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**Acts**

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# Acts

## Chapter 1

<sup>1</sup>Dear Theophilus,

In the first book that I wrote for you, I told about many of Jesus' actions and teachings. <sup>2</sup>{I told you about those things} up to the moment when God took Jesus up to heaven. Before Jesus went to heaven, he gave instructions to his chosen Representatives as the Holy Spirit guided him. <sup>3</sup>Even though the Romans executed Jesus on a cross, God made him alive again. Jesus then went to his Representatives {and other disciples} and proved to them in many convincing ways that he truly was alive again. He met with them at different times over a period of 40 days. He talked with them about how God would rule the lives of people everywhere.

<sup>4</sup>One time while Jesus was with his disciples, he told them, "I want you to stay here in the city of Jerusalem and wait until God our Father sends his Spirit to you. As I told you, he promised that he would do that. <sup>5</sup>John baptized people in water, but within a few days God is going to baptize you in the Holy Spirit."

<sup>6</sup>One day when the Representatives were meeting together with Jesus, they asked him, "Lord, will you now become our king so that we Israelite people will have our own king once again?" <sup>7</sup>He replied to them, "You do not need to know when that will happen. God my Father alone has decided {when he will make me king}." <sup>8</sup>But when the Holy Spirit comes to you, he will enable you to tell people about me powerfully. You will do this here in the city of Jerusalem. You will do it in the nearby regions of Judea and Samaria. But you will also do it all over the world. <sup>9</sup>After he said that, he started to rise up {into heaven} while they watched. But then a cloud blocked their view so that they could no longer see him.

<sup>10</sup>While they were still staring toward the sky as Jesus was going up, suddenly two angels in human form stood beside them. Their clothes shone brightly. <sup>11</sup>One of the angels said, "You men who come from Galilee, you do not need to look up at the sky any longer! Some day this same Jesus, whom God took from you up into heaven, will come back {to earth}. He will return in the same way that you just now saw him go up to heaven."

<sup>12</sup>Then {after the two angels left}, the Representatives returned to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives, which is a short distance from Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup>After they entered the city, they went into the upstairs room {in the house} where they were staying. Those who were there included Peter, John, James, Andrew, Philip, Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew. They also included another man named James, who was the son of Alphaeus; Simon the Zealot; and Judas, who was the son of yet another man named James. <sup>14</sup>All these men prayed together regularly and frequently. Others who prayed with them included the women who had traveled with Jesus; Mary, who was Jesus' mother; and his younger brothers.

<sup>15</sup>Now about 120 people were meeting together at that place. At one of the meetings, Peter stood up among his fellow believers {because he was going to say something important}. He said, <sup>16</sup>"You who believe as I do, there are words that King David wrote in the Scriptures long ago that had to happen as he said they would. The Holy Spirit, who knew that Judas would show Jesus' enemies where to find him and arrest him, inspired David to write those words. <sup>17</sup>But Jesus had chosen Judas, along with the rest of us, to represent him. {So we need to find someone else to take his place.}"

<sup>18</sup>This is how Judas died. The Jewish leaders gave Judas money for betraying Jesus. He used that money to buy a field{and he went to that field to kill himself because he felt so badly about what he had done to Jesus}. He fell down onto that field from a high place and landed with such force that his abdomen burst open and all his intestines spilled out. <sup>19</sup>The news about this spread widely among the people of Jerusalem. When they heard about

it, they gave that field a new name. In their Aramaic language it was Akeldama, which means "Field of Blood." {They gave it that name because it was where someone had died.}

<sup>20</sup>Peter also said, "What happened to Judas is like what we read in the book of Psalms: 'May his home become empty, with no one living in it.' These other words in the Psalms also refer to him: 'Let someone else take over his work as a leader.'"

<sup>21</sup>"So we need to identify all the men who were with us during the whole time when the Lord Jesus was with us.

<sup>22</sup>{They need to have been with us} from the time when John the Baptizer began his work until the day when Jesus left us and rose up to heaven. One such man must {replace Judas and} join us in telling people about Jesus and how God caused him to live again after he died."

<sup>23</sup>So the people who were meeting together suggested two men who could replace Judas. One man was Joseph the son of Sabbas, who also had the name Justus. The other man was Matthias. <sup>24-25</sup>Then they prayed: "Lord Jesus, Judas stopped representing you as he should have. He has now gone to the place where he deserves to be. You know what every person thinks privately. So please show us which of these two men you have chosen to take the place of Judas as your Representative." <sup>26</sup>Then they cast lots to choose between the two of them. The lot indicated that Matthias was the one to replace Judas. So he became a Representative along with the 11 others.

## Chapter 2

<sup>1</sup>On the day when the Jews were celebrating the Pentecost festival, the believers were all together in one place {in the city of Jerusalem}. <sup>2</sup>Suddenly, they heard a noise coming from the sky that sounded like a wind blowing loudly. Everyone in the entire house where they were sitting heard the noise. <sup>3</sup>Then they saw what looked like burning flames. These flames separated from one another and came to rest on each of the believers. <sup>4</sup>Then all of the believers were filled with the Holy Spirit. They began to speak in languages they had never learned. The Spirit was making it possible for them to do that fluently.

<sup>5</sup>At that time many Jews were staying in Jerusalem {to celebrate the Pentecost festival}. They were Jewish people who sincerely worshiped God. They had come from many different countries around the world. <sup>6</sup>When they heard this loud noise, a large crowd {of these Jews} gathered {at the place where the believers were}. The people in the crowd were amazed because they were each hearing the believers speak in their own languages. <sup>7</sup>They were all completely amazed and they said to each other, "Listen, all these people who are speaking have come from Galilee. {So they cannot possibly know our languages!} <sup>8</sup>But all of us hear them speaking our own native languages! <sup>9</sup>Some of us are people from the regions of Parthia and Media and Elam. Others of us are from the regions of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia. <sup>10</sup>There are some people here from the regions of Phrygia and Pamphylia, from the country of Egypt, and from the regions in Libya that are near the city of Cyrene. There are others of us who are here visiting Jerusalem from Rome. <sup>11</sup>They include native Jews as well as non-Jews who have chosen to believe and practice what Jews believe. And others of us are from the island of Crete and from the region of Arabia. And yet we can hear these people speaking in all our different languages about the mighty works that God has done!" <sup>12</sup>The people wondered {about what was happening} and did not know what to think {about it}. So they asked one another, "What is happening here?" <sup>13</sup>But some of them made fun of what they saw. They said, "{These people are talking like this because} they have drunk too much wine!"

<sup>14</sup>In response, Peter stood up with all the other Representatives and spoke loudly to the crowd of people. He said, "You Jewish people and all of you others who live here in Jerusalem, listen to me and I will explain to you what is happening! <sup>15</sup>Some of you think that we are drunk, but we are not drunk. It is only nine o'clock in the morning, and people here never get drunk at this time of the day! <sup>16</sup>Instead, what has happened to us is the {miraculous} thing that the prophet Joel wrote about {long ago}. He wrote: <sup>17</sup>

'During the last days,' God says, 'I will give my Holy Spirit to all kinds of people. Your sons and daughters will tell people my messages. I will give visions to the young men, and I will give inspired dreams to the old men. <sup>18</sup>During

those days I will give my Holy Spirit to my servants, both men and women, so they can tell people my messages. <sup>19</sup>I will cause things to happen in the sky that will make people marvel. I will cause things to happen on the earth that will show that great events are going to take place. Here on the earth there will be blood, fire, and smoke everywhere. <sup>20</sup>In the sky the sun will appear dark to people and the moon will appear red to them. Those things will happen before the momentous time when I, the Lord God, come to judge everyone. <sup>21</sup>But even though I am coming to judge and punish sin, I will save all those who repent and ask me to forgive their sins.”

<sup>22</sup>{Peter continued speaking. He said,} “You Israelites, listen to me! When Jesus from Nazareth lived among you, God proved to you that he had sent him by enabling him to do many amazing miracles. These showed that he was from God. You yourselves know that this is true. <sup>23</sup>Even though you knew that, you urged people who do not obey God’s law to take action to kill Jesus. They did that by nailing him to a cross. However, God had already planned for that to happen, and he knew what the results would be, so he allowed it. <sup>24</sup>Jesus died, but God caused him to become alive again and no longer dead, because it was not possible for him to stay dead.

<sup>25</sup>Long ago King David wrote what the Messiah said,

‘I knew that you, Lord God, would always be there to protect me. You are right beside me, so I will not be afraid of those who want to harm me. <sup>26</sup>Because of that, I am happy and I joyfully praise you, O God. And I am completely confident {that you will cause me to become alive again after I die}. <sup>27</sup>I am confident because I know that you will not make me remain in the place where the dead are. You will not even let my body waste away, because you have chosen me for a special purpose. <sup>28</sup>You have shown me how to live again. You will make me very happy because you will be with me {forever}.”

<sup>29</sup>{Peter continued,} “You who are Jews like me, I can tell you confidently that our ancient ruler, King David, died and that his subjects buried him. In fact, his body is still here now at the place where they buried him. <sup>30</sup>So we know that King David was not talking about himself in this psalm. Instead, he was a prophet, and he knew that God promised to him that one of his descendants would become king after him. <sup>31</sup>A long time ago, David knew what God would do. He said that God would cause Jesus the Messiah to live again after he died. God would not allow him to remain in a grave. God would not even let him be dead long enough for his body to begin to decompose.

<sup>32</sup>After this man Jesus had died, God made him alive again. All of us who are standing here before you can testify to this. {We all saw him alive after he had died.} <sup>33</sup>So we are not babbling drunkenly. Instead, this is what has happened. God has greatly honored Jesus by giving him a position next to him in heaven. Jesus has received the Holy Spirit from God his Father, just as God promised. And now Jesus has generously given us the Holy Spirit, and God has confirmed that gift by doing this miracle that you are witnessing. <sup>34</sup>We know that David was not speaking about himself, because David did not go up into heaven {as Jesus did}. Besides that, David himself said this about the Messiah:

‘The Lord God said to my Lord the Messiah, “I will honor you by giving you a position next to me <sup>35</sup>while I completely defeat your enemies.””

<sup>36</sup>{Peter ended by saying,} “So I want every Israelite to know definitely that God has made Jesus both Lord and Messiah, this same Jesus whom you had nailed to a cross and killed.”

<sup>37</sup>When the people heard what Peter said, they knew they had done wrong. The people asked him and the other Representatives, “Can you men tell us what God wants us to do?”

<sup>38</sup>Peter answered them, “Each of you should turn away from your sinful behavior. If you now believe in what Jesus, the Messiah, has done for you, we will baptize you, showing that God has forgiven your sins, and he will give you his Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup>You will receive the Holy Spirit because God has promised to give him to you and to your children and to all others whom the God we worship leads to have faith in Jesus. That includes all those who live far away from here.” <sup>40</sup>Peter said many more things and spoke strongly to them. He told them, “Ask God to save you so that he will not punish you when he punishes these evil people {who have rejected Jesus}!”

<sup>41</sup>So the people who believed Peter's message received baptism. There were about 3,000 of them who joined the group of believers that day. <sup>42</sup>They continually obeyed what the Representatives taught. They met many times together with the other believers, and they ate a meal and prayed together every day.

<sup>43</sup>Throughout Jerusalem people came to have a great awe for God, because the Representatives were doing many kinds of miraculous deeds. <sup>44</sup>All of those who believed in Jesus met regularly together. They also kept sharing what they had with one another. <sup>45</sup>From time to time some of them sold some of their land and some of the other things that they owned. They did this so that they could give some of the money they made to other believers. They gave those believers as much as they needed. <sup>46</sup>Every day they kept gathering to worship together in the temple courtyard, and then they would have meals together in their homes. They ate together happily and with genuine affection. <sup>47</sup>As they did so, they kept praising God, and the other people who lived in Jerusalem greatly respected them. {As those things were happening,} every day the Lord Jesus saved more people and those people joined with the other believers.

## Chapter 3

<sup>1</sup>One day Peter and John were going to the temple to pray. It was three o'clock in the afternoon, the time when people prayed there. <sup>2</sup>There was a man there who had not been able to walk from the time he was born. He was sitting by the Beautiful Gate at the entrance to the temple area. People carried him there every day so that he could ask those who were going into the temple area to give him some money.

<sup>3</sup>As Peter and John were approaching that gate, he saw them and asked them to give him some money. <sup>4</sup>When they heard the man speak to them, Peter and John looked directly at him, and Peter said to him, "Look at us!" <sup>5</sup>So he looked directly at them, expecting to get some money from them. <sup>6</sup>Then Peter said to him, "I do not have any money, but I will do what I can do for you. I heal you by the power of Jesus the Messiah, that man who came from the city of Nazareth. So get up and walk!" <sup>7</sup>Then Peter grasped the man's right hand and helped him to stand up. The man realized immediately that his feet and ankles were going to be strong enough to support him. <sup>8</sup>So the man jumped {the rest of the way} up {by himself} and started walking! He went into the temple area with Peter and John, leaping for joy and praising God as he walked!

<sup>9</sup>All the people who were there saw him walking and heard him praising God. <sup>10</sup>They recognized that he was the man who used to sit at the Beautiful Gate that led into the temple area and ask people for money! So all the people there were greatly amazed that he could now walk. <sup>11</sup>The man would not let go of Peter and John. The three of them were in Solomon's Porch{, a covered walkway within the temple area}. As the amazing news of the man's healing spread through the crowd, more and more people came running over to see them.

<sup>12</sup>When Peter saw that a crowd was gathering around them, he said to the people, "You Israelites, it should not surprise you that this man can now walk. But you should not be looking at us as if we were so godly that we made him walk by our own power! <sup>13</sup>{Let me tell you what has really happened.} God made a covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We Israelites are descendants of those men, so the covenant includes us. God honored that covenant by sending Jesus to be the Messiah. {We told this man that the power of Jesus could heal him, and} God has now glorified Jesus by doing this miracle. But when Jesus was living among us, you turned him over to the Romans for trial. Pilate, the Roman governor, {knew that Jesus was innocent and} wanted to set him free. But you gathered in front of Pilate and shouted that he should not release him. <sup>14</sup>Rather than have Pilate release Jesus to you, even though Jesus was the Messiah, you rejected him and asked Pilate to set free a killer instead! <sup>15</sup>So you are responsible for the death of Jesus, the one who gives people life. But God brought him back to life after he died. We can testify that we saw Jesus many times after he became alive again. <sup>16</sup>You recognize this man whom you see standing here. {He is the man who used to beg for alms at the Beautiful Gate.} He is now strong enough to stand on his own because he believed in what Jesus could do. Yes, it is because he trusted in Jesus that he is now completely healthy. All of you saw this happen.

<sup>17</sup>“Now, my countrymen, I know that you and your leaders killed Jesus because you did not know that he was the Messiah. <sup>18</sup>God said through the prophets ahead of time that the Messiah he would send would suffer and die. And now, by what has happened, he has fulfilled what the prophets said. <sup>19</sup>So stop living sinful lives and ask God to help you do what pleases him. Then God will completely forgive you for sinning against him. <sup>20</sup>If you do that, there will be times when you will know that the Lord God is helping you. And some day he will send back to earth the Messiah whom he has given to you. That person is Jesus. <sup>21</sup>Jesus will certainly stay in heaven until the time when God causes all that he created to become new. Long ago God promised to do that, and he chose holy prophets to tell that to people. <sup>22</sup>For example, {the prophet} Moses said this {about the Messiah}: ‘The Lord our God will make one of you Israelites a prophet like me. You must do everything he tells you to do. <sup>23</sup>Those who do not do what that prophet tells them will no longer belong to God’s people. God will destroy them.’” <sup>24</sup>{Peter continued,} “In fact, all the prophets have told about what would happen during the times we are now living in. Those prophets include Samuel and the ones who lived after him, who all spoke about these events before they happened. <sup>25</sup>What the prophets said long ago applies to you today. And the solemn agreement that God made to bless our ancestors also extends to you, their descendants. He said to Abraham {about the Messiah}, ‘I will bless all the people groups on the earth as a result of what your descendant will do.’” <sup>26</sup>So when God sent Jesus to the earth as the Messiah, he had him come to you Israelites first. God intended for the Messiah to bless you by getting you to stop doing things that were wrong.”

## Chapter 4

<sup>1</sup>While Peter and John were still speaking to the people, several men walked up and confronted them. They included priests who served in the temple, the officer in charge of the temple guard, and some members of the Sadducee group. <sup>2</sup>These men were very angry because these two men were teaching the people. They were telling the people that what God did for Jesus shows that God causes people to live again after they die. <sup>3</sup>So these men arrested Peter and John and put them in jail. They did this because it was already evening and the Jewish council would have to wait until the next day to question them. <sup>4</sup>However, many people who had heard Peter speak put their faith in Jesus. The number of men who believed in Jesus increased to about five thousand.

<sup>5</sup>The next day the high priest called the other chief priests, the teachers of the Jewish laws, and the other members of the Jewish council. They all assembled in one place in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup>Annas, the former high priest, was there. Caiaphas, the new high priest, was also there. And so were John and Alexander and other men who were related to the high priest. <sup>7</sup>They commanded guards to bring Peter and John into the room, and then they asked Peter and John, “Who gave you the right or the ability to do this?”

<sup>8</sup>As the Holy Spirit gave him power, Peter said to them in response, “You fellow Israelites who rule us and all of you elders, listen to me! <sup>9</sup>Today you are questioning us about a good deed we did for a man who could not walk. You want to know how he became able to walk. <sup>10</sup>So we want this whole council and all the other Israelites to know what has happened. This man is able to stand before you because Jesus from Nazareth, the Messiah, healed him. You were responsible for the Romans executing Jesus by nailing him to a cross. But God brought Jesus back to life after they executed him.

<sup>11</sup>Jesus the Messiah of Nazareth is the one of whom the Scriptures say,

‘The stone that the builders threw away has become the most important stone in the building.’

And you are those builders{, because you rejected Jesus}. <sup>12</sup>{So you should no longer reject him, because} only Jesus can save us. For God has given us no other person in the world who can save us {from the guilt of our sins}!”

<sup>13</sup>The Jewish leaders recognized that Peter and John were not afraid of them. They also realized that these two men were ordinary people who had not studied in schools. So the leaders were amazed. They knew that these men had



spent time with Jesus. <sup>14</sup>They also saw the man who had become able to walk again standing there with Peter and John. So they were not able to say anything to contradict them.

<sup>15</sup>The Jewish leaders told guards to take Peter, John, and this man outside of the room where they were meeting. After they did so, the leaders talked with each other {about Peter and John}. <sup>16</sup>They said, "There is nothing that we can do to punish these two men! The news of the amazing miracle that they have done has spread widely in Jerusalem. So we cannot tell people that it did not happen! <sup>17</sup>However, we must not allow any more people to hear what they have been teaching about this Jesus. So we must tell these men that we will punish them if they continue to tell other people about the one who they say gave them the power to heal this man." <sup>18</sup>So the Jewish leaders told the guards to bring them into the room again. After the guards had done so, they told them both that they were completely forbidden to speak or teach about Jesus.

<sup>19</sup>But Peter and John told them in response, "In order to obey your command, we would have to disobey God{, who commanded us to tell everyone about Jesus}. We will let you decide whether you think God would want us to obey you instead of him. <sup>20</sup>But as for us, we cannot obey you. We will not stop telling people about what we saw Jesus do and what we heard him teach."

<sup>21</sup>Then the Jewish leaders again told Peter and John not to disobey them. But then they let them go without punishing them. The leaders knew that throughout Jerusalem people were praising God for what had happened {to the man who could not walk, and they did not want to upset the people}. <sup>22</sup>The people were praising God because {this was a remarkable miracle}. The man whom Peter and John had healed by doing this miracle was over forty years old, {and he had never before walked in his life}.

<sup>23</sup>After Peter and John left the council, they met with the others who believed in Jesus and told them everything that the people on the ruling council had said to them. <sup>24</sup>When the others who believed in Jesus heard this, they prayed together aloud to God, "O Lord! You made the sky, the earth, the oceans, and everything in them. <sup>25</sup>Your Holy Spirit caused our ancestor, King David, who served you, to write these words:

'Why did the people groups of the world become angry

and why did they plan uselessly {against God}?

<sup>26</sup>The kings in the world prepared to fight,

and the rulers joined with them

to oppose the Lord God and the one whom he had chosen to be the Messiah.'

