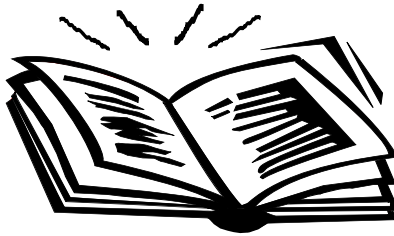


ACTS of the APOSTLES

**Paul brings Good News
to the world**

A Bible Commentary in
easy-to-read Worldwide
English for personal or
group study
by Fred Morris



**ACTS Part Two:
Chapters 13 to 28**

ACTS of the APOSTLES: Paul's Ministry

THIS BOOK describes the work of the Holy Spirit through the

- ◆ Paul's three missionary journeys
- ◆ Preaching to both Jews and non-Jews
- ◆ Clear guidance from the Holy Spirit
- ◆ Teaching believers in new churches
- ◆ Miracles, riots and persecution
- ◆ Arrested in Jerusalem
- ◆ Shipwrecked on the island of Malta
- ◆ A 'prisoner for Christ' in Rome

powerful ministry of the apostle Paul. The Good News that Jesus is the Son of God spread quickly around the world. Paul's journeys in Europe and Asia Minor enabled Jews and non-Jews to know Jesus Christ. His teachings and writings still do that today.

MANNA PUBLICATIONS supply Bible commentaries written by Fred Morris. For many years Fred, and his wife Lorna, travelled round the world teaching and preaching. When they returned home they wrote these notes for printing and selling wherever there was a need for basic Christian teaching.

THIS REVISED edition is written in easy-to-read Worldwide English which will add understanding and also speed up translation into other languages. It gives basic teaching for all readers plus additional notes for Bible students, teachers and pastors.

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



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ACTS Part Two: Chapters 13 – 28

This is our second Bible commentary on the Acts of the Apostles. 'Acts' is the book in the New Testament part of the Bible that tells us about the first Christians 2000 years ago.

In our first Bible commentary on Acts, we read that Jesus (Hebrew name Yeshua) went to heaven to be with His Father, God (Yahweh). He sent the Holy Spirit to be with His followers. This happened in Jerusalem, so the Christian Church first started in Jerusalem. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God enabled the Church to grow daily. The apostles of Jesus Christ preached boldly the Good News about Him. They also healed people in the name of Jesus. Peter, James and John were the leading apostles in Jerusalem at that time.

The word 'apostle' means messenger sent by God. The word 'Church' means the group of people whose lives have been changed through believing in Jesus. The word 'believer' means 'one who trusts God and is a follower of Jesus Christ'.

Through the preaching of the Good News and the work of the Holy Spirit, many thousands of people became followers of Jesus in a short time. They asked God to forgive their sins in the name of Jesus. In this way they were saved from God's judgement. They were baptised and began a new life of faith in God. They received the promise of everlasting life with Jesus.

A JEW CALLED SAUL

At first it was mostly Jews who heard the Good News. Many believed in Jesus as the Son of God. They believed that He was the Jewish Messiah, the Christ. He was promised by God many years before in the holy writings. The new believers met with the first followers of Jesus and joined the Jews in the synagogues in Jerusalem and elsewhere.

Some of the Jewish leaders disagreed with the teaching of the apostles. A Jewish leader called Saul was given permission to put many Christians into prison. Some were killed. But one day God stopped him doing this. Jesus spoke to him personally on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3–6). He, too, became a follower of Jesus. Jesus forgave him and he was given the power of the Holy Spirit (9:17–19).

In this second commentary on Acts, we tell you about the life and journeys of Saul (later called Paul). He travelled around the world preaching the Good News that Jesus is the Son of God who came to live on earth to show us His Father. Saul told the people that God allowed Jesus to be punished for our sins so that we could be forgiven and live with Him for evermore when we die (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18). Like us, Saul could not understand these things



The Messiah or Christ

God's plan was to send His Messiah, His Son, to His chosen people, the Jews. After the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, many more people believed that He was the Son of God, including non-Jews. Their holy writings (the Old Testament part of the Bible) tell about the promised Messiah. Saul (later called Paul) had to learn about these things before he preached the Good News of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit gave him power and understanding to do this so that Jews and non-Jews could receive God's plan of salvation.

20 things Saul learnt from the holy writings about Jesus. These prophecies all came true at the time of Saul.

1. Jesus is the promised Messiah (Christ), God's Son, our Saviour (Deuteronomy 18:15; Jeremiah 23:5; Isaiah 53:12).
2. Jesus is the promised healer (Isaiah 35:5,6).
3. Jesus came from Abraham and King David's family (Isaiah 9:7).
4. God promised that Abraham's seed would bless all the nations on earth (Genesis 18:18).
5. Jesus was born in Bethlehem from the family/region of Judah/Judea (Micah 5:2).
6. Jesus was born as the Son of God to a young woman while she was engaged to be married and before she had sex with a man (Isaiah 7:14; Luke 1:35).
7. As a baby, Jesus was taken to Egypt for safe keeping (Hosea 11:1).
8. Jesus moved to the region of Galilee to teach the people (Isaiah 9:1, 2).
9. Jesus was 'the great prophet' spoken of by Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15).
10. Jesus is our priest for ever (Psalm 110:4).
11. Jesus was wise and understanding (Isaiah 11:2).
12. Jesus was rejected by many people (Isaiah 53:3).
13. Jesus was welcomed into Jerusalem as a humble king, riding on a young donkey (Zechariah 9:9).
14. Jesus was betrayed by one of His disciples (Psalm 41:9).
15. Jesus was betrayed for 30 silver coins (Zechariah 11:12).
16. Jesus had untrue things said against Him (Psalm 27:12).
17. Jesus did not speak when He was put on trial (Isaiah 53:7).
18. Jesus was put to death with criminals (Isaiah 53:12).
19. The hands and feet of Jesus were pierced through (Psalm 22:16).
20. The people laughed at Jesus and said bad things about him especially as He hung on the cross (Psalm 22:6–8).

at first. But he re-read the holy writings (the Old Testament part of the Bible) and believed that this was God's plan to save the world. If we read our Bibles every day, the Holy Spirit will help us to understand these things.

Saul knew the holy writings very well. They told about the Messiah (Saviour) that God would send to the Jews. After his conversion, Saul believed that Jesus was God's Messiah, the Christ. He also believed that Jesus came to save non-Jews as well as Jews.



Travelling ministers: Acts 13–16

We see many examples in the New Testament of servants of Jesus who are ministers or messengers who visit or write to other churches.

As a **preacher** and **evangelist** Paul travelled a long way to preach the Good News of Jesus Christ. He spent many years travelling round the Roman Empire (Europe and Turkey). He started new churches and appointed pastors.

Then Paul went back to visit these churches. He taught them more truths of God and encouraged them to follow in the way of Jesus (Acts 14:21; 15:23; 16:4). He also wrote letters to them to explain God's truth and the teachings of Christ. A person who does this is called a **teacher**. A person who brings words given by the Holy Spirit to believers is called a **prophet**.

Preachers, evangelists, prophets and teachers, who travel from town to town, are called travelling ministers. It can bring much blessing, encouragement and unity to the new believers (14:22; 15:31; 16:5).

1. These people must be humble people who have been chosen and anointed by the Holy Spirit (13:2).
2. They must be people who are approved and appointed by their home church (13:3).
3. They should be prepared to work hard and not expect to get a lot of money by doing this.
4. They should be supported by their 'home' church who pray for them, guide them and help them to keep faithful to God.
5. These four guidelines avoid false ministers who travel from place to place.

Questions. Is your church a 'sending church'? Does your church send out and support and encourage travelling ministers? Do you share in the work of encouraging new churches? Do you pray for those who do this work (12:5)? Do you encourage or share in the ministry of writing letters?

Questions. Is your church a 'receiving church'? Does your church receive and welcome evangelists, preachers, prophets and teachers from other churches? Do you work closely with the 'sending' churches? Do you help to pay their expenses or give them a gift?

Saul then learned all the teachings of Jesus. He taught the Jews and those who were not Jews throughout the Roman Empire. This was the plan of God (Acts 9:15). Many people were saved and became Christians. Saul helped to start many churches in Europe (see map).



Acts 13:1–12

SAUL'S FIRST JOURNEY PREACHING THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS CHRIST

The Christian Church in Antioch grew strong. Among the leaders were Barnabas, Simeon, Lucius, Manaen and Saul (13:1–2). Also young John Mark (13:5). Some were teachers, some were preachers and some had the gift of prophecy. These are all gifts given by the Holy Spirit.

As they were worshipping, praying and fasting (13:2) the Holy Spirit spoke to the believers: 'Set Saul and Barnabas apart for the special work I want them to do'.

The church leaders again fasted. They prayed and laid their hands on the heads of Barnabas and Saul. They sent them off to do special work for the Lord (13:3). The Holy Spirit was in charge. He called and led His servants. He went before them to make men's hearts ready to hear the Good News.

