

GREEK YEARBOOK

ACTS OF
APOSTLES

LEGEND


WATCH THE WIND OF GOD

ABC COMMENTARY No.44

**ARAMAIC BIBLE COMPANION WITH NT
GREEK CLASSICS**

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES
ALBION BIBLE COMMENTARY No.44

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ACTS 1

Introduction

This chapter details the specifics of a long campaign of inspiring and teaching among the world's nations by the apostolic church. The empowering is the Holy Spirit, the world is the field, the throne is the source of allegiance and help, the scripture their guide, the resurrection the heart of their witness.

Who is Theophilus? Could he be the high priest of that name deposed in Agrippa's time? Bruce following Streeter considers the equestrian Flavius Clemens, who was a nephew of Vespasian, best fits the bill. Marshall opts for a man of tender faith and anonymity "dear to God". Take your pick! The one thing we do know is that this book is dynamic and the text of first resort for the household of faith who trace their lineage back to Pentecost.

(a) Inspirational role Every Christian may have inner resources for living. Luke begins by reference to his earlier "account" **λογος** or "story" of Jesus. The earlier one might be termed a "history of Jesus' ministry" – carrying the guarantee of firsthand sources. In retrospect Luke speaks of "making" a history – the Greek term he chooses (like our word "poem) must mean "putting it together *under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit* – as Christ similarly acted as a living epistle **ποιεω** through the indwelling Spirit. His teaching is "pure ethics" not "pure theory"

(b) Indisputable reality Luke gives a short summary of the 40 day period featuring Jesus' resurrection appearances. He appeared to His chosen ("those examined by the touchstone of His life" "selected as bride" "as rowers under his stroke"). During this time He gave proof **τεκμηριους** of His resurrection. (*A logic term used by Aristotle as Q.E.D. in mathematics and one superior to signs **σημαιοι** – also of "authoritative" proof and eyewitness testimony - used by the Greeks of the nod of Zeus - the highest proof in the universe. Used of the reason given as opposed to unexplained fact*) The Lord's presence was akin to the experience of Rutherford who spoke of "Christ at our elbow". This is a dynamic narrative – Christ over 40 days was seen continually- **οραω – οπανομενος** is based on the 'future stem' for this is the way He is ever after to be seen; he also continually speaking **λεγων περι** ('PERI' Homer's most frequent usage is of "battles" – cf. Acts 14.22) and met them "en masse" **συναλιζομενος** (αλης means "crowd") during Sabbath or first days in the course of 5 weeks. As ever we sense the Lord's presence in "fellowship" times. "In v4 the Lord refers to His unique teaching recorded in John 14-17 on the family of God – the verb **ηκουσατε** suggests a single impressive lesson-on the Holy Ghost. Cf. John 16

Without the inward witness of the abiding Spirit there is a Christ revealed to us but not in us-Galatians 1.

(c) Inevitable realisation. Entrance fee nil-annual subscription everything Luke records two “**μεν...δε**” statements. The first is to say HOLINESS (apparently so distant) would become a wonderful reality as the lives of these disciples would be as offerings encompassed together in the flame of sanctification during the coming of the Holy Ghost some days later at Pentecost.

The second was that THE KINGDOM (apparently so near with the appearance of Christ) would come after a far flung and long extended witness reaching from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth.

It is ever the same; we want more prophetic certainty but God’s desire for us is more consuming holiness.

(d) The inalienable rights of Christ as head of His church “given command to live/exist” in v.2 to the apostles **εντελλομαι** whom He “cheered by a word passed along” in v4 and now taken up **αναλαμβανω** into heaven as “captain” of salvation, heaven’s beloved one. In Luke 24.52 Luke tells us the disciples after straining like a bow to project their eyes far into the heavens fell down in worship and went into Jerusalem - returning from where Christ was lifted up (v9) and “led them out as soldiers” or “excited them” **εξαγω** walking **πορευομενος** it seems over the Bethany skyline eastwards. Their pre-ascension journey was not above 6 furlongs cf. Ex16.29 with Num35.5. Bethany is 13 away. Christ had encouraged them by “blessing them” as He went up as King to the throne our Melchizadek now places two warrior “human beings” near them – whose “flowing moving raiment” was white as snow The wonder is – these “men from glory” know of His future plans. “Why look at the changing face of the sky – this Jesus will come in a like manner” **τροπος** (changing circumstance when as now ‘the oars are lashed to the thong’ for a future voyage of faith in the divine economy. The query of v6 receives a good answer.

