filled them. They received gifts from the Spirit. They spoke in 'tongues' (see note on Acts 2:4). They also *prophesied.

Verses 8-9 Then Paul went to the *synagogue. When he was in a new city, he always did this first. He *preached about God's *kingdom. The *kingdom has come by means of Jesus, the *Messiah. His *kingdom is here for all who accept him as *Saviour and *Lord.

Paul *preached like this for three months. He tried to persuade the people there to believe what he taught. As had happened before, some *Jews opposed him. They closed their minds to God's truth. They wanted other people to do this too. So, they said very bad things about the 'Way' (see note on 18:25).

Paul had to leave. He found somewhere else to *preach. It was a building like a school. People came to hear lectures there. We do not know anything about Tyrannus. Perhaps he owned the hall. Paul probably used the hall from the end of the morning to the end of the afternoon.

Paul continued to make tents (see Acts 20:34). He probably did this work in the early morning. Paul and the other *Christians had so much energy! Their energy came from God.

This was because they were so eager to do his work. God always gives us enough energy to do things for him.

Verse 10 Paul stayed in Ephesus for two years. Many people in Asia came to Ephesus to do business. They also came to *worship the *goddess Artemis. So, Paul had many chances to *preach to many different people, both *Jews and *Greeks.

The seven sons of Sceva, 19:11-20

v11 God gave Paul the power to do extraordinary *miracles. **v12** People took cloths that Paul had used or worn. They brought these cloths to sick people. All the sick people became well again and evil *spirits left them.

v13 Some *Jews who were wandering about tried to use the *Lord Jesus' name to force out evil *spirits. They said to the evil *spirits, 'I order you! Come out in the name of Jesus, the same Jesus about whom Paul *preaches.'

v14 Seven sons of Sceva, a *Jewish chief priest, were doing this. **v15** One day, an evil *spirit spoke to them. It said, 'I know Jesus and I know about Paul. But I do not know you!' **v16** The man with the evil *spirit in him attacked them. The evil *spirit hit them and hurt them. They ran out of the house. They were naked and they had injuries.

v17 The *Jews and *Greeks in Ephesus heard about this. They were very afraid and they respected the name of the *Lord Jesus even more. **v18** Many *believers started to tell everyone about the evil things that they had done. **v19** Some of them had done magic. They brought their books and they burnt them in public. These books were worth 50 000 silver coins. **v20** In this manner, the *Lord's message continued to increase in power and it spread widely.

Verses 11-13 When Paul made tents, he probably wore a cloth round his head. This helped him to stay cool. He would also cover his clothes with cloth. This protected them from dust and dirt. The people in Ephesus took these cloths. When sick people touched

the cloths, they became well. Evil *spirits left them too.

The cloths did not have special powers. Paul did not have special powers. The power to cure came from God. In his *Gospel, Luke records that a sick woman touched Jesus' coat (Luke 8:43-48). Jesus felt power go out from him. The woman became well immediately. Jesus told her that she was well because of her *faith. The 'extraordinary *miracles' remind us about this.

God cures in many ways. When people have *faith in Jesus, God's power to cure is there. The name of Jesus has power over evil *spirits too. Some *Jews realised this. So, they used Jesus' name to force out evil *spirits. But people must not use Jesus' name like magic. They must know Jesus as their *Saviour and *Lord. They must trust him and obey him. If they do not, they are in danger. To show this, Luke recorded what happened next.

Verses 14-16 Luke describes Sceva as a 'chief priest'. But there was never a *high priest called Sceva in *Jerusalem. He may have belonged to a family of a *high priest. Or he may have been a priest of a false *Roman religion.

People paid Sceva's seven sons to force out evil *spirits. They knew that Paul used Jesus' name to force out evil *spirits. They knew how powerful Jesus' name is. So, they copied Paul. They had no authority to use Jesus' name. They had not accepted Jesus as their *Saviour and *Lord. An evil *spirit realised this. It realised that they had no power to make it leave. So, it attacked them. It is dangerous to use Jesus' name wrongly! But the story also reminds us that *believers have authority over evil *spirits. If Jesus is our *Lord, we can use his name.

Verse 17 The news about Sceva's sons spread. People realised the power in Jesus' name. There were two reactions to this. People were afraid. They also continued to give honour to Jesus' name.

Verses 18-20 Many people in Ephesus performed magic. Even some of the new *believers performed magic. They had heard what had happened to Sceva's sons. Now they wanted to turn away from magic completely. They *repented. To show this, they destroyed

their books about magic. The books cost a lot of money but that did not matter. They wanted to obey God.

God hates magic (Deuteronomy 18:10-12). When people become *Christians, they must turn away from magic completely. They must destroy all their things that have any connection with magic.

When the *believers in Ephesus destroyed their books, many more people believed in Jesus. They saw that the *believers' *faith was real and true. They realised the power that Jesus has. The fifth part of Acts ends at verse 20 (see 'About this book' above).

Demetrius complains about Paul, 19:21-27

v21 After all this had happened, Paul decided to go to *Jerusalem. He decided to pass through Macedonia and Achaia on the way. 'After I go there', he said, 'I must also go to Rome.' **v22** He sent Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia. They were two of his helpers. Then he spent more time in the *province called Asia. **v23** At this time, there was a serious problem in Ephesus. The problem was about the Way of the *Lord. **v24** There was a man who made things from silver. His name was Demetrius. He made models of Artemis's *temple from silver. Artemis was a *goddess. The people who worked for him earned much money. **v25** So, he asked them to meet together. They met with other people who did similar work. Demetrius said, 'Men, you know that we have a good income from this work. **v26** But you can see and hear what this man Paul is doing. He says that the gods that people make are not real gods! He has convinced many people in Ephesus and almost everywhere in Asia. He has persuaded them to turn away from Artemis. **v27** This is dangerous! People will say bad things about our business. Also, people will stop respecting the *temple of the great *goddess Artemis. Asia and the world *worship Artemis. People may stop believing that she is powerful!'

Verse 21 Paul had established a strong *church in Ephesus. Now it was time to travel again. The word 'decided' here means 'he made plans in the Spirit'. God was guiding Paul. God was telling Paul where he must go. He must go to Rome. But Paul did not intend to stay there. He was on his way to Spain (Romans 15:24, 28).

But first, he wanted to encourage the Christians in Macedonia and Athens. He also wanted to collect money from these Christians. This money was to help the poor Christians in *Jerusalem. They were poor because people had *persecuted them. Also, there had been a *famine. It was important to Paul to collect this money. He mentions it in his letters (Romans 15:25-31; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians chapters 8-9). But Luke mentions it only once (Acts 24:17). Luke records other events that he thought were more important.

Verse 22 Paul sent Timothy and Erastus ahead of him to Macedonia. This was probably to help to collect the money. Luke wrote that Paul stayed longer 'in the *province called Asia'. This shows that he did not stay only in the city called Ephesus.

Verses 23-24 Ephesus was famous as a place where people *worshipped Artemis. This Artemis was not the same as the *Greek and *Roman *goddess, Artemis the hunter. Artemis of Ephesus was the mother-*goddess of Asia. Many people who *worshipped her performed magic. Her name had much evil power. People called her the 'Queen of everything that exists'. They also called her '*Saviour' and '*Lord'. This is very wicked. There is only one *Saviour and *Lord: the *Lord Jesus *Christ.

Artemis's *temple was in Ephesus. It was bigger than the *temple in Athens. Many people earned money by making models of it. These models contained a little model of Artemis. People bought them to *worship Artemis. In Ephesus, people who made things joined unions. These were groups of people who did similar work. They helped and supported each other. Probably, Demetrius led the union for people who made things from silver.

Verses 25-27 Demetrius asked the union to meet. He wanted to speak to them about Paul. Paul *preached about the one genuine God. People cannot see God. They cannot make images of him.

Paul urged people to turn away from false gods that people make with their hands. If they did this, they would not buy the models of Artemis's *temple. This was bad for Demetrius's business! He was very angry. He seemed to be upset because people might *reject Artemis. More likely, he was angry because he would not make money. He did not care whether Paul was right.

'Artemis is great!' 19:28-34

v28 When the crowd heard this, they became very angry. They started to shout, 'Great is Artemis, the *goddess of the Ephesians (people from Ephesus)!'
v29 This soon upset the whole city. Some men seized Gaius and Aristarchus. Gaius and Aristarchus had come to Macedonia with Paul. They all rushed to the theatre.

v30 Paul wanted to go out and speak to the crowd. But the *believers would not let him. **v31** Some of the local officials were Paul's friends. They, too, sent him a message. They urged him not to go to the theatre. **v32** People at the meeting were confused. Some people were shouting one thing. Other people were shouting something else. Most people did not know why they were there! **v33** There was a man called Alexander. The *Jews pushed him to the front of the crowd. Some of the crowd shouted instructions to him. He waved his hand. He tried to explain what was happening. **v34** But they saw that he was a *Jew. So, they all shouted together, 'Great is Artemis of the Ephesians (people from Ephesus)!'
They did this for two hours.

Verse 28 Demetrius's workers were angry too. They did not want to lose their good income. So, they began to shout. The people in Ephesus were proud of their *goddess and her *temple. So, the workers reminded them by shouting 'Great is Artemis, the *goddess of the Ephesians!' They wanted the people to

join in with them against Paul and his 'foreign' God.

Verse 29 The meeting probably started inside. But now the workers had gone outside into the streets. They upset everyone in the city. Probably, more people joined the noisy crowd.

They went to the theatre. Public meetings happened in the theatre in most cities. The theatre in Ephesus was very big. There was room there for 25 000 people! On their way there, the crowd seized two of Paul's helpers. Aristarchus was from Thessalonica. Later, he travelled to *Jerusalem with Paul.

Verses 30-31 Paul wanted to speak to the crowd. But this was not an ordinary meeting of citizens. These people were very angry. They were shouting all the time. The *believers would not allow Paul to speak. Neither would the local officials.

These officials were called 'asiarchs'. Asiarchs were the chief citizens of Ephesus and other cities in Asia. Every year, one asiarch would be *high priest for the *Roman religion. Asiarchs were very loyal to the *Roman *Emperor. Luke records that some of these asiarchs were Paul's friends. Again, Luke is showing that *Christians were not opposed to the *Roman government.

Verse 32 With humour, Luke makes it clear that this was not a proper meeting. Most people did not know why they were there!

Verses 33-34 Paul was a *Jew. People in Ephesus knew that *Jews did not *worship Artemis. So, the *Jews were very worried. They knew that the people were *pagans. But they wanted them to know that they opposed Paul too (but for different reasons).

They thought that the crowd might start to be angry with them because of Paul. So, they chose Alexander to explain this. But the crowd would not let Alexander speak. Alexander was a *Jew. They knew that he did not *worship Artemis. They had become angry with everyone who did not respect the *goddess of their city. They were too angry to listen to anyone! They just shouted the same words again and again.

An important official talks to the crowd, 19:35-41

v35 At last, the official of the town made the crowd quiet. He said, 'People of Ephesus! Ephesus is famous as a place to *worship the great Artemis! Everyone in the world knows this. Everyone knows that her image, which fell down from the sky, is here. **v36** Nobody can say that this is not true. So, you must be quiet. Do not do anything suddenly. Think about it first. **v37** You have brought these men here. But they have not robbed *temples. They have not said evil things about our *goddess. **v38** Demetrius and his workers may want to complain about these men. If they do, then we have courts and judges. They meet on regular days. Let them accuse these men in the courts. **v39** You want to do more than that. If so, you must settle the disagreement in a legal meeting of citizens. **v40** Already, people could accuse us of starting a *riot. This is because of what has happened today. We cannot give a reason for this noise and confusion. There is no excuse for it!' **v41** After he said this, he told the people to leave.

Verse 35 The official of the town was the most important official in Ephesus. His job was to write records of meetings. He knew that this meeting was not legal. He would have to report it to the *Roman government. The *Roman rulers would be very angry. They did not allow *riots. So, the official had to control the crowd quickly. If he did not, the *Roman rulers might blame him for the *riot.

The official had authority and people respected him. So, they stopped shouting and they listened to him. He showed that he agreed with them. Ephesus was famous for Artemis's *temple. The whole world knew this. He reminded them that they had Artemis's image. This was probably a meteorite (rock which falls to earth from space). In ancient times, people believed that meteorites came from the gods.

Verses 36-37 Then, the official urged them to stop and think. Gaius and Aristarchus were

not criminals. They had not robbed *temples. They had not insulted Artemis.

Verses 38-39 At that moment, Gaius and Aristarchus were innocent men. If Demetrius wanted to accuse them of crimes, he must do it properly. The official reminded him about how to do this. Demetrius could accuse them in the local law courts. Or he could go to the citizens' meeting. This meeting happened three times in every month.

Verses 40-41 Then, the official warned the crowd. The *Roman government could accuse them all of starting a *riot. Sometimes, the *Roman rulers gave people terrible punishments for this. The people in Ephesus had no excuse for their bad behaviour. The official's words scared the crowd. When he ordered them to leave, they did this. There was no more trouble.

Again, Luke shows that *Christians were not doing anything against *Roman law. They were not a danger to society. So, the *gospel could continue to spread across the *empire.

Chapter 20

Paul travels through Macedonia and Greece, 20:1-6

v1 After the *riot, Paul sent for the *believers and he encouraged them. Then he said goodbye to them. He left to go to Macedonia. **v2** He travelled through those regions and he encouraged the *believers there with many messages. At last, he arrived in Greece. **v3** He stayed there for three months. Just before Paul sailed to Syria, he discovered something. Some of the *Jews were plotting against him. So, he decided to return through Macedonia. **v4** Sopater, Pyrrhus's son from Berea, went with him. So, did Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica. Gaius from Derbe was also with him. Timothy went too. Tychicus and Trophimus from Asia also went. **v5** These men went on ahead. They waited for us in Troas. **v6** After the *Festival of *Unleavened Bread, we sailed from Philippi. And 5 days later, we met the other men in Troas. We stayed there for a week.

Verse 1 Before he left, Paul encouraged the *believers. He had already decided to make this journey (see Acts 19:21). He was worried about the Christians in Corinth. He had written to them. He had visited them and Timothy had visited them. But there were still many problems. They had not followed his advice. They were not loyal to him. He had sent his helper, Titus, to Corinth. Titus brought another letter to them. We cannot be sure what Paul wrote in this letter. This is because we do not have it. Paul intended to meet Titus in Troas. So, Titus could tell him more about the *church in Corinth.

Verses 2 We do not know how long Paul was in Macedonia. But it was probably more than a year.

Verse 3 Paul stayed in Greece during the winter of *AD 56 to *AD 57. He probably stayed in Corinth. He wrote his letter to the *Romans from there. Then he prepared to sail to Syria. But he discovered a *Jewish plot to kill him. Perhaps the *Jews remembered him from before (Acts 18:12). So, he went back to Macedonia.

Verses 4-6 Luke gives a list of the people who went with Paul. They came from different *churches. The Christians in these *churches had given money to help the Christians in *Jerusalem. They would go with Paul to deliver it to the Christians in *Jerusalem.

Sopater, Aristarchus and Secundus went on behalf of the Christians in Macedonia. Gaius went on behalf of the Christians in Asia. Tychicus and Trophimus went on behalf on the Christians in Asia. Timothy was probably there to help Paul.

Probably, this group travelled together through Macedonia. Then, they separated. Paul stayed in Philippi for the *Passover (see also Acts 12:3). This was the most important *Jewish *festival.

Luke met Paul in Philippi. We know this because the 'we' passages start again. They travelled together to Troas. The voyage lasted 5 days. The wind was against them. Before, they had sailed across in two days (Acts 16:11).

