**The Book of Acts**

**Eastertide, 2018**

**Passages for Discussion**

**Chapters 1-4**

**1:1-11**

**The Promise of the Holy Spirit & The Ascension of Jesus**

1In the first book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus did and taught from the beginning 2until the day when he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. 3After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over the course of forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. 4While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. ‘This’, he said, ‘is what you have heard from me;5for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’

**The Ascension of Jesus**

6 So when they had come together, they asked him, ‘Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?’ 7He replied, ‘It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. 8But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’ 9When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight.10While he was going and they were gazing up towards heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. 11They said, ‘Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up towards heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.’

**1:21-26 The choosing of Matthias**

21So one of the men who have accompanied us throughout the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us—one of these must become a witness with us to his resurrection.’ 23So they proposed two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also known as Justus, and Matthias.24Then they prayed and said, ‘Lord, you know everyone’s heart. Show us which one of these two you have chosen 25to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.’ 26And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias; and he was added to the eleven apostles.

**2:1-13**

**The Coming of the Holy Spirit**

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. 2And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.3Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. 4All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

5 Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. 6And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each.7Amazed and astonished, they asked, ‘Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language? 9Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, 10Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, 11Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God’s deeds of power.’ 12All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, ‘What does this mean?’ 13But others sneered and said, ‘They are filled with new wine.’

**2:14-36: Peter’s first Sermon**

14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them: ‘Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. 15Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. 16No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

17 “In the last days it will be, God declares,  
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,  
   and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
and your young men shall see visions,  
   and your old men shall dream dreams.   
18 Even upon my slaves, both men and women,  
   in those days I will pour out my Spirit;  
     and they shall prophesy.   
19 And I will show portents in the heaven above  
   and signs on the earth below,  
     blood, and fire, and smoky mist.   
20 The sun shall be turned to darkness  
   and the moon to blood,  
     before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day.   
21 Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

22 ‘You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know— 23this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. 24But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. 25For David says concerning him,

“I saw the Lord always before me,  
   for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken;   
26 therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;  
   moreover, my flesh will live in hope.   
27 For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,  
   or let your Holy One experience corruption.   
28 You have made known to me the ways of life;  
   you will make me full of gladness with your presence.”

29 ‘Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.30Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne. 31Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying,

“He was not abandoned to Hades,  
   nor did his flesh experience corruption.”

32This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. 33Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear. 34For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says,

“The Lord said to my Lord,  
‘Sit at my right hand,   
35   until I make your enemies your footstool.’ ”

36Therefore let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified.’

**2:42-47 A Description of the Community**

42They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. 44All who believed were together and had all things in common; 45they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, 47praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

**3:12-25 Peter’s Second Sermon**

12When Peter saw it, he addressed the people, ‘You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk? 13The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. 14But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, 15and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. 16And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you.

17 ‘And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. 18In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer. 19Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out, 20so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah appointed for you, that is, Jesus, 21who must remain in heaven until the time of universal restoration that God announced long ago through his holy prophets. 22Moses said, “The Lord your God will raise up for you from your own people a prophet like me. You must listen to whatever he tells you. 23And it will be that everyone who does not listen to that prophet will be utterly rooted out from the people.” 24And all the prophets, as many as have spoken, from Samuel and those after him, also predicted these days. 25You are the descendants of the prophets and of the covenant that God gave to your ancestors, saying to Abraham, “And in your descendants all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

**4:8-12 Peter’s speech before the Council**

8Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers of the people and elders, 9if we are questioned today because of a good deed done to someone who was sick and are asked how this man has been healed, 10let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead. 11This Jesus is “the stone that was rejected by you, the builders;    it has become the cornerstone.”   
12There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved.’

**Chapters 5-9**

**5:1-11 Ananias and Sapphira**

1But a man named Ananias, with the consent of his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property; 2with his wife’s knowledge, he kept back some of the proceeds, and brought only a part and laid it at the apostles’ feet.3‘Ananias,’ Peter asked, ‘why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land? 4While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, were not the proceeds at your disposal? How is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You did not lie to us but to God!’ 5Now when Ananias heard these words, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard of it. 6The young men came and wrapped up his body, then carried him out and buried him.

7 After an interval of about three hours his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8Peter said to her, ‘Tell me whether you and your husband sold the land for such and such a price.’ And she said, ‘Yes, that was the price.’ 9Then Peter said to her, ‘How is it that you have agreed together to put the Spirit of the Lord to the test? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out.’ 10Immediately she fell down at his feet and died. When the young men came in they found her dead, so they carried her out and buried her beside her husband. 11And great fear seized the whole church and all who heard of these things.

**5:27-32 Peter and John’s Creedal Statement**

27 When they had brought them, they had them stand before the council. The high priest questioned them, 28saying, ‘We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you are determined to bring this man’s blood on us.’ 29But Peter and the apostles answered, ‘We must obey God rather than any human authority. 30The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. 31God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, so that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him.’