“As you have *seen*”; the word used is **θεωρω**. The “cloud” may be a Shekinah reference (FFB) and since there is a link with the Parousia and “coming with clouds of heaven” it may speak of glorified ones. The **Galilean** reference took them to the Lord’s ministry “*returning in the Spirit to Galilee*”. In this sense they must begin as fishers of men and as those who “feed His sheep”! Jesus left on a Thursday - apprehended by saints in glory and two Sundays later the Holy Spirit was given. C.H.Spurgeon’s challenge “Ye men of Plymouth” was to the Purist but somewhat Exclusive Brethren leadership to relate and evangelise. Reach-out is vital

(e) Indispensable recourse of prayer

The twelve including **James son of Alphaeus** (*Joseph’s brother according to Hegesippus*). They joined the ladies – whose apartments were often at a first floor level (v14) They continued **προσκαρτερουντες** with an “iron” hold on Christ. They prayed aloud with vows and expressions of personal lack in the Master’s bodily absence. Nine times we read of Peter and John in Acts. Here they are united as never

before, men of one desire committed to Jesus Christ deeply missing Him. They also prayed as never before.

(f) Immediate replacement of Judas There were now 120 – the disciples had multiplied by 10. Peter addressed the brothers as “men or soldiers” like the heavenly “soldiers” did in v11. *Peter in quoting Ps41.9 is immediately conscious of the Holy Spirit (cf. the inbreathing).* That psalm speaks about “my familiar friend” (*Hebrew mlc* “my completion of the building”) who “lifted his heel”. He was “guide” to those who took Jesus – he had been in the arithmetic of apostolate. He sued for or by lot obtained the inheritance of this ministry **διακονια**. So the parenthesis reads “On the one hand he bought a little piece of land with the reward of iniquity and going headlong his body rent like a garment, his compassions / bowels left him – so the estate was named “place of blood devouring”

All this is written in the Psalms (*Hebrew ψαλλω that which moves us-touching every emotion*) “Let his over-abode” which is the living quarters over the cattle stable” – his two tier place **επαυλις** be deserted.” And Psalm 69.25 “His hedged or fenced place r/f be unsettled” and Psalm 109.8 “May his days be fear and his dqr-“search for his brethren/charge” let one who comes afterward r/ha take. This psalm directs that care or outreach to Jewish brethren demands a replacement.

1. A man of courage
2. From those who watched Christ serve or minister
3. Beginning under the rule of “repentance”
4. One who was present over the 40 days to know his “commission”
5. 5.And a man committed to death to the resurrected Lord

They chose “the gift of God” by prayer saying “You Lord know as a friend the hearts of all (cf. 15.8) declare whether it is to be the “son of sworn allegiance” or “the gift of God” for this ministry which Judas left to march and fight for his own place **τοπος**. So they gave their little broken pieces of clay and broken pottery. All our decisions are those of broken lives and sometimes broken hearts. Also he was counted by pebbles in an urn. It might mean “condemned with”– all died for Jesus condemned by the world. So the apostles cast lots **κληρους** and the people *voted συγκατεφηφισθη* whom God had *elected or called εξελεξω*

The first Act of the Holy Spirit

V3. They saw him **οπαζω** as in the future; v9 **βλεπω** they looked longingly at “life’s” heart for they looked at Jesus; v10 **ατενιζω**

They looked intently as at a problem (Aristotle’s use); 11 **θεαομαι** – look like spectators ...then no more Jesus is seen!

V7 Neither the era nor the moments of the Kingdom’s dawn are to be made known to them!

V8 But v5 **Baptism** into holiness of life, into power in witness v7-8; as mouthpieces of revelation v16 – cf. Psalm 41.9, 69.25, 109.8 This inner leading and enabling is real as was the glorious leading & equipping of Christ

ACTS 2 **“Storm”**

Oct 27 2002 A big storm swept west and into the Midlands and 11 lives were lost

We need more than anything *to lift our sails to the wind of God* and to a very different wind where “dove” and “rushing mighty wind” spell life and not death – movement and joy and not hurricane and fury. Pentecost carries the ship of faith to every land not like the fierce storm that leaves wrecks in its train. In the first-fruits was 3000 lives were saved!