Paul's last visit to Troas, 20:7-12

v7 *On the first day of the week, we met together. We broke up bread and we shared it. Paul talked to the people until midnight because he was leaving the next day. v8* *We were meeting in the upstairs room. There were many lamps there. v9* *A young man was sitting by a window. He was called Eutychus. As Paul talked, Eutychus became more and more sleepy. When he was asleep, he fell. He fell from the third storey down to the ground below. When they picked him up, he was dead.*

v10 *Paul went down. He threw himself on Eutychus and he hugged him. He said, 'Do not worry! He is alive.'* **v11** *Then Paul went back upstairs. He broke up bread (see note) and he ate with us. He talked until dawn and then he left. v12* *The *believers took the young man home alive. They were very happy.*

Verse 7 Paul and his companions stayed in Troas for a week. But Luke wrote about only one event. It was a very important event. This story also shows us how the members of the early *church *worshipped together.

They met 'on the first day of the week'. This was Sunday. So, we know that the first *Christians *worshipped on Sunday. God raised Jesus from death on a Sunday.

*Believers from the *church at Troas were there. Paul and his companions were there too. The meeting was in the evening. This was because people worked during the day. Paul had much to say to them. He was leaving the next day.

Verses 8-10 'Young man' here means a boy between 8 and 14 years old. Many people were in the room. There was a lot of smoke from the lamps. The young man, Eutychus, was sitting by a window, probably so that he could breathe the cool air. But he could not stay awake. He fell out of the window.

Some students say that Eutychus did not really die. He was just unconscious. They say that Paul knew this. But Luke was there. He saw everything that happened. He gives many details in his story. Luke was a doctor. He says

that Eutychus was dead. Eutychus came back to life when Paul hugged him.

Verses 11-12 It was probably early Monday morning before Paul broke bread with them. *Jews broke up bread and shared the pieces before a meal. This was their custom. Jesus did this the night before he died. Then Paul and the *believers ate a meal together (see note on Acts 2:46). After that, Paul spoke with them until he left.

From Troas to Miletus, 20:13-16

v13 *Paul decided to travel by land. He went on ahead to the ship. We sailed to Assos where we intended to meet Paul. Then we intended to take him on the ship. He had told us to do this. v14* *He met us at Assos and he came on the ship. We sailed on to Mitylene. v15* *Next day, we sailed from there and we arrived in a place near Chios. The day after that, we reached Miletus. v16* *Paul had decided to sail on past Ephesus. This was because he did not want to stay too long in Asia. He was in a hurry. He wanted to be in *Jerusalem for *Pentecost if possible.*

Verse 13 Paul decided to walk to Assos. He used the *Roman road. It was about 32 kilometres (20 miles) from Troas. It took much more time to sail there. Perhaps Paul wanted to stay and teach a little longer.

Verses 14-16 Paul met them at Assos and came on the ship. They sailed south. They visited some ports on their way to Miletus. Paul did not want to stop at Ephesus. Maybe that was because it was too soon after the *riot. Also, he was in a hurry to reach *Jerusalem.

Paul says goodbye to the *church leaders from Ephesus, 20:17-38

v17 *From Miletus, Paul sent a message to Ephesus. He asked the *church leaders to meet him. v18* *When they arrived, he said this to them. 'I was with you when I first came to Asia. You know everything that I did. v19* *Some of the *Jews plotted against me. They caused trouble for me and I wept. But I served the *Lord. I was humble. v20* *I *preached and I taught you in public. I *preached and I taught you in*

*your homes. I told you anything that would help you. I held back nothing. You know this. v21 I told both *Jews and *Gentiles to turn to God. I told them to *repent. I told them to have *faith in our *Lord Jesus.*

*v22 Now I must obey the *Holy Spirit. I am going to *Jerusalem. I do not know what will happen to me there. v23 I only know this. In every city that I visit, the *Holy Spirit has warned me. I will go to prison and I will have troubles. v24 But my life is worth nothing to me. I only want to finish the race. I want to finish the task that the *Lord Jesus gave me. The task is to tell the good news about God's *grace.'*

Verse 17 Paul did not want to return to Ephesus. But he wanted to speak to the *church leaders there. So, he asked them to meet him in Miletus. Miletus was 48 kilometres (30 miles) south of Ephesus.

Paul's speech was for a *Christian audience. It is the only speech in Acts like this. All Paul's other speeches were for *Jewish or *Gentile audiences. Luke was there and he heard Paul's speech. He remembered it and he wrote it down. The speech was like one of Paul's letters but it was shorter.

Verses 18-21 First, Paul spoke about when he was with them. He reminded them about that time. In his letters, he also reminded the Christians about when their *churches started (Philippians 1:5; 4:15; Colossians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 2:1-15).

He spoke about the problems that he had. But he still carried on doing what God wanted. The *Greek word for 'served' here means to be a slave. Paul belonged to God and he obeyed God completely.

He mentioned that 'some of the *Jews plotted against me' (verse 19). But Luke does not mention this in Acts 19. Paul tells us some more in 1 Corinthians 15:32.

Paul reminded them that he *preached to crowds. He *preached to people in their homes. He told the good news to *Jews and to *Gentiles. The *Greek word for 'held back' has a special meaning. It means 'to hold back because of other people's opinions'. Paul was

always bold. He did not worry about other people's opinions of him.

Sometimes it can be difficult to tell people about Jesus. We may upset our friends. We may be afraid that people will *persecute us. People may insult us and they may do bad things to us. These things happened to Paul because he *preached the good news. But that did not stop him. He wanted people to receive *salvation. He did not change God's message. He did not make it easier. He told them that they must change their lives. They must turn to God and they must be sorry about their *sins. They must have *faith in Jesus *Christ. There is no other way to receive *salvation.

Verses 22-24 Next, Paul told them that he intended to go to *Jerusalem. He was honest with them. He did not know what might happen. He was obeying the *Holy Spirit. But he knew that it would be dangerous. People would put him in prison. He might die. But he was willing to lose his freedom and his life. He was like a runner in a race. He knew where he must go. He must not become tired and he must not stop. He must finish the work that Jesus had given him.

*v25 I have travelled from place to place. I *preached to you about God's *kingdom. But now, I know this. None of you will ever see me again. v26 So, today, I tell you this. I am no longer responsible for any of you! v27 I have told you everything that God wants you to know. I have held back nothing. v28 Look after yourselves. The *Holy Spirit has put people in your care. Look after them. Be like *shepherds in God's *church. He bought this *church with his own blood.*

*v29 I know this. After I leave, people like fierce wolves (wild animals that attack and kill other animals) will come in among you. They will attack the *church. v30 Some of your own people will tell lies. They will do this to lead *believers away. They will do this to make *believers obey them. v31 Be careful! Remember this. For three years, night and day, I kept warning you and I wept many tears.*

Verses 25-27 This verse reminds us of Ezekiel 33:1-6. God chose the *prophet Ezekiel to

warn the *Israelites. They must stop *sinning, or they would die. If Ezekiel did not warn them, he was responsible for their death. But if he did warn them, he was not responsible. Paul was like Ezekiel. God had chosen him to tell people God's message. If anyone did not obey God's message, it was their own fault. Paul had done everything that he could to spread the good news.

Verse 28 First; Paul said that the leaders must look after themselves. He meant this in a *spiritual way. They must live good lives. They must trust and obey God. Then, they would be able to look after the *church.

Paul said that they must 'be like *shepherds'. Jesus said, 'I am the good *Shepherd' (John 10:11). We are like his sheep. The leaders are Jesus' helpers. They are also like *shepherds. The *Christians are like the sheep. *Shepherds look after the sheep. They lead them and they protect them from attack.

Paul reminded them that these sheep belonged to God. They were his *church and they were precious. God had bought them 'with his own blood'. Jesus is God. God is Father, Son and *Holy Spirit.

Verse 29 Paul kept using this example of *shepherds and sheep. He warned about false teachers. They were people like fierce wild animals. Paul was thinking about some *Jewish *Christians. They had already come to the *churches in Galatia and Corinth (2 Corinthians 11:4; Galatians 1:6-9). They did not *preach the real *gospel.

Verses 30-31 Paul also warned about *spiritual attack in the *church. He said that people will obey false teachers instead of obeying *Christ. Good teachers always talk about *Christ, not about themselves. They encourage people to obey *Christ. But false teachers want to be important. They want power over people and they lead people away from *Christ.

Paul urged them to watch for attack. He had warned them all the time that he was with them. We know that Paul was right to warn them. False teachers did come to them (see Paul's Letter to Timothy and Revelation 2:1-6).

v32 Now I put you into God's care.
Remember the message about his *grace.

*This message can make you strong. It can give you the *blessings that belong to you, God's people. **v33** I have never wanted anyone's money or clothes. **v34** You know that I have worked with my hands. So, I provided all that I and my friends needed. **v35** I showed you that, by hard work, we must help weak people. I showed you by everything that I did. Remember that the *Lord Jesus said, 'It is better to give something than to receive something. This is because God will *bless you more.' **v36** After this, Paul knelt down. They all did this. He prayed. **v37** Everyone was crying. They hugged him and they kissed him. **v38** They were especially sad. This was because Paul had said, 'You will never see me again.'*

Then he went to the ship and they went with him.

Verse 32 Paul could not look after them any longer. He was going away. But God could look after them. So, Paul put them into God's care. They had the *gospel. That was all that they needed. They would grow in *faith by means of God's *grace.

Verses 33-34 Paul reminded them of something that is really important. *Church leaders must look after God's people. That is their responsibility. But they must not do this to get a reward. Paul was like a model for them. He had not asked them for anything. He had made tents in order to earn money. He had helped 'weak people'. 'Weak people' were those who could not look after themselves. Perhaps this would be because they are poor or sick.

'It is better to give something than to receive something. This is because God will *bless you more' (verse 35). Jesus' words here are not in the *Gospel accounts. Perhaps Paul heard them from one of the 12 *apostles in *Jerusalem.

Verses 36-38 Paul loved these Christians very much. The Christians loved Paul very much too. He was not just their teacher. He was their dear friend and like their brother. They were all very sad. This was because they would never meet again.

Chapter 21

Paul visits the *believers in Tyre, 21:1-6

v1 We said goodbye to them and then we left. We sailed straight to Cos. The next day, we went to Rhodes. From there, we went to Patara. **v2** We found a ship that was going to Phoenicia. So, we got on it and we sailed away. **v3** We came to a place where we could see *Cyprus. We sailed south of *Cyprus and we sailed on to Syria. We stopped at Tyre. Our ship had to deliver its goods there. **v4** We found some *believers there and we stayed with them for a week. By means of the Spirit, they warned Paul not to go on to *Jerusalem. **v5** When our time with them was over, we left. We went on our way again. All the men went with us out of the town. Their wives and children came too. On the beach, we knelt down and we prayed. **v6** Then we all said goodbye. We went on the ship. Then the *believers returned home.

Verses 1-3 Paul and his companions sailed 724 kilometres (450 miles) from Miletus to Tyre. They sailed across the Mediterranean Sea. Probably, this took them about 5 days.

Verses 4-6 Paul and his companions knew that there was a *church in Tyre. Probably, it had started after Stephen's death. Many *Jews who spoke *Greek left *Jerusalem then. They went to this region (see Acts 11:19). Paul and his companions found these *believers. They stayed with the *believers while they waited to sail again.

'By means of the Spirit, they warned Paul not to go on to *Jerusalem' (verse 4). It was probably a *Christian *prophets who warned Paul. But Paul still wanted to go. That was because the *Holy Spirit had already told Paul to go (Acts 19:21; 20:22). The Spirit had not changed this decision. But the people knew 'by means of the Spirit' that Paul would be in danger. The people urged him not to go, not the Spirit. The Spirit just showed them that something bad would happen. So, they tried to persuade him not to go.

Paul reminds us of Jesus here. In his *Gospel, Luke wrote that Jesus decided to go to

*Jerusalem. Nothing could stop him. But he knew that he would die there.

Before he left, the whole *church went with Paul to pray. They did not know him well. He had only stayed with them for one week. But they gave him their friendship and love. There is a strong love between *Christians, especially when people *persecute *Christians. People *persecute *Christians, like people *persecuted Paul. It is the same today. *Christians everywhere are in God's family. We speak different languages. We have different customs and traditions. We have different music. We *worship God in different ways. But we are all like brothers and sisters in *Christ. We care about our brothers and sisters. We pray for our brothers and sisters. The Christians in Tyre welcomed Paul and his companions. *Christians always welcome other *Christians. This is because of the special love that we share by means of Jesus *Christ.

Paul stays with Philip, 21:7-9

v7 We continued our voyage. We sailed from Tyre to Ptolemais. We greeted the *believers there and we stayed for one day with them. **v8** The next day, we went to Caesarea. We stayed with Philip, the *preacher. He was one of the 7 men who helped the *apostles. **v9** He had 4 daughters, who were not married. They were *prophets.

Verse 7 They sailed 40 kilometres (25 miles) south to Ptolemais. They met some more *believers there. These *believers had probably come from *Jerusalem. The *believers in Tyre had come from *Jerusalem.

Verses 8-9 They travelled on to Caesarea. Probably, Paul knew Philip. Philip had come to Caesarea about 20 years before (Acts 8:40). Now, he had 4 daughters. They all had the gift of *prophecy. But they did not give Paul a *prophecy. Instead, someone else did.

Agabus the *prophet, 21:10-16

v10 We had been there for several days when a *prophet arrived. He was called Agabus. He came down from *Judea. **v11** He came to us. He took Paul's belt and he tied his own hands and feet with it. He

said, 'The **Holy Spirit* says, "This is how the **Jews* in **Jerusalem* will tie the owner of this belt. They will hand him over to the **Gentiles*.'" **v12** When we heard this, we urged Paul not to go to **Jerusalem*. The **believers* there also urged Paul not to go to **Jerusalem*.

v13 But Paul replied, 'You must not cry. Do not break my heart (upset me very badly). I am willing not only for people in **Jerusalem* to tie me. But I am also willing to die there for the **Lord Jesus*.' **v14** We could not persuade him so we stopped. We prayed, 'We want what God wants. That is what we want to happen!'

v15 After this, we prepared to go to **Jerusalem*. **v16** Some **believers* from *Caesarea* went with us. They took us to stay in Mnason's house. He was a man from **Cyprus*. He had been a **believer* since the early days of the **church*.

Verses 10-11 Luke first mentioned Agabus in Acts 11:27-28. He was one of the men who **prophesied* about the **famine*. These **prophets* came down from **Jerusalem* to *Antioch* to tell this **prophecy*. Here, Agabus had come down to *Caesarea*. He showed Paul what would happen to him in **Jerusalem*. Agabus's words remind us of Jesus' words in Mark 10:33. Jesus was speaking about himself. He said that the **Jewish* leaders would arrest him. He said that they would give him to the **Gentiles*.

Agabus used both actions and words to **prophesy*. Some of the **Old Testament* **prophets* used both actions and words. For example, the **prophet* Ahijah took his new coat. He tore it into 12 pieces. This showed Solomon how God would divide his **kingdom* (1 Kings 11:29-39). The **prophets* Isaiah and Ezekiel also used actions in their **prophecies* (Isaiah 20:2-4; Ezekiel 4:1-3). It was a powerful way to give God's message.

Verses 12-14 Agabus did not warn Paul not to go to **Jerusalem*. But Paul's friends did. This included Luke. Paul became very upset because they were weeping. To break a person's heart means to make them very sad. But Paul did not change his decision. He was willing to die if necessary.

His friends realised that they could not persuade him. Instead, they all prayed. They wanted what God wanted. This prayer is like Jesus' prayer before he died. He did not want to suffer. But it was the only way to save people from the results of **sin*. So, he agreed to what God wanted. He prayed, 'Do not do what I want. Do what you want.' (Luke 22:42).

Verse 15 The **Greek* word here means that they probably had horses to ride. It was 103 kilometres (64 miles) from *Caesarea* to **Jerusalem*.

Verse 16 Some **believers* from *Caesarea* showed them where to stay in **Jerusalem*. Some **Jewish* **Christians* in **Jerusalem* would not allow **Gentile* **Christians* in their home. But Mnason welcomed them. He was one of the **Jews* who spoke **Greek*. He had not left **Jerusalem* after Stephen's death. Probably, Mnason had been a **believer* from when the **church* began. Some students think that he gave Luke important information about the early **church*, for example, the stories in Acts 9:32-42. These stories are about Aeneas and Dorcas.