**6:1-7 The Selection of Deacons**

1Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. 2And the twelve called together the whole community of the disciples and said, ‘It is not right that we should neglect the word of God in order to wait at tables.3Therefore, friends, select from among yourselves seven men of good standing, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this task, 4while we, for our part, will devote ourselves to prayer and to serving the word.’ 5What they said pleased the whole community, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, together with Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. 6They had these men stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

7 The word of God continued to spread; the number of the disciples increased greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

**7:2-53 Stephen’s Speech: The History of Israel**

2‘Brothers and fathers, listen to me. The God of glory appeared to our ancestor Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, 3and said to him, “Leave your country and your relatives and go to the land that I will show you.” 4Then he left the country of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After his father died, God had him move from there to this country in which you are now living. 5He did not give him any of it as a heritage, not even a foot’s length, but promised to give it to him as his possession and to his descendants after him, even though he had no child. 6And God spoke in these terms, that his descendants would be resident aliens in a country belonging to others, who would enslave them and maltreat them for four hundred years. 7“But I will judge the nation that they serve,” said God, “and after that they shall come out and worship me in this place.” 8Then he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so Abraham became the father of Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs.

9 ‘The patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him, 10and rescued him from all his afflictions, and enabled him to win favour and to show wisdom when he stood before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who appointed him ruler over Egypt and over all his household.11Now there came a famine throughout Egypt and Canaan, and great suffering, and our ancestors could find no food. 12But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our ancestors there on their first visit. 13On the second visit Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph’s family became known to Pharaoh. 14Then Joseph sent and invited his father Jacob and all his relatives to come to him, seventy-five in all; 15so Jacob went down to Egypt. He himself died there as well as our ancestors, 16and their bodies were brought back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham had bought for a sum of silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

17 ‘But as the time drew near for the fulfilment of the promise that God had made to Abraham, our people in Egypt increased and multiplied18until another king who had not known Joseph ruled over Egypt. 19He dealt craftily with our race and forced our ancestors to abandon their infants so that they would die. 20At this time Moses was born, and he was beautiful before God. For three months he was brought up in his father’s house; 21and when he was abandoned, Pharaoh’s daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son. 22So Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in his words and deeds.

23 ‘When he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his relatives, the Israelites. 24When he saw one of them being wronged, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking down the Egyptian. 25He supposed that his kinsfolk would understand that God through him was rescuing them, but they did not understand. 26The next day he came to some of them as they were quarrelling and tried to reconcile them, saying, “Men, you are brothers; why do you wrong each other?” 27But the man who was wronging his neighbour pushed Mosesaside, saying, “Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? 28Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?” 29When he heard this, Moses fled and became a resident alien in the land of Midian. There he became the father of two sons.

30 ‘Now when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in the flame of a burning bush. 31When Moses saw it, he was amazed at the sight; and as he approached to look, there came the voice of the Lord: 32“I am the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.” Moses began to tremble and did not dare to look. 33Then the Lord said to him, “Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. 34I have surely seen the mistreatment of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their groaning, and I have come down to rescue them. Come now, I will send you to Egypt.”

35 ‘It was this Moses whom they rejected when they said, “Who made you a ruler and a judge?” and whom God now sent as both ruler and liberator through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. 36He led them out, having performed wonders and signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness for forty years. 37This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, “God will raise up a prophet for you from your own people as he raised me up.” 38He is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our ancestors; and he received living oracles to give to us. 39Our ancestors were unwilling to obey him; instead, they pushed him aside, and in their hearts they turned back to Egypt, 40saying to Aaron, “Make gods for us who will lead the way for us; as for this Moses who led us out from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him.” 41At that time they made a calf, offered a sacrifice to the idol, and revelled in the works of their hands. 42But God turned away from them and handed them over to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets:  
“Did you offer to me slain victims and sacrifices  
   for forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?   
43 No; you took along the tent of Moloch,  
   and the star of your god Rephan,  
     the images that you made to worship;  
so I will remove you beyond Babylon.”

44 ‘Our ancestors had the tent of testimony in the wilderness, as Goddirected when he spoke to Moses, ordering him to make it according to the pattern he had seen. 45Our ancestors in turn brought it in with Joshua when they dispossessed the nations that God drove out before our ancestors. And it was there until the time of David, 46who found favour with God and asked that he might find a dwelling-place for the house of Jacob. 47But it was Solomon who built a house for him. 48Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands; as the prophet says,   
49 “Heaven is my throne,  
   and the earth is my footstool.  
What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord,  
   or what is the place of my rest?   
50 Did not my hand make all these things?”

51 ‘You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you are for ever opposing the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors used to do. 52Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute? They killed those who foretold the coming of the Righteous One, and now you have become his betrayers and murderers. 53You are the ones that received the law as ordained by angels, and yet you have not kept it.’

**7:54-60 The Stoning of Stephen**

When they heard these things, they became enraged and ground their teeth at Stephen. 55But filled with the Holy Spirit, he gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.56‘Look,’ he said, ‘I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!’ 57But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. 58Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ 60Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them.’ When he had said this, he died.