Pentecost - divine ministry

The victorious overcoming power of Holy Spirit came with the suddenness of the unseen (*not as a dove*) and an echo that was to run down the centuries and be known in Acts 8.17 & 10.44 and a myriad other places. The Holy Spirit constrains and His is overwhelming love [*βιαιας*]. They had been or ready for what ministry Christ determined *καθιστημαι* and “in the same place” (*επι το αυτο*) as to the will of God. So they were “filled” in the sense that sailors would understand—their boats full of fish and their hearts full of song as they drank liberally, so *συμπληρουσθαι*. The authority of the Lord the Spirit was over each individual. Now He “settled” over each constituting their future ministry through apothegm or tongue which they could hear and speak. Thus the division of the world among the apostles was not a random choice but related to what follows—the tongues were given for the going cf. v6. Thus the gospel was to reach east to Parthia, Media, Elam and Mesopotamia; to all Judea; North West to Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia & Pamphylia; south to Egypt Libya & Cyrene; West to Rome and Crete; South East to Arabia. NB *Men of courage and religion* had travelled from these parts for the Feast of Tabernacles!

Pentecost-The message of joy

They began to “speak of themselves” *λαλεω* in the sense of “out of their experience”. This is the right place to begin with well-contexted biblical testimony. The Call of the Holy Spirit was heard by devout God-fearers. The “echo” from heaven served to bear men irresistibly towards the apostles. We are in danger of forgetting the Holy Spirit works external to us and also in and through us. All were beside themselves, with no way through to grasp for themselves this mighty experience. They knew there was a “will and purpose behind all this” *θελοι* others jeered “These men are full of the delight of new wine.” The testimonies of the apostles to the context of the (a) joy of the Holy Spirit’s outpouring on the church or new society amid latter day prophetic scenes (b) the testimony to their experience of Jesus and his death and joyful resurrection and (c) to His exaltation and ascension and the “spur” of the Holy Spirit *κατενυγω* – the people were “nudged” to go further by the Holy Spirit through preaching to seek God in repentance are recorded in vv14-40 culminating in the immense joy of 3000 souls saved demonstrating His anointing – rewarding the travail of His soul!

Pentecost - a harvest of souls *Peter's Sermon – where preachers have much to learn!*
αποφθεγγομαι This is a combination of terse memorable saying and plain speaking on Christian principles

Men of courage & praise – Jews.vv14-21 Peter is gracious to speak to the people as potentially living “to God’s praise”. He deals with the supposition– “you take up wrong as you blow in” **υπολαμβανω**. Wine isn’t available – but God is! Then Peter quotes at length what he calls a “river of words” **ρηματα** 5verses from Joel 2 28-32. This refers to the penultimate “mighty acts” including earth signs of bloodshed fire and vapour smoke pillars, and heavenly wonders when the sun turning upside down in darkness and the moon turning to or being for “bloodshed”. This quotation related directly to the “darkness” at the cross, reminded them of the Glorious future “outshining” of Christ’s coming and of the prophet’s challenge to people at Jerusalem to seek grace and help of God in a time when prophecy will open up Gods plans – the new generation of men and women will prophecy, visionary young men will rise up and senators with dreams of a new day. Slavery will pass. From the ranks of the poor spiritual giants will arise. So Peter encourages them to begin to live to “praise God”

Courageous princes with God 22-28

Now Peter encourages them to seek the Lord in prayer. How appropriate as they had come to Bethel and didn’t know the Lord was there! There had even been a “vision of angels” following Christ’s crucifixion which was in itself the “stairway to heaven” and indeed the Lord himself had even ascended above.

Peter spoke of Jesus’ **miracle power** more fully expounded in the gospel of Mark. There was the first sign of water changed to wine and the glorious final miracle of the Resurrection. Jesus demonstrated the “finger of God” and sovereignty over life and history. Peter would never forget finding the coin in the fish’s mouth and “casting on right side” of the ship for 153 great fish. As Chrysostom said, “It is difficult for those who worshipped *cats and crocodiles* and for those who said ‘*The LORD our God is one God*’ to worship Christ without signs”. Self-authenticating middle voice of the Greek verb **αποδεικνυμι** is used for these signs.

The gospel of Mark uses the Greek word **ευθως** “immediately” very frequently in developing a self authenticating life story of Christ! The usage demonstrates how swiftly the ministry of Jesus introduced ‘Change’ to individuals, families and society at large.