<sup>27</sup>What David said is true! Both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with people who were Israelites and people who were not, joined together in this city of Jerusalem to oppose Jesus. They opposed him even though he had done nothing wrong and even though you, God, had sent him as the Messiah. <sup>28</sup>{But when they opposed Jesus,} they did no more than you allowed because it was what you had decided long ago would happen. <sup>29</sup>So now, Lord, listen to what they are saying about how they will punish us! Help us who serve you to speak about Jesus without being afraid at all! <sup>30</sup>Use your power to do great healings and many other miraculous deeds that will show the authority you have given to Jesus, your chosen Messiah!"

<sup>31</sup>When the believers had finished praying, the place where they were meeting started to shake. The Holy Spirit gave them all power to tell people about Jesus as God had commanded, and they did that with great courage.

<sup>32</sup>Those in the group of people who believed in Jesus were in complete agreement about what they believed and what they wanted. Not one of them said that he was the sole owner of anything. Instead, they shared what they had with one another. <sup>33</sup>The Representatives continued to preach powerfully that God had caused the Lord Jesus to live again after he died. And God was helping all the believers very much. <sup>34</sup>Here is one way God was helping them. No one among the believers was lacking anything. This was because other believers who owned fields or houses would sell some of their property to help them. They would bring the proceeds from the sale

<sup>35</sup>and they would give it to the Representatives, who would then give out the money to the believers who needed it. <sup>36</sup>Now there was a man named Joseph who belonged to the tribe of Levi and who came from the island of Cyprus. The Representatives called him Barnabas. In the language of the Jews, that name means a person who always encourages others. <sup>37</sup>Barnabas sold a field that belonged to him and he brought the money to the Representatives {for them to give to other believers}.

## Chapter 5

<sup>1</sup>Now there was one of the believers whose name was Ananias. He was married, and his wife's name was Sapphira. They also sold some land. <sup>2</sup>He kept for himself some of the money he had received for the land. His wife knew that he had done that. Then he brought the rest of the money and gave it to the Representatives.

<sup>3</sup>Then Peter said, "Ananias, you have allowed Satan to control you so completely that you tried to deceive the Holy Spirit. You kept for yourself some of the money you received for selling the land. {You did not give us all of it.} <sup>4</sup>Before you sold that land, you truly owned it. And after you sold it, the money was still yours. So you should never have thought about doing such a wicked thing. You were not just trying to deceive people! No, you were trying to deceive God himself!" <sup>5</sup>When Ananias heard the things Peter told him, he immediately fell down dead. And everyone who learned {about Ananias' death} felt a great awe for God. <sup>6</sup>When Ananias died, some young men came forward, wrapped his body in a sheet, and carried it out and buried it.

<sup>7</sup>About three hours later, his wife came in. But she did not know that Peter confronted her husband about the lie they had told and that her husband had died as a result. <sup>8</sup>Then Peter showed her the money that Ananias had brought and asked her, "Tell me, is this the amount of money you two received for the land you sold?" She said, "Yes, that is what we received." <sup>9</sup>So Peter said to her, "You both did a terrible thing when you agreed to try to deceive the Holy Spirit! This is what will happen to you as a result. {God struck your husband dead as a punishment and} some young men are just coming back from burying him. God is also going to strike you dead, and they will take your body out and bury it as well." <sup>10</sup>Immediately Sapphira fell down dead right in front of Peter. Just then the young men came back in. When they saw that she had also died, they carried her body out and buried it next to her husband's body.

<sup>11</sup>All the believers in Jerusalem felt a great awe for God because of what had happened to Ananias and Sapphira. Everyone else who heard about these things also felt great awe for God.

<sup>12</sup>God was enabling the Representatives to do many amazing miracles {that showed the truth of what they were preaching} among the people. All the believers were meeting together regularly in the temple courtyard at the place called Solomon's Porch. <sup>13</sup>All of the other people who had not believed in Jesus were afraid to meet with the believers. However, those people continued to speak very highly of them. <sup>14</sup>Many more men and women started believing in the Lord Jesus, and they joined the group of believers. <sup>15</sup>Because the people were seeing such amazing miracles, they started bringing those who had various diseases right into the streets and placing them on stretchers and mattresses there. They were hoping that when Peter walked by his shadow might touch some of them, because if even that happened, God would heal them. <sup>16</sup>Large crowds of people were also coming from the towns near Jerusalem. They were bringing those who had various diseases and those whom evil spirits were tormenting, and God healed all of them.

<sup>17</sup>However, the high priest became very resentful {that such large crowds were coming to the Representatives}. Many priests who were members of the Sadducee group were also very resentful of them. They joined together with the high priest to work against them. <sup>18</sup>So they commanded the temple guards to arrest them and to put them in the public jail. <sup>19</sup>{The high priest and his allies kept them in jail overnight so that they could question them in the morning.} But that night an angel from the Lord God opened the jail doors and led all the Representatives outside. Then the angel told them, <sup>20</sup>"Go to the temple courtyard, stand there, and tell the people about the eternal life that Jesus can give them. Do not leave anything out, even though the Sanhedrin has commanded you not to say certain things." <sup>21</sup>So when the Representatives heard what the angel said, they went to the temple

courtyard and began to teach the people once more about Jesus. By then it was about dawn. Around that same time, the high priest and the other priests who were working with him gathered together in the Jewish council chamber. From there they summoned the other council members. Together they were all the leaders of Israel. Once the whole council was present, they sent guards to the jail to get the Representatives. <sup>22</sup>But when the guards arrived at the jail, they discovered that they were not there. So they returned to the council and told the members, <sup>23</sup>"We saw that the jail doors were very safely locked and that the guards were keeping watch in front of the doors. But when we opened the doors {and went in to get those men}, none of them were inside the jail." <sup>24</sup>When the chief priests and the officer in charge of the temple guards heard that, they were greatly confused. They wondered what the consequences would be.

<sup>25</sup>Then someone came and reported to them, "Listen to this! The men you put in jail have somehow gotten into the temple courtyard. And they are telling the people there about Jesus!" <sup>26</sup>So the officer in charge of the temple guards went to the temple courtyard with the officers. They brought the Representatives back {to the council room}. But they did not treat them roughly. They were afraid that if they did that, the people would try to kill them by throwing stones at them.

<sup>27</sup>After the captain and his officers had brought the Representatives to the council room, they commanded them to stand in front of the council members. Then the high priest questioned them intensely. <sup>28</sup>He said to them, "We ordered you very clearly not to teach people about that man Jesus! But you have disobeyed us, and you have taught people all over Jerusalem about him! Furthermore, you are trying to make it seem that we are the ones who are guilty for that man's death!" <sup>29</sup>But Peter, speaking for himself and the other Representatives, replied, "We have to obey what God commands us to do, not what you people tell us to do! <sup>30</sup>You are the ones who killed Jesus by nailing him to a cross! But God, whom our ancestors worshiped, caused Jesus to live again after he died. <sup>31</sup>God has honored Jesus more than he has honored anyone else. He has made him the one to save us and rule over us. He has enabled us Israelites to stop sinning and he has forgiven us for the sins we committed. <sup>32</sup>We tell people about these things that we saw happen to Jesus. The Holy Spirit, whom God has sent to us who obey him, is also confirming that these things are true." <sup>33</sup>When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they became so angry {with the Representatives} that they wanted to kill them.

<sup>34</sup>But there was a council member named Gamaliel. He was a member of the Pharisee group. He taught the Jewish laws, and the Jewish people respected him highly. He stood up in the council and told the guards to take the Representatives out of the room for a short time. <sup>35</sup>{After the guards had taken them out,} Gamaliel said to the other council members, "You leaders of the people of Israel, you must think carefully about what you are going to do to these men. <sup>36</sup>Some years ago a man named Theudas led a revolt against the government. He claimed that he was a great man, and about four hundred men joined him. But the Romans captured and executed him, and all those who had joined him went back to where they came from. So this revolt did not succeed. <sup>37</sup>After that, during the time when the Romans were recording the names of people in order to tax them, a man named Judas from the region of Galilee rebelled. He convinced some people to rebel with him. But he too died, and all those who had joined him went off in different directions. <sup>38</sup>Based on these examples, let me offer some advice. Do not kill these men! Set them free! I say this because if the things that are happening now are just something that humans have planned, someone will stop them. They will fail. <sup>39</sup>But if God has commanded them to do these things, you will not be able to stop them. You may even discover that you are working against God!" The other members of the council accepted what Gamaliel said. <sup>40</sup>They told the temple guards to bring in the Representatives and beat them. {So the guards brought them into the council room and beat them.} Then the council members commanded them not to speak to people about Jesus any more, and they let them go.

<sup>41</sup>So they left the council chamber. As they did, they even rejoiced that God had honored them by allowing people to treat them badly because they were testifying to Jesus. <sup>42</sup>Every day after that, they went to the temple area and to various people's houses, and they continued teaching people and telling them that Jesus is the Messiah.

## Chapter 6

<sup>1</sup>During that time, many more people were becoming believers. The Greek-speaking Jews began to complain about the Aramaic-speaking Jews because the widows among them were not receiving their fair share of food every day.

<sup>2</sup>So {after} the twelve Representatives {had heard what they were saying, they} summoned all the other believers {in Jerusalem} to meet together. Then they said to them, "We would not be doing the right thing if we stopped telling people the message God told us to share about Jesus in order to distribute food to people! <sup>3</sup>So, fellow believers, carefully choose seven men from among you, men whom you know the Spirit of God directs and who are very wise. Then we will instruct them to do this work. <sup>4</sup>As for us, we will keep on using our time to pray and to proclaim the news about Jesus."

<sup>5</sup>All of the disciples liked their suggestion. So they chose Stephen, a man who strongly believed in God and whom the Holy Spirit controlled completely. They also chose Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, who was from the city of Antioch. Nicolas was a former Gentile who had converted to the Jewish religion. <sup>6</sup>The believers brought these seven men to the Representatives, who prayed for those men. As they prayed, they placed their hands on the men's heads to show that they approved of them to do that work.

<sup>7</sup>More and more people were hearing the news about Jesus. The number of people in Jerusalem who believed in Jesus was increasing greatly. Among them were very many Jewish priests. They put their trust in Jesus as the Messiah and so they began to live in the way he said they should.

<sup>8</sup>God was giving Stephen power to do many amazing miracles among the people {that showed that the message about Jesus was true}. <sup>9</sup>However, some people opposed Stephen. They were Jews who attended a synagogue that had the name Freedmen's Synagogue. Some other Jews also opposed Stephen. They were from the synagogues that people attended who were from the cities of Cyrene and Alexandria and from the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. They all began to argue with Stephen. <sup>10</sup>But they were not able to prove that what he said was wrong, because God's Spirit enabled him to speak very wisely.

<sup>11</sup>So they secretly persuaded some men to accuse Stephen falsely. Those men said, "We heard him say bad things about Moses and God." <sup>12</sup>They also made the other Jewish people angry at Stephen, including the elders and the teachers of the Jewish laws. They came up to Stephen and grabbed him and took him to the Jewish council. <sup>13</sup>They also brought in some people who told lies about Stephen. They said, "This man keeps saying bad things about this holy temple and about the laws that Moses received from God. <sup>14</sup>What we mean is that we have heard him say that this Jesus from the town of Nazareth will destroy the temple here in Jerusalem and will tell us to obey different customs from the ones that Moses taught our ancestors."

<sup>15</sup>All the people in the council room stared at Stephen and saw that his face resembled the face of an angel.

## Chapter 7

<sup>1</sup>Then the high priest asked Stephen, "Are the things that these people are saying about you true?" <sup>2</sup>Stephen replied, "Fellow Jews and respected leaders, please listen to me! The glorious God whom we worship appeared to our forefather Abraham while he was still living in the region of Mesopotamia, before he moved to the city of Haran. <sup>3</sup>God said to him, 'Leave this land where you and your relatives are living, and go into the land to which I will direct you.' <sup>4</sup>So Abraham left that land, which was also called Chaldea, and he arrived in Haran and lived there. After his father died, God told him to move to this land where our people are now living.

<sup>5</sup>At that time God did not give Abraham any land to own here, not even a small plot of this land. But God promised that later he would give this land to him and his descendants, and that it would always belong to them. However, at that time Abraham did not have any children who would inherit it.

<sup>6</sup>Later God told Abraham, 'Your descendants will go and live in a foreign country. They will live there for four hundred years. During that time, the rulers will mistreat your descendants and force them to work as slaves. <sup>7</sup>But I will punish the people who make them work as slaves,' said God. 'After that, your descendants will leave that land, and they will come and worship me in this land.'

<sup>8</sup>Then God commanded that every male in Abraham's household and all of his male descendants should be circumcised to show that they all belonged to God. Later Abraham's son, Isaac, was born, and when Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him. Later Isaac had a son named Jacob. Jacob was the father of the twelve men whom we Jews call the patriarchs, our forefathers.

<sup>9</sup>You know that Jacob's older sons became jealous because their father favored their younger brother Joseph. So they sold him to merchants who took him to Egypt, where he became a slave. But God took care of Joseph. <sup>10</sup>God protected him whenever people caused him to suffer. He enabled Joseph to be wise, and he caused Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, to think well of Joseph. So Pharaoh appointed him to rule over Egypt and to look after all of Pharaoh's property.

<sup>11</sup>{While Joseph was doing that work,} there was a time when there was very little food anywhere in Egypt and also in Canaan. People were suffering badly. At that time Jacob and his sons in Canaan could not find enough food to eat. <sup>12</sup>When Jacob heard a report that there was grain in Egypt that people could buy, he sent Joseph's older brothers there to buy grain. {They went and bought grain from Joseph, but they did not recognize him. Then they returned home.} <sup>13</sup>When Joseph's brothers went to Egypt again, they bought grain from Joseph once more. But this time he told them who he was. And so Pharaoh found out that these men who had come from Canaan were Joseph's brothers. <sup>14</sup>Joseph sent his brothers back home to tell their father Jacob that Joseph wanted him and his entire family to come to Egypt. At that time Jacob's family consisted of seventy-five people. <sup>15</sup>So when Jacob heard that, he and all his family went to live in Egypt. {Later on,} Jacob died there, and our other ancestors, his sons, also died there. <sup>16</sup>Their descendants brought their bodies back to our land and buried them in the tomb that Abraham bought from Hamor's sons in the city of Shechem.

<sup>17</sup>Our ancestors had become very numerous by the time God was about to rescue them from Egypt. That is what God had promised Abraham he would do. <sup>18</sup>Another king had begun to rule in Egypt. He did not know that Joseph had greatly helped the people of Egypt {long before his own time}. <sup>19</sup>That king tried to get rid of our ancestors in cruel ways. He oppressed them and caused them to suffer greatly. He even commanded them to abandon their newborn babies outside their homes so that they would die.

<sup>20</sup>During that time Moses was born, and God saw that he was a very beautiful child. His parents secretly cared for him in their house for three months. <sup>21</sup>Then they had to abandon him outside the house. But Pharaoh's daughter found him and cared for him as her own son. <sup>22</sup>The Egyptians taught Moses the many things that they had learned. When he grew up, he spoke and did things powerfully.

<sup>23</sup>One day when Moses was about forty years old, he decided to see how his relatives, the people of Israel, were doing. <sup>24</sup>He saw an Egyptian mistreating one of the Israelites. So he went over to help the Israelite man. He avenged him by killing the Egyptian. <sup>25</sup>Moses expected that his fellow Israelites would understand that God had sent him to free them from being slaves. But they did not understand. <sup>26</sup>The next day, Moses saw two of his fellow Israelites fighting each other. He tried to make them stop by saying to them, 'Now you two are both Israelites! You must stop hurting each other!' <sup>27</sup>But the man who was injuring the other man pushed Moses away. He said to him, 'You have no authority over us! <sup>28</sup>You probably want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday!' <sup>29</sup>When Moses heard that, he fled from Egypt to the land of Midian. He lived there for some years. {He got married, and} he {and his wife} had two sons.

<sup>30</sup>One day forty years later, the Lord God came to Moses in the form of an angel. This was in the desert near Mount Sinai. He appeared in the flames of a bush that was on fire. <sup>31</sup>When Moses saw it, he was amazed because the bush was not burning up. As he went over to look more closely, he heard the Lord God say to him, <sup>32</sup>'I am the God whom your ancestors worshiped. I am the God whom Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob worship.' Moses was so afraid that he

began to shake. He was afraid to look at the bush any longer. <sup>33</sup>Then the Lord God said to him, 'Take your sandals off to show that you honor me. Because I am here, the place where you are standing is especially mine. <sup>34</sup>I have seen clearly how the people of Egypt are continually causing my people to suffer. I have heard my people when they groan because of it. So I am taking action to rescue them from Egypt. Now get ready, because I am going to send you back to Egypt.'

<sup>35</sup>This Moses is the one who had tried to help our Israelite people. But they rejected him by saying, 'You have no authority over us!' Moses is the one whom God himself sent to rule them and to free them from being slaves. He did that with the help of the angel who spoke to him from the bush. <sup>36</sup>Moses is the one who led our ancestors out from Egypt. He did many kinds of miracles in Egypt, at the Sea of Reeds, and during the forty years that the Israelite people lived in the wilderness. <sup>37</sup>This Moses is the one who said to the Israelite people, 'God will cause another man from among your own people to be a prophet like me for you.' <sup>38</sup>It was this man Moses who was among the Israelites who were together in the wilderness. God spoke through the angel on Mount Sinai to give Moses our laws. Moses was the one who told our ancestors what the angel had said. He was the one to whom God gave commandments and who passed them on to us. Those commandments are still powerful today.

<sup>39</sup>However, our ancestors did not want to obey Moses. Instead, they rejected him as their leader and wanted to return to Egypt. <sup>40</sup>So they told his older brother Aaron, 'Make idols for us who will be our gods to lead us. As for that fellow Moses who led us out of Egypt, we do not know what has happened to him!' <sup>41</sup>When the Israelites rejected Moses, they made an image that looked like a calf. Then they offered sacrifices to honor that idol. They sang and danced to worship something that they themselves had made. <sup>42</sup>So God stopped correcting them. He left them to worship the stars in the sky. This agrees with what one of the prophets wrote:

God said, 'You Israelite people repeatedly killed animals and offered them to me with grain as sacrifices during those forty years that you were in the wilderness. But you certainly were not truly offering them to me! <sup>43</sup>On the contrary, you carried with you from place to place the tent that contained the idol representing the god Molech that you worshiped. You also carried with you the image of the star called Rephan. Those were idols that you had made, and you worshiped them instead of me. So I will cause you to be taken away far from your homes to regions even farther than the country of Babylon.'

<sup>44</sup>"While our ancestors were in the desert, they worshiped God at the sacred tent that showed that he was there with them. They had made the tent exactly like God had commanded Moses to make it. It was exactly like the model that Moses had seen when he was up on the mountain. <sup>45</sup>Later on, other ancestors of ours carried that tent with them when Joshua led them into this land. That was during the time when they took this land for themselves, when God forced the people who previously lived here to leave. So the Israelites were able to possess this land. The tent remained in this land and was still here when King David ruled. <sup>46</sup>David pleased God, and he asked God to let him build a temple where he and all of our Israelite people could worship God. <sup>47</sup>But instead, God told David's son Solomon to build a temple where people could worship him."

<sup>48</sup>"However, we know that God, who is greater than everything, does not live in temples that people build. It is as the prophet Isaiah wrote:

<sup>49-50</sup>God said, "I created everything in heaven and on earth. My presence fills all of creation. So you human beings cannot make a place good enough for me to live in!"

<sup>51</sup>"You people are disobedient to God, as if you did not even know God! You are exactly like your ancestors! You always resist the Holy Spirit, just as they did! <sup>52</sup>Your ancestors caused every prophet to suffer. They even killed those who long ago announced that the Messiah would come, the one who always did what pleased God. And the Messiah has come! He is the one whom you recently turned over to his enemies and insisted that they kill him! <sup>53</sup>You are the people who have received God's laws. Those were laws that God caused angels to give to our ancestors. However, you have not obeyed them!"

<sup>54</sup>When the Jewish council members and others there heard all that Stephen said, they became very angry. They were grinding their teeth together because they were so angry at him!

<sup>55</sup>But the Holy Spirit completely controlled Stephen. He looked up into heaven and saw a dazzling light from God, and he saw Jesus standing at God's right side. <sup>56</sup>"Look," he said, "I see right into heaven, and I see the Son of Man {in human form} standing where God rules!"