**8: 26-40 Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch**

26 Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, ‘Get up and go towards the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.’ (This is a wilderness road.) 27So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship 28and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah.29Then the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go over to this chariot and join it.’ 30So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ 31He replied, ‘How can I, unless someone guides me?’ And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. 32Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:  
‘Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,  
   and like a lamb silent before its shearer,  
     so he does not open his mouth.   
33 In his humiliation justice was denied him.  
   Who can describe his generation?  
     For his life is taken away from the earth.’   
34The eunuch asked Philip, ‘About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?’ 35Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. 36As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, ‘Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?’ 38He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. 39When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. 40But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

**9:1-19 The Conversion of Saul**

9Meanwhile Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest 2and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. 3Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. 4He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’ 5He asked, ‘Who are you, Lord?’ The reply came, ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.6But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.’7The men who were travelling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. 8Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. 9For three days he was without sight, and neither ate nor drank.

10 Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, ‘Ananias.’ He answered, ‘Here I am, Lord.’ 11The Lord said to him, ‘Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, 12and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.’ 13But Ananias answered, ‘Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem; 14and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name.’ 15But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before Gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; 16I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.’17So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, ‘Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.’ 18And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, 19and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

**9:36-41 Raising of Tabitha in Joppa**

36 Now in Joppa there was a disciple whose name was Tabitha, which in Greek is Dorcas. She was devoted to good works and acts of charity. 37At that time she became ill and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in a room upstairs. 38Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, who heard that Peter was there, sent two men to him with the request, ‘Please come to us without delay.’ 39So Peter got up and went with them; and when he arrived, they took him to the room upstairs. All the widows stood beside him, weeping and showing tunics and other clothing that Dorcas had made while she was with them. 40Peter put all of them outside, and then he knelt down and prayed. He turned to the body and said, ‘Tabitha, get up.’ Then she opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. 41He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive.

**Chapters 10-12**

**10:34-43 The Gentiles receive the Holy Spirit**

34 Then Peter began to speak to them: ‘I truly understand that God shows no partiality, 35but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. 36You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all.37That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: 38how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. 39We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; 40but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, 41not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. 43All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.’ 44 While Peter was still speaking, the Holy Spirit fell upon all who heard the word. 45The circumcised believers who had come with Peter were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out even on the Gentiles, 46for they heard them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter said, 47‘Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’ 48So he ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they invited him to stay for several days.

**11:1-1-18 Peter’s speech to the Jerusalem believers**

Now the apostles and the believers who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also accepted the word of God. 2So when Peter went up to Jerusalem, the circumcised believers criticized him, 3saying, ‘Why did you go to uncircumcised men and eat with them?’ 4Then Peter began to explain it to them, step by step, saying, 5‘I was in the city of Joppa praying, and in a trance I saw a vision. There was something like a large sheet coming down from heaven, being lowered by its four corners; and it came close to me. 6As I looked at it closely I saw four-footed animals, beasts of prey, reptiles, and birds of the air. 7I also heard a voice saying to me, “Get up, Peter; kill and eat.” 8But I replied, “By no means, Lord; for nothing profane or unclean has ever entered my mouth.” 9But a second time the voice answered from heaven, “What God has made clean, you must not call profane.” 10This happened three times; then everything was pulled up again to heaven. 11At that very moment three men, sent to me from Caesarea, arrived at the house where we were. 12The Spirit told me to go with them and not to make a distinction between them and us. These six brothers also accompanied me, and we entered the man’s house. 13He told us how he had seen the angel standing in his house and saying, “Send to Joppa and bring Simon, who is called Peter; 14he will give you a message by which you and your entire household will be saved.” 15And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them just as it had upon us at the beginning. 16And I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, “John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” 17If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?’ 18When they heard this, they were silenced. And they praised God, saying, ‘Then God has given even to the Gentiles the repentance that leads to life.’

**11:22-30 The growth of the church in Antioch**

News of this [the growth of church in Antioch] came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he came and saw the grace of God, he rejoiced, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast devotion; for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were brought to the Lord. Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for an entire year they associated with the church and taught a great many people, and **it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called ‘Christians’.**

 At that time prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. One of them named Agabus stood up and predicted by the Spirit that there would be a severe famine over all the world; and this took place during the reign of Claudius. The disciples determined that according to their ability, each would send relief to the believers living in Judea; this they did, sending it to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

**12:1-16 Peter’s imprisonment and escape**

About that time King Herod laid violent hands upon some who belonged to the church. 2He had James, the brother of John, killed with the sword. 3After he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. (This was during the festival of Unleavened Bread.)4When he had seized him, he put him in prison and handed him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending to bring him out to the people after the Passover. 5While Peter was kept in prison, the church prayed fervently to God for him.

**Peter Delivered from Prison**

6 The very night before Herod was going to bring him out, Peter, bound with two chains, was sleeping between two soldiers, while guards in front of the door were keeping watch over the prison. 7Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He tapped Peter on the side and woke him, saying, ‘Get up quickly.’ And the chains fell off his wrists. 8The angel said to him, ‘Fasten your belt and put on your sandals.’ He did so. Then he said to him, ‘Wrap your cloak around you and follow me.’ 9Peter went out and followed him; he did not realize that what was happening with the angel’s help was real; he thought he was seeing a vision. 10After they had passed the first and the second guard, they came before the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went outside and walked along a lane, when suddenly the angel left him. 11Then Peter came to himself and said, ‘Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hands of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting.’