Peter describes Christ as **εκδοτον** – given by the Father’s will as “bridegroom”. Peter speaks of the Lord as “impaled” to a cross – the word **προσπεινυμι** can mean “pegging down a tent” – and indeed Christ raised up the tabernacle of David. We have to set alongside resurrection **ανιστημι** decamping and the home-call of the Father as the second meaning.

Again Peter has terse scripture statements – Psa. 16 8-11 “I constantly fixed my eyes on the Lord” Weymouth. “He is at my right hand I shall not be tossed like a ship at sea.” “For this my heart is cheered once for all”. “You will not leave my soul in hell like a sword in a wound” **εγκαταλειπω** “You will not give your Holy One to experience *decomposition*”(Weymouth) “You will meantime show me the paths of life and fill me with festive joy in your presence”.

Men of courage-brothers 29-37

Peter takes David's tomb as still holding David's dust – “until the time of speaking”. Moffat has no **“according to the flesh”** in v31 – but the promise was that Christ would be incarnate man - and Origen, Eusebius, Chrysostom and Athanasius do. Peter's Midrash is authoritative and plain truth **παρρησια**. The resurrection was not counterfeit flesh – for it was in non-corruptible flesh. This “very Jesus” God raised to heaven. He shed forth the Spirit “alongside the Father” – the Spirit of “Jehovah”, wisdom(prophecy dreams vision), discerning/interpreting Christ, of divine counsel, of courageous gospel warriors, of experience of God, of awe **ἡμῶν ἡμῶν ἡμῶν ἡμῶν** **τῆς** Here Peter sensing the Spirit working urges God wants Israel to know **ασφαλως** without disappointment that Jesus is Christ. The hearers were “nudged” by the Spirit **κατενυγησαν** – spurred as if by a rider to go on faster under the “rein” of the Holy Spirit. In this and every conversion the seven-fold Spirit is working life; deft application; mediation; counsel, battle, experience. They were “cut to the heart” and fearful as Peter declared pointedly “whom you crucified” thus exposing their guilt. He called them to repentance and to receive baptism and the gift of the Spirit. They broke with the shying generation that went aside like a horse. They found the great promise of Isa. 57.19 “Peace, peace to him who is afar and him that is near – cf. Luther – “Spiritual physicians are cobblers of the Lord”. They received the word ready to change **ασ-μενος** – they held like iron to teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer -all 3000 souls! They had found the rock of Deut. 32.4-5 **ρωχη** (cf. *THE Capital Z in the original Deuteronomistic text ascribing greatness to Messiah*). The believers left the “wrestling generation” of **ἰσχυροὶ** “wrestlers”

Pentecost-victory over the world-and harvest before the storm clouds of war The third *εγενετω*

The Third “historic occurrence” was the continuance of signs and wonders. These were portents of forthcoming trouble and signals of the outbreak of war. The apostles could foresee after Christ the oncoming war of the Jews – perhaps the significance of “blood fire and smoke” The imperfect of **γινομαι** is used in v43. In v44 they were bartering their possessions living as the last generation –as not having long to stay. Their help was not confined to Christians –“any man”. It was like Egypt before the angel of death – they had grace with all – and many a seeker came to their door in need – **προσπιθημι**. In v46 we see group structure developing. They were “one-souled” lit “everything burning” **ομοθυμαδον** They were utterly uncomplicated – **simple** plain men with one common compelling passion.

ACTS 3 **A fruitful door**

Daily additions to the Church

“The Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved by faith (*reflecting the middle of the verb σωζομενος* so “active ones” – “Listeners”). Here is the story

of the gate of “fruitfulness or harvest”. Luke gives a glorious incident from the annals of the early church and the ministry of Peter and John. Praise God it is still happening. I met a man by The Annunciation church in Chislehurst who told me he had been anti Church and through his girlfriend’s life and witness he has found Christ is “real”.

The look that saves looks right to Christ in us

The scripture translates **ωραιον** as “beautiful” or “seasonable”. This is not however an architectural aesthete speaking – this is an evangelist commenting on a large spiritual harvest. The door was to the priests’ court was 82.5’x48’ covered by the first veil. It was ornate vines sculptured in gold and bunches of grapes the size of a man hanging down from above. In this court Peter and John prayed .Its grapes of wrath and blessing reminded them of the true & the death of Christ. The Corinthian gate at the entrance to the women’s court was also special being entirely of brass with two doors of 45’x15’. By it stood 13 treasury chests – and doubtless at its entrance outside sat the man crippled from birth advantaging from “shared mercy” of both men and women going in. He got in a request to Peter & John. Just as Peter looked away to the ascending Lord he looked at this man **ατενιζω** in his dire need. Look right into **εις** our pockets. He paused **επειχεν** in expectation. Peter said “To begin with I have no silver & gold – but this which I have I am giving you. In the circle of the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and teach by your walk.