<sup>57</sup>{When the Jewish council members and others heard that,} they shouted loudly. They put their hands over their ears so that they would not hear him. All together they ran up to Stephen and grabbed him. <sup>58</sup>They dragged him outside the city of Jerusalem and started to throw stones at him to kill him. The people who were accusing him took off their outer garments in order to throw stones more easily. They put these garments on the ground next to a young man whose name was Saul so that he could guard them. <sup>59</sup>While they continued to throw stones at Stephen, Stephen prayed out loud, "Lord Jesus, welcome me when I die!"

<sup>60</sup>Then Stephen knelt down and cried out loud, "Lord, do not punish them for this sin!" After he had said this, he died.

## Chapter 8

<sup>1-2</sup>Then some men who honored God buried Stephen's body in a tomb, and they mourned loudly for him.

But Saul thought the Sanhedrin had done the right thing by stoning Stephen. On that same day, people {Saul was leading} started severely persecuting the believers who were living in Jerusalem. So most of the believers fled to other places throughout the provinces of Judea and Samaria. But the apostles remained in Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup>Saul began trying to destroy the group of believers. He entered their houses one by one. He dragged away men and women {who believed in Jesus}, and he put them in prison.

<sup>4</sup>The believers who had left Jerusalem went to different places, where they continued preaching the message about Jesus. <sup>5</sup>One of those believers, whose name was Philip, went from Jerusalem to a city in the district of Samaria. There he was telling the people that Jesus is the Messiah. <sup>6</sup>Many people there heard Philip speak and saw the miraculous things that he was doing. So they all paid close attention to what he was saying. <sup>7</sup>For example, Philip commanded evil spirits to come out of many people, and they came out screaming. Also, many people who could not move their muscles and many others who were lame were healed. <sup>8</sup>So many people in that city were very happy.

<sup>9</sup>There was a man in that city whose name was Simon. He had been practicing sorcery for a long time, and he amazed the people in the district of Samaria with his magic. He claimed he was "Simon the Great One!" <sup>10</sup>The people there, both ordinary and important people, listened to him. They were saying, "Simon is the Great Power of God." <sup>11</sup>They continued to listen to him carefully because for a long time he had astonished them by practicing sorcery. <sup>12</sup>But then they believed Philip's message of the good news about how God would rule the lives of people everywhere and about Jesus the Messiah. Philip baptized the men and the women who believed in Jesus. <sup>13</sup>Though the people had been worshipping him, Simon too believed Philip's message and received baptism. He began to accompany Philip constantly. He was continually amazed by the great miracles he saw Philip doing. These things showed that Philip was speaking the truth.

<sup>14</sup>When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that many people throughout Samaria district had believed God's message, they sent Peter and John there. <sup>15</sup>When Peter and John arrived in Samaria, they prayed for those new believers to receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>16</sup>For the Holy Spirit had not yet openly empowered any of them. They had only received baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>17</sup>Then Peter and John placed their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

<sup>18</sup>Simon saw that people received the Holy Spirit as a result of the apostles placing their hands on them. So he offered to give money to the apostles. <sup>19</sup>He said, "Enable me also to do what you are doing, so that if I place my hands on someone, he will receive the Holy Spirit." <sup>20</sup>But Peter said to him, "May you and your money be destroyed, because you tried to get God's gift with money! <sup>21</sup>You cannot work with us in what we are doing,

because you do not have the right attitude toward God! <sup>22</sup>So stop thinking wickedly like that! Plead with the Lord to forgive you for what you wanted to do, since he will forgive you if you ask sincerely. <sup>23</sup>You are in spiritual danger! I perceive that you are extremely jealous of us and that a continual desire to do evil is controlling you.” <sup>24</sup>Then Simon answered, “Pray to the Lord that he will not do to me what you just said!”

<sup>25</sup>Peter and John then told the people there what they knew personally about the Lord Jesus. They shared the message of the Lord with them. Then they both returned to Jerusalem. Along the way, they declared the good news about Jesus to people living in many towns in the district of Samaria.

<sup>26</sup>While Peter and John were returning to Jerusalem, the Lord sent an angel to Philip. {Even though so many Samaritans were becoming believers in Jesus,} that angel told him, “Get ready and go south along the road that goes from Jerusalem to the city of Gaza.” That road is in a desert area. <sup>27</sup>So Philip got ready and went along that road. On the road he met a man from the land of Ethiopia. The man was an important official of the queen of Ethiopia. In his language people called their queen the Kandake. He took care of all of her funds. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship God, <sup>28</sup>and he was returning home and was seated, riding in his carriage. As he was riding, he was reading aloud from what the prophet Isaiah had written.

<sup>29</sup>God’s Spirit told Philip, “Go near to that carriage and keep walking close to it!” <sup>30</sup>So Philip ran over to the carriage. He heard the official reading what the prophet Isaiah had written. He asked the man, “Do you understand what you are reading?” <sup>31</sup>He answered Philip, “No, I cannot possibly understand it if there is no one to explain it to me.” Then the man said to Philip, “Please come up and sit beside me.” {So Philip got into the carriage.} <sup>32</sup>The part of the Scriptures that the official was reading was this: “People led him away as if he were a sheep they were leading to the place where they were going to kill it. He stands in silence as a lamb does while people cut off its wool.

<sup>33</sup>He will be humiliated. People will deny him a fair trial. He will not have any offspring, because his enemies will kill him.”

<sup>34</sup>The official asked Philip about what he was reading, “Tell me, who was the prophet writing about? Was he writing about himself, or about someone else?” <sup>35</sup>So Philip replied to him. He began with that Scripture passage and he told him the good news about Jesus.

<sup>36</sup>While they were traveling along the road, they came to a place where there was some water. Then the official said to Philip, “Look, there is some water! I would like you to baptize me.” <sup>37</sup><sup>[1]</sup> [Philip said, “If you believe in Jesus with complete sincerity, God will save you and you may be baptized.” The Ethiopian answered, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.”] <sup>38</sup>So the official told the driver to stop the carriage. Then both Philip and the official went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. <sup>39</sup>When they came up out of the water, suddenly the Spirit of the Lord took Philip away. The official never saw Philip again. Even so, the official continued going very happily along the road.

<sup>40</sup>Philip then realized that the Spirit had miraculously taken him to the town of Azotus. While he traveled around in that region, he continued proclaiming the good news about Jesus in all the towns between the cities of Azotus and Caesarea. And he was still proclaiming it when he finally arrived in Caesarea.

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8:37 <sup>[1]</sup>

## Chapter 9

<sup>1</sup>Meanwhile, Saul angrily continued threatening to kill those who believed in the Lord Jesus. He went to the high priest in Jerusalem <sup>2</sup>and requested him to write letters introducing Saul to the leaders of the Jewish synagogues in the city of Damascus. The letters would ask them to give Saul the authority to seize any man or woman who followed the teachings of Jesus and take them as prisoners to Jerusalem. {There the Jewish leaders could judge and punish them. The high priest gave Saul the letters he asked for.}



<sup>3</sup>While Saul and those with him were traveling, they were approaching Damascus. Suddenly a brilliant light from heaven shone around Saul. <sup>4</sup>Immediately he fell down to the ground. Then he heard the voice of someone say to him, "Saul, Saul, stop trying to hurt me!" <sup>5</sup>Saul asked him, "Lord, who are you?" He replied, "I am Jesus, whom you are hurting." <sup>6</sup>Now stand up and go into the city of Damascus! Someone there will tell you what I want you to do." <sup>7</sup>The men who were traveling with Saul were so astonished that they could not say anything. They just stood there. This was because they heard someone speaking, but they did not see anyone. <sup>8</sup>Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could not see anything. So the men with him took him by the hand and led him into Damascus. <sup>9</sup>For the next three days Saul could not see anything, and he did not eat or drink anything.

<sup>10</sup>In Damascus there was a man who believed in Jesus named Ananias. Jesus made him see a vision and in it he called to him, "Ananias!" Ananias replied, "Lord, I am listening." <sup>11</sup>Jesus told him, "Go to Straight Street, to the house that belongs to Judas. Ask someone there if you can talk to a man named Saul who is from the city of Tarsus. Saul is praying to me at this moment. <sup>12</sup>Saul has seen a vision in which a man named Ananias entered the house where he was staying and put his hands on him to restore his sight." <sup>13</sup>Ananias answered, "But Lord, many people have told me about this man! He has done many bad things to the people in Jerusalem who believe in you! <sup>14</sup>The chief priests have given him permission to come here to Damascus and take prisoner all those who believe in you!" <sup>15</sup>But Jesus told Ananias, "Go visit Saul! Do what I say, because I have chosen him to serve me. I want him to speak about me to non-Jewish people and their leaders and to the Israelite people. <sup>16</sup>I myself will tell him that he must often suffer in order to tell people about me." <sup>17</sup>So Ananias went, and after he found the house where Saul was, he entered it. Then, as soon as he met Saul, he put his hands on him, and he said, "Saul, you are already like a brother to me. Jesus himself commanded me to come to you. Jesus is the one who appeared to you while you were traveling along the road to Damascus. He sent me to you to restore your sight, and he wants the Holy Spirit to lead and empower you." <sup>18</sup>Instantly, what seemed like flakes fell from Saul's eyes, and he was able to see again. Then he got up and was baptized. <sup>19</sup>After Saul ate some food, he became strong again. Saul stayed with the other believers in Damascus for several days.

<sup>20</sup>Right away he began to preach about Jesus in the Jewish synagogues. He told the people there that Jesus is the Son of God. <sup>21</sup>The people who heard him preach were amazed. Some of them were saying, "We can hardly believe that this is the same man who persecuted the believers in Jerusalem! And he came here to take them as prisoners to the chief priests in Jerusalem!" <sup>22</sup>But God enabled Saul to preach to many people even more convincingly. He was proving from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Messiah. The Jewish leaders in Damascus became angry {because they could not disprove what he said}.

<sup>23</sup>Some time later, the Jewish leaders there plotted to kill him. <sup>24</sup>Those Jewish leaders were continually watching the people passing through the city gates so that if they saw Saul there, they could kill him. However, someone told Saul what they planned to do. <sup>25</sup>So some of those whom he had led to believe in Jesus took him one night to the high stone wall that surrounded the city. They used ropes to lower him in a large basket through an opening in the wall. In this way he escaped from Damascus.

<sup>26</sup>When Saul arrived in Jerusalem, he tried to meet with the other believers there. However, almost all of them continued to be afraid of him. They were not convinced that he had become a believer. <sup>27</sup>But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He explained to the apostles how, while Saul was traveling along the road to Damascus, he had seen Jesus, who had spoken to him there. He also told them how Saul had preached boldly about Jesus to people in Damascus. <sup>28</sup>So Saul began to meet with the apostles and other believers throughout Jerusalem. He spoke boldly to the people there about Jesus.

<sup>29</sup>Saul was also speaking about Jesus with Jews who spoke Greek, and he was debating with them. But they were continually trying to think of a way to kill him. <sup>30</sup>But the other believers found out that the Jews who spoke Greek were planning to kill Saul. So some of them took him to the city of Caesarea. There they put him on a ship that was going to Tarsus, his hometown.

<sup>31</sup>Since no one was persecuting them anymore, the believers throughout the entire regions of Judea, Galilee, and Samaria were able to live peacefully. The Holy Spirit was strengthening them and encouraging them. They were honoring the Lord Jesus, and the Holy Spirit was leading many other people to become believers.

<sup>32</sup>{Those peaceful conditions allowed} Peter to travel throughout those regions. Once he went to the coastal plain to visit the believers who lived in the town of Lydda. <sup>33</sup>There he met a man whose name was Aeneas. Aeneas was not able to walk or stand, and so he had not been able to get up from his bed for eight years. <sup>34</sup>Peter said to him, "Aeneas, Jesus the Messiah heals you! Get up and roll up your own mat!" Right away Aeneas stood up. <sup>35</sup>Most of the people who lived in Lydda and on Sharon Plain saw Aeneas after the Lord had healed him, so they believed in the Lord Jesus.

<sup>36</sup>In the town of Joppa there was a believer whose name was Tabitha. Her name in the Greek language was Dorcas. She was always doing good deeds for poor people by giving them things that they needed. <sup>37</sup>During the time that Peter was in Lydda, she became sick and died. Some women there washed her body {according to the Jewish custom}. Then they {covered her body with cloth and} placed it in an upstairs room in her house.

<sup>38</sup>Lydda was near the city of Joppa, so when the disciples heard that Peter was still in Lydda, they sent two men to go to Peter. When they arrived where Peter was, they urged him, "Please come immediately with us to Joppa!"

<sup>39</sup>Peter got ready right away and went with them. When he arrived at the house in Joppa, they took him to the upstairs room where the body of Dorcas was lying. All the widows there stood around him. They were crying and showing him the tunics and other garments that Dorcas had made for people while she was still alive. <sup>40</sup>But Peter sent them all out of the room {so that he could pray}. Then he got down on his knees and prayed. Then, turning toward her body, he said, "Tabitha, stand up!" Immediately she opened her eyes and, when she saw Peter, she sat up. <sup>41</sup>He grasped one of her hands and helped her to stand up. After he had summoned the believers and especially the widows among them to come back in, he showed them that she was alive again. <sup>42</sup>Soon people everywhere in Joppa knew about that miracle and, as a result, many people believed in Jesus. <sup>43</sup>Peter stayed in Joppa many days with a man named Simon, who made leather from animal skins.

## Chapter 10

<sup>1</sup>There was a man whose name was Cornelius who lived in the city of Caesarea. He was an officer who commanded 100 men in a large group of Roman soldiers from Italy. <sup>2</sup>He continually tried to do what would please God. He and his entire household were non-Jews who worshiped God. He often gave money to help poor Jewish people. He prayed to God regularly.

<sup>3</sup>One day at about three o'clock in the afternoon, Cornelius saw a vision. He clearly saw an angel whom God had sent. He saw the angel coming into his room and saying to him, "Cornelius!" <sup>4</sup>Cornelius stared at the angel and became terrified. Then he asked fearfully, "Sir, what do you want?" The angel answered him, "You have been praying regularly to God. You often give money to help poor people. Those things have been like an offering to God, and he has noticed them. <sup>5</sup>So now command some men to go to Joppa. Tell them to bring back a man named Simon whose other name is Peter. <sup>6</sup>He is staying with a man, also named Simon, who makes leather. His house is near the ocean." <sup>7</sup>When the angel who was speaking with Cornelius had gone, he summoned two of his household servants and a soldier who served him, one who also worshiped God. <sup>8</sup>He explained to them everything that the angel had said. Then he told them to go to the city of Joppa and ask Peter to come to Caesarea.

<sup>9</sup>About noon the next day, those three men were traveling along the road. As they were approaching Joppa, Peter went up on the flat housetop to pray. <sup>10</sup>Peter became hungry and wanted something to eat. While some people were preparing the food, he saw a vision. <sup>11</sup>He saw an opening in the sky through which something like a large, square piece of cloth was coming down. Someone seemed to be lowering it by its four corners to the ground.

<sup>12</sup>Inside the sheet were many different kinds of creatures. Some had four feet, others crawled on the ground, and others were wild birds. These included animals and birds that the Mosaic laws forbade Jews to eat. <sup>13</sup>Then he heard

God say to him, "Go ahead, Peter, kill some of these and eat them." <sup>14</sup>But Peter replied, "Lord, surely not! I have never eaten anything that our Jewish law says is unacceptable to you or that we must not eat!" <sup>15</sup>Then Peter heard God talk to him a second time. He said, "I am God, so if I have made something acceptable to eat, do not say that it is not acceptable to eat!" <sup>16</sup>This happened three times. Right after that, the sheet with the animals and birds went back up into the sky.

<sup>17</sup>This left Peter trying to understand what that vision meant. Meanwhile, the men Cornelius had sent arrived in Joppa. They asked people how to get to Simon's house. When people told them, they found the house and stood outside the gate. <sup>18</sup>They called from the gate and asked if a man whose name was Simon, whose other name was Peter, was staying there. <sup>19</sup>While Peter was still trying to understand what the vision meant, the Holy Spirit said to him, "Listen! Three men are here who want you to go with them. <sup>20</sup>So do not be reluctant. Go downstairs and go with them! Do not think that you should not go with them, because I have sent them here!" <sup>21</sup>So Peter went down to the men and said to them, "Greetings! I am the man you are looking for. Why have you come?" <sup>22</sup>They replied, "Cornelius, who is a Roman army officer, sent us here. He is a good man who worships God. All of the Jewish people who know about him speak well of him. An angel from God told Cornelius, 'Have some men to go to Joppa and get Simon Peter. Bring him to your house and listen to what he has to say.'" <sup>23</sup>So Peter invited them into the house and told them that they should stay there that night.

The next day Peter got ready and went with the men. Several of the believers from Joppa also went with him. <sup>24</sup>The day after that, they arrived in the city of Caesarea. Cornelius was waiting for them. He had also invited his relatives and close friends to come, so they were there in his house too. <sup>25</sup>When Peter entered the house, Cornelius met him and bowed low in front of him to worship him. <sup>26</sup>But Peter grasped Cornelius by the hand and lifted him to his feet. He said, "Stand up! Do not bow down and worship me! I myself am only human, like you!"

<sup>27</sup>While he was talking to Cornelius, Peter {and the others} entered the house. They saw that Cornelius had invited many people to come {and hear Peter}. <sup>28</sup>Then Peter said to them, "You all know that we Jews think we are disobeying our laws if we associate with people who are not Jews or visit them in their homes. However, God has shown me {in a vision} that I should not say that God only accepts people who are Jews. <sup>29</sup>So when you sent some men to ask me to come here, I came right away without objection. So, please tell me, why have you asked me to come here?"

<sup>30</sup>Cornelius replied, "About this time three days ago, I was praying to God in my house, as I regularly do at three o'clock in the afternoon. Suddenly a man whose clothes shone brightly stood in front of me <sup>31</sup>and said, 'Cornelius, God has heard your prayer. He has also noticed that you have often given money to help poor people, and he is pleased with that. <sup>32</sup>So now, send messengers to go to the city of Joppa in order to ask Simon, whose other name is Peter, to come here. He is staying near the ocean in a house that belongs to another man named Simon, who makes leather.' <sup>33</sup>So I sent some men right away to ask you to come here. I certainly thank you for coming. Now we all are gathered here, knowing that God is with us. We want to hear all the things that the Lord God has commanded you to say. So please speak to us."

<sup>34</sup>So Peter began to speak to them. He said, "Now I understand that it is true that God does not favor only certain groups of people. <sup>35</sup>Instead, from every people group he accepts everyone who honors him and who does what pleases him. <sup>36</sup>You know what God told us Israelites. He proclaimed to us the good news that people could live peacefully with him because of what Jesus the Messiah has done. This Jesus is not Lord only over us Israelites. He is also the Lord who rules over all people. <sup>37</sup>You know what Jesus did throughout the land of Judea, beginning in Galilee. He started to do those things after John proclaimed to people that they should stop their sinful behavior. If they did, John baptized them. <sup>38</sup>You know that God gave his Holy Spirit to Jesus, the man from the town of Nazareth, and gave him the power to do miracles. You also know how Jesus went to many places, doing good deeds. Whenever he met people whom the devil was causing to suffer, he healed them. It was God who enabled Jesus to do those things."

<sup>39</sup>"We all saw the things Jesus did in Jerusalem and around every part of the land of Israel where he lived. His enemies killed him by nailing him to a wooden cross. <sup>40</sup>Jesus died on a Friday, but God brought him back to life that

Sunday. God made sure that many people would see that he was certainly alive again. <sup>41</sup>At that time God did not let everyone see him. God had previously chosen some people to be witnesses that Jesus was alive. I am one of the people who saw him and even ate meals together with him just after God brought him back to life. <sup>42</sup>Jesus commanded us to preach to the people and tell them that God has chosen him to judge everyone one day. He will judge those who are still alive and those who have died before that day. <sup>43</sup>All the prophets who wrote about him long ago told the people about him. They wrote that if anyone believed in him, God would forgive whatever sins they had done, because of what this man, Jesus, would do for them."