Notice these things about the calling of Saul and Barnabas:

1. Saul and Barnabas were trusted leaders in the church (13:1).

2. Time was given to allow the Holy Spirit to speak through the people (13:2).
3. The church leaders fasted and prayed for guidance about Saul and Barnabas. They laid hands on them as a sign of God's blessing (13:3).
4. Saul and Barnabas were sent out guided by the Holy Spirit (13:3,4).
5. Notice also that the Holy Spirit called Saul and Barnabas but it was the local church that sent them out.

Saul and Barnabas took John Mark with them (13:5) and went down to the sea port of Seleucia. Then they sailed to the island of Cyprus. Barnabas was born in Cyprus.

The Roman governor of Cyprus, Sergius Paulus, listened to their preaching. He wanted to hear God's word, but Bar-Jesus, a Jewish magician (also called Elymas) tried to stop him.



Why did the apostles lay hands on people's heads?

“Laying on of hands” is an act of blessing that is mentioned several times in Acts. It is also taught in Hebrews 6:2. Jesus touched the sick (Mark 6:5) when He healed them. Paul laid hands on people when he prayed for them to be healed (28:8–9). Timothy received a “gift from God” when Paul touched him (2 Timothy 1:6). And when Paul laid his hands on the heads of believers in Ephesus (Acts 19:6) they received the Holy Spirit, spoke in different languages and prophesied. This also happened when the Apostles laid their hands on believers in Samaria (Acts 8:17).

Church leaders lay their hands on believers when new leaders are chosen for a special work or office, especially as deacons (Acts 6:6) and as missionaries (13:3). The calling and appointing of these people should not be done hastily (1 Timothy 5:22). Only mature Christians and those in leadership should lay hands on believers. No-one troubled by demon spirits should lay hands on people, nor should hands be laid on people troubled by demons spirits.

Paul and Barnabas were called as missionaries when the church was fasting (Acts 13:2). Then after more fasting and praying the church leaders laid their hands on the heads of Paul and Barnabas, believing that:

- God had chosen and called them;
- they had a special work to do for God;
- the power of the Holy Spirit anointed them.

The church members showed their support for Paul and Barnabas and also for their church leaders. They were all in agreement. There was unity of spirit. They all met together to witness the laying on of hands. In this way, Paul and Barnabas were sent out by God through the local church. Later, the church received them back and the members were blessed through listening to the report of Paul and Barnabas (14:27).

It was here that Saul used his Roman name Paul (13:9).

Paul looked straight at Elymas: 'You child of the devil,' he said, 'the hand of the Lord is against you. You are going to be blind...' (13:11). And Elymas was blind for a time.



When the Roman governor saw what happened to Elymas he believed in the power of God.

Sometimes we must speak out against Satan and take control over demon powers in the name of Jesus. Only the Holy Spirit can show us what to do, as He showed Paul. Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit (13:9).



Talk about:

1. What gifts should be encouraged in each church (13:1)?
2. Does your church give time to listening to God? (13:2)?
3. Does your church send out preachers and evangelists (13:3)?
4. What made the Roman governor believe (13:12)?



Acts 13:13–52

PAUL PREACHES TO JEWS AND NON-JEWS

From Cyprus, Paul and his friends went to Asia Minor (see map). There John Mark left them, but we are not sure why (13:13). So Paul was not pleased with Mark (15:38).

When Paul and Barnabas visited other towns, they first visited the Jewish synagogues. That is where Jews met to hear their leaders read the holy writings. At Antioch in Asia Minor, Paul preached a great message (13:16–41).

Paul's preaching was so popular with the Gentiles (non-Jews) that it made the Jews envious (13:42–46).

This is how Paul preached to the crowd using words from the holy writings:

- He reminded them of God's calling for the Jews into the Promised Land of Canaan (13:17–20).



Church government

Jewish synagogues had a leader or ruler of the synagogue called 'Rabbi' or Teacher. Under him were deacons and elders who taught and helped the people.

Paul followed this order in setting up the early churches (Acts 14:23). Stephen was a deacon (6:5); there were elders in Jerusalem (15:2) and James was leader of the Jerusalem council (15:13).

Paul and Barnabas returned to the cities where they had preached. They encouraged the believers and appointed elders.

- He explained that, through the family of King David, God brought to Israel the Saviour Jesus (13:23).
- He said that the people put Jesus to death on a cross but God raised Him from death (13:28–30).
- Then he preached the Good News that everyone who repents and believes in Jesus is forgiven and made right with God (13:38–39).
- He finished with a warning to not make fun of this truth (13:40–41).

Many non-Jews believed and were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit (13:48). But some of the Jews caused a lot of trouble for Paul and Barnabas. They sent them away (13:50).

Paul and Barnabas then went back to visit some of the new churches. This is what they told the believers (14:21,22):

1. They encouraged the believers to grow strong in their faith.
2. They told them to stay true to what they had been taught.
3. They warned the followers of Jesus that they would have many troubles.

Then they chose leaders (elders) who had much faith in God (14:23). They prayed and fasted for these people and left them in God's care. It is essential that churches have elders to help lead, teach and care for the members. Paul knew that it was not sufficient to have preachers in charge of the church groups.



Church meeting places

The word 'Church' means 'all Christian believers in the world' who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. We often call the believers 'the body of Christ'.

We call each local church group 'a fellowship of believers'. Today the word 'church' is also used to mean the buildings where believers meet to worship. But you do not need a building to worship God.

The first Christian believers met in homes and also in the Jewish synagogues on the Sabbath (Saturday). They were popular meeting places for everyone to walk in and listen to the teaching.



Acts 14:1–28

PAUL PREACHES AT ICONIUM AND DERBE

In Iconium Paul preached with great power. 'A great number of Jews and Gentiles believed.' Other Jews did not like this and stirred up trouble. The people were divided. Preaching the Good News of Jesus Christ often divides friends and families; some believe and others do not (Matthew 10:21).

However, Paul and Barnabas stayed a long time there (14:3). They did not 'grow weary doing good' (Galatians 6:9). There were many believers in that city. But after hearing of a plan to kill them, the two apostles left (14:6).

Paul and Barnabas travelled through Asia Minor. They preached the gospel boldly and God worked miracles through them. When the crowds saw a man healed they became excited. They called Paul 'Hermes' and Barnabas 'Zeus', the names of Greek gods (14:12). There was a temple of Zeus in that city.

A pagan priest wanted to sacrifice animals to Paul and Barnabas. Paul stopped him doing this. He told the people, 'We are only human like you... turn away from these worthless things to the living God' (14:15).

Then angry Jews from Antioch, Asia Minor, made the crowds angry and they stoned Paul. They thought he was dead and dragged him outside the city but God raised him up. The next day he and Barnabas left for Derbe (14:20). Here, many believed the Good News of Jesus Christ (14:21).

After a long journey, Paul and Barnabas went back to the church in Antioch (Syria) and told the believers all that God had done.

It was a long time before God sent Paul out on another journey (14:28). There were other jobs for him to do in the church.



Talk about:

1. What should we do when troubles come to us because of our beliefs (14:6,20,22)?
2. How should new believers be encouraged (14:22)?
3. What kind of people are needed to lead churches (14:23; 1 Timothy 3)?
4. Does your church allow time to listen to what God is doing in the lives of Christian workers (14:27)?



Church Problems and Church Meetings: Acts 15:1–35

Some church leaders wanted the new believers to have faith in the laws of Moses (15:1). The laws include circumcision. Others said that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ sets them free from their sins (15:11).

The church met to discuss what was right and wrong:

- First the **whole church met** to share what had happened (v.4).
- Then the **church leaders met** to discuss the problems (v.6).
- Then Paul and Barnabas spoke at a **special church meeting** (v.12).
- Then James **read God's words from the holy writings** (v.16, 17).
- Then James, the leader, gives **advice what to do** (v.19–21).
- The whole church **agreed what to do** (v.22).
- Then they **told the other churches** what was agreed (v.23–29).



Acts 15:1–35

MEETING OF THE CHURCH LEADERS

Men from Judea came to Antioch and told the believers: 'Unless you are circumcised... you cannot be saved' (15:1). Circumcision is the Jewish custom of removing the spare skin from the male sex organ at the age of 8 days. God instructed Abraham to do this to all the boys of his family as a sign of His special agreement with the Jews (Genesis 17:11). Paul taught that faith alone saved men, so some Jewish believers and non-Jewish believers argued against each other.

Because of the disagreement, the church in Antioch sent Paul and Barnabas to the leaders in Jerusalem to ask the apostles and elders what to do (15:2).

On the way they spoke to other Jewish Christians. These people were pleased to hear that the Good News of Jesus Christ was received by non-Jews (15:3). But in Jerusalem, some of the Pharisees were not pleased. They wanted to keep the old ways of religion including circumcision. It is sad when old religious habits hinder the work of the Holy Spirit in our churches today.