12 As soon as he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many had gathered and were praying. 13When he knocked at the outer gate, a maid named Rhoda came to answer. 14On recognizing Peter’s voice, she was so overjoyed that, instead of opening the gate, she ran in and announced that Peter was standing at the gate. 15They said to her, ‘You are out of your mind!’ But she insisted that it was so. They said, ‘It is his angel.’ 16Meanwhile, Peter continued knocking; and when they opened the gate, they saw him and were amazed.

**12:20-23 The Death of Herod Agrippa**

20 Now Herod was angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon. So they came to him in a body; and after winning over Blastus, the king’s chamberlain, they asked for a reconciliation, because their country depended on the king’s country for food. 21On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat on the platform, and delivered a public address to them. 22The people kept shouting, ‘The voice of a god, and not of a mortal!’ 23And immediately, because he had not given the glory to God, an angel of the Lord struck him down, and he was eaten by worms and died.

**Chapters 13-15**

**13:16-41 Paul’s Sermon at Antioch**

16So Paul stood up and with a gesture began to speak:

‘You Israelites, and others who fear God, listen. 17The God of this people Israel chose our ancestors and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. 18For about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness. 19After he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance 20for about four hundred and fifty years. After that he gave them judges until the time of the prophet Samuel. 21Then they asked for a king; and God gave them Saul son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, who reigned for forty years. 22When he had removed him, he made David their king. In his testimony about him he said, “I have found David, son of Jesse, to be a man after my heart, who will carry out all my wishes.” 23Of this man’s posterity God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised; 24before his coming John had already proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel. 25And as John was finishing his work, he said, “What do you suppose that I am? I am not he. No, but one is coming after me; I am not worthy to untie the thong of the sandals on his feet.”

26 ‘My brothers, you descendants of Abraham’s family, and others who fear God, to us the message of this salvation has been sent. 27Because the residents of Jerusalem and their leaders did not recognize him or understand the words of the prophets that are read every sabbath, they fulfilled those words by condemning him. 28Even though they found no cause for a sentence of death, they asked Pilate to have him killed.29When they had carried out everything that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. 30But God raised him from the dead; 31and for many days he appeared to those who came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, and they are now his witnesses to the people. 32And we bring you the good news that what God promised to our ancestors 33he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm,  
“You are my Son;  today I have begotten you.” 34As to his raising him from the dead, no more to return to corruption, he has spoken in this way,  
“I will give you the holy promises made to David.” 35Therefore he has also said in another psalm, “You will not let your Holy One experience corruption.”   
36For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, died, was laid beside his ancestors, and experienced corruption; 37but he whom God raised up experienced no corruption.38Let it be known to you therefore, my brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you; 39by this Jesus everyone who believes is set free from all those sins from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses. 40Beware, therefore, that what the prophets said does not happen to you:   
41 “Look, you scoffers!    Be amazed and perish, for in your days I am doing a work,  
   a work that you will never believe, even if someone tells you.”’

**14:1-7 Divisions and Growth of The Way**

The same thing occurred in Iconium, where Paul and Barnabas went into the Jewish synagogue and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Jews and Greeks became believers. 2But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brothers. 3So they remained for a long time, speaking boldly for the Lord, who testified to the word of his grace by granting signs and wonders to be done through them. 4But the residents of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, and some with the apostles. 5And when an attempt was made by both Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to maltreat them and to stone them, 6the apostles learned of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding country; 7and there they continued proclaiming the good news.

**15:1-30 The Jerusalem Council and the Debate about Circumcision**

15Then certain individuals came down from Judea and were teaching the brothers, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.’ 2And after Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them, Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were appointed to go up to Jerusalem to discuss this question with the apostles and the elders. 3So they were sent on their way by the church, and as they passed through both Phoenicia and Samaria, they reported the conversion of the Gentiles, and brought great joy to all the believers. 4When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. 5But some believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and said, ‘It is necessary for them to be circumcised and ordered to keep the law of Moses.’

6 The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter. 7After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, ‘My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers. 8And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; 9and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us. 10Now therefore why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? 11On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.’

12 The whole assembly kept silence, and listened to Barnabas and Paul as they told of all the signs and wonders that God had done through them among the Gentiles. 13After they finished speaking, James replied, ‘My brothers, listen to me. 14Simeon has related how God first looked favorably on the Gentiles, to take from among them a people for his name. 15This agrees with the words of the prophets, as it is written,   
16 “After this I will return, and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen;  
   from its ruins I will rebuild it, and I will set it up, 17 so that all other peoples may seek the Lord—   even all the Gentiles over whom my name has been called.  
     Thus says the Lord, who has been making these things 18known from long ago.” 19Therefore I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God, 20but we should write to them to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood. 21For in every city, for generations past, Moses has had those who proclaim him, for he has been read aloud every sabbath in the synagogues.’

**The Council’s Letter to Gentile Believers**

22 Then the apostles and the elders, with the consent of the whole church, decided to choose men from among their members and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders among the brothers, 23with the following letter: ‘The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the believers of Gentile origin in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings. 24Since we have heard that certain persons who have gone out from us, though with no instructions from us, have said things to disturb you and have unsettled your minds, 25we have decided unanimously to choose representatives and send them to you, along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. 28For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials: 29that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.’