<sup>44</sup>While Peter was still speaking about Jesus, suddenly the Holy Spirit came to all those people from other nations who were listening to the message. <sup>45</sup>The Jewish believers who had come with Peter from Joppa were amazed that God had so kindly given the Holy Spirit to people from all different nations too. <sup>46</sup>The Jewish believers knew that God had done that because they were hearing those people speak in other languages to tell how great God is. Then Peter said, <sup>47</sup>{to the other Jewish believers who were there}, "God has given them the Holy Spirit just as he gave him to us Jewish believers. Surely all of you would agree that we should baptize these people!" <sup>48</sup>Then Peter told those non-Jewish people that they should be baptized as believers in Jesus the Messiah. So they baptized all of them. After they were baptized, they requested that Peter stay with them several days. {So Peter and the other Jewish believers did that.}

## Chapter 11

<sup>1</sup>The apostles and other believers who lived in various towns in the province of Judea heard people say that some non-Jewish people had also believed the message of God about Jesus. <sup>2</sup>But there were some Jewish believers in Jerusalem who wanted all followers of the Messiah to be circumcized. When Peter returned from Caesarea to Jerusalem, they met with him and criticized him. <sup>3</sup>They said to him, "Not only was it wrong for you to visit in the homes of uncircumcized non-Jews, you even ate with them!"

<sup>4</sup>So Peter began to explain exactly what had happened. <sup>5</sup>He said, "I was praying by myself in the city of Joppa, and in a trance I saw a vision. I saw that something like a large sheet was being lowered from heaven by its four corners, and it came down to where I was. <sup>6</sup>As I was looking intently into it, I saw some tame animals and also some wild animals, reptiles, and wild birds. <sup>7</sup>Then I heard God commanding me, 'Peter, get up, kill and eat them!' <sup>8</sup>But I replied, 'Lord, you surely do not really want me to do that, because I have never eaten anything that our laws say that we must not eat!' <sup>9</sup>God spoke from heaven to me a second time, 'I am God, so if I have made something acceptable to eat, do not say it is unacceptable.' <sup>10</sup>This same thing happened two more times, and then the sheet with all those animals and birds was pulled up into heaven again.

<sup>11</sup>At that exact moment, three men who had been sent from Caesarea arrived at the house where I was staying. <sup>12</sup>God's Spirit told me that I should not hesitate to go with them even though they were not Jews. Six Jewish believers also went with me to Caesarea, and then we went into that non-Jewish man's house. <sup>13</sup>He told us that he had seen an angel standing in his house. The angel told him, 'Tell some men to go to Joppa and bring back Simon whose other name is Peter. <sup>14</sup>He will tell you how you and everyone else in your house will be saved.' <sup>15</sup>As I started to speak, the Holy Spirit suddenly came down on them, just like he had first come on us during the Pentecost festival. <sup>16</sup>Then I remembered what the Lord had said: 'John baptized you with water, but God will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.' <sup>17</sup>God gave those non-Jews the same Holy Spirit that he had given to us after we had believed in the Lord Jesus the Messiah. So I could not possibly tell God that he did wrong when he gave them the Holy Spirit!"

<sup>18</sup>After those Jewish believers heard what Peter said, they stopped criticizing him. Instead, they praised God, saying, "Then it is clear to us that God has also accepted the non-Jews so that they will have eternal life, if they turn from their sinful behavior."

<sup>19</sup>After Stephen died, many of the believers left Jerusalem and went to other places because they were suffering there in Jerusalem. Some of them went to Phoenicia, some went to the Island of Cyprus, and others went to Antioch, a city in Syria. In those places they were continually telling people the message about Jesus, but they told

only other Jewish people. <sup>20</sup>Some of the believers were men from the Island of Cyprus and Cyrene city in north Africa. They went to Antioch and were also telling non-Jewish people about the Lord Jesus. <sup>21</sup>The Lord God was powerfully enabling those believers to preach effectively. As a result, very many non-Jewish people believed their message and trusted in the Lord.

<sup>22</sup>The group of believers in Jerusalem heard people say that many people in Antioch were believing in Jesus. So the leaders of the believers in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch. <sup>23</sup>When he got there, he realized that God had acted kindly toward the believers. So he was very happy, and he was encouraging all of the believers to continue to trust completely in the Lord Jesus. <sup>24</sup>Barnabas was a good man whom the Holy Spirit completely controlled, one who trusted God completely. Because of what Barnabas did, many people there believed in the Lord Jesus.

<sup>25</sup>Then Barnabas went to Tarsus city in Cilicia to look for Saul. <sup>26</sup>After he found him, Barnabas brought him back to Antioch to help teach the believers. So, during a whole year, Barnabas and Saul met regularly with the church there and taught large numbers of people about Jesus. It was at Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians.

<sup>27</sup>During the time that Barnabas and Saul were at Antioch, some believers who were prophets arrived there from Jerusalem. <sup>28</sup>One of them, whose name was Agabus, stood up in order to speak. God's Spirit enabled him to prophesy that there would soon be a famine in many countries. (This famine happened when Claudius was the Roman emperor.) <sup>29</sup>When the believers there heard what Agabus said, they decided that they would send money to help the believers who lived in Judea. Each of them decided to give as much money as he was able to give. <sup>30</sup>They sent the money with Barnabas and Saul to the leaders of the believers in Jerusalem.

## Chapter 12

<sup>1</sup>It was about this time that King Herod Agrippa sent soldiers to arrest some of the leaders of the group of believers in Jerusalem. The soldiers put them in prison. The king did that because he wanted to make the believers suffer. <sup>2</sup>He commanded a soldier to cut off the head of the apostle James, the older brother of the apostle John, so the soldier did that. <sup>3</sup>When Herod realized that he had pleased the leaders of the Jewish people, he commanded soldiers to arrest Peter too. This happened during the festival when the Jewish people ate bread without yeast. <sup>4</sup>After they arrested Peter, they put him in prison. They commanded four groups of soldiers to guard Peter. Each group had four soldiers. Herod wanted to bring Peter out of prison and judge him in front of the Jewish people after the Passover Festival was finished. He then planned to execute Peter.

<sup>5</sup>So for several days Peter stayed in prison. But the other believers in their group in Jerusalem were praying earnestly to God that he would help Peter. <sup>6</sup>The night before Herod planned to bring Peter out from prison to have him executed publicly, Peter was sleeping in the prison between two soldiers, with two chains binding him. Two other soldiers were guarding the prison doors. <sup>7</sup>Suddenly, an angel from the Lord God stood beside Peter, and a bright light shone in his cell. The angel poked Peter in the side and woke him up and said, "Get up quickly!" While Peter was getting up, the chains fell off from his wrists. However, the soldiers were not aware of what was happening. <sup>8</sup>Then the angel said to him, "Fasten your belt around you and put on your sandals!" So Peter did that. Then the angel told him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me!" <sup>9</sup>So Peter put on his cloak and sandals and followed the angel out of the prison cell, but he had no idea that all this was really happening. He thought that he was dreaming. <sup>10</sup>Peter and the angel walked by the soldiers who were guarding the two doors, but the soldiers did not see them. Then they came to the iron gate that led into the city. The gate opened by itself, and Peter and the angel walked out of the prison. After they had walked some distance along one street, the angel suddenly disappeared. <sup>11</sup>Then Peter finally realized that what had happened to him was not a vision, but that it had really happened. So he thought, "Now I really know that the Lord God sent an angel to help me. He rescued me from what Herod planned to do to me and also from all the things that the Jewish leaders expected would happen."

<sup>12</sup>When Peter realized that God had rescued him, he went to Mary's house. She was the mother of John, whose other name was Mark. Many believers had assembled there, and they were praying that God would help Peter somehow. <sup>13</sup>When Peter knocked at the outer entrance, a servant girl named Rhoda came to find out who was

outside the door. <sup>14</sup>When Peter answered her, she recognized his voice, but she was so happy and excited that she did not open the door! Instead, she ran back into the house. She announced to the other believers that Peter was standing outside the door. <sup>15</sup>But one of them said to her, "You are crazy!" But she continued saying that it was really true. They kept saying, "No, it cannot be Peter. It is probably his angel." <sup>16</sup>But Peter continued knocking on the door. So when someone finally opened the door, they saw that it was Peter, and they were completely amazed! <sup>17</sup>Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet. Then he told them exactly how the Lord God had led him out of the prison. He also said, "Tell James, the leader of our group, and our other fellow believers what has happened." Then Peter left and went away somewhere else.

<sup>18</sup>The next morning the soldiers who had been guarding Peter became terribly upset because they did not know what had happened to him. <sup>19</sup>Then Herod heard about it. So he commanded soldiers to search for Peter, but they did not find him. Then he questioned the soldiers who had been guarding Peter and commanded them to be led away to be executed. Afterwards, Herod went from the province of Judea down to the city of Caesarea, where he stayed for some time.

<sup>20</sup>King Herod had been furiously angry with the people who lived in the cities of Tyre and Sidon. Then one day some men who represented them came together to the city of Caesarea in order to meet with Herod. They persuaded Blastus, who was one of Herod's important officials, to tell Herod that the people in their cities wanted to make peace with him. They wanted to be able to trade with the people that Herod ruled, because they needed to buy food from those regions. <sup>21</sup>On the day that Herod had planned to meet with them, he put on very expensive clothes that showed that he was king. Then he sat on his throne and formally addressed all the people who had gathered there. <sup>22</sup>Those who were listening to him shouted repeatedly, "This man who is speaking is a god, not a man!" <sup>23</sup>Herod let the people praise him instead of praising God. So, immediately, an angel from the Lord God caused Herod to become seriously ill. Many worms ate his intestines. Soon he died very painfully.

<sup>24</sup>The believers continued telling God's message to people in many places, and the number of people who believed in Jesus was continually increasing.

<sup>25</sup>When Barnabas and Saul finished delivering the money to help the Jewish believers in the province of Judea, they left Jerusalem and returned to the city of Antioch, in the province of Syria. They took John, whose other name was Mark, with them.

## Chapter 13

<sup>1</sup>Among the group of believers in Antioch in the province of Syria there were prophets and those who taught people about Jesus. They were: Barnabas; Simeon, who was also called Niger; Lucius, who was from Cyrene; Manaen, who had grown up with King Herod Antipas; and Saul. <sup>2</sup>While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said to them, "Choose Barnabas and Saul to serve me and to go and do the work that I have chosen them to do!" <sup>3</sup>So they continued to fast and pray. Then they put their hands on Barnabas and Saul and prayed that God would help them. Then they sent them off to do what the Holy Spirit had commanded.

<sup>4</sup>The Holy Spirit gave Barnabas and Saul instructions about where to go. So they went down from Antioch to the city of Seleucia by the sea. From there they went by ship to the city of Salamis on the Island of Cyprus. <sup>5</sup>While they were in Salamis, they went to the Jewish meeting places. There they proclaimed the message from God about Jesus. John Mark went with them and was helping them.

<sup>6</sup>The three of them went across the entire island to the city of Paphos. There they met a magician whose name was Bar Jesus. He was a Jew who falsely claimed to be a prophet. <sup>7</sup>He was with the governor of the island, Sergius Paulus, who was an intelligent man. The governor sent someone to ask Barnabas and Saul to come to him because he wanted to hear the word of God. <sup>8</sup>However, the magician, whose name is translated Elymas in the Greek language, tried to stop them. He repeatedly tried to persuade the governor not to believe in Jesus. <sup>9</sup>Saul now called himself Paul. The Holy Spirit caused Paul to look intently at the magician. Paul said, <sup>10</sup>"You are serving the devil,

and you try to stop everything that is good! You are always lying to people and doing other evil things to them. You must stop saying that the truth about the Lord God is false! <sup>11</sup>Right now the Lord God is going to punish you! You will become blind and you will not be able to see the sun for a while." At once he became blind, as though he were in a dark mist, and he groped about, searching for someone to hold him by the hand and lead him. <sup>12</sup>When the governor saw what had happened to Elymas, he believed in Jesus. He was amazed by what Paul and Barnabas were teaching about the Lord Jesus.

<sup>13</sup>After that, Paul and the men with him went by ship from Paphos to the city of Perga in the province of Pamphylia. At Perga, John Mark left them and returned to his home in Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup>Then Paul and Barnabas traveled by land from Perga and arrived in the city of Antioch in the district of Pisidia in the province of Galatia. On the Sabbath they entered the synagogue and sat down. <sup>15</sup>Someone read aloud from what Moses had written in the books of the law. Next someone read from what the prophets had written. Then the leaders of the Jewish meeting place sent a message to Paul and Barnabas: "Fellow Jews, if one of you wants to speak to the people here to encourage them, please speak to us now."

<sup>16</sup>So Paul stood up and motioned with his hand so that the people would listen to him. Then he said, "Fellow Israelites and you non-Jewish people who also worship God, please listen to me! <sup>17</sup>God, whom we Israelites worship, chose our ancestors to be his people, and he caused them to become very numerous while they were foreigners living in Egypt. Then God did powerful things in order to lead them out of slavery. <sup>18</sup>Even though they repeatedly disobeyed him, he endured their behavior for about forty years while they were in the wilderness. <sup>19</sup>He enabled the Israelites to conquer seven people groups who were then living in the region of Canaan, and he gave their land to the Israelites to possess forever. <sup>20</sup>All of these things happened about 450 years after their ancestors had gone to Egypt."

"After that, God chose people to serve as judges and as leaders to rule the Israelite people. Those leaders continued to rule our people, and the prophet Samuel was the last judge to rule them. <sup>21</sup>Then, while Samuel was still their leader, the people demanded that he choose a king to rule them. So God chose Saul, the son of Kish from the tribe of Benjamin, to be their king. He ruled them for 40 years. <sup>22</sup>After God had rejected Saul from being king, he chose David to be their king. God said about him, 'I have seen that David, son of Jesse, is exactly the kind of man who desires what I desire. He will do everything that I want him to do.'"

<sup>23</sup>"From among David's descendants, God brought one of them, Jesus, to us Israelite people to save us, just as he had promised David and our other ancestors that he would do. <sup>24</sup>Before Jesus began his work, John the Baptizer preached to all of our Israelite people who came to him. He told them that they should turn away from their sinful behavior and ask God to forgive them. Then he would baptize them. <sup>25</sup>When John was about to finish the work that God gave him to do, he was saying, 'Do you think that I am the Messiah whom God promised to send? No, I am not. But listen! The Messiah will soon come. He is so much greater than I am that I am not even important enough to take the sandals off of his feet.'"

<sup>26</sup>"Dear brothers, and all you who are descendants of Abraham, and you non-Jewish people among you who also worship God, please listen! It is to all of us that God has sent the message about how he saves people. <sup>27</sup>The people living in Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus. They did not understand the messages of their own prophets even though they heard the prophets read aloud to them every Sabbath. What the prophets predicted long ago was made true when they condemned Jesus to death. <sup>28</sup>Many people accused Jesus of doing wicked things, but even though they could not prove that he had done anything for which he deserved to die, they asked Pilate, the governor, to condemn Jesus to death. <sup>29</sup>They did to Jesus all the things that the prophets long ago had written that the people would do to him. They killed Jesus by nailing him to a cross. Then his body was taken down from the cross and placed in a tomb. <sup>30</sup>However, God raised him from the dead. <sup>31</sup>For many days he repeatedly appeared to his followers who had come along with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. Those who saw him are telling the people about him now."

<sup>32</sup>"Right now we are proclaiming to you this good message. We want to tell you that God has fulfilled what he promised to our Jewish ancestors! <sup>33</sup>Now he has done this for us who are their descendants, and also for you who

are not Jews, by making Jesus alive again. That is just like what David wrote in the second Psalm, when God was speaking about sending his Son:

'You are my Son;

today I have become your Father.'

<sup>34</sup>God has raised the Messiah from the dead and will never let him die again. God said to our Jewish ancestors, 'I will surely help you, as I promised David that I would do.'<sup>35</sup>In another Psalm of David, he also says about the Messiah: 'You will not allow the body of your holy one to decay.'<sup>36</sup>While David was living, he did what God wanted him to do. And when he died, his body was buried, as his ancestors' bodies had been buried, and his body decayed. So he could not have been speaking about himself in this Psalm.<sup>37</sup>But Jesus was the one God raised from the dead, and his body did not decay."

<sup>38</sup>"Therefore, my fellow Israelites and other friends, it is important for you to know that God can forgive you for your sins as a result of what Jesus has done. He will even forgive you for those things that you could not be forgiven for by the laws that Moses wrote.<sup>39</sup>All people who believe in Jesus are no longer guilty of any of the things that they have done that displeased God.<sup>40</sup>So then be careful that God does not judge you, as the prophets said that God would do!<sup>41</sup>The prophet wrote that God said,

'You who ridicule me, you will certainly be astonished when you see what I am doing, and then you will be destroyed. You will be astonished because I will do something terrible to you while you are living. You would not believe that I would do that even though someone told you!'"

<sup>42</sup>After Paul finished speaking and were going away, many of the people there asked them to return on the next Sabbath and say these things to them again.<sup>43</sup>When the meeting was over, many of them began to follow Paul and Barnabas. These people were both Jews and non-Jews who worshiped God. Paul and Barnabas continued talking to them. They were urging them to continue to trust that God kindly forgives people's sins because of what Jesus did.

<sup>44</sup>On the next Sabbath day, most of the people in Antioch came to the Jewish meeting place to hear Paul and Barnabas speak about the Lord Jesus.<sup>45</sup>But the leaders of the Jews became extremely jealous when they saw the large crowds of people that were coming to hear Paul and Barnabas. So they began to contradict the things that Paul was saying and also to insult him.<sup>46</sup>Then, speaking very boldly, Paul and Barnabas said to those Jewish leaders, "We had to speak the message from God about Jesus to you Jews first before we proclaim it to non-Jews, because God commanded us to do that. But you are rejecting God's message. By doing that, you have shown that you are not worthy of eternal life. Therefore, we are leaving you, and now we will go to the non-Jewish people to tell them the message from God.<sup>47</sup>We are doing this also because the Lord God has commanded us to do it. He said in the Scriptures,

'I have chosen you to reveal things about me to non-Jewish people that will be like a light to them. I have chosen you to tell people everywhere in the world the message that I want to save them.'"

<sup>48</sup>When the non-Jewish people heard those words, they began to rejoice, and they gave God praise for the message about Jesus. All of the non-Jewish people whom God had chosen for eternal life believed the message about the Lord Jesus.<sup>49</sup>At that time, many of the believers traveled around throughout that region, spreading the message about the Lord Jesus everywhere they went.

<sup>50</sup>However, some leaders of the Jews talked to some important women who worshiped with them. They also talked to the most important men in the city. The Jewish leaders persuaded the non-Jewish city leaders to try to stop Paul and Barnabas. So those non-Jewish people led many citizens against Paul and Barnabas, and they drove them out of their region.<sup>51</sup>As the two apostles were leaving, they shook the dust from their feet to show those leaders that God had rejected them and would punish them. Then they left the city of Antioch and went to the city of Iconium.

<sup>52</sup>Meanwhile, the joy and power of the Holy Spirit continued to fill the believers.



## Chapter 14

<sup>1</sup>At Iconium Paul and Barnabas went as usual into the Jewish meeting place and spoke very powerfully about the Lord Jesus. As a result, many Jews and also non-Jews believed in Jesus. <sup>2</sup>But some of the Jews refused to believe that message. They told the non-Jews not to believe it; they made some of the non-Jews angry toward the believers there. <sup>3</sup>But Paul and Barnabas spent a long time there speaking boldly for the Lord, and the Lord Jesus enabled them to do many miracles. In this way he showed people the truth of the message that, even though we do not deserve it, the Lord saves us.

<sup>4</sup>The people who lived in Iconium had two different opinions. Some agreed with the Jews. Others agreed with the apostles. <sup>5</sup>Then the non-Jewish people and the Jews who opposed Paul and Barnabas talked among themselves about how they could mistreat Paul and Barnabas. Some of the important men in that city agreed to help them. Together, they decided that they would kill Paul and Barnabas by throwing stones at them. <sup>6</sup>But Paul and Barnabas heard about their plan, so they quickly went away to the district of Lycaonia. They went to the cities of Lystra and Derbe in that district and to the surrounding area. <sup>7</sup>While they were in that area, they continually told the people the message about the Lord Jesus.

<sup>8</sup>In Lystra, a man was sitting there who was crippled in his legs. When his mother gave birth to him, he had crippled legs, so he was never able to walk. <sup>9</sup>He listened as Paul was speaking about the Lord Jesus. Paul looked directly at him and could see in the man's face that he believed that the Lord Jesus could make him well. <sup>10</sup>So with a loud voice, Paul called out to him, "Stand up!" When the man heard that, he immediately jumped up and began to walk around.