At Jerusalem, James and the apostles welcomed Paul and the others. Then Pharisees in the group stood up and said that all believers should obey the Law of Moses and be circumcised (15:5). Peter answered, 'God who knows the heart... accepted the non-Jews by giving the Holy Spirit to them... He made their hearts pure by faith... We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved... Those who are not Jews are saved in the same way as Jews' (Acts 15: 8–11).

Then the church leaders listened as Paul and Barnabas spoke about the signs and wonders God did among non-Jews in the cities of Asia Minor. Later Paul wrote, 'God's grace has saved you because of your faith in Christ' (Ephesians 2:8). 'Salvation is the free gift of God because of what Christ Jesus our Lord has done' (Romans 6:23). Many false religions say that you must work hard to get to heaven. Paul said: 'Your salvation doesn't come from anything you do. It's God's gift. It is not based on anything you have done' (Ephesians 2:9).

'The words of the prophets agree with this,' James answered. He used words from the prophet Amos who told of a time when God would bless all the nations through Jesus Christ. 'This means all the non-Jews who belong to Me, God said' (Acts 15:17; Amos 9:12). Then James warned the church leaders 'not to make it hard for the non-Jews who are turning to God' (Acts 15:19).

The church leaders wrote a letter to the non-Jewish believers to give them correct teaching. They sent it with Judas, Silas, Paul and Barnabas (15:22–

23). In the letter they said that they were sorry that some of the believers from Judea had upset the non-Jewish believers. This letter brought unity among the believers and made everyone happy (15:31; Ephesians 2:15). Jesus prayed to Father God for unity among believers (John 17:21). He wanted them to be filled with God's love and the Spirit of Christ (John 17:26).



Talk about:

1. Why did the church send leaders to Jerusalem (15:1,2)?
2. Are you excited when people from outside the church are saved (15:3)?
3. What is the way to solve problems (15:4–22)?
4. How do you protect new believers from false teaching (15:30–34)?



Acts 15:36–41; 16:1–40

PAUL'S MISSIONARY WORK GROWS

Soon after this Paul wanted to go back to the new churches in Cyprus and Asia Minor (Turkey). Barnabas agreed but wanted to take his cousin Mark with them (15:37). Paul did not want to take Mark with them. So Paul went with Silas to Asia Minor and Barnabas went with Mark to Cyprus. This disagreement was caused by Paul's refusal to trust a young believer who had left an earlier missionary journey (13:13). Mark was Barnabas's cousin (Colossians 4:10) so Barnabas trusted Mark. Paul and Barnabas could not agree.

We know nothing more of Barnabas, but Mark later worked for Paul (Philemon 24). Mark also wrote his gospel about the teachings and ministry of Jesus. At the end of Paul's life, he asked Mark to help him (2 Timothy 4:11).

When Christian leaders disagree, it is better for both to go separate ways. This avoids dividing the Church. Paul and Barnabas did not divide the believers – they went separate ways and got on with the work of preaching and teaching the Good News.

PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY

Paul and Silas went to Derbe and Lystra. In each place the letter from the church leaders in Jerusalem was read and the believers encouraged.

In Lystra, Paul met a young man named Timothy. Timothy's mother and grandmother were both Jewish believers (2 Timothy 1:5).

Paul loved young Timothy and took him along with them. Timothy's father was not a Jew. Timothy was not accepted by some of the Jews, so Paul circumcised him (16:3). Circumcision is not necessary to make men right with God (Galatians 2:16), but Paul wanted to please the Jews.

Paul, Silas and Timothy visited the churches in that area to encourage them. Their numbers grew daily (16:5). Then they went to towns which Paul had not visited before.

Every day Paul waited on God to find out what he should do. He went to Galatia because the Holy Spirit told him not to go north (16:6). It is always important to know what we should not do and what we should do – where we should not go as well as where we should go.

One night, Paul had a vision. A man from Macedonia called to him, 'Come over and help us.' Next morning they set out for Macedonia (16:10). Paul obeyed the Holy Spirit quickly.

Like Paul, we too must trust the Holy Spirit to guide us. He does this in many ways and at many times:

1. When we ask Him to refill us with His Spirit (Luke 11:13).
2. When we do what pleases the Lord (Acts 16:5).
3. When we witness to others about Jesus (Luke 21:13–15).
4. When we study God's word (2 Timothy 3:16,17).
5. When we are ready to obey (Acts 16:10).
6. When we move forward with the work God has told us to do until the Holy Spirit warns us to stop (16:6,7).

Paul was doing all these things when the Holy Spirit spoke to him and moved him onwards (v.6) and onwards (v.7) and onwards (v.9).

At this time we believe Luke joined Paul and the others. They travelled by boat to southern Macedonia (which is now part of Greece).

There was no Jewish synagogue at Philippi so they went outside the city to the river. There they found a special 'place of prayer' (16:13). Paul and the



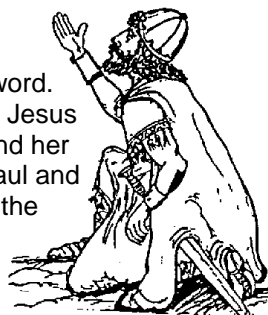
Demons obey the power of Jesus

Demon spirits or demons recognise Jesus Christ and know that he is more powerful. But they try to deceive believers and those who are seeking God's truth. The demon spirit within the slave girl tried to deceive the people to believe that she knew all about the power of God (Acts 16:17). By shouting out her approval of Paul and Silas she was gaining attention for herself and for her evil masters – as if they were equals to the apostles. (Matthew Henry)

Paul did not want a demon spirit to talk about them. The crowds would not understand who was telling the truth. Jesus told a demon spirit to come out of a man who shouted things about Him (read Mark 1:23–27). Jesus did not want that. We must be prepared to order demon spirits to go out in the Name of Jesus. Do not do this on your own. Jesus sent his followers to work together in pairs (Mark 6:7).

others spoke to some women who were there. Sometimes it is necessary to find somewhere quiet to talk about Jesus.

A business woman named Lydia listened to God's word. She was not a Jew but believed in God. She accepted Jesus as the Son of God and the Holy Spirit filled her. She and her family believed and were baptized. Then she asked Paul and the others to stay at her house (16:15). Lydia became the first Christian in Europe through Paul's ministry. Over 15 years earlier, other Jews from Europe and Africa and Asia became followers of Jesus Christ when visiting Jerusalem (Acts 2:9–11,41).



Talk about:

1. If Christian leaders disagree what is one way forward (15:39)?
2. Why did Paul circumcise Timothy (16:3)?
3. Give two ways the Holy Spirit guides us (16:6–9). How should guidance be checked (16:10)?
4. Do you have a special place where you can talk quietly to others about Jesus (16:13)?
5. Do you trust God to warn you about going the wrong way and to lead you to people who need to know about Jesus (16:7,10)?

The apostles often went to the river to pray. One day a slave girl with a demon spirit followed them. 'She made a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling' (16:16). People paid money to hear what the demon spirit in the girl would tell them. These people listened to demon spirits instead of God. Paul was upset when this slave girl followed after them shouting 'These men are servants of the Most High God' (16:17,18). She spoke the truth but Paul knew it came from a demon spirit. Paul was God's messenger, not the slave girl with the demon spirit.

The believers in **Thessalonica** had many troubles but grew strong in the faith and were wonderful examples to other believers (1 Thessalonians 1:6–10). They became well known for helping others.

The believers in **Berea** read the holy writings very carefully (Acts 17:11). They became well known for studying the word of God.

The people in **Athens** were interested in religion but did not want to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. They were well educated. They knew about a lot of things and enjoyed discussing many new ideas. But they did not believe in Jesus as their Saviour. The number of believers in Athens was small because the people of Athens were interested in many other things. The church was not well known.

After many days, Paul spoke to the demon spirit in the girl. 'In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!' At that moment the demon left her (16:18).

The owners saw that the girl had lost her power and they were angry. They could no longer make money through the girl telling the future. They took hold of Paul and Silas and dragged them to the marketplace. 'These Jews are doing things which are against the Roman law' (16:21). The city leaders ordered them to be whipped and put into prison. But God brings glory to His name if we continue to trust Him through all difficulties.

In prison, in the middle of the night, Paul and Silas sang hymns and prayed to God. They were bleeding and in much pain. As the other prisoners listened, an earthquake broke the prison open. The head prison officer woke up and saw the doors open. He thought the prisoners had escaped. He drew his sword to kill himself, but Paul shouted, 'Don't harm yourself! We are all here!' (16:25–28).

GOD SAVES THE PRISON OFFICER

The prison officer was frightened. If the prisoners escaped, he would be in much trouble from the Romans.

The man fell on his knees in front of Paul. He cried out, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' They replied, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you and your family will be saved' (16:31). Then they told him and his family about Jesus. The jailor and his family believed. At midnight, he took Paul and Silas and washed their sore backs and gave them food. This showed that he was a changed man.