(a) Peter took hold of him as a wrestler by the right hand and on that transaction **παραρημα** he raised him and his “steppers” and ankles were strengthened. Leaping away from them he stood and walked and entered in with them to the temple...

(b) Walking, teaching, “leaping upon them” (the nearest equivalent is reaction to a football goal) **αλλομαι** and praising God. And the whole crowd saw him walking, teaching and praising God” They knew “This is the man who sat for shared mercy at the “beautiful or seasonable” door of the temple.

(c) And they were surprised and in ecstasy over the putting of his feet together. **συμβαινω**. He was standing as we would say at attention - his feet together.

(d) This disabled man now healed was holding on to both Peter and John with an iron grip - he was “firmly in the circle of the name of Jesus” cf. v.6..... The healing was nothing if not dramatic.

The look that surprises looks to us-our background speech poverty

Peter again addressed the Jews as “Men of courage and princes with God” But to allow the search for answers to end with disciples is the error of many. Personal dynamics and reverential awe of God cannot make disabled walk. It is the God of Abraham Isaac & Jacob who promised the “seed” who would bless - the one who was also his servant-Son, Jesus. So our healing goes back to the “suffering servant” and risen Lord.

A guilty generation 1. Betrayed & denied Jesus before Pilate 2. Denied He was the holy and just one – asking a murderer’s release instead. 3. Killed the originator or life. i.e. declined His office as King, as perfect Lamb of God and refused Him as Creator. On the security of faith in his name this man whom you see and whose name you know is

made strong and that faith that is from first to last by the Lord's agency has given him this complete health heritage before you all

The look that assures looks to the terms of Gods covenant in his "servant Jesus"-recorded in scripture

Peter addresses them as "brothers" He points to an array of prophetic scriptures.

- (a) Right down along the prophetic period God declared **παρακαταγγελω** Christ would suffer and He has fulfilled this simply or entirely **ουτω** – cf. Ps.22, Isa.53 Lam.1.12 Ezekiel 47 Waters from the altar, "One like the Son of man came before the ancient of days and they brought Him near before Him" (Daniel7.13) this is the crucified Lord. "I will ransom them from the power of the grave" (Hosea13.14 & 6.2) "After 2 days He will revive us" "The sun shall be dark"(Joel2.31) "I will raise up the tabernacle of David" (Amos 9.11) "Upon Mt. Zion shall be deliverance" (Obadiah1.17) "And Jonah was in the belly of the fish 3days & 3 nights"(Jonah1.17) "They shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod on the cheek"(Micah5.1) "This man shall be the peace" "(Micah 5.5). "Behold. upon the mountains the torn feet of him that brings good tidings" (Nahum 1.15) "He had horns coming out of His hands – there was the hiding of His power" (Hab3.4). The Lord in the midst is mighty. He will save"(Zeph.3.17) "In this place will I give peace" (Haggai 1.9) "They shall look on me whom they pierced" (Zech.12.10) "Behold me sending my messenger before my face to prepare my way"(Mal. 3.1)
- (b) "Repent and be converted that your sins may be *wiped absolutely away*" (Greek. **εξαλειπω** "struck off the roll as absolved debt! or "blotted out of mind" so that times of recovery from evil or revival from near-death and rest or *respite from toil (αναφυσις)* might come from the face of the Lord i.e. tête-à-tête in prayer (cf. "former rain") and *He will send to Israel Jesus Christ once more – whom heaven is to receive or hail or worship **until the setting right of things upside down αποκαταστασις** – again all the prophets spoke of these three things– i.e. forgiveness, church and millennium
Moses in Deut.18 15-16 promised "a resurrection" i.e. assurance of forgiveness "a listening for Christ" – i.e. the obedience of Christians; and "complete without destruction of rebels" in kingdom times.