<sup>11</sup>When the crowd saw what Paul had done, they thought that Paul and Barnabas were the gods that they worshiped. So they shouted excitedly in their own Lycaonian language, "Look! The gods have made themselves to look like people and have come down from the sky to help us!" <sup>12</sup>They began to say that Barnabas was probably the chief god, whose name was Zeus. And they began to say that Paul was Hermes, the messenger for the other gods. They had that thought because Paul was the one who had been speaking. <sup>13</sup>People worshiped Zeus at a temple just outside the gates of the city. The priest who was there heard what Paul and Barnabas had done, so he came to the city gate, where many people had already gathered. He brought two bulls with wreaths of flowers around their necks. The priest and the crowd of people wanted to kill the bulls as part of a ceremony to worship Paul and Barnabas. <sup>14</sup>But when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard about that, they were very upset, so they tore their own clothes. They rushed among the people, shouting, <sup>15</sup>"Men, you must not kill those bulls to worship us! We are not gods! We are just human beings with the same feelings as you! We have come to tell you some good news! We have come to tell you about the God who is all-powerful. He wants you to stop worshiping other gods because they cannot help you. This true God made the heavens, the earth, the oceans, and everything in them.

<sup>16</sup>In the past, all of you non-Jewish people worshiped whatever gods that you wanted to worship. God let you worship them because you did not know him. <sup>17</sup>But he has shown us that he acts kindly toward us. He is the one who causes it to rain and causes crops to grow. He is the one who gives you plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy." <sup>18</sup>The people heard what Paul said, but they still thought that they should sacrifice those bulls to worship Paul and Barnabas. But finally, the people decided not to do it.

<sup>19</sup>However, some Jews came from Antioch and Iconium and persuaded many of the people of Lystra that the message Paul had been telling them was not true. The people who believed what those Jews said became angry with Paul. They let the Jews throw stones at him until he fell down, unconscious. They all thought that he was dead, so they dragged him outside the city and left him lying there. <sup>20</sup>But some of the believers in Lystra came and stood around Paul, where he was lying on the ground. And Paul became conscious! He stood up and went back into the city with the believers.

The next day, Paul and Barnabas left the city of Lystra and traveled to the city of Derbe. <sup>21</sup>They stayed there several days, and they kept telling the people the good message about Jesus. Many people became believers. After that, Paul and Barnabas started on their way back. They went again to Lystra. Then they went from there to Iconium, and then they went to the city of Antioch in the province of Pisidia. <sup>22</sup>In each place, they urged the believers to keep

on trusting in the Lord Jesus. They told the believers, "We must suffer many hardships before God will rule over us forever." <sup>23</sup>Paul and Barnabas chose leaders for each congregation. Before Paul and Barnabas left each place, they gathered the believers together and spent some time praying and fasting. Then Paul and Barnabas entrusted the leaders and other believers to the Lord Jesus, in whom they had believed, in order that he would care for them.

<sup>24</sup>After Paul and Barnabas had traveled through the district of Pisidia, they went south to the district of Pamphylia.

<sup>25</sup>In that district, they arrived at the town of Perga and preached God's message about the Lord Jesus to the people there. Then they went down to the seacoast at the town of Attalia. <sup>26</sup>There they got on a ship and went back to the city of Antioch in the province of Syria. That was the place where Paul and Barnabas had been chosen to go to other places and preach, and where the believers had asked God to help Paul and Barnabas in the work that they had now completed. <sup>27</sup>When they arrived in the city of Antioch, they called the believers together. Then Paul and Barnabas told them all that God had helped them to do. Specifically, they told them how God had enabled many non-Jewish people to believe in Jesus. <sup>28</sup>Then Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch with the other believers for a long time.

## Chapter 15

<sup>1</sup>Then some Jewish believers went down from Judea province to Antioch. They started teaching the non-Jewish believers there, saying, "You must be circumcised to show that you belong to God, as Moses commanded in the laws that he received from God. If you do not do that, you will not be saved." <sup>2</sup>Paul and Barnabas strongly disagreed with those Jews and started arguing with them. So the believers at Antioch appointed Paul and Barnabas and some of the other believers to go to Jerusalem, in order that they might discuss this matter with the apostles and other leaders.

<sup>3</sup>After Paul, Barnabas, and the others were sent on their way by the believers in Antioch, they traveled through the provinces of Phoenicia and Samaria. When they stopped at different places along the way, they reported to the believers that many non-Jews had become believers. As a result, all the believers in those places rejoiced greatly.

<sup>4</sup>When Paul, Barnabas, and the others arrived in Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the apostles, other elders, and the other believers in the group there. Then Paul and Barnabas reported the things that God had enabled them to do among non-Jewish people.

<sup>5</sup>But some of the Jewish believers who belonged to the Pharisee sect stood up among the other believers and said to them, "The non-Jews who have believed in Jesus must be circumcised, and they must be told to obey the laws that God gave to Moses."

<sup>6</sup>Then the apostles and the elders met together in order to talk about this matter. <sup>7</sup>After they had discussed it for a long time, Peter stood up and spoke to them. He said, "Fellow believers, you all know that a long time ago God chose me from among you other apostles, in order that I might tell the non-Jewish people also about God's love, and in order that they might believe in him. <sup>8</sup>God knows the hearts of all people. He showed me and others that he had accepted the non-Jews to be his people by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just like he had also done for us. <sup>9</sup>God made no distinction between us and them, because he made them clean inside simply as a result of their believing in the Lord Jesus. That is exactly how he has forgiven us. <sup>10</sup>Why do you want to force the non-Jewish believers to obey our Jewish rituals and laws? Doing that is like putting a heavy burden on them. It forces them to obey laws that even our ancestors broke and that we Jews today have never been able to keep! So then, stop making God angry by doing that! <sup>11</sup>We know that God saves us Jews from our sins because of what the Lord Jesus did for us. God saves us Jews exactly like he saves those non-Jews who believe in the Lord Jesus."

<sup>12</sup>All the people there became silent after Peter had spoken. Then they all listened to Barnabas and Paul. The two of them told about the many great miracles that God had enabled them to do among the non-Jewish people. The miracles that showed that God had accepted the non-Jews.

<sup>13</sup>When Barnabas and Paul had finished speaking, James, the leader of the group of believers in Jerusalem, spoke to them. He said, "Fellow believers, listen to me. <sup>14</sup>Simon Peter has told you how God previously blessed the non-

Jews. God did that by choosing from among them a people who would belong to himself. <sup>15</sup>The words that God spoke long ago, words that were written by one of the prophets, agree with that:

<sup>16</sup>Later on I will return and I will restore the kingdom of David when I choose a king from the descendants of David. It will be like someone who builds a house again after it has been torn down. <sup>17</sup>I will do this in order that all other people might try to know me, the Lord God. This will include even the non-Israelites whom I have called to belong to me. You can be certain that this will happen because I the Lord God have spoken these words. <sup>18</sup>I have done these things, and I have made my people know about them since long ago."

<sup>19</sup>James continued to speak. He said, "Therefore I think that we should stop bothering the non-Jewish people who are turning away from their sins and turning to God. That is, we should stop demanding that they obey all our laws and rituals. <sup>20</sup>Instead, we should write a letter to them requiring only four things: They should not eat meat that people have offered to idols, they should not sleep with someone to whom they are not married, they should not eat meat from animals that have been killed by being strangled, and they should not eat the blood of animals. <sup>21</sup>In many cities for a very long time, people have been proclaiming the laws that Moses wrote, laws prohibiting those things. And every Sabbath those laws are read in the Jewish meeting places. So if the non-Jews want to know more about those laws, they can find out in our meeting houses."

<sup>22</sup>The apostles and the other elders, along with all the other believers in Jerusalem, accepted what James had said. Then they decided that they should choose men from among themselves and that they should send them, along with Paul and Barnabas, to Antioch, to let the believers there know what the leaders at Jerusalem had decided. So they chose Judas, who was also called Barsabbas, and Silas. These were both leaders among the believers at Jerusalem. <sup>23</sup>Then they wrote the following letter that they asked Judas and Silas to take to the believers at Antioch: "We apostles and elders who are your fellow believers send our greetings to you as we write this to you non-Jewish believers who live in Antioch and other places in the provinces of Syria and Cilicia. <sup>24</sup>People have told us that some men from among us went to you, although we had not sent them to you. We heard that they have troubled you by telling you things that confused your thinking. <sup>25</sup>So after we met together here, we decided to choose some men and ask them to go to you, along with Barnabas and Paul, whom we love very much. <sup>26</sup>Those two have put their lives in danger because they serve our Lord Jesus the Messiah. <sup>27</sup>We have also sent Judas and Silas to you. They will tell you the same things that we are writing. <sup>28</sup>It seemed right to the Holy Spirit and to us that you should not be required to obey a lot of burdensome Jewish laws. Instead, we only require you to obey the following instructions:

<sup>29</sup>You should not eat food that people have sacrificed to idols.

You should not eat blood from animals, and you should not eat meat from animals that people have killed by strangling them.

Also, you should not sleep with someone to whom you are not married.

If you avoid doing these things, you will be doing what is right. Farewell."

<sup>30</sup>The four men they selected went down from Jerusalem and came to Antioch. When all the believers there had assembled together, they gave the letter to them. <sup>31</sup>When the believers there read the letter, they rejoiced because its message encouraged them. <sup>32</sup>Being prophets, Judas and Silas spoke a lot and encouraged the believers there and helped them to trust more strongly in the Lord Jesus.

<sup>33</sup>After Judas and Silas had stayed there for some time and were ready to return to Jerusalem, the believers at Antioch wished them well, and then they left. <sup>34</sup><sup>[1]</sup> [But Silas thought it would be best for him to stay there.]

<sup>35</sup>However, Paul and Barnabas continued to stay in Antioch. While they were there, they, along with many others, were teaching people and preaching to them the message about the Lord Jesus.

<sup>36</sup>After some time Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the fellow believers in every city where we previously proclaimed the message about the Lord Jesus. In that way, we will know how well they are continuing to believe in the Lord Jesus." <sup>37</sup>Barnabas agreed with Paul, and said that he wanted to take John, whose other name

was Mark, along with them again. <sup>38</sup>However, Paul told Barnabas that he thought that it would not be good to take Mark with them, because Mark had left them when they were previously in the region of Pamphylia, and had not continued to work with them. <sup>39</sup>Paul and Barnabas strongly disagreed with each other about this matter, so they separated from each other. Barnabas took Mark along with him. They got on a ship and went to the Island of Cyprus. <sup>40</sup>Paul chose Silas, who had returned to Antioch, to work with him. The believers there prayed to the Lord God, asking him to graciously help Paul and Silas. Then the two of them departed from Antioch. <sup>41</sup>Paul continued traveling with Silas through the provinces of Syria and Cilicia. In those places they were helping the groups of believers to trust strongly in the Lord Jesus.

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15:34 <sup>[1]</sup>

## Chapter 16

<sup>1</sup>Paul and Silas went to the cities of Derbe and Lystra and visited the believers there. And take note of this: a believer whose name was Timothy lived in Lystra. His mother was a Jewish believer, but his father was a Greek.

<sup>2</sup>The believers in Lystra and Iconium said good things about Timothy, <sup>3</sup>and Paul wanted to take Timothy with him when he went to other places, so he circumcised Timothy. He did that so that the Jews who lived in those places would accept Timothy, because they knew that his non-Jewish father had not circumcised him.

<sup>4</sup>So Timothy went with Paul and Silas, and they traveled to many other towns. In each town they told the believers the rules that had been decided by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem.

<sup>5</sup>They helped the believers in those towns to trust more strongly in the Lord Jesus, and every day more people became believers.

<sup>6</sup>Paul and his companions were stopped from speaking the word in Asia by the Holy Spirit, so they went through the regions of Phrygia and Galatia. <sup>7</sup>They arrived at the border of the province of Mysia, and they wanted to go north into the province of Bithynia, but again the Spirit of Jesus kept them from going there. <sup>8</sup>So they went through the province of Mysia and arrived at Troas, a city by the sea. <sup>9</sup>That night God gave Paul a vision in which he saw a man from the province of Macedonia. He was calling to Paul, saying, "Come to Macedonia and help us!" <sup>10</sup>After he saw the vision, we left for Macedonia, because we believed that God had called us to proclaim the good news with the people there.

<sup>11</sup>We got on a boat and sailed from Troas to Samothrace, and the next day went to the city of Neapolis. <sup>12</sup>Then we left Neapolis and went to Philippi. It was a very important city in Macedonia, where many Roman citizens lived. We stayed in Philippi for many days.

<sup>13</sup>On the Sabbath day we went outside the city gate down to the river. We had heard someone say that Jewish people gathered to pray there. When we arrived, we saw some women who had gathered to pray, so we sat down and began to tell them about Jesus. <sup>14</sup>A woman whose name was Lydia was one of the women who was listening to Paul. She was from the city of Thyatira, sold purple cloth, and worshiped God. The Lord God caused her to pay attention to the message that Paul spoke, and she believed it. <sup>15</sup>After Paul and Silas baptized Lydia and the others who lived in her house, she said to them, "If you believe I have been faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay there." After she said this, we stayed at her house.

<sup>16</sup>Another day, while we were going to the place where people gathered to pray, we met a young woman who was a slave. An evil spirit was giving her power to tell the future about people. People paid money to the men who were her owners, in return for her telling them what would happen to them. <sup>17</sup>This young woman followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men serve the God who is the greatest of all gods! They are telling you how God can save you." <sup>18</sup>She continued to do this for many days. Finally, Paul became angry, so he turned toward the young woman and spoke to the evil spirit that was in her. He said, "In the name of Jesus the Messiah, come out of her!" Right away the evil spirit left her. <sup>19</sup>And then her owners realized that she could no longer earn money for them because she could no longer predict what would happen to people, so they were angry. They grabbed Paul and

Silas and took them to the public square where the rulers of the city were. <sup>20</sup>The owners of the young woman brought them to the city rulers and told them, "These men are Jews, and they are greatly troubling the people in our city. <sup>21</sup>They are teaching that we should follow rules that our laws do not allow us Romans to obey!" <sup>22</sup>Many of the crowd joined those who were accusing Paul and Silas, and they started to beat them. Then the Roman rulers told soldiers to tear the shirts off Paul and Silas and to beat them with rods. <sup>23</sup>So the soldiers beat Paul and Silas badly with rods. After that, they took them and put them into the prison. They told the jailer to make sure they did not get out. <sup>24</sup>Because the officials had told him to do that, the jailer put Paul and Silas into the room that was farthest inside the prison. There, he made them sit down on the floor and stretch out their legs. Then he fastened their ankles in holes between two large pieces of wood, so that Paul and Silas could not move their legs.

<sup>25</sup>About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and praising God by singing songs. The other prisoners were listening to them. <sup>26</sup>Suddenly there was a very strong earthquake that shook the jail. The earthquake caused all of the doors of the jail to open and all of the chains that fastened the prisoners to fall off. <sup>27</sup>The jailer woke up and saw that the doors of the jail were open by the earthquake. He thought that the prisoners had left the jail, so he pulled out his sword to kill himself, because he knew that the city rulers would kill him if the prisoners became free. <sup>28</sup>Paul saw the jailer and shouted to him, "Do not kill yourself! We prisoners are all here!" <sup>29</sup>The jailer shouted to someone to bring torches so he could see who was still in the prison. He rushed in, shaking with fear, and fell down in front of Paul and Silas. <sup>30</sup>Then he brought Paul and Silas out of the jail and asked: "Sirs, what do I need to do to be saved?" <sup>31</sup>They answered, "Trust in the Lord Jesus, and you and your household will be saved."

<sup>32</sup>Then Paul and Silas spoke about the Lord Jesus to him and everyone in his household. <sup>33</sup>Then the jailer washed their wounds, right at that time in the middle of the night. Then Paul and Silas baptized him and everyone in his household. <sup>34</sup>Then the jailer took Paul and Silas into his house and gave them food to eat. He and all in his household were all very happy because they had believed in God.

<sup>35</sup>The next morning, the city rulers told some soldiers to go to the prison to say to the jailer, "Let those two prisoners go now!" <sup>36</sup>When the jailer heard this, he went and told Paul, "The city rulers have told me to let you go. So you two can leave the prison now and go in peace!" <sup>37</sup>But Paul said to the jailer, "The city rulers told men to beat us in front of a crowd, even though we are Roman citizens, and put us in prison. And now they want to send us away without telling anyone! We will not accept that! Those city rulers must come themselves and free us from prison." <sup>38</sup>So the soldiers went and told the city rulers what Paul had said. When the city rulers heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were afraid because they had done the wrong thing. <sup>39</sup>So the city rulers came to Paul and Silas and told them that they were sorry for what they had done to them. The city rulers brought them out of the prison and asked them to leave the city. <sup>40</sup>After Paul and Silas left the prison, they went to Lydia's house. There they met with her and the other believers. They encouraged the believers to continue trusting in the Lord Jesus, and then the two apostles left the city of Philippi.

## Chapter 17

<sup>1</sup>They traveled through the cities of Amphipolis and Apollonia and came to the city of Thessalonica. There was a Jewish meeting place there. <sup>2</sup>On the sabbath Paul went to the meeting place as he usually did. For three weeks he went there on each sabbath day. He spoke to the people about how the Scriptures said that Jesus would be the Messiah. <sup>3</sup>He showed from the Scriptures that the prophets wrote that the Messiah would have to die and come alive again. He said, "This man Jesus is the Messiah. He died and became alive again, just like the prophets said he would." <sup>4</sup>Some of the Jews there believed what Paul had said and began to meet with Paul and Silas. There were also many non-Jewish people and important women who worshiped God who also believed the message about Jesus, and they also began to meet with Paul and Silas.

<sup>5</sup>But some leaders of the Jews became angry because many people believed what Paul taught. So they went to the public square and persuaded some evil men to follow them. In this way, the leaders of the Jews gathered a crowd and caused them to make a lot of noise. Those Jews and others ran to the house of a man named Jason where Paul and Silas were staying. They wanted to bring Paul and Silas outside to where the crowd of people were. <sup>6</sup>They

discovered that Paul and Silas were not at the house, but they found Jason and grabbed him. They dragged him and some of the other believers who were with him to where the city rulers were. They said, "The men who have caused trouble everywhere in the world have come here also, <sup>7</sup>and this fellow Jason has asked them to stay at his house. They are acting against the emperor. They say that another person, whose name is Jesus, is the real king!"

<sup>8</sup>When the crowd of people that had gathered and the city rulers heard that, they became very angry and excited.

<sup>9</sup>The city rulers made Jason and the other believers pay a fine and told them that they would give the money back to them if Paul and Silas did not cause any more trouble. Then the city rulers let Jason and the other believers go.

<sup>10</sup>So that same night, the believers sent Paul and Silas out of Thessalonica to the town of Berea. When Paul and Silas arrived there, they went to the Jewish meeting place. <sup>11</sup>Most of the Jews in Thessalonica had not been willing to listen to God's message, but the Jews who lived in Berea were very willing to listen, so they listened closely to the message about Jesus. Every day they read the Scriptures for themselves to find out if what Paul said about Jesus was true. <sup>12</sup>Because of Paul's teaching, many of the Jewish people believed in Jesus, and also some of the important non-Jewish women and many non-Jewish men believed in him.

<sup>13</sup>But then the Jews in Thessalonica heard that Paul was in Berea preaching the message from God about Jesus. So they went to Berea and said things to the people there that made them very angry with Paul. <sup>14</sup>Some of the believers in Berea took Paul to the seacoast to go to another city. But Silas and Timothy stayed in Berea. <sup>15</sup>When Paul and the other men arrived at the coast, they got on a boat and went to the city of Athens. Then Paul said to the men who had come with him, "Tell Silas and Timothy to come to me here in Athens as soon as they can." Then those men left Athens and returned to Berea.

<sup>16</sup>In Athens, Paul waited for Silas and Timothy to come. In the meantime, he walked around in the city. He became very distressed because there were many idols in the city. <sup>17</sup>So he went to the Jewish meeting place and talked about Jesus with the Jews, and also with the Greeks who had accepted what the Jews believe. He also went to the public square every day and talked to the people whom he met there.

<sup>18</sup>Paul met some teachers who liked to talk about what people believe. People called some of them Epicureans, and they called others Stoics. They told Paul what they believed, and they asked him what he believed. Then some of them said to one another, "He is saying something about some strange gods." They said that because Paul was telling them that Jesus had died and then had become alive again.

<sup>19</sup>So they took him to the place where the city leaders met. When they arrived there, they said to Paul, "Please tell us, what is this new message that you are teaching people? <sup>20</sup>You are teaching some things that we do not understand, so we want to know what they mean." <sup>21</sup>The people of Athens and also the people from other regions who lived there loved to talk about what was new to them.