Paul baptized the prison officer and his whole family. For Paul and Silas, this was the most important thing to do: obey the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19–20, 'Go and teach all people in all countries to believe and follow Me. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and in the name of the Son, and in the name of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to do all things I have told you to do' (TJB). Their troubles in prison did not stop the power of God from working.

In the morning, the city leaders told the prison officer to set Paul and Silas free (16:35). They also said sorry to Paul and Silas (16:39) because Paul was a Roman. It was wrong to whip Romans. They were forgiven by Paul.

This story gives a wonderful picture of how we should trust God who is in control of all things.

This story also gives us a wonderful picture of the love of God. There was no punishment and complete forgiveness from sins for the jailor and for all who believe and follow Jesus, God's Son!

Then Paul and Silas went back to Lydia's house. They stayed there only a short time, then they went on to the next town. They obeyed God's call to preach the Good News in Macedonia.

The believers in Philippi grew stronger in their faith. They loved Paul and cared for his needs when few others did (Philippians 1:3–5; 4:14–16).



Talk about:

1. What did Lydia do to help those who preached the Good News (16:15,40)?
2. Why is it good to praise God and sing hymns when we are hurt by others (16:25)?
3. What was the prison officer saved from (16:28,30)?



Now read Acts: 17:1–34

PAUL PREACHES FROM CITY TO CITY

Paul and his friends came to Thessalonica. On three Sabbath days, Paul went into the synagogue and taught the Jews. He proved from the holy writings 'that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. This Jesus I am reporting to you is the Messiah, the Christ,' he told them (17:3). Some Jews believed. Many non-Jews believed.

Jason opened his house to them. Certain Jews were jealous. They gathered some bad men and rushed to Jason's house looking for Paul and Silas. They could not find them, so they dragged Jason before the city leaders. 'These men have caused trouble all over the world; now they come here and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They disobey Caesar and say that there is another king called Jesus' (17:6,7).

Jason paid money and was freed. At night, the believers sent Paul and Silas away to safety.

In Berea many received their message. They studied the holy writings carefully every day. It is important to check all preaching and teaching with the Word of God. Many of the Jews and non-Jews believed (17:11,12). But jealous Jews followed them there, too. So the believers took Paul and Silas to Athens.

FEW BELIEVERS IN ATHENS

Athens was the centre of culture and learning in Paul's day. He was greatly troubled to see all the idols in the city. He preached the Good News about Jesus and His resurrection. In the synagogue he talked with those who worshipped Yahweh, the one true God (17:17). He explained to them how

Jesus was their Messiah. He also spoke about Jesus to the people in the market place.

Paul spoke with great passion because the people did not have Jesus in their lives. Then some men took him to a meeting of the Areopagus where their law court met. 'What is this new teaching?' they asked him (17:19).

The Greeks had many gods, but did not know the one true living God. Paul told them:

1. The one true God made the world. He is not a god made by the hands of people (17:24).
2. 'God does not need anything.' It is God who gives life and everything else (17:25). He is Lord of all.
3. All people on earth come from one man (Adam) that He made (17:26).
4. God decided when and where to send the people to live. God did this so that we should look for Him, reach out for Him and find Him wherever He sends us (17:27). He is never far from any one of us.
5. God is the creator of life. We live because of Him (17:28). We were created to be His children.
6. God is not made out of gold or silver or stone. Do not think about Him in this way (17:29). It is wrong to worship Him in this way.
7. Repent and turn away from your sins (17:30).
8. God has sent Jesus to judge the world (17:31).

Paul saw that they were 'very religious' people yet did not know God. 'If we are created by God, how can we worship idols?' he asked.

When the Greeks heard about Jesus being raised from the dead, some laughed. Others said, 'We want to hear you again on this...' (17:32).

The people of Athens were religious, rich, clever and educated. But only a few people believed in God and His Son, Jesus (17:34).



Talk about:

1. Describe in your own words the difference between the believers of Berea (17:11) and Athens (17:34) and Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 1:6).
2. What did the people do when Paul preached the Good News of Jesus Christ – in Thessalonica (Acts 17:4); in Berea (17:12); in Athens (17:32)?
3. What points in Paul's preaching can we include when we speak to non-believers about Christ?



Work and ministry

Paul had an ordinary job. He repaired and made tents. He sold the tents that he made. He did this work so that he could earn some money. He worked with Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth (Acts 18:3). We believe he did this same work when he visited other towns (20:34). He did this to earn money to pay for his food and clothes.

He did not expect others to give him money for his food and clothes. He believed it was good to spend part of his time working and part of his time teaching and preaching. In this way he was not a burden to the people he lived with. He did not ask them to pay him money when he taught them but said it was acceptable to pay him. In this way, the believers could help the churches in Jerusalem and not give all their money to Paul.

We call Paul's ministry a tent-making ministry. He did God's work but he also made tents to sell. He was happy to do both and believed that God wanted him to do that. Paul gave God the glory for all the work that he could do – his tent making, his teaching, his preaching. He repaired tents; he repaired broken lives; he repaired false teaching. He did all things for the glory of God.

Many Bible teachers, ministers, preachers and evangelists have ordinary jobs. They have "tent-making ministries". Some work full-time in ministry and are paid by the church or mission. Some work part-time for money and part-time in ministry. All their work glorifies God and blesses the work they do.



MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Based on Acts chapters 13 to 17

Please choose the correct answers, a, b or c. There could be one, two or three answers that are correct for each question.

Answers are given on page 43

1. Barnabas and Saul went to Cyprus because —
 - a) they thought it was a good thing to do.
 - b) the church at Antioch asked them to go.
 - c) the Holy Spirit told them to go.
2. Why did Paul and Barnabas preach to people who were not Jews?
 - a) The Word of God had commanded it.
 - b) They did not like the Jewish people.
 - c) Some of the Gentiles wanted to listen and have eternal life.

3. When the priest of Zeus wanted to worship Paul and Silas —
 - a) they were glad.
 - b) they said they were not gods.
 - c) they said that God was not like Zeus.
4. What did Paul and Silas do everywhere they went?
 - a) Preached the Good News.
 - b) Made the people angry.
 - c) Healed everyone who listened.
5. James said that —
 - a) he agreed with what Peter said.
 - b) that only the Jews could be people of God.
 - c) that it should not be made difficult for the non-Jews to believe.
6. James said that all believers —
 - a) should be circumcised.
 - b) must not eat meat.
 - c) should stay away from sexual sin.
7. Paul and his companions went to Macedonia because —
 - a) they did not want to go to Bithynia.
 - b) they heard it was a good place to go.
 - c) Paul had a vision about Macedonia.
8. The God-fearing lady, Lydia —
 - a) was at a place of prayer when Paul met her.
 - b) was baptised with all her household.
 - c) believed everything that Paul said.
9. Which are true?
 - a) The slave girl believed in Jesus.
 - b) The city leaders believed in Jesus.
 - c) The jailer believed in Jesus.
10. What happened in Thessalonica?
 - a) Paul and Silas were dragged before the city leaders.
 - b) Some Jews believed and some others were jealous.
 - c) Jason started a riot.
11. Paul went to Berea where —
 - a) the Thessalonian Jews came to make trouble for him.
 - b) nobody would listen to him.
 - c) Silas and Timothy left Paul and went home.
12. Paul told the men of Athens —
 - a) to follow an unknown god.
 - b) about God who made the world.
 - c) that gods are made by man.



Acts: 18 1–17

GOD ENCOURAGES PAUL TO PREACH IN CORINTH

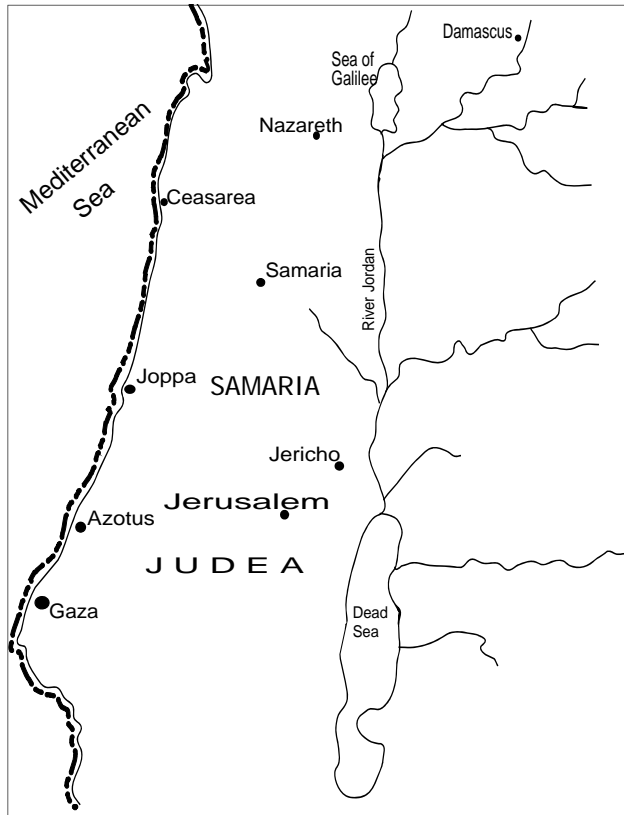
Paul did not stay long in Athens. He went to Corinth where God told him to preach boldly. 'Don't be afraid. Keep on speaking. Don't be silent. I am with you. No-one will hurt you.' Why? God had many people in Corinth who would receive the Good News of Jesus and be saved (18:9,10).