Paul visits James in **Jerusalem*, 21:17-26

v17 When we arrived in **Jerusalem*, the **believers* welcomed us eagerly. **v18** The next day, Paul went with us to visit James. All the leaders of the **church* were there. **v19** Paul greeted them. Then he gave a complete report about his work. It was about everything that God had done among the **Gentiles*. **v20** When they heard this, they all **praised* God. They said, 'Brother Paul, you can see how many thousands of **Jews* have become **believers*! You can see how they all want to obey the **Law*. **v21** But people have told them things about you. They said that you teach all **Jews* who live among **Gentiles* to turn away from Moses' **Law*. They said that you tell them not to **circumcise* their male children. They also said that you tell them not to follow **Jewish* customs. **v22** Our people will hear that you have come. We have a plan. **v23** So, please do what we tell you. There are 4 men with us, who have made special promises to God. **v24** Go with them and

*prepare yourself for *purification. Pay for them to cut all their hair off. Then everyone will know that these things about you are not true. They will know that you obey Moses' *Law. v25 We sent a letter to the *Gentiles who have become *believers. We told them what we want them to do. They must not eat any food that people have offered to *idols. They must not eat meat that has blood in it. They must not eat animals that people have *strangled. They must not do wicked things that are about sex.'*

v26 *The next day, Paul took the 4 men with him. He prepared himself for *purification with them. Then he went into the *Temple. He told the people there when the time of *purification finished. He also told them when he would offer a *sacrifice for each of them.*

Verses 17-22 Mnason welcomed Paul and his companions into his home. Then, Paul met James (Jesus' brother) and the other leaders. James was a leader of the church in *Jerusalem.

Luke was there also (verse 18). Verse 18 ends this 'we' passage. Paul told them about all the *Gentiles who had become *Christians. Some of these *Gentiles were there with Paul. So, everyone knew that his report was true.

The leaders were very pleased but they were also worried. They had a problem. Many *Jews in *Jerusalem had become *Christians too. They wanted to remain *Jewish. They still wanted to follow *Jewish customs. But they had heard that Paul did not want *Jewish *Christians to do this. They had heard that he persuaded them 'to turn away from Moses' *Law' (verse 21). But this was not true. Paul did not teach this. He did not agree that *Gentile *Christians must receive *circumcision. He said that they must just have *faith in *Christ (Galatians 5:2-4). But he did not say that *Jews must not receive *circumcision. He did not think that it mattered. It does not matter to God (Galatians 5:6; 6:15). They could follow *Jewish customs if they wanted. But they did not have to follow *Jewish customs. Each person must decide (Romans 14:2-6).

Verse 23 Probably, Paul persuaded the leaders that he was not against *Jewish customs. But he had to convince the other *believers. So, the leaders asked him to follow a *Jewish custom in public. Then people would know that he was not against their customs. They asked him to help 4 men. These men had made special promises to God. These promises were called Nazirite promises. People made Nazirite promises to thank God when he had helped them in a special way.

Perhaps God had cured them. Or perhaps he had saved them from danger. They had to prepare to offer *sacrifices. They had to make themselves 'clean' to God. For 30 days, they did not drink wine. They did not touch anything that was not 'clean', for example, a dead body. They did not cut their hair.

After 30 days, they offered *sacrifices in the *Temple. They cut their hair. They burned the hair with the *sacrifices. They also had to offer other gifts to God. This cost a lot of money. People had to stop work for 30 days. They had to buy the animals and other gifts. Many people could not afford it. So, often, a richer person would also join in with them for *purification. The leaders asked Paul to do this. This was to show that he also obeyed Moses' *Law.

Verses 24-26 But the leaders did not want to make *Gentiles obey the *Law. They reminded Paul about the letter that they had written (see Acts 15:19-21, 23-29). Paul did what the leaders wanted. He did it the next day. He wanted to show the *Jewish *Christians that he followed *Jewish customs too.

The people try to kill Paul, 21:27-36

v27 *The 7 days for *purification were nearly finished. Some *Jews from Asia saw Paul when he was in the *Temple. They made the crowd become angry and they seized Paul. v28 They shouted, 'Men in *Israel, help us! This man says bad things about us and our *Temple. He teaches against Moses' *Law. He travels everywhere and does this. Now he has brought some *Gentiles into the inner part of the *Temple. This holy place is*

now *unclean.' **v29** (They said this because they had seen Trophimus in the city. Trophimus was from Ephesus. He was with Paul. They thought that Paul had brought Trophimus into the inner part of the *Temple.) **v30** Many other people in the city heard that there was trouble. They all ran and seized Paul. They dragged him out of the *Temple and shut the doors immediately. **v31** The crowd were trying to kill Paul. Meanwhile, this news reached the leader of the *Roman army. He heard that everyone in *Jerusalem was upset. There was a *riot. **v32** Immediately, the leader ran down to the crowd. He took some officers and soldiers with him. The crowd saw the leader and his soldiers. They stopped hitting Paul. **v33** The leader went to Paul and he arrested him. He ordered people to tie Paul with two chains. Then he asked, 'Who is this man? What has he done?' **v34** Some people in the crowd shouted one thing. Other people shouted something else. The leader could not discover what had happened. This was because there was much confusion. So, he ordered his soldiers to take Paul into the *fort. **v35** When Paul reached the steps, the crowd became very angry. So, the soldiers had to lift him and carry him. **v36** The crowd followed. They continued to shout, 'Kill him!'

Verses 27-29 The *Jews from Asia probably came from Ephesus. We think this because they recognised Trophimus, one of Paul's companions. They also recognised Paul, probably because of the *riot in Ephesus. That was why they were so angry.

It was *Pentecost. So, there were many *Jews from different countries in the *Temple. The *Jews from Asia accused Paul of two crimes. They said that he taught against the two most important things in *Judaism. These were the *Law and the *Temple. This reminds us of Stephen. False witnesses said that Stephen had spoken against the *Law and the *Temple (Acts 6:13). They said this about Stephen and Paul because they did not understand their message.

They also said that Paul had brought *Gentiles into the inner part of the *Temple. This was not true. They said it because they had seen Paul with Trophimus, a *Gentile, in the city. So, they thought that he had come with Paul during his *purification. *Gentiles had to stay in the outer parts of the *Temple. This was because *Jews believed that *Gentiles made their *holy place *unclean. A fence separated the inner from the outer parts. If a *Gentile passed it, they would die. The *Roman rulers allowed the men in the *Sanhedrin to kill anyone who did this.

Verse 30 When the *Jews from Asia accused Paul, everyone became very angry. They dragged Paul from the inner part of the *Temple. They could not kill him there, so they took him to the outer part. Luke records that the gates closed. So, then Paul could not run back inside. Paul's death would not make the inner part of the *Temple *unclean.

Verses 31-32 But Paul did not die. The *Romans rescued him! There was a *fort north west of the *Temple. It was called the Antonia *fort. Soldiers watched the city from this *fort. A thousand soldiers were there. This was because there were many visitors.

There were steps from the *Temple to the *fort. So, people reported the *riot quickly. The leader, officers and soldiers ran down the steps. They did not let the crowd kill Paul.

Verses 33-36 Instead, their leader arrested him. He ordered his men to put a chain on each of Paul's arms. Then he ordered them to tie Paul to two soldiers. The leader wanted to discover what Paul had done. *Roman law did not allow people to kill someone without a *trial. But there was a lot of noise and confusion. The leader could not decide what Paul had done. So, he ordered his soldiers to take Paul into the *fort. They had to carry him. This was probably because the crowd were trying to seize him. They still wanted to kill him.

Paul asks a question, 21:37-40

v37 The soldiers were taking Paul into the *fort. Just before he entered, he spoke to their leader. He said, 'Can I say something to you?'

*The leader said, 'So, you speak *Greek! v38 Are you not that *Egyptian who started a *riot not long ago? He led 4000 men with knives (see note) into the desert.' v39 'No', answered Paul, 'I am a *Jew. I am a citizen of Tarsus in Cilicia. It is an important city. Please let me speak to the people.'*

*v40 The leader allowed Paul to speak. So, Paul stood on the stairs. He waved his hand. When they were quiet, he spoke to them in *Aramaic.*

Verse 37 The army leader thought that Paul had not had an education. Paul surprised him when he spoke in *Greek.

Verse 38 Josephus, a writer of *Jewish history, wrote about this *Egyptian. In *AD 54, the *Egyptian led many men to the *Mount of *Olives. He wanted to attack *Jerusalem. But the *Roman ruler Felix ordered soldiers to attack them first. The *Egyptian ran away. The *Roman army caught or killed many men. But the *Egyptian escaped. The army leader thought that perhaps Paul was this *Egyptian. 'men with knives' (verse 38) The *Greek word here is sicarii. 'Sicarii' was the name for certain groups of *Jews. These 'sicarii' did not want the *Romans to rule them. They wanted to fight the *Romans.

Verses 39-40 Immediately, Paul told the army leader who he was. He was not the *Egyptian! The leader allowed Paul to speak to the crowd. Probably, he wanted to discover what Paul had done.

Paul waved his hand. He wanted them to be quiet. Then he spoke in *Aramaic. *Aramaic was the local language. Paul wanted the people to listen. He wanted them to understand. Paul, too, was a *Jew. He was not their enemy. He was one of them.

Chapter 22

Paul speaks to the crowd, 22:1-21

v1 'Brothers and fathers, listen to me! I will explain what happened.'

*v2 The crowd became even quieter. This was because they heard Paul speak in *Aramaic. Paul continued, v3 'I am a *Jew. I was born in Tarsus in Cilicia. But I*

*grew up in this city. Gamaliel taught me. I learnt every *Law of our *ancestors. I was eager to obey God. I was as eager as all of you here today. v4 I *persecuted everyone who followed the Way. I even killed them. I arrested both men and women and I put them in prison. v5 The *high priest and the whole *Sanhedrin can prove that this is true. They even gave me letters to the *Jewish leaders in Damascus so that I could arrest people there. I could bring them to *Jerusalem for their punishment. v6 It was about noon when I came near to Damascus. Suddenly, there was a bright light from heaven. It flashed round me. v7 I fell to the ground. I heard a voice. It was asking me, "Saul, Saul, why do you *persecute me?" v8 "Who are you, *Lord?" I asked. "I am Jesus of *Nazareth, the person whom you *persecute", he replied. v9 The men with me saw the light. But they did not hear the voice. v10 " *Lord, what do you want me to do?" I asked. "Get up", the *Lord said. "Go to Damascus. There, someone will tell you what to do." v11 I was blind because of the light. My companions took my hand and they led me into Damascus.*

*v12 A man called Ananias lived in that city. He was a *holy man who obeyed Moses' *Law. All the *Jews who lived there respected him. v13 He came to me and he stood by me. He said, "Saul, my friend, now you can see again!"*

*Immediately I could see. I looked at Ananias. v14 He said, "The God of our *ancestors has chosen you. You will know what he wants to happen. He has chosen you to see his *Righteous Servant and to hear his voice. v15 You will be his witness. You must tell everyone what you have seen. You must tell them what you have heard. v16 Do not wait any longer. Get up! Receive *baptism. Wash away your *sins by praying to the *Lord." '*

Verses 1-5 Almost all of Paul's audience were *Jews. So, Paul called them his 'brothers and fathers' (verse 1). He spoke in the *Jewish language, *Aramaic. This made them listen.

Paul wanted them to know that he was a true *Jew. He was not against the *Jewish religion. He had learned everything about the *Law. Gamaliel, the most famous *Jewish teacher, had taught him.

Paul was very eager to obey God. That was why he had *persecuted *Christians. He had believed that they had turned against the *Jewish religion. But he was wrong.

Verse 6-11 Luke tells this story in Acts 9:1-19. Here, we can read it in Paul's own words.

Paul emphasised that he did not decide to become a *Christian by himself. He changed because of something that God did. He said that he saw the light at noon. So, it was brighter than the sun! He heard the voice of Jesus of *Nazareth. He asked Jesus what to do. He obeyed the voice. He was blind, so his companions led him into Damascus.

Verse 12 Paul's account here emphasised things that were important to the *Jews. He described Ananias as 'a *holy man who obeyed Moses' *Law'. Also, he said that 'all the *Jews who lived there (in Damascus) respected him (Ananias)'.

Verses 13-14 Ananias cured Paul. Then he said that God had chosen Paul. 'The God of our *ancestors' (verse 14) and 'his *Righteous Servant' were *Jewish phrases. So, this God was the same God that the *Jews *worshipped. His *Righteous Servant was Jesus of *Nazareth.

Verses 15-16 God wanted Paul to tell everyone about this. So, Ananias told him to get up and go immediately. He told Paul to receive *baptism and to pray.

v17 'Then I returned to *Jerusalem. I went to the *Temple to pray. There, I had a *vision. **v18** I saw the *Lord. He was saying to me, "Hurry! Leave *Jerusalem immediately. The people will not listen to what you say about me." **v19** " *Lord", I answered, "they know what I did. I went to the *synagogues. I arrested people who had *faith in you. I hurt them. **v20** Stephen died because he was your witness. I was there and I approved of his murder. I looked after the coats of the men who killed him." **v21** But the *Lord

said, "Go! I will send you far away, to the *Gentiles."'

Verses 17-18 Paul mentioned the *Temple here. This showed that he was not against the *Temple! He went there to pray as a *Christian. While he was there, Jesus appeared to him.

In Acts 9:26-31, Luke records that the *Jews were plotting against Paul. They wanted to kill him. Paul did not want to say that to his audience! But he knew about the plot when he prayed. So, Jesus told him to leave *Jerusalem. The *believers helped Paul to do this (Acts 9:30).

Verses 19-21 Paul seemed to argue with Jesus. He did not want to leave the *Jews. He thought that they would listen to him. This was because he had changed so much. Only God could change a person like this. Before, Paul had *persecuted *Christians. He had approved of Stephen's death. Now, he believed because he had spoken to Jesus himself. Again, Jesus told him to go. The *Jews would not believe what he said. Instead, he must go to the *Gentiles.

Paul – the *Roman citizen, 22:22-30

v22 The crowd were listening, until Paul said this. Then they started to shout loudly, 'Take him away! Kill him! He does not deserve to live!'

v23 They continued to shout. They threw off their coats. They threw dust up in the air. **v24** The *Roman soldiers' leader ordered people to take Paul into the *fort. He ordered them to whip Paul and he ordered them to ask Paul questions. The people were shouting at Paul. The soldiers' leader wanted to know why. **v25** They got ready to whip Paul. As they tied him, he asked the captain there a question. He said, 'Is it legal to whip a *Roman citizen before his *trial?' **v26** When the captain heard this, he went to the soldiers' leader. He said, 'Be careful about what you are doing! This man is a *Roman citizen!' **v27** The soldiers' leader went to Paul. He said, 'Tell me! Are you a *Roman citizen?' 'Yes, I am', Paul answered. **v28** Then the soldiers' leader

*said, 'I paid a lot of money to become a *Roman citizen.' Paul answered, 'But I was born a *Roman citizen.' v29 The men who were ready to whip Paul left immediately. The soldiers' leader was afraid. He realised that Paul was a *Roman citizen. But he had put Paul in chains.*

Verses 22-23 Paul said that *Gentiles could know God. God wanted them to know him. They did not have to become *Jews first. Paul's words meant that *Gentiles were equal with *Jews to God.

The *Jews showed their anger. They threw off their coats and they threw dust. Paul had spoken in *Aramaic. So, the soldiers' leader did not understand. He did not know why the crowd was angry.

Verses 24-26 The soldiers' leader did not want a *riot. So, he ordered his soldiers to take Paul into the *fort. He needed to know what Paul had said.