<sup>22</sup>Then Paul stood up in front of the people and said, "People of Athens, I see that you are very religious. <sup>23</sup>I say that because, while I was walking along I saw the things that you worship, I even saw an altar that had these words that someone had carved on it: THIS HONORS A GOD THAT WE DO NOT KNOW. So now I will tell you about that God whom you worship but you do not know.

<sup>24</sup>He is the God who made the world and everything in it. He rules over all beings in heaven and on earth, and he does not live in temples that people have built. <sup>25</sup>He does not need to have anything made for him by people because he makes people live and breath, and he gives them everything they need.

<sup>26</sup>In the beginning, God created one couple, and from them God produced all the people groups that now live everywhere on the earth. He put each people group in its place for its time. <sup>27</sup>He wanted people to realize that they need him. Then maybe they would look for him and find him. God wants us to look for him, although he is very close to each one of us. <sup>28</sup>It is because of God that we live, move, and exist, as one of you has said, 'Because we are his children.'

<sup>29</sup>Therefore, because we are God's children, we should not think that God is like gold, silver, or stone, made into something by man. <sup>30</sup>During the times when people did not know what God wanted them to do, he did not punish

them for what they did. But now God commands all people everywhere to turn away from their evil deeds. <sup>31</sup>He tells us that on a certain day that he has chosen he is going to judge all of us justly by the man he has chosen, making sure we understand this by raising this man from the dead."

<sup>32</sup>When the men heard Paul say that a man had become alive again after he had died, some of them laughed at him. But others asked him to come back and tell them about it another day. <sup>33</sup>After they said that, Paul walked away. <sup>34</sup>However, some of the people went with Paul and believed the message about Jesus. Among those who believed in Jesus was a man named Dionysius who was a member of the council. Also, there were a woman named Damaris and some other people with them who believed.

## Chapter 18

<sup>1</sup>After that, Paul left the city of Athens and went to the city of Corinth. <sup>2</sup>There he met a Jew whose name was Aquila, who was from the region of Pontus. Aquila and his wife Priscilla had come a short time previously from the city of Rome, in Italy. They left Rome because Claudius, the Roman emperor, had ordered that all the Jews must leave Rome. Paul went to see Priscilla and Aquila. <sup>3</sup>Aquila and Priscilla made tents to earn money. Paul also made tents, so he stayed with them, and they worked together. <sup>4</sup>Every Sabbath, Paul went to the Jewish meeting place, where he spoke to both Jews and non-Jews. He taught them about Jesus.

<sup>5</sup>When Silas and Timothy came from the region of Macedonia, Paul was strongly moved by the Spirit to tell the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. <sup>6</sup>But the Jews began to turn against Paul and to say evil things about him. So he shook the dust from his clothes and he said to them, "If God punishes you, it is your responsibility, not mine! From now on I will talk to those who are not Jewish!" <sup>7</sup>So Paul left the Jewish meeting place and went into a house that was next to it, and preached there. Titius Justus, the owner of the house, was a non-Jewish man who worshiped God. <sup>8</sup>After that, the ruler of the Jewish meeting place, whose name was Crispus, and all of his family believed in the Lord. Many other people in Corinth heard about Crispus and his family, they also believed in Jesus and were baptized.

<sup>9</sup>One night Paul had a vision in which the Lord Jesus said to him, "Do not be afraid of the people who are against you, but keep talking about me, <sup>10</sup>because I will help you and no one will be able to hurt you here. Keep telling them about me, because there are many people in this city who belong to me." <sup>11</sup>So Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching the people the message from God about Jesus.

<sup>12</sup>When Gallio became the Roman governor of the province of Achaia, the Jewish leaders got together and seized Paul. They took him before the governor and accused him, <sup>13</sup>saying, "This man is teaching people to worship God in ways that go against our Jewish laws." <sup>14</sup>When Paul was about to speak, Gallio said to the Jews, "If this man had broken our Roman laws, I would have listened to what you Jews want to tell me. <sup>15</sup>However, you are talking about words and names and your own Jewish laws, so you yourselves must talk to him about this. I will not judge these things!" <sup>16</sup>After Gallio had said that, he told some soldiers to take the Jewish leaders away from the court. <sup>17</sup>Then the people grabbed the leader of the Jews, Sosthenes. They beat him right there in front of the judge's seat. But Gallio did nothing about it.

<sup>18</sup>Paul stayed with the believers in Corinth for many more days. Then he got on a ship with Priscilla and Aquila and sailed for the province of Syria. He got his hair cut off in Cenchrea because of a vow that he had made. <sup>19</sup>They arrived at the city of Ephesus, and Priscilla and Aquila stayed there.

Paul himself entered the Jewish meeting place and spoke to the Jews about Jesus. <sup>20</sup>They asked him to stay longer, but he did not agree to stay. <sup>21</sup>But as he left, he told them, "I will come back, if God wants me to." Then he got on a ship and sailed away from Ephesus.

<sup>22</sup>When the ship came to the city of Caesarea, Paul got off. He went up to Jerusalem and greeted the believers there. Then he went to the city of Antioch in the region of Syria.

<sup>23</sup>Paul spent some time with the believers there. Then he left Antioch and walked to many cities in the regions of Galatia and Phrygia. He urged the believers to believe more and more in the message from God about Jesus.

<sup>24</sup>While Paul was going through Galatia and Phrygia, a Jewish man named Apollos came to Ephesus. He was from the city of Alexandria and spoke very well about the Scriptures. <sup>25</sup>Other believers had taught Apollos how the Lord Jesus wanted people to live, and he enthusiastically taught those things to the people. However, he was not teaching everything about Jesus, because he only knew about the baptism of John the Baptizer. <sup>26</sup>Apollos went to the Jewish meeting place, and he told the people there about the things that he had learned. When Priscilla and Aquila heard what he taught, they asked him to come to their home where they taught him more about Jesus.

<sup>27</sup>When Apollos decided that he would like to go to the region of Achaia, the believers in Ephesus told him that it would be good for him to do that. So they wrote a letter to the believers in Achaia saying that they should welcome Apollos. After he got there, he helped those whom God had kindly enabled to believe in Jesus. <sup>28</sup>Apollos was talking very powerfully with the leaders of the Jews while many other people listened. By reading from the Scriptures, he was able to show them that Jesus was the Messiah.

## Chapter 19

<sup>1</sup>While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul left Phrygia and Galatia and went through Asia, and he came back to Ephesus. He met some people who said that they were believers. <sup>2</sup>He asked them, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed God's message?" They answered, "No, we did not. We have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit." <sup>3</sup>So Paul asked, "So when you were baptized, what did you know?" They replied, "We believed what John the Baptizer taught." <sup>4</sup>Paul said, "John's baptism was a sign that people were turning to God and away from their evil thoughts and deeds. He also told them to believe in someone else, one who is coming after him, and that person is Jesus." <sup>5</sup>So when those men heard that, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup>After that, Paul placed his hands on their heads one by one, and the power of the Holy Spirit came upon each of them. The Holy Spirit gave them power to speak in languages that they had not learned, and they also spoke messages that the Holy Spirit told them. <sup>7</sup>There were about twelve men whom Paul baptized and who received the Holy Spirit.

<sup>8</sup>For three months after that, Paul entered the Jewish meeting place in Ephesus on each Sabbath and taught and persuaded people about Jesus and how God would show himself as king. <sup>9</sup>But some of the Jews would not believe the message and did not want to hear it any more. They said many bad things about what Paul was teaching. So Paul left them and took the believers with him to meet in the meeting place of Tyrannus. <sup>10</sup>For two years Paul taught people there. In this way, most of the Jews and non-Jews who lived in the region of Asia heard the message about the Lord Jesus.

<sup>11</sup>God also gave Paul the power to do miracles. <sup>12</sup>If those who were sick could not come to Paul, pieces of cloth that Paul touched would be taken and placed on the sick people. As a result, the sick people would become well, and the evil spirits would leave them.

<sup>13</sup>There were also some Jews who walked from town to town, and they commanded the evil spirits in those places to depart from people. Some of those Jews told the evil spirits to come out of people by saying "I command you to come out by the power of the Lord Jesus, the man whom Paul teaches about!" <sup>14</sup>There were seven men who were doing this. They were sons of a man named Sceva, a Jew, who called himself a chief priest. <sup>15</sup>But one day as they were doing that, the evil spirit did not come out of that person. Instead, the evil spirit said to them, "I know Jesus, and I know Paul, but no one has given you power to do anything to me!" <sup>16</sup>After saying that, suddenly the man who had the evil spirit jumped on the sons of Sceva. He knocked all of them down and hurt each of them. He tore off their clothes and wounded them. They became frightened and ran out of the house. <sup>17</sup>All the people who lived in Ephesus, both Jews and non-Jews, heard what had happened. They became afraid because they saw that the man with the evil spirit was very strong. At the same time, they honored the name of the Lord Jesus.



<sup>18</sup>At that time, while other believers were listening, many believers told about the evil things that they had been doing. <sup>19</sup>Some of the people who were sorcerers took their scrolls that told how to work magic and burned them in a place where everyone could see them. When people added up how much the scrolls cost, it came to fifty thousand silver coins.

<sup>20</sup>In this way, many people heard the message about the Lord Jesus and believed in him.

<sup>21</sup>After Paul completed his work in Ephesus, the Spirit led him to decide to go to Jerusalem, but first he planned to go see the believers in the regions of Macedonia and Achaia. Paul said, "After I have been to Jerusalem, I will also go to Rome." <sup>22</sup>He sent two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, to Macedonia. But Paul stayed in the city of Ephesus, in the province of Asia.

<sup>23</sup>Soon after that, people in Ephesus began to make a great amount of trouble because of Jesus and the teaching about him. <sup>24</sup>There was a man there whose name was Demetrius. He made statues of the goddess Artemis (who is also known as Diana) out of silver. Demetrius made a lot of money for all the men who made and sold these idols.

<sup>25</sup>Demetrius called together the workmen who made the idols. He said to them, "Men, you know that we make a lot of money doing our work. <sup>26</sup>You know that Paul has taught many people who live in Ephesus to no longer buy the statues that we make. Now even the people from many other towns in our province no longer want to buy what we make. Paul tells people that the gods that we worship are not gods and that we should not worship them. <sup>27</sup>If people listen to him, they will stop our business. People will not think that they should come any longer to the temple of Artemis (also known as Diana) to worship her. People will no longer think that Artemis is great. Yet all the province of Asia and even the whole world worship her!" <sup>28</sup>All the men there became angry at Paul when they heard what Demetrius said. They began to shout, "The goddess Artemis of the Ephesians is great!" <sup>29</sup>Many of the people in the city became angry at Paul and began shouting. Some of the people took hold of Gaius and Aristarchus, two men from Macedonia who traveled with Paul. Then the whole crowd of people ran, dragging those men along with them, to the city theater. <sup>30</sup>Paul wanted to go into theater to talk to the people, but the other believers would not let him go there. <sup>31</sup>Some city rulers who were friends of Paul heard what was happening. They sent someone to tell Paul not to go into the theater.

<sup>32</sup>The crowd of people in the theater kept shouting. Some shouted one thing, and some shouted something else. But most of them did not even know why they were meeting! <sup>33</sup>One of the Jews there was named Alexander. Some of the Jews pushed him to the front of the crowd so that he could speak to the people. Alexander put his hands up trying to get the crowd to stop shouting. He wanted to tell them that the Jews did not cause the trouble. <sup>34</sup>But many of the non-Jewish people knew that Alexander was a Jew and knew that the Jews did not worship the goddess Artemis. So the non-Jews shouted for two hours, "Great is the goddess Artemis of the Ephesians!"

<sup>35</sup>Then one of the city rulers made the crowd stop shouting. He said to them, "My fellow citizens, everyone in the world knows that the sacred image of our goddess Artemis fell down from heaven! <sup>36</sup>Everyone knows that, and no one can say that these things are not true. So you should be quiet now. Do not do anything stupid. <sup>37</sup>You should not have brought these two men here, because they have not done anything evil. They have not gone into our temples and taken things from there, and they have not spoken evil of our goddess. <sup>38</sup>Therefore, if Demetrius and his fellow workmen want to accuse anyone of doing anything bad, they should do it in the right way. There are courts that they can go to if they want to, and there are judges who have been chosen by the government. You can accuse anyone there. <sup>39</sup>But if you want to ask about anything else, you should ask for your rulers to take care of it when those rulers come together. <sup>40</sup>This is not a good meeting! Take care of this trouble the right way because we do not want to go against the government. If the rulers asked me what you were all shouting about, I would not be able to give them a good answer." <sup>41</sup>That is what the city ruler said to the crowd. Then he told them all to go home, and they did go to their homes.

## Chapter 20

<sup>1</sup>After the people at Ephesus had stopped rioting, Paul called the believers together. He urged them to continue to trust in the Lord Jesus. Soon after that, he told them “Goodbye” and left to go to the region of Macedonia. <sup>2</sup>After he arrived there, he urged them to continue to trust in the Lord Jesus. Then he went to Greece. <sup>3</sup>He stayed in Greece for three months. Then he planned to return to Syria by ship, but he heard that some of the Jews there were planning to kill him as he traveled. So he decided to go by land, and he went again through Macedonia. <sup>4</sup>The men who were going to travel with him to Jerusalem were Sopater, the son of Pyrrhus, from the town of Berea; Aristarchus and Secundus, who were from the city of Thessalonica; Gaius, who was from the city of Derbe; Timothy, who was from the region of Galatia; and Tychicus and Trophimus, who were from the province of Asia. <sup>5</sup>Those seven men went ahead of Paul and me, Luke, by ship from Macedonia, so they got to the city of Troas before we did and waited for the two of us there. <sup>6</sup>But Paul and I traveled by land as far as the city of Philippi. After the Jewish Festival of Bread made without Yeast, we got on a ship that was going to the city of Troas. After five days we arrived at Troas and met the other men who had traveled ahead of us. Then we all stayed in Troas for seven days.

<sup>7</sup>On the first day of the week, we would gather together and we would share a meal together with the other believers. Paul spoke to the believers until midnight. He was planning to leave Troas the next day, so he continued speaking. <sup>8</sup>Many oil lamps were burning in the upstairs room in which we had gathered. <sup>9</sup>A young man whose name was Eutychus was there. He was seated on the sill of an open window on the third story of the house. As Paul continued talking for a long time, Eutychus became sleepier and sleepier. Finally, he fell sound asleep. He fell out of the window down to the ground. Some of the believers went down immediately and picked him up. But he was dead. <sup>10</sup>Paul also went down. He lay down and stretched out on top of the young man and put his arms around him. Then he said to the people who were standing around, “Do not worry; he is alive again!” <sup>11</sup>Paul went upstairs again and he prepared a meal and he ate it. Afterwards he talked with the believers until the sun came up. Then he left. <sup>12</sup>The other people took the young man home, and were greatly comforted because he was alive again.

<sup>13</sup>We then went to the ship. But Paul did not get on the ship with us in Troas, because he wanted to go more quickly overland to the town of Assos. The rest of us got on the ship and sailed for Assos. <sup>14</sup>We met Paul in Assos. He got on the ship with us, and we sailed to the city of Mitylene. <sup>15</sup>The day after we reached Mitylene, we sailed from there and arrived at a place near the Island of Chios. The day after that, we sailed to the Island of Samos. The next day we left Samos and sailed to the city of Miletus. <sup>16</sup>Miletus was just south of the city of Ephesus. Paul did not want to stop at Ephesus because he did not want to spend time in Asia. If possible, he wanted to arrive in Jerusalem by the time of the Pentecost festival, and the time of that festival was near.

<sup>17</sup>When the ship arrived at Miletus, Paul sent a messenger to Ephesus to ask the elders of the group of believers there to come to talk with him.

<sup>18</sup>When the elders came to him, Paul said to them, “From the first day when I arrived here in the province of Asia until the day I left, you know how I acted among you the entire time that I was with you. <sup>19</sup>You know how I kept serving the Lord Jesus very humbly and how I sometimes wept. You also know how I suffered because the Jews who were not believers often tried to harm me. <sup>20</sup>You also know that, when I preached God’s message to you, I never left out anything that would help you. You know that I taught you God’s message when many people were present, and I also went to your homes and taught you there. <sup>21</sup>I preached both to Jews and to non-Jews, telling them all that they must turn toward God and away from their sinful behavior and believe in our Lord Jesus.”

<sup>22</sup>“And now I am going to Jerusalem, because the Holy Spirit has clearly shown me that I must go there, and I must obey him. I do not know what will happen to me there. <sup>23</sup>But I do know that in each city I have visited, the Holy Spirit has told me that in Jerusalem people will put me in prison and will cause me to suffer. <sup>24</sup>But I do not care even if people kill me, if first I am able to finish the work that the Lord Jesus has told me to do. He called me to tell people the good message that God saves us by doing for us what we do not deserve. <sup>25</sup>I have preached to you the message about how God will show himself as king. But now I know that today is the last time that you fellow believers will see me. <sup>26</sup>So I want you all to understand that if anyone who has heard me preach dies without

trusting in Jesus, it is not my fault, <sup>27</sup>because I told you everything that God has planned for us. <sup>28</sup>You leaders must continue to believe and obey God's message. You must also help all the other believers for whom the Holy Spirit has given you to care for. Watch over yourselves and the group of the Lord's believers as a shepherd watches over his sheep. God bought them with the blood that flowed from his Son's body on the cross. <sup>29</sup>I know very well that after I leave, people who teach lies will come among you and will do great harm to the believers. They will be like fierce wolves that kill the sheep. <sup>30</sup>Even in your own group of leaders there will be some who will lie to other believers by teaching them the wrong things. They will teach those messages so that some people will believe them and will become their followers. <sup>31</sup>So watch out that none of you stops believing the true message about our Lord Jesus! Remember that day and night for three years I taught you that message and warned you with tears to be faithful to the Lord."

<sup>32</sup>"Now as I leave you I ask God to protect you and to keep you believing the message that he saves us by doing for us what we do not deserve. If you continue believing the message that I told you, you will become strong, and God will give you forever the good things that he has promised to give to all of those who belong to him.

<sup>33</sup>As for myself, I never wanted anyone's money or fine clothing. <sup>34</sup>You yourselves know that I have worked with my hands to earn the money that my friends and I needed. <sup>35</sup>In everything that I did, I showed you that we should work hard in order to have enough money to give some to those who are needy. We should remember that our Lord Jesus himself said, 'A person is happier when he gives to others than when he receives from them.'"

<sup>36</sup>When Paul had finished speaking, he knelt down with all of the elders and prayed. <sup>37</sup>They all cried a lot, and they hugged Paul and kissed him. <sup>38</sup>They were very sad because he had said that they would never see him again. Then they all went with him to the ship.

## Chapter 21

<sup>1</sup>After we said goodbye to the elders from Ephesus, we got on the ship and traveled on the water to the Island of Cos, where the ship stopped for the night. The next day we went in the ship from Cos to the Island of Rhodes, where the ship stopped again. The day after that we went to the town of Patara, where the ship stopped. <sup>2</sup>At Patara we left that ship, and someone told us that there was a ship that would be going to the region of Phoenicia. So we got on that ship, and it left. <sup>3</sup>We traveled over the sea until we could see the Island of Cyprus. We passed to the south of the island and continued sailing until we arrived at the region of Phoenicia, in the province of Syria, at the city of Tyre. The ship was going to stay there several days because its workers had to unload the cargo.

<sup>4</sup>Someone told us where the believers in Tyre lived, so we went and stayed with them for seven days. Because God's Spirit revealed to them that people would cause Paul to suffer in Jerusalem, they told Paul that he should not go there. <sup>5</sup>But when it was time for the ship to leave again, we prepared to continue on our way to Jerusalem. When we left Tyre, all the men and their wives and children went with us to the edge of the sea. We all knelt down there on the sand and prayed. <sup>6</sup>After we all said goodbye, Paul and we his companions got on the ship, and the other believers returned to their own homes.

<sup>7</sup>After we left Tyre, we continued on that ship to the city of Ptolemais. There were believers there, and we greeted them and stayed with them that night. <sup>8</sup>The next day we left Ptolemais and sailed to the city of Caesarea, where we stayed in the home of Philip, who spent his time telling others how to become followers of Jesus. He was one of the seven men whom the believers in Jerusalem had chosen to care for the widows. <sup>9</sup>He had four daughters who were not married. Each of them frequently spoke messages that the Holy Spirit had told them.