**Chapters 16-20**

**16:1-15 Paul’s Missionary Journey & the Conversion of Lydia**

Paul went on also to Derbe and to Lystra, where there was a disciple named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer; but his father was a Greek. 2He was well spoken of by the believers in Lystra and Iconium. 3Paul wanted Timothy to accompany him; and he took him and had him circumcised because of the Jews who were in those places, for they all knew that his father was a Greek. 4As they went from town to town, they delivered to them for observance the decisions that had been reached by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem. 5So the churches were strengthened in the faith and increased in numbers daily.

6 They went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. 7When they had come opposite Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them; 8so, passing by Mysia, they went down to Troas. 9During the night Paul had a vision: there stood a man of Macedonia pleading with him and saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’ 10When he had seen the vision, we immediately tried to cross over to Macedonia, being convinced that God had called us to proclaim the good news to them.

11 We set sail from Troas and took a straight course to Samothrace, the following day to Neapolis, 12and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city for some days. 13On the sabbath day we went outside the gate by the river, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down and spoke to the women who had gathered there. 14A certain woman named Lydia, a worshipper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. 15When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, ‘If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my home.’ And she prevailed upon us.

**17:1-9 Paul in Thessalonika**

17After Paul and Silas had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. 2And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three sabbath days argued with them from the scriptures, 3explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, ‘This is the Messiah, Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you.’ 4Some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women. 5But the Jews became jealous, and with the help of some ruffians in the market-places they formed a mob and set the city in an uproar. While they were searching for Paul and Silas to bring them out to the assembly, they attacked Jason’s house. 6When they could not find them, they dragged Jason and some believers before the city authorities, shouting, ‘These people who have been turning the world upside down have come here also, 7and Jason has entertained them as guests. They are all acting contrary to the decrees of the emperor, saying that there is another king named Jesus.’ 8The people and the city officials were disturbed when they heard this, 9and after they had taken bail from Jason and the others, they let them go.

**17:22:31 Paul’s Sermon in Athens**

22 Then Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, ‘Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. 23For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, “To an unknown god.” What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. 24The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, 25nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. 26From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, 27so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. 28For “In him we live and move and have our being”; as even some of your own poets have said, “For we too are his offspring.”   
29Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. 30While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, 31because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.’

**18:1-17 Paul in Corinth**

After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, and, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them, and they worked together—by trade they were tentmakers. Every sabbath he would argue in the synagogue and would try to convince Jews and Greeks.

 When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with proclaiming the word, testifying to the Jews that the Messiah was Jesus. When they opposed and reviled him, in protest he shook the dust from his clothes and said to them, ‘Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.’ Then he left the synagogue and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshipper of God; his house was next door to the synagogue. Crispus, the official of the synagogue, became a believer in the Lord, together with all his household; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul became believers and were baptized. One night the Lord said to Paul in a vision, ‘Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no one will lay a hand on you to harm you, for there are many in this city who are my people.’ He stayed there for a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

 But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal. They said, ‘This man is persuading people to worship God in ways that are contrary to the law.’ Just as Paul was about to speak, Gallio said to the Jews, ‘If it were a matter of crime or serious villainy, I would be justified in accepting the complaint of you Jews; but since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves; I do not wish to be a judge of these matters.’ And he dismissed them from the tribunal. Then all of them seized Sosthenes, the official of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to any of these things.

**19:1-20 Paul in Ephesus**

After this Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, and, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them, and they worked together—by trade they were tentmakers. Every sabbath he would argue in the synagogue and would try to convince Jews and Greeks.

 When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with proclaiming the word, testifying to the Jews that the Messiah was Jesus. When they opposed and reviled him, in protest he shook the dust from his clothes and said to them, ‘Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.’ Then he left the synagogue and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshipper of God; his house was next door to the synagogue. Crispus, the official of the synagogue, became a believer in the Lord, together with all his household; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul became believers and were baptized. One night the Lord said to Paul in a vision, ‘Do not be afraid, but speak and do not be silent; for I am with you, and no one will lay a hand on you to harm you, for there are many in this city who are my people.’ He stayed there for a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

 But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal. They said, ‘This man is persuading people to worship God in ways that are contrary to the law.’ Just as Paul was about to speak, Gallio said to the Jews, ‘If it were a matter of crime or serious villainy, I would be justified in accepting the complaint of you Jews; but since it is a matter of questions about words and names and your own law, see to it yourselves; I do not wish to be a judge of these matters.’ And he dismissed them from the tribunal. Then all of them seized Sosthenes, the official of the synagogue, and beat him in front of the tribunal. But Gallio paid no attention to any of these things.

**20:18-35 Paul’s farewell to the leaders of Ephesus**

18When they came to him, he said to them:

‘You yourselves know how I lived among you the entire time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, 19serving the Lord with all humility and with tears, enduring the trials that came to me through the plots of the Jews. 20I did not shrink from doing anything helpful, proclaiming the message to you and teaching you publicly and from house to house, 21as I testified to both Jews and Greeks about repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus. 22And now, as a captive to the Spirit, I am on my way to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there,23except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and persecutions are waiting for me. 24But I do not count my life of any value to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the good news of God’s grace.