Heirs of the prophets v25

- (c) Peter then puts his challenge that from Samuel every prophet announced in advance the days of the church in reference to the covenant God made mutually between the "seed" of Abraham and the seeds or families of Israel cf. Genesis12.3, 18.18, 22.18, 26.4. So it is promised that everyone who turns of Israel is blessed - first Jews and then Gentiles. God who is sovereign has bound himself to the obedient hearer in an absolute manner!
Corrie Ten Boom once said "Forgiveness is the key that unlocks the door of resentment & handcuffs of hate - the power that breaks the chains of bitterness and the shackles of selfishness".

ACTS 4

Preaching Praying Providing

Preaching today

As a theology student in the early 1960's one's training was geared to producing a competent preacher. There would be sermon crafting lectures built on W.E.Sangster's notes for students. Each student would preach to his peers on a given passage which he began to prepare within the lecture. Supporting lectures in Homiletics examined the nature of the sermon. Elocution periods taught the use of the voice, hermeneutics as a subject had gone from the curriculum but examination of the Greek textual meaning of e.g. *Hebrews* and similar treatment of "*Lamentations*" in Hebrew took its place. Old & New Testament lectures played their part introducing bible background etc. Experience was gained in small meetings, in student venues when choir epilogues were needed and then in churches around the cities of Londonderry and Belfast where colleges I attended were located.

More senior students often knew the human heart better and their preaching excelled. One student developed a Stephen Olford style. Another oozed with literary material & humour. A third buoyed up his slender message in splendid etiquette. A sea change called "communication" has rolled over this like a tidal wave. Is the sermon now too visualised? Has power-point captured the eye and de-sensitised the heart? **O carry me to Bethlehem** – the house of bread – where salvation through Christ in the power of the Spirit lives again in personality, grips my conscience, feeds my soul! "Preach the Word" is not equal to "The writing and pictures on the wall". More than cooking lessons or counselling or driving instruction or anything we know it is truth through the personality of converted messengers called to be heralds of God; messengers whose radiance is gathered in the treasury of prayer.

Preaching: The message we have is commissioned by Christ as he ascended 1-21

The apostles were effective communicators – they had shown that the resurrection was the capstone of Gods act of redemption – bringing the blessing of "turning from sin" to the people. The Jewish priests backed up by the officer in charge of the temple (*the healing of Chapter 3 took place there*) and the Sadducees who were enraged by "resurrection" talk were "finding hard work" **διαπονέω** because the apostles taught Resurrection through Jesus.

They were put under house arrest overnight. 5000 men believed.

Next day elders scribes of the law with Annas and Caiaphas and the high priestly group "**came together as in marriage**" **συναγωγή**. They enquired of the "power" and "name" accrediting their action. A "Holy Spirit filled" Peter stood addressing leaders and elders, "If we are judged on the good work of the man without strength – in what name he was saved – it is the name of Jesus of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, in His name he stands before you healthy" Then in v11 he quotes Psalm 118.22 exalting Christ as "The stone set at nought now head of the corner". The Christian dogmatic follows "There is no other name **presenting itself** **δεδομενον** under heaven among all nations – in which we must be saved" cf. John 3.16 John 5.24 etc.

Beholding courage and award that there was no scribal training nor professionals they marvelled and recognised they had been with Jesus” Because the man stood by they could say nothing. They made them retire and discussed action. They admitted with chagrin a signal of the risen Lord, widely known and undeniable. That it do not **“divide into portions”** *διανεμω* and further spread they said “Let us threaten these men” not to speak to any man of any nation in this name. **Here they clashed with the commission.** So they commanded them against catholic and joyous loud proclamation & against teaching *επι* in honour of or dependence upon the power of Jesus’ name. Peter and John replied “If it is right to obey you rather than God, you be judges of that for we are not empowered not to speak the things we have seen and heard.” They added threats, finding no way to correct because of the people who glorified God– for the man healed was about forty. Praise the Lord– he can restore the years the locust has eaten!

Praying: The Lord of our souls is gone to Glory – drawing our hearts after Him 23-31

The apostles went back to the church and reported the “threats”. They prayed a prayer laced with scripture.

(a) Ex20.11 In six days God made the world; His is the sovereign power. They took courage from one higher than Pharaoh.

(b) Ps. 146.6 Maker and ever faithful – “He lifts up the bowed down” etc.

(c) Ps. 2.1-2 Why do rulers set themselves against the anointed; “Ask for the heathen” – so prayer set outreach a-going.