<sup>10</sup>After we had been in Philip's house for several days, a believer whose name was Agabus came down from the district of Judea and arrived in Caesarea. He frequently spoke messages that the Holy Spirit had told him. <sup>11</sup>Coming over to where we were, he took off Paul's belt. Then he tied his own feet and hands with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'The Jewish leaders in Jerusalem will tie up the hands and feet of the owner of this belt, like this, and they will put him in the hands of non-Jewish people as a prisoner.'" <sup>12</sup>When the rest of us heard that, we and the other

believers there asked Paul, "Please do not go up to Jerusalem!" <sup>13</sup>But Paul replied, "Please stop crying and trying to discourage me from going! I am willing to go to prison and also to die in Jerusalem because I serve the Lord Jesus." <sup>14</sup>When we realized that he would go to Jerusalem, we did not try any longer to stop him. We said, "May the Lord's will be done!"

<sup>15</sup>After those days in Caesarea, we prepared our possessions and left to go by land up to Jerusalem. <sup>16</sup>Some of the believers from Caesarea also went with us. They took us to stay in the house of a man whose name was Mnason. He was from the Island of Cyprus, and he had believed in Jesus when people were first beginning to hear the message about him.

<sup>17</sup>When we arrived in Jerusalem, a group of the believers greeted us happily. <sup>18</sup>The next day Paul and the rest of us went to speak with James, who was the leader of the church there. All of the other leaders of the church in Jerusalem were also there. <sup>19</sup>Paul greeted them, and then he told them all of the things that God had enabled him to do among the non-Jewish people. <sup>20</sup>When they heard that, James and the other elders thanked God. Then one of them said to Paul, "Brother, you know that there are very many thousands of us Jewish people here who have believed in the Lord Jesus. Also, you know that we all continue very carefully to obey the laws that Moses gave us. <sup>21</sup>But our fellow Jewish believers have been told that when you are among non-Jews, you tell the Jewish believers who live there that they should stop obeying the laws of Moses. People say that you tell those Jewish believers not to circumcise their sons and not to practice our other customs. We do not believe that they are telling the truth about you. <sup>22</sup>But our fellow Jewish believers will hear that you have come, and they will be angry with you. So you need to do something to show them that what they heard about you is not true. <sup>23</sup>So please do what we suggest to you. There are four men among us who have made a vow to God. <sup>24</sup>Go with these men to the temple and do the ceremonies there necessary for you and them to be able to worship in the temple. Then, when it is time for them to offer the sacrifices, pay for what they offer. After that, they can shave their heads to show that they have done what they said they would do. When people see you in the courts of the temple with those men, they will know that what they have been told about you is not true. Instead, all of them will know that you obey all our Jewish laws. <sup>25</sup>As for the non-Jewish believers, we elders here in Jerusalem have talked about which of our laws they should obey, and we wrote them a letter, telling them what we decided. We wrote that they should not eat meat that people have offered as a sacrifice to any idol, that they should not eat blood from animals, and that they should not eat meat from animals that people have killed by strangling them. We also told them that they should not sleep with someone to whom they are not married." <sup>26</sup>So Paul agreed to do what they asked, and the next day he took the four men, and together they purified themselves. After that, Paul went to the temple courts and told the priest what day they would finish purifying themselves and when they would offer the animals as sacrifices for each of them.

<sup>27</sup>When the seven days for purifying themselves were nearly finished, Paul returned to the temple courtyard. Some Jews from Asia saw him there, and they were very angry at him. They called out to many other Jews who were in the temple courtyard to help them take hold of Paul. <sup>28</sup>They shouted, "Fellow Israelites, come and help us to punish this man! This is the one who is teaching people wherever he goes that they should despise the Jewish people. He teaches people that they should no longer obey the laws of Moses nor respect this holy temple. He has even brought non-Jews here into the court of our temple, causing this place to become polluted!" <sup>29</sup>They said these because they had seen Paul walking around in Jerusalem with Trophimus, who was a non-Jew, from Ephesus. Their laws did not permit non-Jews to be in the temple, and they thought that Paul had brought Trophimus into the temple courtyard that day. <sup>30</sup>People all over the city heard that there was trouble at the temple courtyard, and they came running there. They caught Paul and dragged him outside of the temple area. The gates to the temple courtyard were shut, so that the people would not riot inside the temple area.

<sup>31</sup>While they were trying to kill Paul, someone ran to the fortress near the temple and told the Roman commander that many people in Jerusalem were rioting at the temple. <sup>32</sup>The commander quickly took some officers and a large group of soldiers and ran to the temple area where the crowd was. When the crowd of people who were yelling and beating Paul saw the commander and the soldiers coming, they stopped beating him.

<sup>33</sup>The commander came to where Paul was and took hold of him. He commanded soldiers to fasten a chain to each of Paul's arms. Then he asked the people in the crowd, "Who is this man, and what has he done?" <sup>34</sup>Some of the many people there were shouting one thing, and some were shouting something else. Because they continued shouting so loudly, the commander could not understand what they were saying. So he commanded that Paul be taken into the fortress so that he could question him there. <sup>35</sup>The soldiers led Paul to the steps of the fortress, but many people continued to follow them, trying to kill Paul. So the commander told the soldiers to carry Paul up the steps into the fortress. <sup>36</sup>The crowd that followed kept shouting, "Kill him! Kill him!"

<sup>37</sup>As Paul was about to be taken into the fortress, he said in Greek to the commander, "May I speak to you?" The commander said, "I am surprised that you can speak Greek! <sup>38</sup>I thought that you were that fellow from Egypt who wanted to rebel against the government not long ago, and who took four thousand violent men with him out into the desert, so that we could not catch him." <sup>39</sup>Paul answered, "No, I am not! I am a Jew. I was born in Tarsus, which is an important city in the province of Cilicia. I request that you let me speak to the people." <sup>40</sup>Then the commander permitted Paul to speak. So Paul stood on the steps and motioned with his hand for the crowd to be quiet. And after the people in the crowd became quiet, Paul spoke to them in their own Hebrew language.

## Chapter 22

<sup>1</sup>Paul said, "Jewish elders and my fellow Jews, listen to me now while I speak to those who are accusing me!" <sup>2</sup>When the crowd of people heard Paul speaking to them in their own Hebrew language, they became quiet and listened. Then Paul said to them, <sup>3</sup>"I am a Jew, as are all of you. I was born in the city of Tarsus, in the province of Cilicia, but I grew up here in Jerusalem. When I was young, I learned the laws that Moses gave to our ancestors. Gamaliel was my teacher. I obeyed those laws because I have wanted to obey God, and I am sure that all of you also obey those laws. <sup>4</sup>That is why I tried to arrest those who believed the message of God about Jesus. I looked for ways to kill them. Whenever I found men or women who believed the message, I had them thrown into jail. <sup>5</sup>The high priest knows this, and so do the other men who belong to our Jewish council. They gave me letters to take to their fellow Jews in the city of Damascus. Those letters gave me power to go there and arrest people who believed in Jesus. I was then to take them as prisoners to Jerusalem, so that they would be punished here.

<sup>6</sup>So I went to Damascus. About noon, as I got near to Damascus, suddenly a bright light from the sky flashed all around me. <sup>7</sup>The light was so bright that I fell to the ground. Then I heard the voice of someone speaking to me from up in the sky, saying, 'Saul! Saul! Why do you do things to hurt me?' <sup>8</sup>I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' He replied, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth the one whom you are hurting.' <sup>9</sup>The men who were traveling with me saw the bright light, but they did not understand what the voice said. <sup>10</sup>Then I asked, 'Lord, what do you want me to do?' The Lord told me, 'Get up and go into Damascus. A man there will tell you all that I have planned for you to do.' <sup>11</sup>After that, I could not see, because the bright light had caused me to become blind. So the men who were with me took me by the hand and led me to Damascus. <sup>12</sup>A man whose name was Ananias came to see me. He was a man who honored God and obeyed the Jewish laws. All the Jews living in Damascus said good things about him. <sup>13</sup>He came and stood beside me and said to me, 'My friend Saul, see again!' Instantly I could see and I saw him standing beside me. <sup>14</sup>Then he said: 'The God whom we worship and whom our ancestors worshiped has chosen you and will show you what he wants you to do. He has shown you the righteous one, Jesus the Messiah, and you have heard him speak to you himself. <sup>15</sup>He wants you to tell people everywhere what you have seen and heard from him. <sup>16</sup>So now do not delay! Stand up, let me baptize you, and pray to the Lord Jesus and ask God to forgive you for your sins!"

<sup>17</sup>"Later, I returned to Jerusalem. One day I went to the temple courtyard and while I was praying there, I saw a vision. <sup>18</sup>The Lord spoke to me, saying, 'Do not stay here! Leave Jerusalem now, because the people here will not believe what you tell them about me!' <sup>19</sup>But I said to him, 'Lord, they know that I went to many of our synagogues looking for people who believe in you. I was putting in jail those whom I found who believed in you, and I was even beating them. <sup>20</sup>They remember that when Stephen was killed because he told people about you, I stood there watching and approving of what they were doing. I even guarded the outer clothes that those who were murdering

him had thrown aside!" <sup>21</sup>But the Lord said to me, "No, do not stay here! Leave Jerusalem, because I am going to send you far away from here to other people groups, the non-Jews!"

<sup>22</sup>The people listened to what Paul was saying until he talked about the Lord sending him to other people groups. Then they began shouting, "Kill him! He does not deserve to live any longer!" <sup>23</sup>While they were shouting, they took off their outer garments and threw dust into the air, which showed how angry they were. <sup>24</sup>So the leader commanded that Paul be taken into the prison. He told the soldiers that they should whip Paul in order to make him tell what he had done that made the Jews so angry. <sup>25</sup>Then they stretched his arms out and tied them so that they could whip him on his back. But Paul said to the soldier near him, "You will be acting unlawfully if you whip me, a Roman citizen whom no one has put on trial and condemned!" <sup>26</sup>When the officer heard that, he went to the commander and reported it to him. He said to the commander, "This man is a Roman citizen! Surely you would not command us to whip him!" <sup>27</sup>The commander was surprised when he heard that. He himself went into the prison and said to Paul, "Tell me, are you really a Roman citizen?" Paul answered, "Yes, I am." <sup>28</sup>Then the commander said, "I am also a Roman citizen. I paid a lot of money to become a Roman citizen." Paul said, "But I was born a Roman citizen." <sup>29</sup>The soldiers were about to whip Paul and to ask him questions about what he had done. But when they heard what Paul said, they left him. The commander also became afraid, because he knew that Paul was a Roman citizen and that he had broken the law when he commanded the soldiers to tie up Paul's hands.

<sup>30</sup>The commander still wanted to know why the Jews were accusing Paul. So the next day he told the soldiers to take the chains off Paul. He also called the chief priests and the other council members to meet. Then he took Paul to where the council was meeting and told him to stand before them.

## Chapter 23

<sup>1</sup>Paul looked at the Jewish council members and said: "My fellow Jews, all my life I have lived respecting our God, and I do not know of anything that I have done that I knew was wrong." <sup>2</sup>When Ananias the high priest heard what Paul said, he told the men who were standing near Paul to hit him on the mouth. <sup>3</sup>Then Paul said to Ananias, "God will punish you for that, you hypocrite! You sit there and judge me, using the laws that God gave Moses. But you yourself disobey those laws, because you commanded me to be struck without having proved that I have done anything that is wrong!" <sup>4</sup>The men who were standing near Paul said to him, "You should not speak badly to God's servant, our high priest!" <sup>5</sup>Paul replied, "My fellow Jews, I am sorry that I said that. I did not know that the man who told one of you to hit me is the high priest. If I had known that, I would not have talked badly about our high priest, because I know that it is written in our Jewish law, 'Do not speak evil of any of your rulers!'"

<sup>6</sup>Paul knew that some of the council members were Sadducees and others were Pharisees. So he called out in the council hall, "My fellow Jews, I am a Pharisee, and all in my family were Pharisees, as well. I have been put on trial here because I am sure that one day God will cause those who have died to become alive again." <sup>7</sup>When he said that, the Pharisees and Sadducees started to argue with one another about whether or not people who have died will become alive again, and each of them were arguing with the other. <sup>8</sup>The Sadducees believe that after people die, they will not become alive again. They also believe that there are no angels and no other kinds of spirits. But the Pharisees believe all these things. <sup>9</sup>They began shouting at one another as they argued. Some of the teachers of the laws who were Pharisees stood up. One of them said, "We think that this man has done nothing wrong. Maybe an angel or some other spirit spoke to him and what he says is true." <sup>10</sup>Then the Pharisees and Sadducees became violent with one another. So the commander was afraid that they would tear Paul to pieces. He told soldiers to go down from the prison and take Paul away from the council members and bring him up into the barracks.

<sup>11</sup>That night, Paul saw the Lord Jesus come and stand near him. The Lord said to him, "Have courage! You have told people here in Jerusalem about me, and you must tell people in Rome about me too."

<sup>12</sup>The next morning some of the Jews who hated Paul met and talked about how to kill him. They told themselves that they would not eat or drink anything until he was dead. They asked God to curse them if they did not do what

they promised. <sup>13</sup>There were more than forty men who wanted to kill Paul. <sup>14</sup>They went to the chief priests and Jewish elders and told them, "God has heard us promise that we will not eat or drink anything until we have killed Paul. <sup>15</sup>So we request that you go to the commander and ask him, on behalf of the whole Jewish council, to bring Paul down to us. Tell the commander that you want to talk to Paul some more. We will be waiting to kill Paul while he is on the way here."

<sup>16</sup>But the son of Paul's sister heard what they were planning to do, so he went into the fortress and told Paul.

<sup>17</sup>When Paul heard that, he called one of the officers and said to him, "Please take this young man to the commander, because he needs to tell him something." <sup>18</sup>So the officer took the young man to the commander. The officer said to the commander, "The prisoner Paul called me and said, 'Please take this young man to the commander, because he needs to tell him something.'" <sup>19</sup>The commander took the young man by the hand, led him off by himself, and asked him, "What do you need to tell me?" <sup>20</sup>He said, "There are some Jews who want to bring Paul before their council tomorrow. They will say that they want to ask him some more questions. But that is not true. <sup>21</sup>Do not do what they ask you to do, because there are more than forty Jewish men who will be hiding and waiting to kill Paul when he passes by on the way to the council. They even promised to God that they will not eat or drink anything until they have killed Paul. They are ready to do it, and right now they are waiting for you to agree to do what they are asking you to do." <sup>22</sup>The commander said to the young man, "Do not tell anyone that you have told me about their plan." Then he sent the young man away.

<sup>23</sup>Then the commander called two of his officers and told them, "Get a group of two hundred soldiers ready to travel. Take along seventy soldiers riding horses, and two hundred other soldiers carrying spears. All of you must be ready to leave at nine o'clock tonight, to go down to the city of Caesarea. <sup>24</sup>And take along horses for Paul to ride, and escort him to the palace of Governor Felix." <sup>25</sup>Then the commander wrote a letter to send to the governor. This is what he wrote: <sup>26</sup>"I am Claudius Lysias writing to you. You, Felix, are our governor whom we honor, and I send you my greetings. <sup>27</sup>I have sent you this man, Paul, because certain Jews seized him and were about to kill him. But I heard someone tell me that he is a Roman citizen, so I and my soldiers went and rescued him. <sup>28</sup>I wanted to know what those Jews were saying that he had done wrong, so I took him to their Jewish council. <sup>29</sup>I listened while they asked this man questions and he answered them. The things they accused him about had to do with their Jewish laws. But Paul has not disobeyed any of our Roman laws. So our officials should not execute him or even put him in prison. <sup>30</sup>Someone told me that some Jews were planning to kill this man, so I sent him to you, so that you may give him a fair trial there. I have also commanded the Jews who have accused him to go there to Caesarea and tell you what they are accusing him about. Goodbye."

<sup>31</sup>So the soldiers did what the commander told them. They got Paul and took him with them during the night down to Antipatris. <sup>32</sup>The next day, the foot soldiers returned to Jerusalem, and the soldiers who rode horses went on with Paul. <sup>33</sup>When they arrived in the city of Caesarea, they gave the letter to the governor, and they placed Paul before him. <sup>34</sup>The governor read the letter and then he said to Paul, "What province are you from?" Paul answered, "I am from Cilicia." <sup>35</sup>Then the governor said, "When the people who have accused you arrive, I will listen to what each of you says and then I will judge your case." Then he commanded that Paul be guarded in the palace that King Herod the Great had built.

## Chapter 24

<sup>1</sup>Five days later Ananias the high priest went down there from Jerusalem, along with some other Jewish elders and a speechmaker whose name was Tertullus. There they told the governor what Paul had done that they thought was wrong. <sup>2</sup>The governor commanded Paul to be brought in. When Paul arrived, Tertullus began to accuse him. He said to the governor, "Honorable Governor Felix, during the many years that you have ruled us, we have lived well. By planning wisely, you have improved many things in this province. <sup>3</sup>Therefore, Governor Felix, we always thank you for everything that you have done for all of us, wherever you have done those things. <sup>4</sup>But, so that I will not take up too much of your time, I ask that you kindly listen to what I have to say. <sup>5</sup>We have observed that this man, wherever he goes, causes trouble with the Jews. He also leads the entire group whom people call the followers of

the Nazarene. <sup>6</sup>He even tried to do things in the temple in Jerusalem that would pollute it, so we arrested him.<sup>[1]</sup> [And we wanted to judge him according to our law. <sup>7</sup>[2] But Lysias, the commander of the Roman fortress, came with his soldiers and took him away from us. <sup>8</sup>[3] sending us to you.] If you question him yourself, you will be able to learn that all these things about which we are accusing him are true. <sup>9</sup>Then the Jewish leaders there told the governor that what Tertullus had said was true.

<sup>10</sup>Then the governor motioned with his hand to Paul that he should speak. So Paul replied, and said, "Governor Felix, I know that you have judged this Jewish province for many years. Therefore I gladly defend myself. I know that you will listen to me and will judge me fairly. <sup>11</sup>You know that it has not been more than twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem to worship God. <sup>12</sup>No one can say that they saw me arguing with anyone in the temple courts because I did not do that. No one can say that they saw me causing people to riot in any Jewish synagogue or causing trouble anywhere else in Jerusalem, because I did not do that. <sup>13</sup>So they cannot prove to you the things about which they are now accusing me. <sup>14</sup>But I admit to you that this is true: I do worship the God that our ancestors worshiped. It is true that I follow the way that Jesus taught us. I also believe everything that Moses wrote in the laws that God gave him and everything that the other prophets wrote in their books. <sup>15</sup>I believe, just like these men also believe, that some day God will cause everyone who has died to become alive again, both those who were good and those who were wicked. <sup>16</sup>Because I believe that day will come, I always try to do what pleases God and what other people think is right. <sup>17</sup>After I had been in other places for several years, I returned to Jerusalem to bring some money to my fellow Jews who are poor. <sup>18</sup>Some Jews from Asia saw me in the temple courts after I had completed the ritual that allows one to worship God. There was no crowd with me, and I was not causing people to riot. <sup>19</sup>But it was those Jews who caused the people to riot. They should be here in front of you to accuse me, if they think that I did something wrong. <sup>20</sup>But if they do not want to do that, these Jewish men who are here should tell you what they think I did that was wrong when I defended myself in their council. <sup>21</sup>They might say that I did something wrong when I shouted, 'You are judging me today because I believe that God will cause all people who have died to become alive again.'"

<sup>22</sup>Felix already knew much about what people called the Way, and so he stopped the trial. He said to them, "Later, when Commander Lysias comes down here, I will decide this case." <sup>23</sup>Then he told the officer who was guarding Paul to take Paul back to the prison and make sure that Paul was guarded all the time. But he said that Paul was not to be chained, and if his friends came to visit him, the officer should allow them to help Paul in any way that they wanted to.

<sup>24</sup>Several days later Felix came back with his wife Drusilla, who was a Jew, and called for Paul to speak with him. Felix listened to what Paul said to him about trusting in Jesus the Messiah. <sup>25</sup>Paul talked to him about what God wants people to do in order to please him. He also explained how people should control how they act and that there would be a time when God will judge all people. Felix became afraid after hearing those things, so he said to Paul, "That is all I want to hear now. When I have time, I will ask you to come to me again." <sup>26</sup>Felix was hoping that Paul would give him some money, so he sent for Paul to come to him many times. Paul talked with Felix many times, but he did not give Felix any money, and Felix did not tell his soldiers to release Paul from prison.

<sup>27</sup>When two years had passed, Porcius Festus became governor in place of Felix. Felix let Paul remain in prison because he wanted to please the Jewish leaders.