Corinth was a busy sea port in southern Greece. It was a city full of immoral people.

There Paul met Aquila and Priscilla. In Rome, Claudius was emperor at that time. The Jews there made trouble for the Christians, so Claudius made all Christians leave Rome. Aquila and Priscilla were Jews who believed in Jesus, so they left Rome. This is why they were living in Corinth. Paul was a tent maker and they were tent makers too, so he stayed with them and they made tents together to earn money. Paul stayed there for one and a half years.

The Jewish leaders in Corinth also tried to make trouble for the Christians (18:6). But the Roman governor, Gallio, did not listen to the Jews (18:14–16). When the Jews rejected Paul he preached to people who were not Jews (18:6).

It was in Corinth that Paul wrote his letters to the Thessalonians. Paul praised them, encouraged them and corrected them.





Talk about:

1. Paul went to Athens (17:15) then to Corinth (18:1). How did Paul know when he was in the right place (18:9–11)?
2. Is it good for teachers, preachers or leaders to have a part-time job to earn money (18:3)?



Acts 18:18–28; 9:1–20

PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY

Paul went back to Jerusalem and then returned to his home church in Antioch (18:22). After some time in Antioch, Paul travelled again to the churches in Asia Minor. He taught believers in each place (18:23).

During this time, Apollos went to Ephesus (18:24) from Alexandria, in Egypt. His knowledge of the holy writings was good and he spoke with great power about Jesus. But he only knew the baptism of John the Baptist (18:25). Paul's friends helped Apollos to gain 'a better understanding of the way of God' (18:26).

When Paul returned to Ephesus, he found some believers had been baptized in the name of John (19:3). Then Paul baptized them in the name of Jesus (19:5). Paul laid his hands on them and prayed for them (19:6). The Holy Spirit came down on them. Some spoke in different languages and some began to prophesy. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are chosen by God for each believer.

Paul spoke in the synagogue at Ephesus for three months. When some people began to speak against him and 'The Way' of Jesus he went to a teaching room owned by Tyrannus. He taught there every day for two years so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in that region heard the word of the Lord (19:10).

While Paul was in Ephesus, he wrote letters to the church in Corinth. He explained the teachings of Jesus to stop them going the wrong way in life. He strengthened their faith and warned them about false teachings. When Paul started new churches he tried to write to them or visit them.



The power of God today (see Acts 19:19)

'We have seen God's power at work. He visited us with miracles. People brought their idols to be burnt and gave their lives to Christ. People's thoughts were uncovered through the preaching of the word of God. At night, some people could not sleep. They came back in the morning to confess the wrong things they had done. It was really a time of God's grace. Now I am receiving phone calls and visits of people to praise God because He has changed their lives. Glory to God!' (*Pastor B., Burkina Faso, September 2004.*)

God did many miracles through Paul, especially healing people who were ill and driving out demon spirits (19:11,12). The sons of a pagan priest were evil magicians. When they saw Paul cast out demons in the name of Jesus, they tried to do the same.

One day they tried using the words they heard Paul use. They found a man with a demon spirit and shouted 'In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out' (19:13).

The demon spirit answered them, 'Jesus I know, and I know Paul, but who are you?' Then the man jumped on them and beat them, so that they ran out of the house 'naked and bleeding'.

Because of this, many people in Ephesus believed and were sorry for the bad things that they had done. Some burned all their witchcraft books and evil objects used in witchcraft. 'The word of the Lord spread everywhere' and the power of the Good News grew stronger (19:20).



Talk about:

1. How can you help believers to fully understand God's truth (18:26)?
2. What is necessary to receive the Holy Spirit (John 7:38–39)?
3. What did Paul say and do to the believers in Ephesus (19:4–6)?
4. Why is it necessary to burn or destroy all objects used in witchcraft, magic and the occult when we believe (19:20)?
5. Why is it important to write to new Christians or new churches?



Paul was not afraid to tell the truth

Paul preached that the Law of Moses was good but not sufficient to save people from their sins (Romans 3:20). He preached that people are put right with God through faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:22). He knew that the Law is a guide for telling us what is wrong. But the Law alone cannot save us from our sins (Romans 3:20). It shows what is right and wrong.

Many found this difficult to understand. This is why Paul was in trouble with some of the Jewish believers in Jerusalem (Acts 21:21). Many believers were trying hard to follow Christ and also to follow the Law of Moses (21:20). Because of this, Paul was asked to show that he believed in the Law of Moses (21:23–24). He wanted to please these men and also to please God. But soon Paul was in trouble with Jews from Asia Minor (21:27).

Then he asked to explain the truth (Acts 21:39). This caused further trouble with the Jews in Jerusalem (22:22). But the Lord Jesus told Paul, 'Be brave! You have given witness to me in Jerusalem. You must do the same in Rome' (23:11). ***Always pray for boldness to tell the truth.***



Acts 19:21–41; 20:1–38

PAUL PLANS WHAT TO DO IN EPHESUS

The work of the Holy Spirit in Ephesus became very powerful. The truth of God spread everywhere around (19:20). During this time Paul began to plan where to travel next. He wanted to visit the churches across the sea in Macedonia and Achaia (now called Greece).

He also wanted to visit Jerusalem and Rome (19:21). Jerusalem was the centre of the Jewish people and also the centre of the Christian churches. Rome was the centre of the Roman empire. Achaia was the centre of the old Greek empire. Paul knew that these were important places to visit to preach the Good News of Jesus Christ and to teach the believers. He stayed in Ephesus a little longer but sent two of his helpers to Macedonia (19:22). Paul followed them later (20:1).

At this time, the people who made silver idols encouraged the crowds to cause trouble for the followers of Jesus (19:23–29). Paul did not move away from Ephesus. He stayed with the believers. He wanted to help and support them (19:30). Paul stayed with them until the trouble was over (20:1). Then he left to visit the churches in Macedonia and Achaia (Greece) before returning to Troas in Asia Minor (Turkey) (20:1–6).

Paul knew when to stay and when to move on. He was a busy preacher and teacher but he listened to the Holy Spirit to guide him.

Paul was prevented from going back to his home church in Antioch (Syria). Paul learned of a plan to kill him (20:3), so he went back through Macedonia. Paul would never see Greece or Asia Minor or Syria again. The others waited for him at Troas. He joined them there and stayed seven days.

The believers met in an upper room and Paul talked to them until midnight. It was hot and the room filled with smoke from the oil lamps. A young man sat in the open window. He fell asleep and fell to the ground. When they reached him, he was dead. Paul went down and threw his arms around the young man's body and his spirit came into him again (20:10).

After this miracle, Paul went back upstairs, shared food and taught the people until it was morning. Then Paul went by boat to Miletus. He did not stop at Ephesus. In this way he saved time on his journey to Jerusalem (20:16).

PAUL TEACHES THE CHURCH LEADERS

While at Miletus, Paul sent for the church leaders from Ephesus. He spoke serious words to them: 'I have told both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God and turn away from their sins. They must have faith in our Lord Jesus,' he told them. He did not fail to teach the full message of the Good

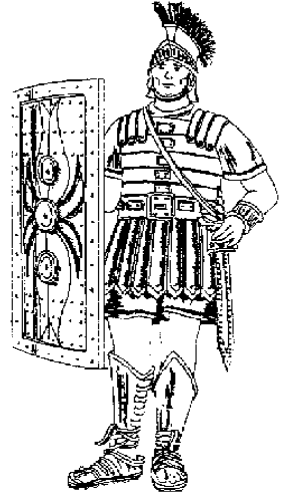
News. 'And now, compelled by the Holy Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem. I do not know what will happen to me there' (20:20–22).

'The Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, my life is worth nothing to me. I only want to complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me' (20:23–24).

'Keep watch over yourselves and all the believers. The Holy Spirit has made you leaders. After I leave you, men will come and try to change God's truth' (20:30).

The Holy Spirit chose the church leaders, and they were responsible to God, not to Paul. Some leaders try to watch over their flock, but do not 'keep watch' over their own lives. If leaders fail in their own personal life then the believers are taught wrong things about God.

When Paul was ready to depart, the church leaders cried and hugged and kissed him (20:37). Paul told them that he would never see them again.



Talk about:

1. What can you do when your life is in danger from people who cause trouble (19:30; 20:3; Matthew 2:14,22)?
2. What can build up our faith (20:32)?
3. Use Paul's words to talk about what a true leader is like (20:28–31).
4. Can anyone be a 'shepherd of God's Church' (20:28)?
5. Why did Paul spend so much time teaching (20:11,27,31)?
6. When you are in a hurry and busy serving God, do you find time to listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying?