He was not patient any longer. He ordered his men to whip Paul. This was the usual way that the *Romans got information from prisoners. The *Romans made their whips from long pieces of leather. They attached sharp bits of metal and bone to the leather. Then they tied the pieces of leather to a strong wooden stick. Often, prisoners died when people hit them with this whip. It gave them terrible injuries.

As the soldiers prepared to whip Paul, he asked the captain a question. The answer was no! It was not legal to whip a *Roman citizen before a *trial. We know this because the *Roman writer Cicero (106-43 *BC) said so.

When Paul asked this question, the captain knew that Paul was a *Roman citizen. If they whipped him, they were going against *Roman law. This was very serious. The soldiers' leader would lose his job. The *Roman government might even punish him with death. So, the captain told the soldiers' leader. The soldiers' leader asked Paul if he was a *Roman citizen. Paul said, 'Yes'.

Verses 28-29 Paul's father was a *Roman citizen. So, Paul was a *Roman citizen by birth. The soldiers' leader had paid money to become a citizen. This was not legal. But some people paid money in secret to bad

government officials. These bad officials let them become *Roman citizens. This happened often when Claudius (10 *BC – *AD 54) was *Emperor. Perhaps this is why the soldiers' leader added the name Claudius to his real *Greek name Lysias (see Acts 23:26).

The soldiers did not whip Paul. They left. The soldiers' leader realised that he had made a serious mistake. But he did not let Paul go free. He still thought that Paul had done a crime.

*v30 The *Jewish leaders were accusing Paul. The soldiers' leader wanted to discover the exact reason why. So, the next day, he ordered people to take Paul's chains off. He ordered the chief priests and all the *Sanhedrin to meet together. Then he brought Paul in. He made Paul stand in front of them.*

Verse 30 So, he kept Paul in chains for one night. This was probably to keep Paul safe. The crowd wanted to kill him. The soldiers' leader still wanted to know what Paul had done.

He probably thought that Paul's crime was against the *Jewish religion. This was why he ordered the most important priests and *Jewish leaders to meet. He wanted them to listen to Paul. They could decide if he deserved a punishment.

Chapter 23

Paul speaks to the *Sanhedrin, 23:1-11

*v1 Paul looked straight at the *Sanhedrin. He said, 'My brothers, my conscience feels good about how I have served God to this day.' v2 Some men were standing near Paul. Ananias, the *high priest, ordered them to hit Paul on the mouth. v3 Then Paul said to Ananias, 'You are like a wall that someone has painted white! God will hit you! You are sitting there as a judge over me. You intend to decide whether I obey Moses' *Law. But you yourself are acting against that *Law because you are ordering people to hit me. And that is against the *Law!' v4 Then the men who stood near Paul said, 'Do you dare to insult God's *high priest?' v5 Paul replied, 'Brothers, I did not know that he was the*

**high priest. We must not say evil things about a leader of our people. It says that in the *scriptures.'*

v6 *Some of the men in the *Sanhedrin were *Sadducees. The other men in it were *Pharisees. Paul knew that. So, he shouted, 'My brothers, I am a *Pharisee. My father was a *Pharisee. I am having a *trial just because I believe in the *resurrection of dead people.'* **v7** *When he said that, an argument started between the *Pharisees and the *Sadducees. The argument divided the people.* **v8** *The *Sadducees did not believe that dead people will come back to life. They did not believe in *angels or *spirits. But the *Pharisees believed in all those things.* **v9** *So, there was a lot of noise. Some of the teachers of Moses' *Law were *Pharisees. They stood up and they argued strongly. They said, 'We do not find anything wrong with this man. Perhaps an *angel or a *spirit really did speak to him!'*

v10 *The argument became fierce and the soldiers' leader was afraid. He thought that they would tear Paul apart. So, he ordered the soldiers to go in. He told them to rescue Paul. Then the soldiers took Paul back into the *fort.*

v11 *That night, the *Lord stood near Paul. The *Lord said, 'Do not worry! You have told people about me in *Jerusalem. You must also tell people about me in Rome.'*

Verses 1-3 Paul called the men in the *Sanhedrin his 'brothers'. That was not the usual way to talk to them. People called them 'rulers of the people'. People called them 'leaders of *Israel'. But people did not call them 'brothers'! When Paul called them 'brothers', he made himself equal with them. Then Paul said that he was innocent. He did not believe that he had done anything wrong. This annoyed the *high priest. He ordered some men to hit Paul. That was against the *Jewish *Law. People had to prove that a person was guilty. Paul had not even had a *trial.

This made Paul very angry. He said that the *high priest was 'like a wall that someone has painted white' (verse 3). That was a common insult. It meant that Ananias was a *hypocrite. He was like stones that someone had put in a pile. Then the person had painted the pile of stones white, so that it seemed like a wall. But it was not a wall. (See also Ezekiel 13:10-16.) Or Ananias was like a building where dead bodies lay. Someone had painted the walls white so that it looked good. But inside there were dead bodies. This reminds us of what Jesus said about the *Pharisees. He said that they were *hypocrites (Matthew 23:27; Luke 11:44). Ananias was a *hypocrite. He said that Paul had not obeyed the *Law. But then Ananias did something himself that was against the *Law! He did it in front of everyone.

Verses 4-5 However, Paul apologised quickly. It was a crime to say evil things about a leader. Paul knew that. He said words from the *scriptures (Exodus 22:28). He did not know that Ananias was the *high priest.

Some students say that Paul did not recognise Ananias. That would be because Paul could not see very well. But it was a long time since Paul had been in *Jerusalem. So some students think that Paul had never seen Ananias before.

Ananias certainly did not behave like a *high priest. He was a cruel man. He was on the *Romans' side against his own people. He was greedy and he stole from the priests.

Verses 6-9 There were both *Pharisees and *Sadducees in the *Sanhedrin. They were all *Jews but they had very different beliefs. The *Pharisees believed in fate. But the *Sadducees believed that people can choose what happens to them. The *Pharisees believed in *angels and *spirits. But the *Sadducees did not. The *Pharisees believed in the *resurrection of dead people. But the *Sadducees did not believe in *resurrection. Paul had already said that he was a *Pharisee. Then, he said that his 'crime' was to believe in *resurrection. Probably, Paul realised that he would not have a fair *trial. So, in this way, he made the *Pharisees come onto his side. Paul did not agree with the *Sadducees about the *resurrection. But the *Pharisees agreed with

him, so they supported him against the *Sadducees.

Verse 10 Everyone argued. Paul was not safe there. So, the soldiers' leader ordered his men to take Paul into the *fort.

Verse 11 Again, the *Lord Jesus appeared in front of Paul. Paul had nearly died. He was alone and afraid. But Jesus told him not to worry. The *Greek word here means 'be brave'. Jesus promised that Paul would go to Rome. Paul would tell the good news there. Paul really wanted to do that. (See Acts 19:21.) Jesus brought comfort and hope to Paul.

A plot to kill Paul, 23:12-22

v12 The next morning, some *Jews met together. They made a plan. They made a special promise. They promised not to eat anything. And they promised not to drink anything. They would not do those things until they had killed Paul. **v13** More than 40 men made that plan. **v14** They went to the chief priests and leaders. They said, 'We have made a special promise together. We shall not eat anything until we have killed Paul. **v15** Now, you and the *Sanhedrin must go to the soldiers' leader. You must ask him to bring Paul to you. Pretend that you want more information about Paul. You want exact information about what he has done. We will be ready. We will kill him before he gets here.' **v16** But the son of Paul's sister heard about this plot. He went to the *fort and he told Paul about the plot. **v17** Then Paul spoke to one of the captains. Paul said, 'Take this young man to the soldiers' leader. The young man has something to tell him.' **v18** So, the captain took the young man to the soldiers' leader. The captain said, 'Paul, the prisoner, sent for me. He asked me to bring this young man to you. The young man has something to tell you.' **v19** The soldiers' leader took the young man aside. The leader asked, 'What is it that you want to tell me?' **v20** The young man said, 'Some *Jews have agreed to ask you something tomorrow. They will ask you to bring Paul in front of the *Sanhedrin.

*They will say that they want more information about him. **v21** Do not do what they want. More than 40 men are waiting to attack Paul. They have made a special promise. They will not eat anything and they will not drink anything. They will not do those things until they have killed Paul. They are ready now and they are waiting for your decision.'*

v22 The soldiers' leader replied, 'Do not tell anyone that you have told this to me.'

Verses 12-13 More than 40 *Jews wanted to kill Paul! They made a special promise. In that way, they intended to show that they were sincere. They told the chief priests and leaders about the promise. Some students think that these men were 'sicarii'. (The note about Acts 21:38 shows what 'sicarii' were.) Perhaps the *high priest, Ananias, had hired them to murder Paul.

Verses 14-15 It was too difficult to kill Paul in the *fort. So those *Jews planned that the *chief priests and leaders would go to the soldiers' leader. (The soldiers' leader was called the commander.) They would persuade the commander to bring Paul to them again. When Paul was outside, the *Jews would kill him. That was their plan. So Paul was in great danger. Many people now wanted him to die.

Verses 16-17 But God had promised that Paul would go to Rome. If God promises something, that thing will happen. No human plan can stop God's plan.

Paul was 'under house arrest'. It means that the commander did not let Paul go free. But he allowed Paul to have visitors. Paul's nephew (the son of Paul's sister) came. He had heard about the plot and he told Paul about it.

We do not know anything about Paul's sister or about his nephew. We do not know whether they were *Christians. We know only that Paul's nephew was young. He was probably about 13 or 14 years old. The *Greek word for 'young man' (verse 17) has that meaning.

Paul sent for a captain. He asked the captain to take the young man to the commander.

Verses 18-19 The captain did what Paul asked him to do. The captain realised that it was

urgent. This is the first time that Luke uses the words 'Paul, the prisoner' in Acts. Paul uses similar words 5 times in his letters (Ephesians 3:1; 4:1; Philippians 1:13; Philemon verses 1, 9).

Verses 20-21 Paul's nephew told the commander (the soldiers' leader) about the plot. The men were planning to kill Paul 'tomorrow'. Probably, they had already spoken to the commander about Paul. Paul's nephew said that they were waiting for the commander's decision (verse 21). The young man urged the commander not to help those men in their plan. He asked the commander not to do what those men would ask him.

Verse 22 The commander knew that Paul was a *Roman citizen. So the commander needed to do something quickly. He told the young man to keep their conversation secret.

The commander makes arrangements, 23:23-25

v23 Then the commander sent for two of his captains. He told them, 'Get 200 soldiers ready to go to Caesarea. Also, get 70 men on horses and get 200 soldiers with spears (sharp knives on poles). Get the men ready to go at 9 o'clock tonight. **v24** Get a horse ready for Paul. Make sure that he goes safely to Felix the *governor.' **v25** The commander wrote a letter.

Verses 23-25 The commander (the soldiers' leader) ordered 470 soldiers to prepare themselves. That large group had to go with Paul so that they could guard him. In total, there were very many soldiers in the *fort. That group was about half of the total.

The letter to Felix the *governor, 23:26-30

v26 This is what was in the letter: 'From Claudius Lysias, to the most excellent *Governor Felix, greetings. **v27** Some *Jews seized this man. They would have killed him. But I discovered that he was a *Roman citizen. I came with some soldiers and I rescued him. **v28** I wanted to know why they were accusing him. So, I brought him to their *Sanhedrin. **v29** I discovered this. He had

*done nothing to deserve death. He had done nothing to deserve prison. The *Jews were accusing him of crimes against their *Jewish *Law. v30 Someone told me that there was a plot against him. So, I have sent him to you immediately. I have told the *Jewish leaders that they must accuse him in front of you.'*

Verse 26 At the time when Paul lived, all letters began in this way. The writer wrote his or her own name first. Then the writer wrote the name of the person that he or she was writing to. Then the writer wrote his or her greetings to that person.

Here, we discover the commander's name. (See also note on Acts 22:28.) Lysias calls Felix 'most excellent'. In that way, he shows that Felix is a very important man. (See note on Acts 1:1.) Felix was the *governor of *Judea.

Verse 27 Lysias said, 'I discovered that he was a *Roman citizen.' That was why he rescued Paul. But actually, Lysias did not discover that Paul was a *Roman citizen until later.

Verse 28 Lysias did not mention that his men nearly whipped Paul. Nor did Lysias mention that he put Paul in chains. Lysias did not want to get into trouble! He just said that he brought Paul to the *Sanhedrin. Lysias wanted to show that he did everything right.

Verse 29 Paul had done nothing that was against *Roman law. The *Jews had said that Paul taught bad things about the *Jewish *Law, *Temple and people. (See Acts 21:28.) That was a matter for the *Sanhedrin. It was not something for the *Roman rulers to decide.

Verse 30 But Paul's life was now in danger. Lysias did not want to be responsible for Paul's death. So, he had sent Paul to the *governor. That was the right thing to do.

Paul goes to Caesarea, 23:31-35

v31 The soldiers obeyed the commander's orders. That night, they took Paul with them. They took him to the city called Antipatris. **v32** The next day, the soldiers that were walking returned to the *fort. The men on horses went with Paul. **v33** They arrived in Caesarea and they

*delivered the letter to the *governor. They handed Paul over to him. v34 The *governor read the letter. He asked Paul, 'Which *province are you from?' The *governor discovered that Paul was from Cilicia. v35 The *governor said, 'I will listen to you later. The people that accuse you are coming here. As soon as they arrive, I will listen to you.' Then he ordered men to guard Paul in Herod's palace.*

Verses 31-34 The first part of the journey was the most dangerous part. Antipatris was nearly 64 kilometres (40 miles) away from Jerusalem. All the soldiers arrived in Antipatris with Paul. Then the soldiers that were walking returned to *Jerusalem.

Paul and the other soldiers continued their journey to Caesarea. The distance from Antipatris to Caesarea was about 40 kilometres (25 miles).

Because Felix was the *governor of *Judea, he was now responsible for Paul. Felix was Lysias' boss. So Lysias had to explain the situation to him. Lysias explained it in a letter.

Usually, a prisoner had his *trial in the *province where the crime had possibly happened. But sometimes the *governor could send the prisoner to that prisoner's own *province. However, Felix decided to have Paul's *trial in *Judea. Paul had to wait until the *Jewish leaders arrived.

Verse 35 The *governor lived in a magnificent palace. Herod the Great, a previous king of Judea, had built it for himself. Paul stayed there while he was waiting. He was still a prisoner. But he was safe and comfortable.

Chapter 24

The *Jewish leaders accuse Paul, 24:1-9

*v1 Five days later, Ananias the *high priest went to Caesarea. Some leaders and Tertullus, a lawyer, also went. They went to the *governor. They told him why they were accusing Paul. v2 Then they sent for Paul. Tertullus accused him in front of Felix.*

'Most excellent Felix, you have given to us a long period of peace. You are a wise ruler and you have done many good

things for our nation. v3 We are all grateful for what you have done, always! v4 I do not want to bother you. However, please be patient with us. Please listen to us for only a few minutes.

*v5 We discovered that this man makes trouble. He starts *riots among the *Jews all over the world. He is the leader of a group called Nazarenes (see note below).*

*v6 He also tried to make the *Temple *unclean. So, we arrested him. We wanted to deal with him by our law. v7 But Lysias, the commander, came. He used much force and he took Paul away from us. v8 He ordered the people who accused Paul to come to you. Ask Paul questions yourself. Then you will discover whether Paul has done these things. You will discover whether we are right to accuse him.' v9 The *Jewish crowd spoke too. They agreed with what Tertullus had said.*

Verse 1 Ananias and the other leaders went to Caesarea quickly. When they arrived, they met Felix in the court. Now Paul's *trial could begin.

First, the leaders told Felix why they were accusing Paul.

Verses 2-4 Then Paul came into the court. Tertullus was a professional lawyer. He began the *trial in the usual way. The usual custom was to praise the *governor. Cicero, a *Roman writer who lived from 106-43 *BC, tells us that. That is what Tertullus did. But most of the things that Tertullus said here were not true. Felix was a wicked and cruel man.