(d) Isa. 61.1 Christ’s mission of preaching to the poor broken-hearted captives and prisoners of sin must go on.

The opposition of Herod and Pilate only fulfilled the Father’s will. They prayed “give boldness – stretch out your hand to heal – give signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

God’s response was immediate – while they begged the place shook like a boat at anchor; they were filled with the holy Ghost and off they went again with like enthusiasm as in the days they sailed the Galilee only now in the interests of a greater mission to “catch men”. **Every one of them *απαντες*** went out speaking boldly.

Providing: The home we seek and treasure we value is in heaven 32-37

They had one heart and soul. Nothing they owned was counted theirs. Everything was common. With great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection, great grace was on all, there was no need for whoever had bought houses or land sold and laid at the apostles’ feet giving to meet need. Joseph Barnabas – son of Consolation-a Levite-Cypriot by birth, having land, sold it and brought the money gained from the transaction and laid it along the feet of the apostles. They backed the message – “the beautiful feet” with their money! Heaven was more important to them than a mansion below. This lesson of Judas they had fully learned. Mammon must not prevail where needs must be met.

**This world is not my home I’m just a passing through
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue
The angels beckon me from heaven’s open door**

And I can't feel at home in this old world any more!

ACTS 5

The discordant note of Compromise

The early church determined upon a thoroughgoing course. To support believers in days of increasing hardship they decided to share all means mutually in support of the church. Those with property could sell what they owned and lay it all at the feet of the apostles and obviously derive support thereafter. Ananias & Sapphira gave a small proportion of moneys derived from a land sale-thus introducing corruption and lying to the Holy Spirit

Modern examples: **Donald G Barnhouse'** challenge ran "Some of you have just enough Christianity to be miserable in a night-club and not enough to be happy in a prayer meeting" **A disciple of Pythagoras** promised a cobbler to return with the price of his new shoes. When he did the man was dead. He went home – but conscience wouldn't let him forget his promise and pushing the money in the door he said, "Though he is dead to the world he is alive to me" **It is said that if you imprison a migrating bird in a cage** it will beat its breast against the cage and fly to and fro but when it stops even if you were to throw it free in the air it has lost its will to fly. **There can come a time when the tug of the Holy Ghost at the heart may pass for ever.** Today a TV service from Huddersfield and one later from Coventry were packed with people, young and old. In Manchester 300-400 people attended the carol services at Platt Church of England. In Bromley Baptist a similar number attended in the evening and three young people testified and were baptised in a quite outstanding praise and testimony service full of youth. That is a small sample from my own experience of the Church in England at the time of writing.

1. The Adversary in the family- Signs

Ananias (*whom Jehovah guards*) and Sapphira (*covenant or divorce of God*) had "set apart" only a small part of the moneys of the property sale for God. They understood the church care plan benefits depended on absolute solidarity and giving all. Peter confronted Ananias on false holiness – and he fell down dead. On Sapphira's arrival 3 hours later Peter asked if the sum given were indeed the sale price. She replied "Yes" and fell at the feet of the apostles just as their money might have done. Peter said they were "singing in symphony" testing the Holy Spirit.

The devil had filled their heart with this world. They had agreed to deceive the church defly conscience and disown the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

2. The Addition of families Wonders performed in the Name

The Lord continued to answer the earlier prayer that the Sovereign God would by signs and wonders glorify Jesus.

The church was "of one eager desire" or like "one rushing wind" in Solomon's Stoa. Consequent upon the life of this "rushing wind church" people did not dare "weld themselves" or try to inlay themselves in the fellowship for advantage or if bereft of spirituality – but on the other hand "families" – husbands and wives 14 in ever increasing numbers were added – first as associate friends. The weak and demonised were laid on beds and mats in the street that the shadow of Peter might touch one of

them. That can only mean they queued up for the position where he passed on the way to market or to prayer. But every single one was healed. They gave God all-and God blessed them fully!

3. The attraction of whole households. An angel reverses the situation overnight

A series of attempts to stall the advance of the faith now follow. The broad family of the High priests (whom Luke characterises as heretical on the matter of Resurrection) put the apostles in the common prison. The angel of the Lord was active “through that whole night” commanding the incarcerated ones to “march as an army” and declare the words of Life in the Spirit in the temple. So at daybreak – they had clearly been released earlier (for prayer & breakfast) – they were at their post teaching. A Sanhedrin was now called and the elders of the heirs of Israel –officers reported the prison locked guarded and the apostles gone. A man came from the temple to report that they were there teaching. Immediately they were summoned and charged with “filling Jerusalem with their Didache of the cross and resurrection and then accused of wanting revenge on the Sanhedrin for Christ’s blood.