25 ‘And now I know that none of you, among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom, will ever see my face again. 26Therefore I declare to you this day that I am not responsible for the blood of any of you, 27for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole purpose of God. 28Keep watch over yourselves and over all the flock, of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son. 29I know that after I have gone, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock.30Some even from your own group will come distorting the truth in order to entice the disciples to follow them. 31Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to warn everyone with tears. 32And now I commend you to God and to the message of his grace, a message that is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all who are sanctified. 33I coveted no one’s silver or gold or clothing. 34You know for yourselves that I worked with my own hands to support myself and my companions. 35In all this I have given you an example that by such work we must support the weak, remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, for he himself said, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

**Chapters 21-28**

**Chapter 21**: Paul’s Journey to Jerusalem

**21:17-26**

17 When we arrived in Jerusalem, the brothers welcomed us warmly. 18The next day Paul went with us to visit James; and all the elders were present. 19After greeting them, he related one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. 20When they heard it, they praised God. Then they said to him, ‘You see, brother, how many thousands of believers there are among the Jews, and they are all zealous for the law. 21They have been told about you that you teach all the Jews living among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, and that you tell them not to circumcise their children or observe the customs. 22What then is to be done? They will certainly hear that you have come. 23So do what we tell you. We have four men who are under a vow. 24Join these men, go through the rite of purification with them, and pay for the shaving of their heads. Thus all will know that there is nothing in what they have been told about you, but that you yourself observe and guard the law. 25But as for the Gentiles who have become believers, we have sent a letter with our judgement that they should abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication.’ 26Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having purified himself, he entered the temple with them, making public the completion of the days of purification when the sacrifice would be made for each of them.

**22:1-29 Paul’s sppech to the Roman Commander Claudius**

‘Brothers and fathers, listen to the defense that I now make before you.’

2 When they heard him addressing them in Hebrew, they became even more quiet. Then he said:

3 ‘I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated strictly according to our ancestral law, being zealous for God, just as all of you are today. 4I persecuted this Way up to the point of death by binding both men and women and putting them in prison, 5as the high priest and the whole council of elders can testify about me. From them I also received letters to the brothers in Damascus, and I went there in order to bind those who were there and to bring them back to Jerusalem for punishment.

6 ‘While I was on my way and approaching Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone about me. 7I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” 8I answered, “Who are you, Lord?” Then he said to me, “I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you are persecuting.” 9Now those who were with me saw the light but did not hear the voice of the one who was speaking to me. 10I asked, “What am I to do, Lord?” The Lord said to me, “Get up and go to Damascus; there you will be told everything that has been assigned to you to do.” 11Since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, those who were with me took my hand and led me to Damascus.

12 ‘A certain Ananias, who was a devout man according to the law and well spoken of by all the Jews living there, 13came to me; and standing beside me, he said, “Brother Saul, regain your sight!” In that very hour I regained my sight and saw him. 14Then he said, “The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear his own voice; 15for you will be his witness to all the world of what you have seen and heard. 16And now why do you delay? Get up, be baptized, and have your sins washed away, calling on his name.”

17 ‘After I had returned to Jerusalem and while I was praying in the temple, I fell into a trance 18and saw Jesus saying to me, “Hurry and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.” 19And I said, “Lord, they themselves know that in every synagogue I imprisoned and beat those who believed in you. 20And while the blood of your witness Stephen was shed, I myself was standing by, approving and keeping the coats of those who killed him.” 21Then he said to me, “Go, for I will send you far away to the Gentiles.”’

22 Up to this point they listened to him, but then they shouted, ‘Away with such a fellow from the earth! For he should not be allowed to live.’ 23And while they were shouting, throwing off their cloaks, and tossing dust into the air, 24the tribune directed that he was to be brought into the barracks, and ordered him to be examined by flogging, to find out the reason for this outcry against him. 25But when they had tied him up with thongs, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, ‘Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who is uncondemned?’ 26When the centurion heard that, he went to the tribune and said to him, ‘What are you about to do? This man is a Roman citizen.’ 27The tribune came and asked Paul, ‘Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?’ And he said, ‘Yes.’ 28The tribune answered, ‘It cost me a large sum of money to get my citizenship.’ Paul said, ‘But I was born a citizen.’ 29Immediately those who were about to examine him drew back from him; and the tribune also was afraid, for he realized that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had bound him.

**23:1-10 Paul’s Defense before the Jewish Council**

While Paul was looking intently at the council he said, ‘Brothers, up to this day I have lived my life with a clear conscience before God.’ 2Then the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near him to strike him on the mouth. 3At this Paul said to him, ‘God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! Are you sitting there to judge me according to the law, and yet in violation of the law you order me to be struck?’ 4Those standing nearby said, ‘Do you dare to insult God’s high priest?’ 5And Paul said, ‘I did not realize, brothers, that he was high priest; for it is written, “You shall not speak evil of a leader of your people.” ’

6 When Paul noticed that some were Sadducees and others were Pharisees, he called out in the council, ‘Brothers, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees. I am on trial concerning the hope of the resurrection of the dead.’ 7When he said this, a dissension began between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. 8(The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, or angel, or spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge all three.) 9Then a great clamour arose, and certain scribes of the Pharisees’ group stood up and contended, ‘We find nothing wrong with this man. What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?’ 10When the dissension became violent, the tribune, fearing that they would tear Paul to pieces, ordered the soldiers to go down, take him by force, and bring him into the barracks.