Acts 21:1–40

PAUL GOES TO JERUSALEM

Paul travelled from Miletus, near Ephesus by ship to Cae-sa-re-a (21:1–7). Paul met with the believers there. They told Paul what the Holy Spirit said about the troubles in Jerusalem. They begged him not to go. But Paul believed that the Holy Spirit wanted him to go (20:22).

When the ship came to Caesarea, Paul stayed with Philip the evangelist. While he was there Agabus came from Jerusalem. He took Paul's belt and tied his own hands and feet with it as a sign. He spoke words given to him by the Holy Spirit: 'In this way the Jews... will tie up the owner of this

belt' (21:11). Paul, like Jesus, now knew what would happen to him in Jerusalem.

Paul answered Agabus and the believers: 'Why are you weeping? I am ready to be tied up and to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus' (21:13).

The believers knew the danger ahead for all of them, but they went up to Jerusalem with Paul. Paul stayed with Mnason, an old believer from Cyprus who lived in the city. Thousands of people were in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. They filled every room, but God had a special place for His servant Paul and his friends with Mnason (21:16).



Pharisees and Sadducees

The Pharisees and Sadducees were two religious groups of Jews. Jesus warned believers not to follow their ways (Matthew 16:6; 23:3).

There were several thousand **Pharisees** at the time of Jesus and Paul. Pharisees were devout Jews obeying the Law of Moses and the Temple laws. They made it difficult for others to follow their example. They believed strongly in God's truth recorded in the holy writings and thought that they were the experts in understanding and applying the truth of God. They told people what to believe and what to do, and what not to do.



They made many more laws of their own. Therefore, it was difficult for the people to obey all their rules and to find peace with God. Jesus said that the Pharisees did not obey their own laws (Matthew 23:3). He knew that we cannot find peace with God by following lots of man-made laws.

The **Sadducees** were wealthy Jews who obeyed the Law of Moses but did not make any new laws. They said that the people should obey the Law but make up their own minds what to do day by day. They obeyed the old religious traditions but did not seek God's guidance from His Word. This is why the Sadducees always argued with the Pharisees about obeying the Law. The Sadducees also refused to believe in angels, spirits and life after death.

The next day Paul went to see James and the leaders of the Jerusalem church (21:17–18). In Greece and Turkey many thousands of non-Jews had believed. Paul wanted to tell the elders what God had done there.

The elders praised God. But they said to Paul, 'There are thousands of Jews who try hard to obey the Law of Moses. They have heard that you



When things go wrong

When things appear to go wrong, it feels that God is no longer with us or in control. Throughout a large part of the Bible, it is clear that many times God spoke directly to His people. Before He ascended into heaven, Jesus said 'All authority is given to Me' (Matthew 28:18).

Therefore we should remember that God has handed control over to His Son, our Lord Jesus. Through His Spirit we see the Lord guiding Paul (Acts 23:11):

- Jesus spoke in the middle of the night.
- Jesus appeared in bodily form and stood near to Paul.
- Jesus came to comfort and to encourage him.
- Jesus came to praise what Paul had been doing.
- Jesus came to tell him what he will do in the future.

When you have troubles, Jesus will be with you and guide you. Sometimes He will let you know a little of what lies ahead. He does not tell us much about the future, so that we learn to live by faith. Paul did not know much about the future, only that one day he would go to Rome (23:11). God warns us not to try to find out the future from fortune tellers, mediums and spirits of the dead (Deuteronomy 18:10–13). He wants us to trust Him and follow Jesus.

teach the Jews to turn away from Moses. They think you teach them not to circumcise their children and not to live according to our customs. They will hear that you have come, so do what we tell you' (21:20–23).

They told Paul to take four men who were with them to the Temple, to be purified; to have their heads shaved; to pay for them to offer sacrifices. This would be obeying the Law of Moses.

Paul agreed to do this. However, he always preached that men are saved by grace, and through faith alone, not by keeping the Law of Moses (Ephesians 2:8–9).

PAUL IS ATTACKED BY THE JEWS

It was an easy thing for Paul to obey the Law of Moses. He had done this before.

Paul had been under the Nazarite Vow (Numbers 6:1–21). He had shaved his head at Cenchrrea (Acts 18:18). The four Jewish Christians in Jerusalem may have been under the same vow. It was time to have their heads shaved (21:24). Paul went with them.

At the Temple some of the Jews from Asia Minor saw Paul. They hated Paul and wanted to kill him. They said he had taken a non-Jew into the Temple. 'He has made this holy place unclean,' they shouted (21:28).

The crowds tried to kill Paul, but the Roman commander saved him from them and tied him up with chains. The soldiers carried him away to the Roman fort (21:34–35). There Paul stood on the steps and asked to speak to the crowds (21:39).



Talk about:

1. Explain the work of the Holy Spirit in Paul's journey to Jerusalem (19:21; 20:22–23; 21:4,11–13).
2. What advice did the believers give to Paul (21:4,12)?
3. How did the believers encourage Paul (21:14)?
4. How did the words of the Holy Spirit in 21:11 come true?
5. When Paul obeyed the Law of Moses (21:26) was this a good thing for Paul?



Acts 22:1–29

PAUL SPEAKS GOD'S TRUTH TO THE CROWDS

Paul spoke to the crowds in the Hebrew language so that they would fully understand him. He told them:

1. He was a Jew who knew the Law of Moses very well (22:3)
2. He was given permission to put followers of Jesus into prison and send them to die (22:4–5).
3. He was met by Jesus on the road to Damascus (22:6–11).
4. God sent a Jewish believer to speak to him. He told Paul to witness about Jesus (22:12–16).
5. In Jerusalem, Jesus told Paul to witness about Him in other places around the world and to people who are not Jews (22:17–21).

When the crowds heard this they wanted to kill Paul (22:22). The Roman commander gave orders for Paul to be flogged (22:24). When the commander found out that Paul was a Roman as well as a Jew, they stopped flogging him. (22:29). Then the commander took Paul to the Jewish Court, the Sanhedrin (22:30).



Talk about:

1. Why were the Jews so angry with Paul?
2. How did Paul explain his actions to the angry crowd (22:22)?
3. Why was the Roman commander afraid to flog Paul (22:29)?



MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

based on Acts chapters 18 to 22

Please choose the correct answers, a, b or c. There could be one, two or three answers that are correct for each question.

Answers are given on page 43

1. In Corinth, Paul —
 - a) met Aquila and Priscilla and worked with them.
 - b) was welcomed by the Jews in the synagogue.
 - c) only spoke to the Jews.

2. Apollos —
 - a) was a learned man with a knowledge of scripture.
 - b) had been baptised by John.
 - c) was taught by Paul.

3. Paul went to Ephesus and —
 - a) for two years spoke boldly in the synagogue.
 - b) taught some of John's disciples about Jesus.
 - c) did not have any miracles.

4. There was a riot in Ephesus because Paul —
 - a) said that gods made by man are not gods at all.
 - b) destroyed the temple of the goddess Artemis.
 - c) asked the city leaders to speak to the crowds.

5. In Troas –
 - a) Eutychus died and came to life again.
 - b) Paul fell from a window.
 - c) Paul spoke all night.

6. Paul –
 - a) did not want to go to Ephesus.
 - b) wanted the church leaders to bring him some money.
 - c) wanted to go to Jerusalem.

7. The prophet Agabus —
 - a) told Paul he would be put into prison by the Jews.
 - b) told Paul not to go to Jerusalem.
 - c) had four unmarried daughters.

8. Paul —
- had done something wrong against the Jewish law.
 - was taken away by the soldiers.
 - had done something wrong against the Roman law.
9. The crowd was angry because Paul —
- spoke in Aramaic.
 - was a Jew from Tarsus.
 - said God had sent him to the people who were not the Jews.
10. Paul —
- was flogged and questioned.
 - paid a lot of money to be a Roman citizen.
 - was born a Roman citizen.



Acts 23:1–35

PAUL SPEAKS GOD’S TRUTH TO THE JEWISH COURT

Paul spoke to the Sanhedrin, which was the highest Jewish court. He spoke of the hope of resurrection of life after death. The Sadducees say there is no resurrection, so they argue with the Pharisees, who believe in the resurrection.

Paul told the court that he was a Pharisee. He believed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ and he believed in life after death (23:6). This caused a big argument and fighting. It was easy for Paul to make the religious leaders argue between themselves. People who refuse to believe the whole of God’s truth often end up disagreeing.

Some of the Jews wanted to harm Paul, so the commander ordered his men to take Paul away.

COMFORT AND PROTECTION FOR PAUL

That night, the Lord Jesus came to Paul and said, ‘Be brave! You have given witness to me in Jerusalem. You must do the same in Rome’ (23:11). This comforted Paul and encouraged him in the difficult years ahead.

The Jews planned to kill Paul. Paul’s nephew heard of this and sent a message to Paul. So the commander ordered his men to take Paul to Caesarea during the night. There he waited to see Felix, the Roman governor of Judea (23:24). Paul would then have a proper trial.