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24:6 <sup>[1]</sup>

24:7 <sup>[2]</sup>

24:8 <sup>[3]</sup>

## Chapter 25

<sup>1</sup>Festus began to rule as governor of the province. Three days later, he left the city of Caesarea and went up to Jerusalem. <sup>2</sup>There, the chief priests and other Jewish leaders stood before Festus and said that Paul had done things that were very wrong. <sup>3</sup>They urgently asked Festus to bring Paul to trial in Jerusalem. But they were really



planning to attack him on the road and kill him. <sup>4</sup>Festus replied, "Paul is under guard in Caesarea, let him stay there. I myself will go down to Caesarea very soon." <sup>5</sup>"So," he said, "you should go there with me, those of you who are able to. If you have anything to accuse Paul of, you can do it there."

<sup>6</sup>Festus remained in Jerusalem with the temple leaders eight or ten more days. Then he went back down to the city of Caesarea. The next day Festus commanded that Paul be brought to him, where he sat in the judge's seat. <sup>7</sup>After Paul was brought before the judge's seat, the Jewish leaders who had come down from Jerusalem gathered around him to accuse him of many serious charges, but they were not able to prove any of them. <sup>8</sup>Then Paul spoke for himself. He said, "I have done nothing against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against the emperor." <sup>9</sup>But Festus wanted to please the Jewish leaders, so he asked Paul, "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem so I can judge you there about these things?" <sup>10</sup>Paul replied, "No, I am now standing before you, who represent the Emperor. This is where I ought to be judged. I have done nothing wrong to the Jewish people, as you know very well. <sup>11</sup>If I had done anything deserving of death, I would not refuse to die; but there is nothing that they accuse me of that deserves such a punishment. No one can condemn me just to satisfy them. I ask that Caesar himself judge me." <sup>12</sup>After Festus conferred with his advisors, he said, "You have appealed to Caesar, and so to Caesar you shall go!"

<sup>13</sup>After several days, King Herod Agrippa arrived at Caesarea, along with his sister Bernice. They had come to pay their respects to Festus. <sup>14</sup>King Agrippa and Bernice stayed many days in Caesarea. After some time had passed, Festus told Agrippa about Paul. He said, "There is a man here whom Felix kept in prison. <sup>15</sup>When I went to Jerusalem, the chief priests and the Jewish elders came before me and asked me to condemn him to death. <sup>16</sup>But I told them that when someone has been accused of a serious crime, it is not a custom for Romans to condemn a person immediately. Instead, we allow the accused man to stand face to face with his accusers and defend himself against what they say about him. <sup>17</sup>So when those Jews came here to Caesarea, I did not delay the trial at all. The day after they arrived, I sat in the judge's seat and ordered the guard to bring in the prisoner. <sup>18</sup>But when the Jewish leaders told me what the prisoner had done wrong, I did not think that anything they said was serious. <sup>19</sup>Instead, what they argued with him about were things in their own religion and about a man whose name was Jesus who had died, but whom Paul said was alive. <sup>20</sup>I did not understand these matters, or how to find out the truth. So I asked Paul, 'Are you willing to go to Jerusalem, so I can judge you there about these things?' <sup>21</sup>But Paul asked for Caesar himself to judge his case, so I ordered him to be kept under guard until I could send him to Caesarea." <sup>22</sup>Then Agrippa said to Festus, "I myself would like to hear what this man has to say." Festus answered, "I will arrange for you to hear him tomorrow."

<sup>23</sup>The next day Agrippa and Bernice entered the hall of judgment, and all the other people were honoring them. Some Roman commanders and important men in Caesarea came with them. Then Festus commanded that the guards should bring Paul in. <sup>24</sup>After Paul entered, Festus said, "King Agrippa and all the rest of you who are here, you see this man! Many leaders of the Jews, both in Jerusalem and here, asked me not to let him live any longer. <sup>25</sup>But I found nothing that he had done to deserve death. Even so, he has asked Caesar to judge his case, so I have decided to send him to Rome. <sup>26</sup>But I do not know what exactly I should write to the emperor about him. That is why I have brought him here to speak to you all, and especially to you, King Agrippa! I have done this so that you may question him. Then I may know what to write to the emperor. <sup>27</sup>I think that it would be unreasonable to send a prisoner to the emperor in Rome without telling exactly what were the wrong things people say that he has done."

## Chapter 26

<sup>1</sup>Then Agrippa said to Paul, "We will now allow you to speak on your own behalf." Then Paul stretched out his hand to show that he was about to speak. He said, <sup>2</sup>"King Agrippa, I consider myself fortunate that today that I can explain to you why the Jewish leaders are wrong when they say I have done evil things. <sup>3</sup>I am especially fortunate because you know all about the customs of us Jews and the questions that we argue about. So I ask you to listen patiently to me."

<sup>4</sup>All my fellow Jews know about how I have conducted my life from the time I was a child. They know how I lived in the city where I was born and also later in Jerusalem. <sup>5</sup>They have known me from my very beginning, and they could tell you, if they wanted to, that since I was very young I obeyed the most rigid customs of our religion very carefully. I lived just like the other Pharisees. <sup>6</sup>Today I am on trial because I am confidently expecting that God will do what he promised to our ancestors. <sup>7</sup>Our twelve Jewish tribes are also confidently waiting for God to do for us what he promised, as they honor him and worship him, day and night. Honored king, I confidently expect that God will do what he promised, and they also believe that! But it is for what I expect God to do that they say I have done wrong. <sup>8</sup>Why would any of you think that God could not raise the dead?

<sup>9</sup>There was a time in the past when I, too, was sure that I should do everything that I could to stop people from believing in Jesus from Nazareth town. <sup>10</sup>So that is what I did when I lived in Jerusalem. I shut up many of the believers in prison, as the chief priests there had given me power to do. And when their people killed believers, I voted in favor of that. <sup>11</sup>I punished those Jewish people in every synagogue where I could find them. I would force them, with all my anger against them, to make them insult God and curse his name. I even went off to foreign cities to find them so I could do everything in my power to stop them.

<sup>12</sup>The chief priests gave me power to arrest believers in Damascus, and that is where I went. But while I was on my way, <sup>13</sup>at about noon, O King, I saw on the road a bright light in the sky. It was even brighter than the sun! It shone all around me, and also around those who were traveling with me. <sup>14</sup>We all fell to the ground. Then I heard the voice of someone speaking to me in the Hebrew language. He said, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' <sup>15</sup>Then I said, 'Who are you, Lord?' And the Lord said, 'I am Jesus! I am the one you are fighting against. <sup>16</sup>But get up and stand on your feet! I have appeared to you in order to make you into a servant and a witness both of what you have seen of what you know about me now and what I will show you later. <sup>17</sup>I will protect you from the people and the non-Jews to whom I will send you, <sup>18</sup>in order to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of the enemy to God. In this way God will forgive their sins and give to them the things that all my people will have forever, the people who belong to me by faith.

<sup>19</sup>So, King Agrippa, I did what God told me in a vision to do. <sup>20</sup>First, I spoke to the Jews in Damascus and those in Jerusalem, and in all the countryside of Judea, and to the non-Jews there also. I told them that they should stop sinning and ask God for help. I told them also that they should do those things that show that they have stopped sinning.

<sup>21</sup>It is because I preached this message that some Jews seized me when I was in the temple courtyard and tried to kill me. <sup>22</sup>However, God has been helping me, so I have continued to proclaim these things to this very day. I have continued to tell both ordinary people and important people exactly what the prophets and Moses said would happen. <sup>23</sup>They said that the Messiah would suffer and die, that he would be the first to rise from the dead. They also said that he would proclaim, both to his own people and to the non-Jewish people, that God is truly able to save them."

<sup>24</sup>Before Paul could say anything further, Festus shouted out in a loud voice: "Paul, you are crazy! You have studied too much, and it has made you insane!" <sup>25</sup>But Paul answered, "Your Excellency Festus, I am not insane! On the contrary, what I am saying is true and quite sane! <sup>26</sup>For King Agrippa knows the things that I have been talking about, and I can speak freely to him about them. I am sure that none of these things could have escaped his notice, because none of these things happened in secret." <sup>27</sup>"King Agrippa, do you believe what the prophets wrote? I know that you believe those things." <sup>28</sup>Then Agrippa answered Paul, "In just a short time you have almost persuaded me to become a Christian!" <sup>29</sup>Paul replied, "Whether it takes a short time or a long time, it does not matter. I pray to God that you and also all of the others who are listening to me today will also become like me, except for these chains!" <sup>30</sup>Then the king stood. The governor, Bernice, and all the others also got up <sup>31</sup>and left the room. After they left, they said to each other, "This man has done nothing deserving death or his chains." <sup>32</sup>Agrippa said to Festus, "If this man had not appealed to Caesar, he could have been released."

## Chapter 27

<sup>1</sup>When the Governor decided that we should sail for Italy, he put Paul and some other prisoners into the control of an army captain whose name was Julius. He held the rank of centurion and was part of a large number of soldiers who were under the direct command of the emperor. <sup>2</sup>We boarded a ship from the city of Adramyttium in Asia. The ship was about to sail to places on the coast of Asia. In this way we went to sea. Aristarchus, from Thessalonica in Macedonia, went with us. <sup>3</sup>The next day we arrived at Sidon. Julius treated Paul kindly and gave him permission to go see his friends, who would care for him. <sup>4</sup>Then the ship set sail from there. We went along the coast of Cyprus, which was sheltered from the wind, because the wind was against us. <sup>5</sup>After that, we crossed over the sea close to the coast of Cilicia and Pamphylia. The ship arrived at Myra, which is in Lycia. We got off the ship there. <sup>6</sup>In Myra, Julius found a ship that had come from Alexandria and would soon sail to Italy. So he arranged for us to go aboard that ship, and we left. <sup>7</sup>We sailed slowly for many days and came near to Cnidus, but we got there with difficulty, because the winds were against us. After that, the wind was very strong and did not allow the ship to move straight ahead westward. Instead, we sailed along the coast of the Island of Crete, where the wind was not blowing strongly, and we passed near Salmone, a piece of land sticking out into the water. <sup>8</sup>The wind was still strong, and it prevented the ship from moving ahead fast. So we moved slowly along the coast of Crete, and we arrived at a town that was called Fair Havens, near Lasea.

<sup>9</sup>Much time passed, and it had now become dangerous to sail, because the Jewish fasting period had already passed and the sea would become very stormy. So Paul said to the men on the ship, <sup>10</sup>and said to them, "Men, I see that if we sail now, it will be disastrous for us with much injury and loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives." <sup>11</sup>But the Roman captain did not believe Paul. Instead, he believed what the pilot and the owner of the ship said, and he decided to do what they advised. <sup>12</sup>The harbor was not a good place to remain during the winter, so most of the sailors advised going to sea from there. They hoped that they could reach Phoenix and spend the winter there. Phoenix is a town in Crete. On it blow winds both from the southwest and northwest. <sup>13</sup>Because there was only a gentle wind blowing from the south, the ship's crew thought that they could travel like they wanted to. So they lifted the anchor up out of the sea, and the ship sailed close along the coastline of the island of Crete. <sup>14</sup>After a short time, however, a stormy wind blew down from the shore. It blew across the island from the north side and hit the ship. That wind is called Euroclydon, "the Northeast Wind." <sup>15</sup>It blew strongly against the front of the ship, and we could not sail against it. So the sailors let the wind move the ship in the direction that the wind was blowing. <sup>16</sup>The ship then sailed along the coast line of a small island named Cauda. We were able, with difficulty, to fasten the lifeboat securely to the ship. <sup>17</sup>When they had hoisted the lifeboat up, they used its ropes to bind the hull of the ship. And they were afraid that they might run aground on the sandbars of Syrtis, so they lowered the sea anchor and the wind drove them along. <sup>18</sup>The wind and the waves continued to toss the ship about roughly. So on the next day the sailors began to throw overboard the things that the ship was carrying. <sup>19</sup>On the third day of the storm, the sailors threw overboard most of the sails, ropes, and poles, in order to make the ship lighter. They did this with their own hands. <sup>20</sup>The wind continued to blow very strongly for many days, and the sky was full of dark clouds day and night so that we could not see the sun or the stars. We had lost all hope that we would survive.

<sup>21</sup>None of us on the ship had eaten for many days. Then one day, Paul stood up in front of us and said, "Friends, you should have listened to me when I said that we should not set sail from Crete. Then, we would not have suffered this injury and loss. <sup>22</sup>But now, I urge you, do not be afraid, because none of us will die. The storm will destroy the ship but not us. <sup>23</sup>I know this, because last night God, the one to whom I belong and whom I serve, sent an angel who came and stood by me. <sup>24</sup>The angel said to me, 'Paul, do not be afraid. You must go to Rome and stand before the emperor there so that he can judge you. I want you to know that God has granted to you that all those who are traveling by ship with you will also survive.' <sup>25</sup>So cheer up, my friends, because I believe that God will make this happen, exactly as the angel told me. <sup>26</sup>However, the ship will crash on some island, and we will go ashore there."

<sup>27</sup>On the fourteenth night after the storm had begun, the ship was still being blown across the Adriatic sea. About midnight, the sailors thought that the ship was getting close to land. <sup>28</sup>So they lowered a rope to measure how deep the water was. When they pulled the rope up again, they measured it and saw that the water was forty meters deep. A little later, they measured again and found thirty meters. <sup>29</sup>They were afraid that the ship might go onto some rocks, so they threw out four anchors from the ship's stern. Then they prayed that it would soon be dawn so that they could see where the ship was going. <sup>30</sup>Some of the sailors were planning to escape from the ship, so they lowered the lifeboat into the sea. In order that no one would know what they planned to do, they pretended that they wanted to lower some anchors from the ship's front. <sup>31</sup>But Paul said to the army captain and the soldiers, "If the sailors do not stay in the ship, you have no hope of surviving." <sup>32</sup>So the soldiers cut the ropes and let the lifeboat fall into the water.

<sup>33</sup>Just before dawn, Paul urged everyone on the ship to eat some food. He said, "For the past fourteen days you have been waiting and watching and not eating anything. <sup>34</sup>So, now I urge you to eat some food. You must do this to live. Not even one hair from your heads will perish." <sup>35</sup>After Paul had said that, while everyone was watching, he took some bread and thanked God for it. Then he broke the bread and began to eat some of it. <sup>36</sup>Then they were all cheered up and ate some food. <sup>37</sup>Altogether there were 276 of us on the ship. <sup>38</sup>When everyone had eaten enough, they lightened the ship by throwing the rest of the wheat into the sea.

<sup>39</sup>At dawn we could see land, but the sailors did not know where we were. However, they could see a bay and a wide area of sand at the water's edge. They decided to try to run the ship up onto the beach. <sup>40</sup>So they cast off the anchors and let them fall loose into the sea. At the same time, they untied the ropes that fastened the rudders, and they raised the front sail so that the wind would blow into it. They they steered the ship toward the shore. <sup>41</sup>But the ship sailed into turbulent waters and ran hard onto a sandbank that was just under the waves. The front of the ship stuck there and could not move, and big waves beat against the back of the ship, so that it began to break apart.

<sup>42</sup>The soldiers had it in mind to kill all the prisoners so that none of them could swim away and escape. <sup>43</sup>But army captain wanted to save Paul, so he stopped the soldiers from doing this. Instead, he commanded that everyone who could swim should jump into the water and swim to shore. <sup>44</sup>Then he told the others to hold onto planks or other pieces from the ship and go toward the shore. We did what he said, and in that way all of us arrived safely on land.

## Chapter 28

<sup>1</sup>After we had arrived safely on the shore, we learned that it was an island called Malta. <sup>2</sup>The people who lived there gave to us better than the usual hospitality. They lit a fire and invited us to come and warm ourselves, because it was raining and it was cold. <sup>3</sup>When Paul collected some sticks of wood and put them on the fire, a poisonous snake came out from the fire to escape from the heat, and it bit Paul on his hand and stayed there. <sup>4</sup>The people from the island saw the creature dangling from Paul's hand, they said to each other, "Probably this man has murdered someone. Although he has escaped from being drowned in the sea, the god of justice will cause him to die." <sup>5</sup>But Paul simply shook the snake off into the fire, and nothing happened to him. <sup>6</sup>The people were expecting that Paul's body would soon swell up with a fever or that he would suddenly fall down and die. But after they had waited a long time, they saw that nothing was wrong with him. So the people changed what they were thinking and said to one another, "This man is not a murderer! He is a god!"

<sup>7</sup>Now in a place near to where they were, there were some fields that belonged to a man whose name was Publius. He was the chief official on the island. He invited us to come and stay in his home. He took very good care of us for three days. <sup>8</sup>At that time Publius' father had fever and dysentery, and he was lying in bed. So Paul visited him and prayed for him. Then Paul placed his hands on him and healed him. <sup>9</sup>After Paul had done that, the other people on the island who were sick came to him, and he healed them, too. <sup>10</sup>They brought us gifts and showed in other ways that they greatly respected us. When we were ready to leave three months later, they brought us food and other things that we would need on the ship.

<sup>11</sup>After we had stayed there three months, we got on a ship that was from Alexandria and that was going to Italy and sailed away. On the front of the ship there were carved images of the twin gods whose names were Castor and Pollux. <sup>12</sup>When we arrived at the city of Syracuse, we stayed there three days. <sup>13</sup>Then we sailed and arrived at the city of Rhegium in Italy. The next day, the wind was blowing from the south, so in only two more days we reached the town of Puteoli. There we left the ship. <sup>14</sup>In Puteoli we met some fellow believers who wanted us to stay with them for seven days. After this, we finally arrived at Rome.

<sup>15</sup>In Rome, some fellow believers had heard about us, so they came to meet us. Some of them met us at the town called The Market on Appian Road, and others met us at the town called The Three Inns. When Paul saw those believers, he thanked God and was encouraged. <sup>16</sup>After we arrived in Rome, Paul was permitted to live in a house by himself. But there was always a soldier there to guard him.

<sup>17</sup>After Paul had been there three days, he sent a message to the Jewish leaders to come and talk with him. When they came to him, Paul said to them, "My dear brothers, although I have not opposed our people nor spoken against the customs of our ancestors, our leaders in Jerusalem seized me. But before they could kill me, a Roman commander rescued me and later sent me to the city of Caesarea for Roman authorities to put me on trial. <sup>18</sup>The Roman authorities questioned me and wanted to release me, because I had not done any bad thing for which I should be executed. <sup>19</sup>But when the Jewish leaders there spoke against the desire of the Romans to set me free, I had to request that the emperor judge me here in Rome. But my reason for doing that was not that I wanted to accuse our leaders about anything. <sup>20</sup>So I have requested you to come here so that I can tell you why I am a prisoner. It is because I believe in what the people of Israel confidently expect God will do for us." <sup>21</sup>Then the Jewish leaders said, "We have not received any letters from our fellow Jews in Judea about you. Also, none of our fellow Jews who have arrived here from Judea has said anything bad about you. <sup>22</sup>But we want to hear what you think about this group that you belong to, because we know that in many places people are speaking against it."

<sup>23</sup>So they decided that they would come back on another day to hear Paul speak to them. When that day arrived, even more people than before came to where Paul was staying. Paul told them about how God would rule everyone; he talked about how the law of Moses and the prophets foretold Jesus. Paul talked with all who would listen from morning until evening. <sup>24</sup>Some of those Jews were persuaded to believe what Paul said about Jesus was true, but others did not believe that it was true. <sup>25</sup>When they began to disagree with each other, and when they were about to leave, Paul had one more thing to say: "The Holy Spirit said the truth to your ancestors, when he spoke these words to Isaiah the prophet:

<sup>26</sup>Go to your people and say to them:

'You hear with your ears, but you never understand what God is saying.

You see with your eyes but you never really see the things that God is doing. <sup>27</sup>These people do not understand, because they have become stubborn.

their ears are almost deaf;

and they have closed their eyes because they do not want to see.

They do not want to hear with their ears

or understand with their hearts,

for then they would come back to me

and I would heal them.'

<sup>28</sup>Therefore, you should know that God is offering to save the non-Jews, and they will listen." <sup>29</sup><sup>[1]</sup> [When he had said these things, the Jews went away. They were having a great dispute among themselves.]

<sup>30</sup>For two whole years Paul stayed there in a house that he rented. Many people came to see him, and he received them all gladly and talked with them. <sup>31</sup>He preached and taught people about how God would show himself as king, and he taught them about the Lord Jesus the Messiah. He did that with great boldness, and no one tried to stop him.

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28:29 <sup>[1]</sup>

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