**24:1-23 Paul’s speech in Caesarea before the Roman Governor Felix, high priest Ananais, and Jewish prosecutors**

Five days later the high priest Ananias came down with some elders and an attorney, a certain Tertullus, and they reported their case against Paul to the governor. 2When Paul had been summoned, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying:

‘Your Excellency, because of you we have long enjoyed peace, and reforms have been made for this people because of your foresight. 3We welcome this in every way and everywhere with utmost gratitude. 4But, to detain you no further, I beg you to hear us briefly with your customary graciousness. 5We have, in fact, found this man a pestilent fellow, an agitator among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes. 6He even tried to profane the temple, and so we seized him. 8By examining him yourself you will be able to learn from him concerning everything of which we accuse him.’

9 The Jews also joined in the charge by asserting that all this was true.

**Paul’s Defence before Felix**

10 When the governor motioned to him to speak, Paul replied:

‘I cheerfully make my defence, knowing that for many years you have been a judge over this nation. 11As you can find out, it is not more than twelve days since I went up to worship in Jerusalem. 12They did not find me disputing with anyone in the temple or stirring up a crowd either in the synagogues or throughout the city. 13Neither can they prove to you the charge that they now bring against me. 14But this I admit to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our ancestors, believing everything laid down according to the law or written in the prophets. 15I have a hope in God—a hope that they themselves also accept—that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous. 16Therefore I do my best always to have a clear conscience towards God and all people. 17Now after some years I came to bring alms to my nation and to offer sacrifices. 18While I was doing this, they found me in the temple, completing the rite of purification, without any crowd or disturbance. 19But there were some Jews from Asia—they ought to be here before you to make an accusation, if they have anything against me. 20Or let these men here tell what crime they had found when I stood before the council, 21unless it was this one sentence that I called out while standing before them, “It is about the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today.” ’

22 But Felix, who was rather well informed about the Way, adjourned the hearing with the comment, ‘When Lysias the tribune comes down, I will decide your case.’ 23Then he ordered the centurion to keep him in custody, but to let him have some liberty and not to prevent any of his friends from taking care of his needs.

**Acts 25:1-12 Paul’s speech before the Roman Governor Porcius Festus and Jewish priests in Caesarea**

Three days after Festus had arrived in the province, he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem 2where the chief priests and the leaders of the Jews gave him a report against Paul. They appealed to him 3and requested, as a favor to them against Paul, to have him transferred to Jerusalem. They were, in fact, planning an ambush to kill him along the way. 4Festus replied that Paul was being kept at Caesarea, and that he himself intended to go there shortly. 5‘So’, he said, ‘let those of you who have the authority come down with me, and if there is anything wrong about the man, let them accuse him.’

6 After he had stayed among them for not more than eight or ten days, he went down to Caesarea; the next day he took his seat on the tribunal and ordered Paul to be brought. 7When he arrived, the Jews who had gone down from Jerusalem surrounded him, bringing many serious charges against him, which they could not prove. 8Paul said in his defense, ‘I have in no way committed an offence against the law of the Jews, or against the temple, or against the emperor.’ 9But Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favur, asked Paul, ‘Do you wish to go up to Jerusalem and be tried there before me on these charges?’ 10Paul said, ‘I am appealing to the emperor’s tribunal; this is where I should be tried. I have done no wrong to the Jews, as you very well know. 11Now if I am in the wrong and have committed something for which I deserve to die, I am not trying to escape death; but if there is nothing to their charges against me, no one can turn me over to them. I appeal to the emperor.’ 12Then Festus, after he had conferred with his council, replied, ‘You have appealed to the emperor; to the emperor you will go.’

**Acts 23-26:32 Paul’s speech before King Agrippa II**

3 So on the next day Agrippa and Bernice came with great pomp, and they entered the audience hall with the military tribunes and the prominent men of the city. Then Festus gave the order and Paul was brought in. 24And Festus said, ‘King Agrippa and all here present with us, you see this man about whom the whole Jewish community petitioned me, both in Jerusalem and here, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. 25But I found that he had done nothing deserving death; and when he appealed to his Imperial Majesty, I decided to send him. 26But I have nothing definite to write to our sovereign about him. Therefore I have brought him before all of you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that, after we have examined him, I may have something to write— 27for it seems to me unreasonable to send a prisoner without indicating the charges against him.’

**Paul Defends Himself before Agrippa**

26Agrippa said to Paul, ‘You have permission to speak for yourself.’ Then Paul stretched out his hand and began to defend himself:

2 ‘I consider myself fortunate that it is before you, King Agrippa, I am to make my defence today against all the accusations of the Jews, 3because you are especially familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews; therefore I beg of you to listen to me patiently.