Notice how God protects Paul in 23:24,35.



Acts 24:1 to 25:12

PAUL SPEAKS GOD'S TRUTH TO THE ROMAN GOVERNORS

Five days later, some of the Jews from Jerusalem came to Caesarea to speak to Felix. They told Felix that Paul had caused a lot of trouble with the Jews all over the world. They told Felix that Paul was a leader of the religious group called 'The Nazarenes' (24:5).

Paul told Felix that he was a faithful Jew and also a follower of Jesus (24:14). Paul had done nothing wrong against the Law of Moses. He believed everything in the holy writings. He tried to do what was right for God and for man (24:16). Felix understood everything that Paul said (24:22) and he sent the Jews away.

Felix let Paul's friends visit him and care for his needs (24:23). Felix and his wife sent for Paul to listen to him. Paul witnessed about his faith in Jesus Christ (24:24). He also spoke about:

1. Righteousness – how to live God's way in life.
2. Self-control – how to live the right way towards each other.
3. Judgement – how God will judge all people.

Felix became afraid to listen to Paul (24:25). Felix also wanted Paul to give him money to set him free (24:26). Paul refused to bribe Felix with money. Instead, Paul talked to Felix about God's truth. Asking for bribes and giving bribes is not God's way.

After two years Porcius Festus became governor. To please the Jews, Felix left Paul in prison (24:27). After Festus became governor, he heard the Jews speak against Paul. They asked Festus to send Paul to the Jewish court in Jerusalem. They would kill him if they could!

Festus did not let them do this. He made the Jews go to the court in Caesarea. So they came from Jerusalem to make their charges against Paul. They brought many charges against him, but they could not prove any of them (25:7).

Finally Paul said, 'I appeal to Caesar'. Festus spoke with his council, then replied, 'You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you will go!' (25:12). Caesar was the Roman emperor Nero, the chief ruler in Rome at that time. Later on, Nero persecuted the Christians.



Talk about:

1. Why did the Sadducees argue with Paul and with the Pharisees (23:8)?
2. How did God encourage Paul (23:11)?
3. What did the Roman commander say about Paul (23:29)?
4. How did Paul escape from the Jews (23:12,16,23,35)?

5. Why was Paul sent to Rome (23:11;25:12)?
6. Read what Jesus said in Mark 13:9 and Acts 9:15.
7. Why was Felix afraid to listen to Paul (24:25)?



Acts 25:13 to 26:32

PAUL SPEAKS GOD'S TRUTH TO THE KING

A few days later, King Herod Agrippa II came to visit Festus. The Roman Emperor had appointed Agrippa king of the Jewish people. Agrippa said, 'I want to hear Paul speak' (25:22). Agrippa II was the great-grandson of King Herod the Great who tried to kill Jesus when He was a child (Matthew 2:16).

The next day, King Agrippa and his sister Bernice met Paul with Festus. This fulfilled the words of Jesus in Mark 13:9 and Acts 9:15. The king knew a lot about the Jews. Paul told them that he was a faithful Jew who lived by the rules of the Pharisees (26:5). The Pharisees believe in the resurrection of those who believe God; they believe in life after death. Paul told them that at first he did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God. So he punished those people who were followers of Jesus (26:9–11).

Paul told them how he met the risen Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus (26:12–18) and how he preached about Jesus to the Jews and the non-Jews (26:19–20). Paul said this was why the Jewish leaders tried to kill him (26:21).

He said the same things that Moses and the prophets had said:

- That the Christ would suffer (Isaiah 53).
- That He would rise from the dead (Psalm 16:10).
- That Jesus came to save His own people first (Luke 1:54–55).
- That God promised to bring His truth and light to all the nations (Isaiah 42:6; Luke 2:32).

Agrippa almost believed in Jesus. 'This man could be set free. But he has appealed to Caesar,' he told Festus (26:32). So Paul was sent to Rome to be tried by Nero, the Roman emperor.



Talk about:

1. Why did Paul speak to king Agrippa (25:14–22)?
2. Why did the king stop Paul speaking to him (26:28)?
3. Discuss what happens when a person believes (26:18).



Acts 27:1–44

PAUL GOES TO ROME BY SHIP

By this time Paul had been a prisoner for two years. Aristarchus, Paul's friend, went with him to Rome. Paul called him 'a fellow prisoner' (Colossians 4:10). Luke travelled with them also.

Julius, a centurion of the Imperial Regiment, was in charge of one hundred soldiers who guarded the prisoners (27:1). Julius knew he could trust Paul, so at Sidon he let Paul go off the ship to visit the believers who lived there (27:3).

This was after mid-September at the beginning of the stormy season. Most ships stayed in port for the winter months of October to March. Paul knew that sailing would be too dangerous and told the captain (27:10). The owner of the ship would not listen, so they sailed towards Phoenix in the island of Crete (27:12) This was a safe place to stay for the winter.

But very soon the ship was caught in a storm and driven along by the wind. The seamen threw everything into the sea to lighten the ship, and they went without food. They 'gave up all hope of being saved' (27:20).

One night an angel spoke to Paul: 'Don't be afraid,' he said, 'you must stand trial before Caesar; and God will save the lives of all who sail with you' (27:24).

Paul told the men: 'Keep up your courage men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as He told me... We will be saved but we must run the ship onto the beach of an island' (27:25–26).

Soon the water got shallow so they put down anchors to hold the boat there until it was daylight (27:29). Paul told the 276 men that no one would die. They were filled with hope and ate some food (27:34–36). As daylight came, they saw a sandy beach, and tried to run the ship onto the beach. It got stuck in shallow water and was soon breaking up because of the waves. The soldiers wanted to kill the prisoners, but Julius saved them because of Paul. Then some of the men swam to shore. Others held onto pieces of wood; everyone reached land safely (27:44).



Acts 28:1–31

PAUL ON THE ISLAND OF MALTA

The land was the island of Malta. The people of Malta were very friendly. They made a fire to dry and warm the men. While Paul picked up wood for the fire, a snake attached itself to Paul's hand — possibly by its teeth.

'He must be a murderer,' the people said as they waited for him to swell up and die. When nothing happened to Paul, they said that he was a god (28:6).

The island's chief took Paul and his friends to his big house. He was the chief Roman official. His father was sick in bed, so Paul prayed for him and laid hands on him and God healed him. Many other sick people came to Paul for prayer and healing (28:8–9).

During Paul's stay on the island of Malta, the whole island heard about Jesus. Christianity in Malta dates from this time. Many times Malta has been attacked by the nations around it. But the people of Malta trusted in God for their freedom.

Three months later Paul was put onto a ship to take him to Rome. The winter storms had ended. Before he reached the city, many believers came out to meet him. At the sight of them, Paul was encouraged and praised God (28:15).

PAUL'S MINISTRY IN ROME

For two years, Paul stayed in a rented house 'and welcomed all who came to see him' (28:30). On a certain day, from morning until evening, Paul explained the Kingdom of God to the Jews. He used their own Scriptures to teach them. And he spoke to them of Jesus and His resurrection (28:23).

Some believed the Good News, but others did not. Then Paul used the words of Isaiah (Isaiah 6:9-10). The same words were used by Jesus (Matthew 13:3–23; Mark 4:3–20; Luke 8:4–15).

During the time Paul waited in Rome, he preached boldly the Good News of Jesus Christ (Acts 28:31). He also wrote letters to some of the Christian churches (Colossians, Ephesians, Philippians, Galatians). It was important for Paul to teach the churches that he founded. His writings are also helpful for teaching believers today, in addition to the teachings of Jesus in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Revelation.

After that Luke does not tell us what happened to Paul.

Paul's wish to go to Rome had been fulfilled. God allowed Paul to go there as a prisoner, not as a free man. He was a 'prisoner for Christ'. In this way, the Good News was preached to those who were willing to come and listen. And, through the writings of Paul, the churches were given understanding of the teachings of Christ and the Old Testament prophets.



Talk about:

1. Discuss how Paul helped to save the lives of the people on the ship.
2. Discuss how Paul changed the lives of the people of Malta.
3. Discuss how Paul helped to change the world whilst a prisoner in Rome.



MULTIPLE CHOICE QUESTIONS

Based on Acts chapters 23 to 28

Please choose the correct answers, a, b or c. There could be one, two or three answers that are correct for each question.