During the time when Felix ruled, there were many *riots. To stop those *riots, Felix killed many *Jews. That was how Felix brought peace! Not many *Jews were grateful for that!

Verses 5-7 Then, Tertullus accused Paul. Tertullus said that Paul had done these three crimes:

1. Paul started *riots among the *Jews wherever he went.
2. Paul was the leader of a group that caused trouble. (That group was the *Christians. Tertullus called them 'Nazarenes', because Jesus was from *Nazareth.)

3. Paul had tried to bring a *Gentile into the inner part of the *Temple.

The *Romans punished people who caused trouble. Felix had killed many *Jews who had opposed the *Roman government. Tertullus was trying to show that Paul caused trouble everywhere. He wanted Felix to kill Paul, too.

Verses 8-9 Tertullus told Felix to ask Paul questions. The people in the crowd were opposing Paul, too. They agreed with Tertullus.

Paul speaks to Felix, 24:10-23

v10 *The *governor nodded to Paul. So Paul replied. This is what he said:*
*'You have been the *governor of this nation for many years. I know that. Therefore, I am glad to speak in your court. v11 I went to *worship in *Jerusalem no more than 12 days ago. You can discover easily whether this is true. v12 The *Jews never saw me argue with anyone in the *Temple. I did not cause trouble in the *synagogues, or in the city. v13 They cannot prove those things that they have said against me. v14 Their leaders say that the Way is false. I agree that I follow the Way. But I *worship the God of our *ancestors. I also believe in everything that is in the *Law. And I believe in what the *Prophets wrote. v15 I am as sure about the *resurrection as these people are. I am sure that God will raise everyone from death. He will raise both good people and evil people. v16 I try to have a good conscience about what I do either for God or for people.'*

Verse 10 Felix did not ask Paul questions. Instead, he let Paul speak for himself. Paul followed the usual custom. He spoke first about Felix. Paul said good things about Felix. But Paul was not like Tertullus. The things that Paul said were true. Felix knew *Judea very well. He had lived and worked there for many years. He knew all about the *Jewish religion. Felix understood what the *Jews believed. So, Paul was glad to speak to him about it.

Verses 11-13 Then Paul spoke about himself. Again, he told the truth. He had not come to *Jerusalem to cause trouble. He was not there for long enough to start *riots! He had not come to *Jerusalem for political reasons. He had come for *spiritual reasons. He wanted to *worship God. He had not argued with anyone either. The *Jews could not prove anything that they said.

Paul used a *Greek word for 'prove' that lawyers used. It meant that there had to be evidence. But there was no evidence against Paul.

Verse 14 Next, Paul argued that he was a true *Jew. He *worshipped the same God that the *Jews *worshipped. He agreed with everything that was in the *Jewish *scriptures. But he was also a *Christian. The *Christian *faith did not oppose the *Jewish *faith. *Christians followed Jesus, the *Messiah. Jesus made the *Jewish *faith complete.

Verses 15-16 Then, Paul said that he believed in the *resurrection. He believed that everybody will rise from death. Paul knew that he, like everybody, must meet God. So, he tried to have a good conscience. He tried to serve God well and he tried to serve people well.

v17 *'I had not been in *Jerusalem for several years. Then I went there to take some money. The money was to help the poor people in my nation. And I went there to offer *sacrifices. v18 I was offering *sacrifices when they found me in the *Temple. I had finished my time of *purification. I was not with a crowd and there was no *riot.*

v19 *Some *Jews from Asia were there. If they want to speak against me, they should come here. They should accuse me in front of you. v20 Or ask the men who are here. They can tell you. They did not prove that I was guilty in front of the *Sanhedrin. v21 They can say only one thing against me. It is what I shouted in the court. I shouted, "I am on *trial today because I believe in the *resurrection of dead people." '*

v22 Felix stopped the *trial, because he knew a lot about the Way. He said, 'I will make my decision when Lysias, the commander, arrives.' **v23** Then he ordered the captain to guard Paul. But he told the captain not to lock Paul's door. He told the captain to let Paul's friends look after him.

Verses 17-18 Paul had come to *Jerusalem for two reasons only:

1. to bring money that he had collected for his nation's poor people;
2. to *worship God in the *Temple.

Paul did not do anything bad in the *Temple. When the *Jews found him there, he was following *Jewish customs.

Verses 19-21 Some *Jews from Asia had accused Paul first. They were the original witnesses. They saw what Paul did in *Jerusalem. But they were not in the court. The *Sanhedrin had not been able to prove that Paul was guilty. He was guilty only of believing in the *resurrection of dead people. But that was not a crime against *Roman law.

Verse 22 'Felix stopped the *trial, because he knew a lot about the Way.' Probably, Felix knew about *Christian beliefs because he had a *Jewish wife (Acts 24:24). What Paul said was right. And Felix knew that it was right. Paul was not guilty, because he had not done any crime. But Felix did not want to offend the *Jews. So, he made an excuse. He said that he must wait for Lysias. But he did not need to do this. He had a letter from Lysias (Acts 23:26-30). Felix wanted more time to make his decision.

Verse 23 Paul was still a prisoner. But because he was a *Roman citizen, Felix allowed his friends to visit him.

Paul speaks to Felix and Drusilla, 24:24-27

v24 Several days later, Felix came to the place where Paul was staying. Felix's wife, Drusilla, came with Felix. She was *Jewish. Felix sent for Paul. He listened to Paul as Paul spoke. Paul spoke about *faith in *Christ Jesus. **v25** Paul talked to Felix and Drusilla about doing the right things. He spoke about self-control (when we stop ourselves from doing wrong

things). He spoke about the day when God's judgement would come. Felix was afraid. He said, 'You have said enough for now. You may leave. I will send for you again, when I have time to listen.' **v26** After this, Felix often sent for Paul. And he talked with him. Also, Felix hoped that Paul would give some money to him.

v27 Two years later, Porcius Festus became the new *governor. But Felix wanted to support the *Jews. So, he left Paul in prison.

Verses 24-27 Drusilla was the daughter of Herod Agrippa I (see Acts 12:1-23). Felix had persuaded her to leave her husband, Azizus, the king of Emesia. A *magician helped Felix to do this. Drusilla was Felix's third wife.

Paul told Felix and Drusilla the good news about Jesus. But he also told them about God's judgement. He spoke about doing right things. Both Felix and Drusilla had done wicked things. So, Felix became afraid and he sent Paul away. But Felix still spoke with Paul after this.

Luke says that Felix wanted money. If Felix received money, he would let Paul out of prison. That arrangement was not legal. But people often paid to get their freedom. Felix was greedy for money. But perhaps Felix also wanted to hear more about Jesus. Perhaps he wanted God to forgive him.

However, Felix did not stop doing cruel things. In about *AD 58, there was a fight in Caesarea. It was a fight between the *Jews and the *Greeks there. Felix became angry. He ordered soldiers to kill many *Jews. He also let the soldiers rob the rich *Jews. The *Jewish writer Josephus wrote about this. (He lived from about *AD 37 to AD 100.)

The *Jews asked the *Roman government to remove Felix. The *Jews had a right to ask it under *Roman law. Felix tried to be friends with them again. He left Paul in prison to please them. But the *Roman government removed Felix anyway. They appointed a new *governor for *Judea. His name was Porcius Festus.

Chapter 25

Paul *appeals to the *Emperor, 25:1-12

v1 Three days after Festus arrived in *Judea, he went from Caesarea to *Jerusalem. **v2** There, the chief priests and *Jewish leaders came to him. They told him about the *charges against Paul. **v3** They kept on asking Festus to bring Paul to *Jerusalem. They urged him to do this. They said that it would show his friendship toward them. They had a plan to kill Paul. They wanted to kill him on the way to Jerusalem. **v4** Festus replied, 'Paul is a prisoner in Caesarea. I am going there soon. **v5** Your leaders can go with me. They can accuse him if he has done anything wrong.'

v6 Festus stayed in *Jerusalem for 8 or 10 more days. Then he went to Caesarea. The next day, he sat down as the judge in the court. He ordered people to bring Paul in. **v7** Paul arrived and the *Jews from *Jerusalem surrounded him. They said that he had done many bad crimes. But they were not able to prove anything. **v8** Then Paul spoke for himself. He said, 'I have not done anything wrong against the *Jewish *Law. I have not done anything against the *Temple. I have not done anything against the *Roman *Emperor.' **v9** But Festus wanted to please the leaders. So, he asked Paul, 'Are you willing to go to *Jerusalem? You can have your *trial about these *charges there, in front of me.' **v10** Paul said, 'I am having a *trial here in the *Emperor's court. This is where I should have my *trial. I have not done anything wrong to the *Jews. You know it well. **v11** Have I done something that deserves death? If I have, I do not ask to avoid my punishment. But the *charges against me may be false. Then nobody can hand me over to them! I *appeal to the *Emperor.' **v12** Festus asked his helpers for advice. Then he said, 'You have *appealed to the *Emperor. So, you will go to the *Emperor!'

Verses 1-5 The *Jews in *Judea did not trust the *Romans. That was because of the bad things that Felix had done to *Jews. So, Festus, the new *governor, wanted to please them. He wanted to be friends with them. Then they would not oppose him. So, after only three days in his new job, he travelled to *Jerusalem. He met with the *Jewish leaders there. They told him about Paul. They wanted Festus to send Paul to *Jerusalem. They planned to kill him on the way. That was the same plan as the *Jews had two years before (Acts 23:14-15).

Festus did not know about that plan. But he would not agree with their request. He would return to Caesarea soon. He would have Paul's *trial there.

Verses 6-8 When Festus returned to Caesarea, he started Paul's *trial. But still there was no evidence against Paul. Again, Paul said that he had done nothing wrong. This time, he mentioned the *Roman *Emperor. Later in his speech, he *appealed to the *Emperor (Acts 25:11).

Verse 9 The *charges against Paul were about the *Jewish religion. So, Festus suggested that Paul should go to *Jerusalem. Festus wanted to hand Paul over to the *Sanhedrin again. Festus knew that Paul had not done anything against *Roman law.

The words 'in front of me' do not mean that Festus would be the judge at the *trial. Festus would either agree with the *Sanhedrin's decision, or he would not agree with it. That is what Festus meant.

Verses 10-12 But Paul did not agree to go to *Jerusalem. He knew that he would not have a fair *trial there. Also, his enemies might kill him before he arrived! *Roman law allowed *Roman citizens to *appeal to the *Emperor. They could do this if the *charges were very serious. Then, the *Roman citizen went to Rome. The *Emperor decided whether the *Roman citizen was guilty or innocent. So, Festus had to agree to Paul's request.

Festus talks to King Agrippa, 25:13-22

v13 A few days later, King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea. They visited Festus to welcome him. **v14** They had been there for several days when Festus

*talked about Paul. Festus told the king about the *charges against Paul. Festus said, 'Felix left a man here in prison. v15 When I went to *Jerusalem, the chief priests and *Jewish leaders came to me. They asked me to decide that this man was guilty. v16 This is not the *Roman custom. *Romans do not hand over any man to the people who accuse him. First, he must have the chance to meet those people. Then he can speak against their *charges. I told them this. v17 When they came here with me, I did not waste time. The next day, I sat in the court as judge. I ordered people to bring in the man. v18 The people who accused him stood up. I expected them to accuse him of certain evil crimes. But they did not do that. v19 Instead, they argued with him about their own religion. They also argued about a dead man called Jesus. Paul said that this Jesus was alive. v20 I did not know how to discover the truth about those matters. So I asked Paul whether he was willing to go to *Jerusalem. He could have his *trial there. v21 But Paul *appealed. He wanted the *Emperor to be the judge over him. Paul asked if he could stay in prison until then. So, I ordered this to happen. He will stay here until I send him to the *Emperor.'*

v22 Then Agrippa said to Festus, 'I, too, would like to listen to this man.'

Festus replied, 'You can listen to him tomorrow.'

Verse 13-16 King Herod Agrippa II was the son of Herod Agrippa I (see Acts 12:1). Bernice was the sister of Agrippa II. She was the oldest daughter of Herod Agrippa I. When Herod Agrippa I died, Agrippa II was only 17 years old. So, he stayed with the *Emperor in Rome. But when Agrippa II became older, he got more power. He ruled over several areas of land. He was always loyal to the *Roman *Emperor and to the government. In *AD 56, he became a king. The *Emperor also gave to him the authority to choose the *high priest. Agrippa knew a lot about the *Jewish religion. That is why Festus asked him for advice about Paul.

Festus told Agrippa what had happened. The *Romans were proud of their law. They thought that it was very fair to everyone. He told Agrippa that he had explained *Roman law to the *Jewish leaders.

Verses 17-19 Then, Festus told Agrippa about Paul's *trial in Caesarea. Festus was surprised. He thought that the *charges were not very serious. He had thought that the *charges would be much worse than that. But the *charges were not about crimes against the *Roman government. They were about the *Jewish religion. Festus had no interest in those matters.

Verses 20-22 Festus told Agrippa that he 'did not know how to discover the truth about those matters' (verse 20). So Festus suggested that Paul should go to *Jerusalem for that reason. However, that reason is different from the reason that Luke gives in verse 9. But Paul had not agreed to go. Instead, he had *appealed to the *Emperor. Now Festus had to write a complete record about the *charges against Paul. He needed Agrippa's help with that. The report was for the *Emperor. Someone would take it with Paul to Rome.

Festus mentioned the most important part of the argument. Paul was saying that Jesus is alive. That was the chief part of the good news that the *apostles *preached (for example, Acts 2:31; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:37).

Agrippa, too, wanted to hear Paul. So Festus arranged that it would happen on the next day.

Festus introduces Paul to King Agrippa, 25:23-27

*v23 The next day, Agrippa and Bernice arrived. They showed that they were very important people. They entered the special room where officials met. They entered with the chief officers of the army. Also, the leaders of the city entered with them. Festus gave an order. People brought Paul into the room. v24 Festus said, 'King Agrippa and all who are here, look at this man! Every *Jew from *Jerusalem and Caesarea has come to tell me about him. They shout at me. They say that he should not live any longer. v25 I have discovered that he is not guilty. He*

*has done nothing to deserve death. But he has asked that the *Emperor should be his judge. So, I have decided to send him to Rome. v26 I have to give some information to the *Emperor. But I have nothing definite to write about this man. Therefore, I have brought him here, to you. I have brought him to you especially, King Agrippa. After we have talked about him, I can write something. v27 If one sends a prisoner to *Rome, one must describe the *charges against him. It seems stupid if one does not do that.'*

Verses 23-27 Many important people were meeting together. King Agrippa and Bernice were their special guests. This was an important social occasion! They all entered the room in a procession. Agrippa and Bernice wanted to show their royal power. They probably wore expensive purple clothes and gold crowns. Festus probably wore expensive red clothes. *Governors wore red clothes for important occasions. The soldiers' officers stood near Festus. And there were many guards.

Then Paul entered. His clothes were very different from everyone else's clothes! He did not seem important. But Paul was very important to God. The people round Paul seemed more powerful. But Paul had God's power in him.

Then, Festus explained the situation. *Jews in *Jerusalem and Caesarea were demanding Paul's death. But Paul had not done crimes that deserved death. Festus knew that. But Paul wanted the *Emperor to be his judge. So, Festus had to send Paul to Rome. But Festus said, 'I have nothing definite to write about this man' (verse 26). Festus was not telling the truth here. He knew what the *charges against Paul were. But Festus did not have any evidence against Paul. However, he did not want to let Paul go free. That was because he did not want to upset the *Jewish leaders. Festus wanted Agrippa to listen to Paul. Then Festus hoped that Agrippa would help him after that.