4 ‘All the Jews know my way of life from my youth, a life spent from the beginning among my own people and in Jerusalem. 5They have known for a long time, if they are willing to testify, that I have belonged to the strictest sect of our religion and lived as a Pharisee. 6And now I stand here on trial on account of my hope in the promise made by God to our ancestors, 7a promise that our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly worship day and night. It is for this hope, your Excellency, that I am accused by Jews! 8Why is it thought incredible by any of you that God raises the dead?

9 ‘Indeed, I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10And that is what I did in Jerusalem; with authority received from the chief priests, I not only locked up many of the saints in prison, but I also cast my vote against them when they were being condemned to death. 11By punishing them often in all the synagogues I tried to force them to blaspheme; and since I was so furiously enraged at them, I pursued them even to foreign cities.

**Paul Tells of His Conversion**

12 ‘With this in mind, I was travelling to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, 13when at midday along the road, your Excellency, I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and my companions. 14When we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It hurts you to kick against the goads.” 15I asked, “Who are you, Lord?” The Lord answered, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. 16But get up and stand on your feet; for I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you to serve and testify to the things in which you have seen me and to those in which I will appear to you. 17I will rescue you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you 18to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”

**Paul Tells of His Preaching**

19 ‘After that, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, 20but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout the countryside of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God and do deeds consistent with repentance. 21For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me. 22To this day I have had help from God, and so I stand here, testifying to both small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would take place: 23that the Messiah must suffer, and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.’

**Paul Appeals to Agrippa to Believe**

24 While he was making this defence, Festus exclaimed, ‘You are out of your mind, Paul! Too much learning is driving you insane!’ 25But Paul said, ‘I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking the sober truth. 26Indeed the king knows about these things, and to him I speak freely; for I am certain that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this was not done in a corner. 27King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.’ 28Agrippa said to Paul, ‘Are you so quickly persuading me to become a Christian?’ 29Paul replied, ‘Whether quickly or not, I pray to God that not only you but also all who are listening to me today might become such as I am—except for these chains.’

30 Then the king got up, and with him the governor and Bernice and those who had been seated with them; 31and as they were leaving, they said to one another, ‘This man is doing nothing to deserve death or imprisonment.’ 32Agrippa said to Festus, ‘This man could have been set free if he had not appealed to the emperor.’

**Acts 27:1-12 Paul begins his final journey to Rome**

When it was decided that we were to sail for Italy, they transferred Paul and some other prisoners to a centurion of the Augustan Cohort, named Julius. Embarking on a ship of Adramyttium that was about to set sail to the ports along the coast of Asia, we put to sea, accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica. The next day we put in at Sidon; and Julius treated Paul kindly, and allowed him to go to his friends to be cared for. Putting out to sea from there, we sailed under the lee of Cyprus, because the winds were against us. After we had sailed across the sea that is off Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra in Lycia. There the centurion found an Alexandrian ship bound for Italy and put us on board. We sailed slowly for a number of days and arrived with difficulty off Cnidus, and as the wind was against us, we sailed under the lee of Crete off Salmone. Sailing past it with difficulty, we came to a place called Fair Havens, near the city of Lasea.

 Since much time had been lost and sailing was now dangerous, because even the Fast had already gone by, Paul advised them, saying, ‘Sirs, I can see that the voyage will be with danger and much heavy loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives.’ But the centurion paid more attention to the pilot and to the owner of the ship than to what Paul said. Since the harbour was not suitable for spending the winter, the majority was in favour of putting to sea from there, on the chance that somehow they could reach Phoenix, where they could spend the winter. It was a harbour of Crete, facing south-west and north-west.

**28:17-27 Paul Preaches in Rome**

17 Three days later he called together the local leaders of the Jews. When they had assembled, he said to them, ‘Brothers, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our ancestors, yet I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. 18When they had examined me, the Romans wanted to release me, because there was no reason for the death penalty in my case. 19But when the Jews objected, I was compelled to appeal to the emperor—even though I had no charge to bring against my nation. 20For this reason therefore I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is for the sake of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain.’ 21They replied, ‘We have received no letters from Judea about you, and none of the brothers coming here has reported or spoken anything evil about you. 22But we would like to hear from you what you think, for with regard to this sect we know that everywhere it is spoken against.’

**Paul Preaches in Rome**

23 After they had fixed a day to meet him, they came to him at his lodgings in great numbers. From morning until evening he explained the matter to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the law of Moses and from the prophets. 24Some were convinced by what he had said, while others refused to believe. 25So they disagreed with each other; and as they were leaving, Paul made one further statement: ‘The Holy Spirit was right in saying to your ancestors through the prophet Isaiah,   
26 “Go to this people and say,  
You will indeed listen, but never understand,  
   and you will indeed look, but never perceive.   
27 For this people’s heart has grown dull,  
   and their ears are hard of hearing,  
     and they have shut their eyes;  
     so that they might not look with their eyes,  
   and listen with their ears,  
and understand with their heart and turn—  
   and I would heal them.”   
28Let it be known to you then that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen.’