Answers are given on page 43

1. Paul —
 - a) said he was a Sadducee.
 - b) was taken before the Jewish Court.
 - c) said that God told him to speak about Him in Rome.
2. The Roman commander sent Paul to Caesarea, because —
 - a) he was afraid that Paul might be killed.
 - b) Paul asked the commander to do that.
 - c) so that Governor Felix could put him on trial.
3. Paul —
 - a) was put on trial by Tertullus.
 - b) worshipped the God of the Jews.
 - c) believed there would be a resurrection of the dead.
4. Felix —
 - a) was afraid when he listened to Paul.
 - b) was a Jew.
 - c) did not want to take a bribe.
5. Paul wanted to —
 - a) go to Jerusalem on trial.
 - b) be kept safe in prison.
 - c) to be tried by Caesar.
- 6 Festus —
 - a) asked King Agrippa to come to Jerusalem.
 - b) said that King Agrippa could hear Paul the next day.
 - c) shouted at Paul that he should not live any longer.
7. Which are true?
 - a) Paul told King Agrippa what God had done for him.
 - b) King Agrippa believed the prophets but not Paul.
 - c) King Agrippa believed all that Paul told him.
8. As Paul and his companions were sailing towards Rome, they wanted —
 - a) a strong wind to blow their boat.
 - b) to spend the winter in a harbour.
 - c) to spend the night in Phoenix.

9. Which are true?
- a) The people of Malta thought Paul was a murderer.
 - b) Paul healed the father of the chief man on the island.
 - c) Paul was bitten by a snake.
10. When Paul was in Rome —
- a) he preached both to Jews and to non-Jews.
 - b) some Jews did not believe Paul.
 - c) Paul was kept in a Roman prison.

THE RESULT OF PAUL'S MINISTRY

In prison in Rome, Paul was at the centre of the great Roman Empire. This helped the Good News of Jesus Christ to spread throughout the known world (Philippians 1:12–14). This happened because of what Paul said to his visitors and because of what Paul wrote for the churches.

Jesus said, 'Everyone will hate you because of Me. But the one who stands firm to the end will be saved' (Mark 13:13). Paul stood firm until his work for God was finished.

During the next few years, after the death of Paul, the writings of Luke (the gospel of Luke and the book of Acts) were copied many times and given to the believers to read. The same happened with the writings of Matthew, Mark, John, Peter and James and the letters of Paul. The believers were encouraged and the churches grew strong through reading these new holy writings, which we call the New Testament.

We can trust the words of the New Testament writers to tell us about Jesus Christ and his teachings, for they all knew Jesus. The risen Lord Jesus spoke to Paul and told him to witness about Him to the world.

So we thank God for the writings of Paul which teach everyone the truth about Jesus Christ who is the Son of God. It is a good thing for every believer to read the letters of Paul and the other apostles. They are an important result of the Acts of the Apostles which Luke does not tell us about. They are essential for reading in times of church growth, church decline, church disunity or church persecution.

Many people believe that we are near the time of great troubles before Christ returns (Mark 13:4–8). Many will doubt their faith at this time. Many will be deceived by powerful leaders and by other religions. But many will be saved and stay true to God by obeying the teachings of Jesus Christ and his apostles.

Paul said in his letter to the Ephesians, chapter 3:1 *I, Paul, am a prisoner because of Christ Jesus... 3 I'm talking about the mystery God showed me... 4 By reading it you will be able to understand what I know about the [amazing] mystery of Christ. 5 The mystery was not made known to people of other times. But now the Holy Spirit has made it known to God's holy apostles and prophets... 8 I am by far the least important of all of God's people. But he gave me the grace to preach ... about the wonderful riches that Christ gives... 12 Through Him and through faith in Him we can approach God. We can come to Him freely. We can come without fear.*

ACTS 13 – 28

PROGRESS CHECK (Self-assessment)

It is important for you to understand what God has taught you from studying Acts 13 to 28. Pray for wisdom before answering the questions. You may find it helpful to write down your answers.

What does Acts chapter 13 teach you about:

- the work of the Holy Spirit in the church at Antioch in Syria (verses 1–3)?
- how the governor of Cyprus believed in Jesus (4–12)?
- how Paul preached the Good News to the Jews at Antioch in Asia Minor (13–41)?
- how the people responded to the preaching of Paul (42–45, 48–52)?
- how Paul and Barnabas responded to opposition (46, 47, 51)?

What does Acts chapter 14 teach you about:

- the results of preaching with great power in Iconium (verses 1–6)?
- the results of preaching and healing in Lystra and Derbe (7–21)?
- how Paul and Barnabas strengthened the new churches (22–23)?
- the importance of returning to Antioch in Syria (24–28)?

What does Acts chapter 15 teach you about:

- how to deal with problems in the local church (verses 1–2)?
- how to use every situation to share what God has done (3–9)?
- how to deal with problems among church leaders (10–19)?
- how to bring unity and sound teaching within the Church (20–29)?

- how to build and keep the peace between the churches (30–35)?
- why Paul refused to work with Barnabas (36–41)?

What does Acts chapter 16 teach you about:

- the personal qualities of Paul's work (1–5)?
- the importance of the Holy Spirit in Paul's work (6–10)?
- the result of obeying the Holy Spirit (11–15)?
- the result of refusing help from occult powers (16–24)?
- how Paul and Silas behaved in prison (25–34)?
- Paul's respect for Roman authority (35–40)?

What does Acts chapter 17 teach you about:

- Paul's normal plan to evangelise Jews and non-Jews (verses 1–3, 10–11)?
- the normal response by the Jewish leaders (5–9, 13–15)?
- the normal response to preaching the Good News (4, 12)?
- the reasons for a poor response in Athens (16–34)?

What does Acts chapter 18 teach you about:

- the importance of offering to work while in ministry (verses 1–3)?
- why Paul stopped preaching to the Jews (4–7)?
- why Paul stayed a long time in Corinth (8–17)?
- how Paul encouraged the churches (18–23)?
- how believers encouraged one another (24–28)?

What does Acts chapter 19 teach you about:

- Paul's teaching on baptism and receiving the power of the Holy Spirit (verses 1–7)?
- the ministry of Paul at Ephesus (8–12)?
- the result of using the name of Jesus without the power of the Holy Spirit (13–16)?
- the work of the Holy Spirit at Ephesus (17–20)?
- what Paul planned to do (21–22)?
- how God used city leaders to avoid trouble for Paul (23–41)?

What does Acts chapter 20 teach you about:

- how Paul's plans quickly moved ahead (verses 1–7; 11–16)?
- how Paul taught the believers and raised a young man from death (7–11)?
- what Paul believed in for himself (17–27; 33–35)?
- Paul's last words to the church leaders in Ephesus (28–32)?
- the way love was shown among the church leaders (36–38)?

What does Acts chapter 21 teach you about:

- the hospitality, guidance and distress during Paul's journey to Jerusalem (verses 1–16)?
- the hospitality, guidance and distress during Paul's visit to Jerusalem (17–30)?
- the influence of Roman rulers in Paul's life from this point in time (31–40)?

What does Acts chapter 22 teach you about:

- Paul's personal testimony (verses 1–21)?
- the hardened hearts of religious people (22–23)?
- how the Roman rulers treated Paul (24–30)?

What does Acts chapter 23 teach you about:

- how the Jewish leaders treated Paul (verses 1–4)?
- how easily Paul made the religious leaders argue among themselves (5–10)?
- God's secret plans for Paul (11)?
- the secret plans of the Jews for Paul (12–13)?
- the secret plans of Paul's family (14–22)?
- the secret plans of the Romans for Paul (23–35)?

What does Acts chapter 24 teach you about:

- how the Jewish leaders tried to deceive the Roman rulers (verses 1–9)?
- how Paul gave an honest account of himself (10–21)?
- how Paul had freedom to teach and meet friends while a prisoner (22–27)?

What does Acts chapter 25 teach you about:

- how the Jewish leaders tried to corrupt the new Roman ruler Festus (verses 1–3)?
- how Festus tried to keep the peace with the Jews (4–9)?
- how Paul asked to go to Rome for his trial (10–12)?
- how Festus used Agrippa to find out more about Paul (13–27)?

What does Acts chapter 26 teach you about:

- the importance of Luke's third description of Paul's conversion (1–15)?
- the description of Paul's ministry (16–21)?
- the words of prophecy that Paul read from the holy writings (22–23)?
- the reactions of Festus and Agrippa (24–32)?

What does Acts chapter 27 teach you about:

- the mercy and favour of God towards Paul and towards everybody on board the ship (verses 1–44)?

What does Acts chapter 28 teach you about:

- how the people of Malta were changed by Paul (1–10)?
- how the believers in Italy welcomed Paul (11–16)?
- God's purpose for the Church of Jesus Christ in the last days of Paul's life (17–30)

Answers to Questions

Acts chapters 13 to 17

- | | | | | |
|-------|-----------|-------------|------|----------|
| 1. c | 2. a & c, | 3. b | 4. a | 5. a & c |
| 6. c | 7. c | 8. a, b & c | 9. c | 10. b |
| 11. a | 12. b & c | | | |

Acts chapters 18 to 22

- | | | | | |
|----------|----------|------|------|----------|
| 1. a | 2. a & b | 3. a | 4. a | 5. a & c |
| 6. a & c | 7. a | 8. b | 9. c | 10. c |

Acts chapters 23 to 28

- | | | | | |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| 1. b & c | 2. a & c | 3. b & c | 4. a | 5. c |
| 6. b | 7. a & b | 8. b | 9. a & b | 10. a & b |

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