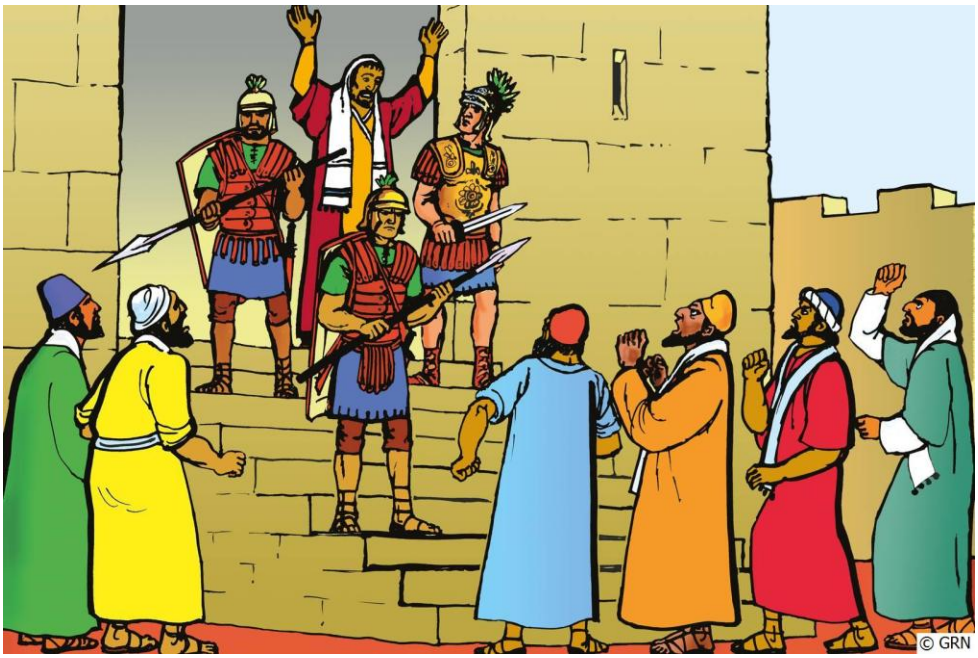
The Early Church of Jesus Christ

A Bible teaching commentary on the Acts of the Apostles in easy-to-read English

Written by Fred Morris



Soldiers rescue Paul from the crowds

Acts Unit 11 of 12

Chapters 20:17-24:27

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Unit 11, Chapters 20:17 to 24:27.

Paul Speaks Urgently to the Church Leaders.

While at Miletus, Paul sent for the church elders from Ephesus. He spoke serious words to them: "You know that I haven't let anyone keep me from preaching… to you. 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 Christ" (20:18 to 21). He did not fail to preach the full message of the Good News that Christ's sacrifice and resurrection fulfils all the Old Testament laws and prophecies.

Paul's third missionary journey from Antioch to Galatia, Phrygia and Asia provinces (Turkey-in-Europe), Macedonia and Achaia (Greece)

"And now, compelled by the Holy Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem. I do not know what will happen to me there" (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 work the Lord Jesus has given me. He wants me to give witness to others of the Good News of God's grace" (20:23 to 24).

Paul warned, "Keep watch over yourselves and all the believers. The Holy Spirit has made you leaders. Be shepherds of the church of the Lord which He bought with his own blood... After I leave you, men will come and try to change God's truth" (20:28,30).

The Holy Spirit chose the church elders, so they were responsible to God, not to Paul.

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

Acts Chapter 21.

Paul Goes Back to Jerusalem.

Paul travelled by ship from Miletus, near Ephesus, to Tyre (21:1 to 6). He met with the Christian believers there. They told Paul what the Holy Spirit said about the troubles to expect in Jerusalem. But Paul believed that the Holy Spirit wanted him to go.

When the ship came to Caesarea, Paul stayed with Philip the evangelist. While he was there, a prophet 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 was going to happen to him in Jerusalem.

Paul answered the prophet 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 dangers ahead, but some of them went up to Jerusalem with Paul. Paul stayed with an early believer from Cyprus who lived in the city. Thousands of people were in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost. They filled every home, but God had a special place for His servant Paul and his friends with a believer (21:16).