Chapter 26

Paul speaks to King Agrippa, 26:1-11

v1 Agrippa told Paul, 'You may now speak for yourself.' Paul waved his hand. He said, **v2** 'King Agrippa, I am glad about this chance to speak to you today. I can speak about all these *charges that the *Jews bring against me. **v3** That is because you know a lot about all the *Jewish customs. You also know about the beliefs that we do not agree about. So, I ask you to listen to me patiently. **v4** All the *Jews have known me since my childhood. They know the way that I have lived, in my own country, then in *Jerusalem. **v5** They have known me for a long time. If they were willing, they could tell you this. They could tell you that I was a *Pharisee. *Pharisees are the strictest *Jewish group. **v6** Now I am having this *trial because I believe God's promise to our *ancestors. **v7** Our 12 tribes (very large families) have *worshipped God every day and every night. God had promised something to them. And they were waiting for that thing to happen. King Agrippa, this is why the *Jewish leaders accuse me. It is because of that hope. That is why they make *charges against me. **v8** You people here should not doubt that God raises dead people to life. **v9** Before, I thought that I must oppose Jesus from *Nazareth. I thought that I should do everything against his name. **v10** First, I did this in *Jerusalem. I had authority from the chief priests. So, I put many of God's people in prison. I even voted for people to kill them. **v11** Often, I went round to many different *synagogues. At each *synagogue, I ordered people to punish God's people. I wanted God's people to give up their *faith. So, I tried to force them to do that. I was very angry with them. I even went to foreign cities in order to *persecute them.'

Verse 1 At the time when Paul lived, a person waved his or her hand to show honour.

Agrippa asked Paul to speak. Before Paul began to speak, he showed honour to Agrippa.

Verses 2-3 It was the custom to praise the ruler (see note on Acts 24:2-4). Again, Paul told the truth when he said good things about Agrippa. Agrippa knew a lot about the *Jews and about their religion.

Verses 4-8 Then, Paul told the story about what had happened in his life. The *Jews knew that he was a *Pharisee. Probably, many of them had seen him with his famous teacher, Gamaliel (see Acts 22:3). The *Pharisees studied Moses' *Law every day. They obeyed all the rules of *Judaism. They also believed in God's promise. God had promised to send his *Messiah to them. They were still waiting for that to happen. But it had happened already. Jesus is God's *Messiah. His *resurrection proved that. His *resurrection means that God will raise us to life, too. Paul knew that God had raised Jesus to life. The *Pharisees believed in the *resurrection of dead people. So the *Pharisees should be able to believe that fact about Jesus.

Verses 9-11 Next, Paul told the people at the meeting how he had *persecuted *Christians. He, too, did not believe in Jesus at that time. He put *believers in prison. He voted that they must die as a punishment. He wanted them to give up their beliefs. He even followed them to foreign cities. Here, Paul is showing that he was a true *Pharisee. He also opposed *Christians at first. He was very angry with them. So, he understood how the *Jews felt. But everything changed for Paul!

Paul tells how he met the *Lord Jesus, 26:12-23

v12 *'For this reason, I went to Damascus. I had orders from the chief priests and I had their authority. v13 King Agrippa, at about noon, I saw a light. It was brighter than the sun. It came from heaven and it flashed on me. It flashed on everyone who was with me. v14 We all fell down on the ground. I heard a voice. It spoke in the *Aramaic language. It said, "Saul, Saul, why do you *persecute me? It is foolish to fight against me. You are hurting yourself. You are like a cow that kicks against its owner's stick!" v15 "Who are you,*

**Lord?" I asked. The *Lord answered, "I am Jesus, whom you are *persecuting. v16 Now stand up. I have appeared in front of you because I have chosen you. You will be my servant. You will tell other people what you have learnt about me today. I will show more to you later. You will tell people about that also. v17 I will protect you from the *Jews. I will protect you from the *Gentiles. I am sending you to the *Gentiles. v18 You must open their eyes. They must turn away from the darkness and they must come into the light. They must *reject *Satan's power and they must ask God for help. Then God will forgive their *sins. They will become part of God's *holy people. That will happen by means of *faith in me." v19 King Agrippa, I obeyed that *vision from heaven. v20 First, I went to the people in Damascus. Then, I went to *Jerusalem. I went all over *Judea. I went to the *Gentiles also. I *preached to them all. I told them that they must *repent. I told them to ask God for help. I said that they must prove that they had *repented. They must do the things that showed this. v21 That is why some *Jews seized me in the *Temple. They tried to kill me. v22 But God has always helped me. So, I stand and I speak to both small and great people here. I have told the *Jews the same things as Moses and the *prophets said. v23 I have told the *Jews that the *Messiah must suffer. He would be the first person that would rise from death. He would bring light both to his own people and to the *Gentiles.'*

Verses 12-14 This is the third time that Luke records this story. (See also Acts 9:1-18; 22:4-16.) In Acts 22:4-16, the people in Paul's audience were almost all *Jews. So there, Paul showed that he was a good *Jew. He emphasised parts of the story that were important to *Jews. But here, the people in his audience were almost all *Gentiles. So, Paul emphasised different parts of the story. He did not say that he became blind. He did not mention Ananias. Instead, he emphasised

what Jesus said to him. And he gave extra information.

When Paul *persecuted *Christians, he *persecuted Jesus. Jesus told Paul that he (Paul) was also hurting himself! Jesus said a popular proverb (a wise thing that people said). Paul was like a *stubborn cow. When the farmer first tied the cow to the plough, the cow hated this. It tried to escape and it kicked. The farmer had a stick with a sharp point. The farmer held this stick close to the cow's legs. When the cow kicked, it hurt its legs on the stick! So, the cow learned to obey the farmer. Otherwise, it hurt itself. Paul, too, was *stubborn and he was learning the hard way!

Verses 15-16 Jesus answered Paul's question. Then he told him to stand up. This was so that he would be ready. Jesus had chosen Paul to serve him in a special way. Paul must tell people about what he had seen. Paul had seen Jesus! Jesus had gone up to heaven. And he was in *glory with his Father, God. But he had appeared in front of Paul. Jesus also said that he would show more to Paul later. This refers to Paul's other *visions of Jesus. (See, for example, Acts 22:17-21.)

Verse 17 Jesus promised to protect Paul. This did not mean that Paul would not suffer. But Paul would be able to complete God's work.

Verse 18 God wanted Paul to open the *Gentiles' eyes. They were not blind in a physical way. They were blind in a *spiritual way. They could not see that the *gospel is true. Paul had to persuade the *Gentiles to turn away from *spiritual darkness. Then they could come into God's light. *Satan was ruling over them. In that way, they were in *spiritual darkness. *Satan rules over everyone who does not accept Jesus as their *Lord and *Saviour. People may not realise this but it is true. Jesus called *Satan 'the prince of this world' (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11). But when you become a *Christian, *Satan does not rule over you any longer. Then God forgives your *sins. The *Holy Spirit comes to live in you. Jesus is your king. In that way, you come into God's light.

Paul had to bring the *Gentiles into God's family. This was God's work for Paul to do.

Verses 19-20 Here, Paul gives a short account of the message that he *preached everywhere.

1. He told people to stop their *sin. They must not do wrong things any longer. The way that they live must change.
2. He told people to ask God for help. When they stop their *sin, they must start to obey God. God must become more important to them than anyone or anything else is.
3. He told people to prove that they had *repented. It is easy for people to say that they *repent. But they must prove it by what they do. God will give to them the power that they need to live good lives.

Verse 21 Paul had shown that *Gentiles are important to God. They can belong to God's family, too. When God forgives them, they receive his *salvation. That made some *Jews very angry with Paul. That was the real reason why they seized him in the *Temple. Paul did not even mention the *charges against him.

Verses 22-23 God had always helped Paul, as Jesus had promised. 'Both small and great people here' referred to Paul's audience. Probably it referred to their rank. Or perhaps it referred to their ages and so it meant 'from the young to the old'.

Paul emphasised that he did not *preach any bad things about the *Jews. He *preached the same message as Moses and the *prophets had given. They had *prophesied that certain things would happen. And those things had happened in Jesus' life. They had happened in his death and his *resurrection. Paul did not want to oppose the *Jews. His message came from the *scriptures. So the *Jews should not oppose what he taught.

'Paul, you are mad!' 26:24-32

v24 Then Festus interrupted Paul's speech. He shouted, 'Paul, you are mad! You have become mad because you have learned too much!'

v25 Paul replied, 'I am not mad, most excellent Festus! I am telling the truth. I am saying sensible things. **v26** King Agrippa knows about these things. I can speak boldly to him. I am sure that he has noticed everything. Nothing that I mentioned has happened in secret. **v27** King Agrippa, do you believe what the *prophets said? I know that you do.'

v28 Agrippa said, 'Do you think that you can persuade me so quickly to be a *Christian?'

v29 Paul replied, 'I wish that you would become like me. I mean not only you. I mean everyone who is listening to me today! I wish that you could become like me. That is, except for these chains of course!'

v30 The king stood up. The *governor, Bernice and those who were sitting with them stood up. **v31** They all left the room. After they had left, they talked to each other. They said, 'This man has not done anything that deserves death. He should not go to prison.'

v32 Agrippa told Festus, 'Paul could have been free if he had not *appealed to the *Emperor.'

Verse 24 Probably, Festus had seen Paul when he (Paul) was studying in his room. Festus knew that Paul was a very clever man. But Festus thought that Paul was mad. Festus had called Jesus 'a dead man' (Acts 25:19). But Paul was saying that Jesus was alive! Paul was also saying that this Jesus brought 'light' to all people (Acts 26:23).

Verses 25-27 Paul replied that he was not mad. He was not saying mad things either. The events of Jesus' life, death and *resurrection had happened in public. Many people had seen those events. Paul asked whether Agrippa believed the *prophets' message about the *Messiah. Paul was being very bold when he talked to the king like that. Everyone was probably very surprised.

Verses 28-29 But Agrippa did not answer Paul. Instead, he asked another question. We do not know whether Agrippa was angry or whether he was sincere. Perhaps he was insulting Paul. However, Paul's answer was sincere. He was a prisoner of those leaders there. But he did not hate them. He wanted them to have *everlasting life. *Everlasting life is a gift. It is better than all other gifts. People receive it by means of Jesus. Paul wanted everyone to have the same *faith in Jesus that he had.

Verses 30-32 The king stood up in order to end the discussion. What Paul said was true.

Perhaps the king realised that. Perhaps he knew that he should accept Jesus as his *Lord and *Saviour. But perhaps he was too proud.

Later, Festus, Agrippa and the other guests agreed that Paul was not guilty. But he had *appealed to the *Emperor. So, Paul had to go to Rome.

Chapter 27

Paul begins his journey to Rome, 27:1-12

v1 It was time for us to go to Rome. They handed Paul and some other prisoners over to Captain Julius. He belonged to the *Emperor's special group of soldiers. **v2** We went on a ship from Adramyttium. It was ready to sail to certain ports. Those ports were along the coast of Asia. We started to sail away. Aristarchus was with us. He was from Thessalonica in Macedonia.

v3 The next day, we arrived at Sidon. Captain Julius was kind to Paul and he allowed Paul to visit his friends. Then, they could give him the things that he needed. **v4** We left Sidon and the wind was blowing against us. We sailed close to the island called *Cyprus. **v5** We sailed across the sea. We were sailing near the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia. Then we landed at Myra in Lycia. **v6** There, Captain Julius found a ship that was going to Italy. The ship was from Alexandria. He ordered us to get on the ship.

Verses 1-2 Luke travelled with Paul from *Jerusalem to Rome. The final passage where Luke uses the word 'we' starts here. It ends at Acts 28:16. Luke gives us many details about the voyage. He probably wrote down many notes during the voyage. He gives a very accurate record of how an ancient ship sailed.

Other prisoners were also on the ship and Captain Julius was guarding them all. Aristarchus, too, came with Paul. (See Acts 19:29; 20:4.) Probably, Aristarchus and Luke had agreed to be Paul's slaves. William Ramsay, a writer in the 19th century, suggested that. It was the only way that Aristarchus and Luke could go with Paul. They were both very loyal to Paul.

Verse 3 Sidon was 113 kilometres (70 miles) north from Caesarea. Paul had friends there in Sidon, and Captain Julius let Paul visit them. They probably gave him food and other things to take on the voyage. Captain Julius was a kind man. During the voyage, he showed kindness to Paul.

Verses 4-5 At this time in the year, there was a strong west wind. So, they had to sail past the northern side of *Cyprus. Myra was 241 kilometres (150 miles) north-west of *Cyprus. It took a long time for them to reach Myra. The journey from Caesarea to Myra had taken two weeks.

Verse 6 At Myra, they went onto another ship. It was taking grain to Italy (see verse 38). Alexandria was in *Egypt. The people in Rome got most of their grain from *Egypt.

The ship reaches a place called Fair Havens, 27:7-12

v7 We sailed slowly for several days. It was difficult to reach Cnidus. The wind did not allow us to go any further in that direction. So, we sailed past *Cape Salmone. There, the island called Crete protected us from the wind. **v8** We sailed slowly along the coast and it was very difficult. We reached a place called Fair Havens. It was not far from the town called Lasea. **v9** Much time had passed and it had become dangerous to sail. It was now after the time called Yom Kippur. (See the note.) **v10** Paul warned them. He said, 'Men, I know that it is dangerous to sail now. Damage will happen to the ship and to its goods and many people will die also.' **v11** But Captain Julius did not listen to Paul's advice. Instead, he listened to the ship's captain and to the ship's owner. **v12** The harbour there was not a good place to stay during the winter. For this reason, nearly everyone wanted to sail away. They hoped to reach Phoenix. Phoenix was a harbour in Crete and it faced both south-west and north-west. The ship could stay there during the winter.

Verses 7-9 The ship could not sail directly to Italy. The strong west wind was against it. So, it travelled very slowly along the coast and it

was difficult to sail. At last, they reached a harbour and they stayed there. They waited for the wind to change. But it was now late in the year. People did not sail during the winter because it was too dangerous. Luke records that 'it was now after the time called Yom Kippur' (verse 9). Yom Kippur was a special day when *Jews asked God to forgive their *sins. Paul was travelling in *AD 59. In *AD 59, Yom Kippur was on 5th October, so there was not much time left to sail.

Verses 10-12 The men on the ship had to make a quick decision. They had to decide whether to sail or not. Fair Havens was a bad place to stay during the winter. Winds blew into the harbour from the east and north-east. That made it difficult and dangerous for the ships there. Also, it was not near a big town. But Paul had travelled often by sea and he had a lot of experience. He advised the men to stay at Fair Havens. He said that it was too dangerous to sail.

Captain Julius did not follow Paul's advice. Julius agreed with the ship's captain and with the owner. Probably, the owner wanted to deliver the grain on time. So, they decided to continue their voyage.

They wanted to sail to Phoenix, which was a safer harbour. There was more shelter there from the bad weather.

The storm on the sea, 27:13-20

v13 A gentle south wind began to blow. The men thought, 'This is exactly what we want!' They pulled up the *anchor and we sailed along the coast of Crete. **v14** Soon, a very strong wind blew down from that island. It was called 'the North-east wind'. **v15** The wind hit the ship and the ship could not sail against it. So, we let the wind push the ship along. **v16** We travelled along by the island called Cauda. We were on the side where there was some shelter. It was difficult to hold the *lifeboat in place. But we did it. **v17** The men dragged the *lifeboat onto the ship. Then, they tied *ropes round the ship. The *ropes held the ship together. The men were afraid that the ship might hit the sandbanks by Syrtis. (Sandbanks are heaps of sand that make shallow

places in the sea.) So, the men lowered the sail and they let the ship float along.

v18 The storm was very strong. So, the next day they threw some of the ship's cargo into the sea. (Cargo means goods that a ship takes from one place to another.) **v19** On the third day, they threw some of the ship's equipment into the sea. They did that with their hands.

v20 For many days, we could not see the sun or the stars. The strong wind continued to blow. In the end, we did not think that anyone could rescue us.

Verses 13-20 So, the men started to sail and the wind was gentle. Phoenix was only 64 kilometres (40 miles) to the west. But a very strong storm surprised them and they were in great danger. They dragged the *lifeboat onto the ship. They did not want the *lifeboat to break up. They were also afraid that the whole ship might break up. So, they tied it with *ropes, like a parcel.