The next day Paul went to see James and the elders of the Jerusalem church (21:17 to 18). In Greece and the Roman Province of Asia many thousands of Gentiles 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 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 to 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 was obeying the Law of Moses.

Paul agreed to do this. However, he always preached that men are saved, by the grace of God, through faith in Jesus alone (Ephesians 2:8 to 9). Believers are then helped by the Holy Spirit to keep the meaning of the Law, which is fulfilled in us through Christ after our salvation.

Paul Is Attacked And Arrested.

Paul had kept the Law of Moses before. He had shaved his head previously because of a vow he made to the Lord (Acts 18:18).

At the Temple, some of the Jews from Asia 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 to 35). There, Paul stood on the steps and asked to speak to the crowds (21:39).

Paul preached that the Law of Moses was good but could not 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. 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 to 24). He wanted to please these men and also to please God. But soon Paul was in trouble with Jews from the Roman Asia Province (21:27).

Then he asked to explain the truth (Acts 21:39). This later caused further trouble with the Jews in Jerusalem (22:22). Peter, however, praised Paul's God-given wisdom and warned his readers not to misunderstand Paul or distort what he said (2 Peter 3:15 to 16).

Acts Chapter 22.

Paul Speaks the Truth From God to the Crowds.

When Paul was arrested, he was allowed to speak to the crowds. He spoke in the local Aramaic language so that they could fully understand him. He told them:

- He was a Jew who knew the Law of Moses very well (22:3)
- He had permission to put followers of Jesus into prison and send them to die (22:4 to 5).
- He was met by Jesus on the road to Damascus (22:6 to 11).
- God sent a Jewish believer to speak to him. He told Paul to witness about Jesus (22:12 to 16).
- In Jerusalem, Jesus told Paul to witness about Him in other countries and to people who were not Jews (22:17 to 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 citizen as well as a Jew, they stopped flogging him (22:29). Then the Roman commander took Paul to the Jewish Court to have a fair trial (22:30).

Acts Chapter 23.

Paul Speaks God's Truth to the Jewish Court.

The next day, Paul was allowed to speak to the highest Jewish court. He spoke of the hope of resurrection of life after death. The Sadducees said there was no resurrection, so they argued with the Pharisees, who believed in the resurrection of the body after death.

Paul told the court that he was a Pharisee. He believed in life after death and in the resurrection of Jesus Christ (23:6). This caused a big argument. The religious leaders argued among themselves. People who refuse to believe the whole of God's truth often end up disagreeing and arguing with each another.

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

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. He remembered these words in the difficult times ahead.

The Jews planned to kill Paul. A nephew of Paul heard of this and visited him in prison. Paul sent his nephew to the Roman officer in charge, to tell him of the plan to kill him (23:12 to 22).

So the commanding officer ordered his men to take Paul to Caesarea during the night. There he waited to see the Roman governor of Judea, the main district of Israel (23:24). Paul would then have a proper trial.

In this way, God protected Paul from his enemies.

Acts Chapter 24.

Paul Speaks God's Truth to the Roman Governor.

Five days later, some of the Jews from Jerusalem came to Caesarea to speak to the Roman governor. They told him that Paul had caused a lot of trouble among the Jews all over the

world. They told him that Paul was a leader of the religious group called 'The Nazarenes' (24:5).

Paul told the governor 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 Old Testament. He tried to do what was right in the eyes of God and man (24:16). The governor understood everything that Paul said (24:22) and he sent the Jews away.

The governor let the friends of Paul visit him and care for his needs (24:23). Later, the governor and his wife sent for Paul to listen to him. Paul witnessed to his faith in Jesus Christ (24:24). He also spoke about:

1. Righteousness – how to follow Jesus.
2. Holiness – how to live the right way ourselves and towards each other.
3. Judgement – how God will judge all people through His Son Jesus.

The governor was afraid (24:25) and wanted Paul to give him money to set him free (24:26). Paul refused to bribe him. Instead, Paul talked to the governor about God's truth. Asking for bribes and giving bribes is not the way God approves. After two years a new governor was appointed. To please the Jews, Paul had been left in prison (24:27).

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