The wind was then taking them towards the south and west. Many ships had hit the *sandbanks near North Africa. The men were afraid that it would happen now. So, they tried to make the ship less heavy. They threw the grain into the sea. Then they became more desperate. They even threw away some of the ship's equipment.

Sailors usually guided ships by the position of the sun and the stars. But these sailors had not seen the sun or the stars for many days and nights. They were lost. They did not know where they were going. They did not know whether they were near to the dangerous *sandbanks. They had no hope that anyone could help them now!

Paul encourages everyone, 27:21-26

v21 Nobody had eaten anything for a long time. So, Paul stood up in front of them. He said, 'Men, you should have listened to my advice. I told you to stay in Crete. There, we would have avoided this damage and loss. **v22** But now, I urge you to be brave! Not one of you will die. We will lose only the ship. **v23** I belong to God and I *worship him. Last night, he sent an *angel to me. **v24** The *angel stood next

to me and he said, "Do not be afraid, Paul. You will have your *trial in front of the *Emperor. God will not allow anyone to die on this ship. It is because of you that God shows *grace to them." **v25** So, continue to be brave, men! I trust God. I believe what he has told me. It will happen as he said. **v26** But first the ship will crash on an island.'

Verses 21-26 Everyone was weak and tired. They thought that they would all die soon. But Paul knew that this would not happen. He already knew that he would reach Rome. God had promised that (Acts 23:11). Also, God had sent an *angel to him on the ship. The *angel had repeated what God had promised. The *angel had also promised that God would protect everyone else on the ship.

So, Paul spoke to the men. There were nearly 300 men (Acts 27:37). Paul, Luke and Aristarchus were probably the only *Christians there. Paul encouraged everyone and he told them about the *angel. He was sure that they would all be safe. They would not die, even when the ship crashed on an island. The *angel had told Paul this, too. Paul trusted God's promises completely. He trusted God even when the situation seemed hopeless.

They make the ship less heavy, 27:27-38

v27 It was the 14th night since the storm began. The storm was still blowing our ship all over the Mediterranean Sea. At about midnight, the sailors realised that we were approaching land. **v28** They measured the water's depth. The water was about 40 metres (120 feet) deep. A short time later, they measured again. They discovered that the water was about 30 metres (90 feet) deep. **v29** The sailors were afraid that we might hit some rocks. So, they dropped four *anchors from the back of the ship and they prayed for daylight.

v30 The sailors tried to escape from the ship. They lowered a *lifeboat into the sea. They pretended that they were lowering *anchors from the front of the ship. **v31** Paul spoke to Captain Julius and the soldiers. 'If these men do not stay

*with the ship, our lives will not be safe', he said. v32 So, the soldiers cut the *ropes that held the *lifeboat. They let it fall into the sea.*

v33 *Just before dawn, Paul urged everyone to eat something.*

'You have worried all the time for 14 days! During that time, you have not eaten anything. v34 Now I urge you to eat some food. You need it to stay alive. If you do that, nobody will suffer.'

v35 *After Paul had said that, he took some bread. He thanked God. In front of everyone, he broke up the bread. He began to eat. v36 They felt more cheerful and they all ate something. v37 There were 276 people on the ship. v38 After everyone had eaten enough, they threw the grain into the sea. So, the ship became less heavy.*

Verses 27-32 The ship was in danger. The sailors knew that they were very near to the shore. It was night. The water was becoming shallower quickly. They did not want the ship to hit any rocks. So, they tried to stop the ship. They dropped *anchors from the back of the ship. Usually, they would drop *anchors from the front. But if they did that, the ship would turn into the wind. Then, it might be difficult to turn it to the shore.

The sailors were still afraid. So, they tried to escape. They pretended that they must put *anchors down from the *lifeboat. But really they were getting the *lifeboat ready to sail away.

Paul told Captain Julius what the *sailors were doing. He listened to Paul's advice this time! Captain Julius ordered some soldiers to cut the *lifeboat's *ropes. So, they lost the *lifeboat.

Again, Paul showed his authority. God had promised to keep everyone safe. This meant that they must stay together.

Verses 33-38 Paul offered some other practical advice. He urged everyone on the ship to eat. They needed strength. Soon, they would have to swim to the shore.

Paul thanked God for the food and then he ate. Everyone else ate, too. Then, they threw

the rest of the grain into the sea. When the ship was less heavy, it was easier to approach the shore. 276 people were a heavy load!

The ship hits a *sandbank, 27:39-44

v39 *It was morning and the sailors saw the coast. They did not recognise it. They saw a bay with a sandy beach and they made a decision. They would make the ship go onto that beach, if they could. v40 They cut off the *anchors and they let the *anchors sink in the sea. At the same time, they untied the *ropes that held the rudders. (Rudders are things like oars that guide the ship's direction.) Next, they raised the sail at the front of the ship. They let the wind carry the ship forwards and we approached the beach. v41 But the ship hit a *sandbank and it landed on the *sandbank. The front of the ship stuck in the sand and it could not move. The strong waves broke the back of the ship into small pieces.*

v42 *The sailors decided to kill all the prisoners. They did not want the prisoners to swim away. They did not want them to escape. v43 But, Captain Julius wanted to save Paul from death. So, he did not let the soldiers kill the prisoners. Instead, he gave orders to everyone who could swim. He told them to jump into the sea before the other men. Then, they must swim to the beach. v44 Next, he told everyone else to follow them. They must hold on to pieces of wood. Or they could hold on to broken parts of the ship. That was how everyone reached the shore safely.*

Verses 39-44 The sailors did not know where they were. They did not recognise the coast. But, there was a sandy beach. So, it was probably safe to land.

They tried to land on the beach but they hit a *sandbank. They could not move the ship. The wind was behind them. The ship began to break up and the soldiers were worried. They would get into trouble if the prisoners escaped. (See also Acts 12:19; 16:27.)

But Captain Julius did not want Paul to die. So, he did not allow the soldiers to kill anyone. Everyone had to leave the ship before it broke

up completely. They had to get to the beach. Some people could swim, so they swam to the beach. Some people could not swim. But they held on to objects that floated. So they too got to the beach. Nobody drowned. Everyone was safe.

Chapter 28

On the island called Malta, 28:1-10

v1 We arrived on the shore. We discovered that the island was called Malta. **v2** The people who lived there were very friendly to us. It was raining and it was cold. So, they made a fire to welcome us. **v3** Paul gathered some sticks. As he put them on the fire, a snake fastened itself to his hand. It had come out because of the heat. **v4** The people who lived there saw the snake. It was hanging onto Paul's hand. They said to each other, 'This man probably murdered someone. He did not drown in the sea. But Justice (see note) will not let him live!' **v5** However, Paul shook off the snake and it fell into the fire. The snake had not hurt Paul at all. **v6** The people expected him to swell up (become larger) or to die suddenly. They waited for a long time but they did not see anything unusual happen to Paul. So, their attitude changed towards him. They said, 'He is a god!' **v7** Near that place, there were some fields. Publius, the island's chief official, owned them. He was very friendly and he welcomed us. We stayed in his home for three days. **v8** Publius's father was in bed. He was very hot and he had an illness in his stomach. Paul went into his room and he prayed. Then, he put his hands on the man and he cured him. **v9** When that happened, everyone on the island brought sick people to Paul. They all became well again. **v10** The people respected us very much. Just before we sailed away, they gave things to us. They gave to us everything that we needed.

Verses 1-4 They were now on Malta. Malta was about 805 kilometres (500 miles) west from the place called Fair Havens. The people

there were very kind and they looked after everyone.

Paul was a very clever man and he was a great leader. But he was happy to do practical tasks. He helped to collect wood for the fire. He was not too proud to get his hands dirty!

But there was a sleepy snake among the sticks. It bit Paul and it hung on to him. The people in Malta believed that this was a judgement for Paul. They used the word 'Justice' as if it were a god's name. Justice means that everything is completely fair.

Paul was a prisoner. The people thought that Paul had killed someone. So it would be fair that he, too, must die. In other words, that would be justice. If you took someone's life away, the gods took your life away, too. That is what they believed. They thought that this was fair.

Verses 5-6 But Paul remained calm and he shook off the snake. He knew that God was protecting him. (See Acts 23:11.) However, the people expected him to die and they watched him carefully. They saw that the snake had not hurt him. It was a *miracle! So, they decided that he was a god.

Verses 7-10 We do not know whether Publius was the *Roman *governor. It is possible that he was just a local official. He was very friendly, too. Paul and his companions stayed at Publius's house. Publius's father was very ill. But God cured him by means of Paul. This news spread and many sick people came to Paul. God cured them all by means of Paul.

The people wanted to thank Paul and his companions. The people were generous. They gave Paul and his companions everything that they needed for the voyage.

From Malta to Rome, 28:11-16

v11 Three months later, we sailed away in a ship from Alexandria. That ship had spent the winter at the island. The ship was called 'The *Twin Brothers'. **v12** We arrived at Syracuse and we stayed there for 3 days. **v13** From there, we sailed to Rhegium. The next day, a south wind began to blow. In two days, we came to Puteoli. **v14** We found some *believers there and they asked us to stay with them. A week later, we left for Rome.

v15 *Some of the *believers in Rome heard that we were coming. They met us at the 'Market of Appius' and at the Three Inns (small hotels). When Paul saw the *believers, he thanked God. He felt cheerful and brave.*

v16 *We arrived in Rome. The officials allowed Paul to live alone. A soldier guarded him.*

Verse 11 They had to stay in Malta for the winter. It was too dangerous to sail. They probably left Malta in early February. They were travelling to Sicily, which was 129 kilometres (80 miles) north from Malta. Their ship was probably carrying grain.

'The Twin Brothers' were the *Greek gods, Castor and Pollux. (Twins are two children that were born together from the same mother.) People believed that those gods protected sailors.

Verses 12-15 This time, the voyage was much easier. The wind helped them and they travelled quickly to Puteoli. Puteoli was the port for Rome. It was 225 kilometres (140 miles) from Rome. It was an important city. There were some *Christians there and they welcomed Paul. Paul stayed with them for a week. Meanwhile, Captain Julius was probably reporting to the *Roman government that he had arrived with Paul.

When the news about Paul's arrival reached Rome, some *Christians travelled to meet him. The 'Market of Appius' was about 69 kilometres (43 miles) from Rome. The Three Inns (small hotels) were about 53 kilometres (33 miles) from Rome.

Paul had never met these *Christians before. But their love and kindness encouraged him. *Christians show special love for other *Christians, even when they have never met before. Jesus gave us a command. He said, 'Love other *believers as I have loved you' (John 15:22). We must do this. Then, people will see that the *Holy Spirit lives in us.

Verse 16 In Rome, Paul did not go to the prison. Instead, he lived alone, with just a soldier to guard him. He had some freedom and people could visit him. Probably, this was because he was a *Roman citizen. Also, Festus

and Captain Julius had said good things about him.

Paul speaks to the *Jewish leaders, 28:17-20

v17 *Three days later, Paul asked some of the *Jewish leaders to meet together. He said:*

*'My friends, I have never done anything to hurt our people. I have done nothing against our *ancestors' customs. But people arrested me in *Jerusalem. The *Jews there handed me over to the *Romans. v18 The *Romans examined the *charges against me. They wanted to let me go free. I had done nothing that deserved death. And the *Romans discovered that. v19 The *Jewish leaders disagreed with them. So, I had to *appeal to the *Emperor. But I do not have anything to say against my own people. v20 That is why I have asked to see you. I have asked to talk with you. People have tied me with chains because of the person that we *Israelites hope for.'*

Verses 17-20 Rome was the most important *Gentile city in the world. But, Paul still followed his usual custom. He *preached to the *Jews first. He told them why he was there as a prisoner. He said these three important things:

1. He had done nothing against the *Jewish people. And he had done nothing against their customs.
2. The *Romans wanted him to go free. They did not think that he had done any serious crimes. He had not done any crimes that deserved death.
3. The *Jews did not agree that Paul was not guilty. So, Paul had to *appeal to the *Emperor.

Paul wanted the *Jews to know that he was a true *Jew. That was why he asked them to meet him. He was a prisoner because of his belief in the *Jewish *Messiah.

Paul *preaches in Rome, 28:21-31

v21 *The leaders replied, 'Nobody from *Judea has written to us about you. We have not had a bad report from our people there. They have not said anything*

bad about you. **v22** But we want you to tell us about your ideas. That is because you belong to that new group. We know that people everywhere are saying bad things against it.'

v23 So the leaders agreed about a time when they would meet with Paul. On that day, many more leaders came. They came to the place where Paul was staying. He explained to them about God's *kingdom. He tried to convince them about who Jesus is. He used examples from Moses' *Law. And he used examples from the *Prophets (the books that the *prophets had written). He spoke from morning until evening. **v24** Some of the leaders agreed with what he said. But other leaders did not agree. **v25** The leaders argued and they could not agree with each other. As they left, Paul said some final words to them. He said, 'The *Holy Spirit told the truth to your *ancestors. **v26** By means of the *prophet Isaiah, he said:

"Go to these people and say:

You will listen and you will continue to listen.

But you will not understand.

You will look and you will continue to look.

But you will not see.

v27 These people are *stubborn.

They have closed their ears.

And they have shut their eyes.

So, they cannot see and they cannot hear.

They cannot understand.

If they could understand, they would ask me for help.

And then I would cure them."'

v28 Paul also said, 'This is what I want you to understand. God wants the *Gentiles to believe his message about *salvation! They will listen to that message!'

v29 After Paul said that, the *Jews left. They were arguing strongly with each other.

v30 For two years, Paul stayed in a house that he had rented. He welcomed everyone who visited him. **v31** He *preached boldly about God's *kingdom. He taught the facts about the *Lord Jesus *Christ and nobody tried to stop him.

Verse 21 During the winter, ships did not come to Italy from elsewhere. But after the winter, ships started to reach Italy again. The ship on which Paul had travelled was among the first ships then. No letter or message from *Judea had arrived before Paul. So, the *Jews in Rome knew nothing about his *trial. Perhaps the men in the *Sanhedrin did not want to write to Rome anyway. The *Emperor might say that Paul was not guilty. Then, the *Roman government might punish them instead. Things like that happened sometimes.

Verses 22-23 There were *Jews in *Rome. However, they had received no report from *Judea about Paul. But they knew something about him. They knew that he was a *Christian. And they had heard bad things about the 'group' called *Christians. So, they wanted to hear Paul's opinions. They were very polite to him. They were curious about his message. So, they arranged a time when he could talk to them all.

On that day, very many *Jews came to Paul's house. We think that it was probably a large house! He *preached to them for a whole day. He talked about God's *kingdom. After he had risen from death, Jesus talked to his *disciples about it, too (Acts 1:3).

Also, Paul tried to persuade the *Jews that Jesus is the *Messiah. He showed them proof from the *scriptures. Paul belonged to a new group but he had not changed his religion. He was still a *Jew. He believed that God had promised a special thing to the *Jews. But Paul knew also that the special thing had now happened by means of Jesus. And Paul wanted the *Jews, too, to know that.

Verse 24 Some of the *Jewish leaders believed in Jesus. But some other *Jewish leaders did not believe. That had happened many times before when Paul *preached. It had happened at Paul's *trial in *Jerusalem (Acts 23:9).

Verses 25-28 Just before they left, Paul said two important things.

1. He said some words from Isaiah 6:9-10. Jesus had said these same words about the people who did not believe in him (Matthew 13:14, 15; Mark 4:11, 12). Some of these *Jews in Rome did not want to hear the message about *sin and *salvation. As Paul said, the message came from the *Holy Spirit. But they were *stubborn. They had chosen not to see or hear. So, they could not understand the message. They had *rejected God's *Messiah. They had *rejected his message. They had *rejected *salvation.

2. Now, the *Gentiles would hear God's message about *salvation. They would listen with open minds.

Verse 29 Many *Jews did not want to listen any longer. Paul had upset them enough. They were still arguing as they left. (This verse appears only in an ancient *Greek copy of Acts that is called the 'Western Text'.)

Verses 30-31 For two years, Paul rented a house. Probably, he made tents again to pay the rent. He was able to *preach about God's *kingdom. He was able to teach about Jesus' life, death and *resurrection.

'Everyone' who came to Paul included both *Jews and *Gentiles. Paul was still a prisoner but the *Roman government let him speak freely. So, the good news spread through Rome and beyond that city too.

We do not know what happened to Paul after this. Some people say that he had a *trial in front of the *Emperor. But Luke does not mention that. Paul expected that the *Romans would let him go free. We know that because of what he says in his letters (Philippians 2:24 and Philemon 22). Probably, the *Romans did let Paul leave Rome. After this, many people think that Paul went on a fourth journey. Probably, he continued to *preach the *gospel. And probably he continued to encourage *Christians in the new *churches.

However, in *AD 64, the *Emperor Nero started to *persecute *Christians. He said that they had started a big fire in Rome. Then he punished many *Christians by death. In a traditional story, people say that the *Romans killed Paul during that period. That is, between *AD 65 and *AD 68.

The *church continued to grow. Today, the *church is growing even faster. But there are

still many people who do not know the *Lord Jesus. They have not heard the *gospel. That is why we must tell people about Jesus. Like Paul, we must trust God and we must be bold. God will help us. We have good news for everyone!

Word List

AD ~ AD 50 means 50 years after Jesus was born, and so on.

altar ~ a table where people burned animals as a *sacrifice to God; or they burned them as a *sacrifice to false gods. (People usually made the table from stone.)

ancestors ~ a person's relatives that lived a long time ago.

anchor ~ a heavy piece of metal that holds a ship in one place.

angel ~ a servant of God. He brings messages from God to people that live on earth.

anoint ~ to mark a person with oil. This shows that God has chosen him or her.

apostle ~ a man that God chose to lead other *Christians; a man that God chose to teach about Jesus; one of the 12 men that Jesus chose to be his helpers.

appeal ~ to ask an important person, like the *Emperor, whether a legal decision is right or not.

Aramaic ~ a local *Jewish language. Jesus spoke Aramaic.

Areopagus ~ the group of men that met to make important decisions in Athens.

baptise ~ to put a person into water, or to put water on a person; how we show that *Christ has made a person clean; to send the Holy Spirit into someone, which God does; to show to everyone that a person belongs to *Christ together with other people; to show to everyone that a person is in the *church.

baptism ~ when someone *baptises someone; when the *Holy Spirit comes into a person when they know *Christ.

Baptist ~ a man who *baptises people.

BC ~ years Before Christ came to the earth.

believer ~ a person who knows *Christ and accepts him.

bless ~ to do much good to a person

blessing ~ a good thing that God does for us.

Cape ~ a corner where the land sticks out into the sea.

census ~ when someone counts people for official reasons.

charges ~ when people accuse someone of crimes; these crimes are called charges.

Christ (look also at *Messiah) ~ Jesus is the Christ. It means that God *anointed him. The name means the same as *Messiah. It means that God chose him.

Christian ~ a person who obeys Jesus *Christ; a person who believes in him.

church ~ a group of *Christians that meet together. (A church is not just the building that they meet in.) It can also mean all the *Christians in the world.

circumcise ~ to cut off the skin from the end of a boy's or man's sex part. For *Jews, this was a *sign to show God's agreement with *Israel. It was a special mark. It showed that the man agreed to obey God.

circumcision ~ when someone *circumcises someone.

colony ~ a place abroad where the *Romans went and then they controlled it.

condemn ~ to say that someone is guilty because he or she has done something wrong.

covenant ~ a promise that people (or God) must obey; an agreement between God and a person or people.

cross ~ two pieces of wood that someone has fixed together. They fix one piece across the other piece. The *Romans fixed people to a cross to kill them. Jesus died on a cross.

crucify ~ to kill someone on a *cross.

Cyprus ~ an island in the Mediterranean Sea.

descendant ~ a future member in a family or nation.

disciple ~ someone who follows another person and he or she learns from that person; someone whom Jesus taught. It also means someone who believes in Jesus. This person also does the things that Jesus teaches.

earthquake ~ when the ground moves and it shakes. Some parts of the world have earthquakes often.

Egypt ~ a country in North Africa. The *Israelites were slaves in Egypt for several

hundred years. God told Moses to lead the *Israelites out of Egypt. And finally they went to the *Promised Land. The escape from Egypt was a very important event in *Jewish history.

Egyptian ~ a person from *Egypt.

emperor ~ the most important ruler in *Rome.

empire ~ a very big *kingdom.

Ephesians ~ people from Ephesus, an important city on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

everlasting life ~ life that continues always.

faith ~ when someone believes in someone or something; when someone is really sure about God and Jesus his Son; 'the faith' means the things that *Christians say are true about Jesus.

famine ~ when crops do not grow, so that there is not much food.

fast ~ to choose not to eat any food for a period of time. Sometimes, people choose not to drink also.

festival ~ a special holiday.

fort ~ a strong building. Soldiers can go inside a fort to guard a city.

Galilee ~ a region in northern *Israel, where Jesus and some *disciples lived; a lake in that region.

Gentile ~ not *Jewish; a person that is not a *Jew; a person who does not know God. 'Gentiles' can mean people from all countries (but it does not include *Jews).

glorify ~ to give someone great honour and power; what God has done to Jesus in heaven.

glory ~ great love and praise and honour; the beautiful light round God; God's power and his great importance.

goddess ~ a false female god.

God-fearer ~ a *Gentile that *worshipped God.

Gospel ~ a book at the beginning of the *New Testament. There are 4 Gospels. They are called Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

gospel ~ the good news about Jesus; the message that Jesus came to *save us.

governor ~ an important ruler.

grace ~ God's generous free gift; God's love, help and protection that people do not deserve and they cannot earn it; when God forgives us although he does not have to forgive.

Greek ~ the language that the people from Greece spoke; the language in which authors wrote the *New Testament; a person from Greece.

Hebrew ~ the language that *Jewish people speak.

high priest ~ the most important priest in the *Jewish *Temple.

holy ~ very, very good; separate from *sin. Only God is really holy.

Holy Spirit ~ God's Spirit, whom Jesus sent to help people; another name for God; also called God's Spirit, *Christ's Spirit, or the Spirit that helps us. The Holy Spirit is a person. But he is not human as we are. He is God. He is equal with God the Father and God the Son (*Christ). He links together with God and *Christ. And he does God's work among the people in the world.

hypocrite ~ a person who pretends to be good or *holy, but he or she is not.

idol ~ a thing that people make from wood, stone or metal. It looks like an animal, a man or a god. People *worship it instead of God. And they pray to it instead of God.

Israel ~ the country that is the *Jews' home.

Israelites ~ another name for the *Jews. They are the people from *Israel.

Jerusalem ~ the capital city in *Israel.

Jew ~ a person that is a member of Abraham's, Isaac's and Jacob's big family; a person that believes the Jews' religion, which is called *Judaism.

Jewish ~ a word that describes a *Jew; or it describes anything that belongs to a *Jew.

Judaism ~ the *Jews' religion.

Judea ~ a region in the country where the *Jews lived.

kingdom ~ where a king rules; a country where a king rules. God's kingdom is where God rules.

Law ~ the rules that God gave to Moses for the *Jews.

lifeboat ~ a small boat on a ship. People can go in the lifeboat if the ship sinks.

Lord ~ the name for God or Jesus in the Bible; the name means that he is above all other things; a name that we use for Jesus when we obey him; someone with authority.

magician ~ someone who makes strange things happen to surprise people. These things are not usual. In order to do them, he has to use a special power. This power is not from his own body. This power is very bad and it is not from God.

martyr ~ a person that enemies kill, because of his or her beliefs.

Messiah ~ in the *Old Testament, the *anointed king; in the *New Testament, Jesus. It means the same as *Christ.

miracle ~ a wonderful thing that God does by his power; a wonderful thing that happens.

missionary ~ a person who goes to another country to tell people about Jesus.

Molech ~ a false god.

Mount ~ a short word for mountain; or, a hill.

Nazareth ~ the town where Jesus lived when he was young.

New Testament ~ the Bible's last part, which the writers wrote after Jesus lived on earth. It is about the things that Jesus did. And it is about the things that he taught. It is also about the *church. It is about what *Christians believe. And it is about what they do.

Old Testament ~ the Bible's first part, which the writers wrote before Jesus lived on earth; the *holy things that the writers wrote before *Christ's birth.

olive ~ a tree with small fruits that people use to make oil; or those fruits themselves. People use the oil to cook food.

pagans ~ people that *worship a false god or gods.

paralysed ~ unable to move.

Passover ~ an important *holy day for the *Jews; a special meal that they ate on this day every year. At the time when Moses was alive, their people had been slaves in *Egypt. Then God had freed them from *Egypt. This special meal helped them to remember that. They came to *Jerusalem, to meet in the *Temple. And then they ate the same food together.

peace ~ when we are friends with God and with other people; when we have no troubles in our mind.

Pentecost ~ a special day that comes 50 days after *Passover or Easter.

persecute ~ to attack people because they believe in *Christ; and to hurt them for that reason.

persecution ~ when God's enemies hurt people because they believe in Jesus.

Pharisee ~ a member in a certain group of *Jews. These *Jews thought that they obeyed all God's rules. They did not like the things that Jesus taught. They thought that they did not do any wrong things. So, they became very proud.

porch ~ an entrance to a building. This entrance has a roof.

praise ~ to tell God how great he is. We can do this when we are praying to him. Or we can do it when we are singing to him.

preach ~ to tell the good news about Jesus to a person or people; and to explain it to them.

Promised Land ~ the country that God promised to give to Abraham and his family.

prophecy ~ special messages and stories that God gives to a person; messages about things that will happen in the future; the words that a *prophet speaks or writes.

prophecy ~ to tell about things that will happen in the future; to speak a special message with God's help and authority (or to speak a false message from a false god).

prophet ~ someone who tells God's messages; a person that God sends to speak for him.

province ~ a principal division of a country that people govern from another country. *Rome ruled the provinces that Luke mentions in the book called 'Acts'.

purification ~ when *Jews prepare themselves to offer *sacrifices to God.

rabbi ~ a *Jewish word that means 'master'. Rabbis were usually teachers.

reject ~ not to accept.

repent ~ to stop doing *sin and then to obey God; to change from past evil behaviour; to let one's mind change, so that one stops doing wrong things.

reptile ~ an animal with cold blood. Snakes are reptiles.

resurrection ~ when someone comes back to life after death; when someone rises from death to life.

righteous ~ very good (only God is really righteous).

riot ~ when an angry crowd complain about something. They make lots of noise and they sometimes fight.

Roman ~ a person from *Rome; a word that describes someone from *Rome; or it describes something from *Rome. The Roman soldiers fought against people in many countries. And they defeated them. They made the people obey the rules that officials in *Rome made. They made the people pay taxes to *Rome.

Rome ~ the most famous city in the world when Jesus lived on earth.

rope ~ a long narrow piece of strong material that people use to tie things together.

Sabbath ~ the Sabbath was the 7th day in the week. That day was special to the *Jews. On that day, the people had to rest from work (Exodus 20:8-11).

sacrifice ~ when someone kills an animal and he offers it to God (or a false god). In this way, he asks God (or a false god) to forgive him.

Sadducees ~ a certain group of *Jews that did not believe in heaven and *resurrection. This group was important when Jesus lived on earth. They used only the 5 books at the beginning of the *Old Testament.

salvation ~ when God saves us from *sin's results and he saves us from its power; when a person is sorry for his or her wrong behaviour and God forgives the person. And then that person obeys Jesus.

Samaria ~ a region between *Judea and *Galilee.

Samaritan ~ a person from *Samaria.

sandbanks ~ heaps of sand that make shallow places in the sea.

Sanhedrin ~ a special group in Israel that met together to be judges over the people. The priests' leaders were in it. The important *Jews were also in it. And the men that taught

about the *Law were in it. The *high priest led the group.

Satan ~ the name for the worst spirit among the evil *spirits, who are against God. He has another name, which is the Devil. He is God's enemy.

save ~ to rescue from *sin's result.

saviour ~ Jesus, the person who *saves us; the person who will bring us back to God from the bad things that we have done; someone who saves us from the bad things that other people have done to us.

scripture ~ the Bible, the book that contains God's *holy messages; the *Old Testament.

shepherd ~ a person that looks after sheep.

signs ~ these give us an idea that something else exists. Or it will exist. But we cannot see that other thing yet.

sin ~ to *sin is to do wrong, bad or evil things; not to obey God. Sins are the wrong things that we do. We do them against God or against other people.

soul ~ something in a person, the part that we cannot see. It is in us during our life. It lives after we die.

spirit ~ a person's spirit is the part in them that will always be alive. It will be alive even after his or her body is dead. There are good spirits. Those include God's Spirit and his *angels. There are also evil spirits. These include *Satan and his *angels.

spiritual ~ when something belongs to the *spirit; when something belongs to the *spirit rather than to physical things; a word that people use to refer to *holy things.

strangle ~ to squeeze the front of the neck so as to kill.

stubborn ~ when people do not want to change their ideas, even when they are wrong.

synagogue ~ a building where *Jews gathered for prayer. They went there to study the *scriptures. And they went there to attend other public meetings.

temple ~ a building where people *worship God (or a false god).

Temple ~ the *Temple was the special building in *Jerusalem where the *Jews *worshipped God.

throne ~ a special chair that a king or ruler sits on.

trial ~ a legal examination in which a person answers questions. Then the judge decides whether the person is guilty of a crime.

tribe ~ a group that contains all the *descendants of one son that Jacob had. Jacob had 12 sons, so there were 12 tribes.

twins ~ two children that were born together from the same mother.

unclean ~ when something is not right to use because God does not accept it.

unleavened ~ unleavened bread is flat. It does not contain anything that would make the bread rise.

vision ~ a dream; sometimes a dream that comes to a person when he or she is awake.

will (as God's will) ~ what God wants to happen; a command or direction from God to a person to act in a certain way; God's plan for a human life. This plan may be different from the person's own desires.

worm ~ a long thin animal without legs. Worms can live inside a person. They can live in the part where food passes through.

worship ~ to give honour to God with *praise and thanks.

worshipper ~ someone who *worships.

Book List

P. & D. Alexander (editors) ~ The New Lion Handbook to the Bible (Third edition) ~ Lion Publishing plc

P. Alexander (editor) ~ The Lion Encyclopaedia of the Bible ~ Lion Publishing plc

W. Barclay ~ The Acts of the *Apostles ~ The St Andrew Press

E. M. Blaiklock ~ Tyndale New Testament Commentary on The Acts of the *Apostles ~ Inter-Varsity Press

F. F. Bruce ~ The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Book of the Acts (revised) ~ Eerdmans

S. Gaukroger ~ Discovering Acts ~ Crossway

D. Guthrie & J. A. Motyer (editors) ~ New Bible Commentary (Third edition) ~ Inter-Varsity Press

A. E. Harvey ~ The New English Bible
Companion to the New Testament ~ Oxford
University Press & Cambridge University
Press

C. H. Rieu ~ The Acts of the *Apostles ~
Penguin

J. R. W. Stott ~ The Message of Acts ~ Inter-
Varsity Press

M. C. Tenney ~ The Zondervan Pictorial Bible
Dictionary ~ Zondervan

D. J. Williams ~ New International Biblical
Commentary, Acts ~ Paternoster Press

R. R. Williams ~ Acts of the *Apostles ~ SCM
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Dictionaries ~ Oxford Compact, Concise
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Bibles ~ NIV, RSV, NEB, CEV, The Good News
Bible, J B Phillips New Testament in Modern
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Richmond Lattimore (Greek scholar)