Peter stressed that they must obey the one in authority not men **πειθαρχεω**. Peter further brought the bad news that the Jewish leaders had put Christ to death by crucifixion but God raised him up so that by this man’s absolute authority God now proclaimed repentance and forgiveness and a long amnesty for sinners. He added “We are witnesses to these things as is the Holy Spirit whom God gives to those who “obey Him as the authority” **πειθαρχεω**

At his point they were very angry and would have moved to kill the apostles but Gamaliel (*benefit of God*) stood up. His speech was really beneficial. He first ordered the apostles out – so this debate must have come to us from Nicodemus or Joseph of Arimathea. Gamaliel spoke of Theudas & the 400 and of Judas the Galilean – both of which movements failed – the first was “loosed” the second “scattered”. He then advised “Bring home to yourselves (*as a ship docking προεχω*) as we would say “like birds coming home to roost”. How serious it would be if in this you were to “fight against God”. If it is of men it will fail, if of God you cannot contest it. This was his wise advice.

They were subsequently beaten and charged under further threats not to speak in the name of Jesus. The men went out **rejoicing χειρω** to have been counted worthy to be used dishonourably for His name.

Daily in the temple they resumed teaching and extended that work into many, many homes where they taught and preached the good news of Jesus as the Messiah or Christ of God.

Acts 6 Earliest discontent sorted

Need

The Church has evident need of God and when its leaders and members are looking in prayer and faith to the Lord those needs shall be met in the way the head of the church intends.

The current need as ever is **to move out to reach others for which purpose it was established.** “The church only prepares to move out after it has been run over from behind” said Leighton Ford. “The church as an institution becomes more concerned with correctness of belief than with the quality of life that belief demands” was the words of Richard Thomas commenting on poor quality Christian living. Eugene Petersen views **Pastors a company of shopkeepers** but comments that “They are preoccupied with how to keep customers happy or how to lure customers from competitors down the street or how to package goods, but most communities need just a couple of good saints” **“The church costs too much”**, said one. Another responded “A little boy was born to us, he cost a lot at the beginning – to satisfy his appetite provide his clothes find him toys and a puppy and later school him at college and then while he was dating he cost us a fortune but in his senior year at college he died and since the funeral he has cost nothing. Which situation would you rather have?” said Alan Redpath after relating this sobering interchange of sentiments. The basic need of man is spiritual. Man needs God and the gospel, joy and power and peace.

Greek needs

The Greeks were a strong feature even in the mother church. There was a gentle but constant muttering because their widows were “overlooked” or “slighted” **παραθεωρεω** in “daily bread”. The apostles took this seriously. Ethnicity might have divided them but prayer united them. They were to seek out their own spiritual leadership

1 Seven men whose witness was commendable

2 Full of the Holy Spirit

3 Full of practical wisdom]

4 Full of faith as Stephen... Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, Nicholas of Antioch were chosen. The apostles prayed with vow of commitment and laid on their hands in solidarity of support.

Priests in need

God’s word grew. Disciples grew **“greatly” σφοδρα** usually of toil and pain or hatred or need. This was phenomenal growth. A great crowd of priests were living obedient to the faith. They would be excommunicated. Their needs were considerable but praise God they believed in the atonement of Jesus Christ, His resurrection and Messianic title. The church had some responsibility for them. There was no organisation to cope with their needs. It is well that the disciples were so committed.

Libertine need

Men who had gained liberty from cruel masters-needed liberty in God’s Son -but instead became harsh.

Theirs was a synagogue of expatriates. These were people from North Africa and Egypt and Cilicia (Paul’s territory). It would appear their early opposition was not unrelated to the animus of Saul himself? They disputed with Stephen who had begun a joint discussion with them and whose ministry was sealed with wonders and signs. His wisdom and spirit resulted in them instigating a whispering campaign – prompting some to charge him with blaspheming Moses and God. They took a hard line, indeed

this was the route to more general persecution. Should Paul have been associated his conversion shows that such attitudes display a deep seated spiritual need of grace and salvation.

Need in the Sanhedrin

The Libertines “stirred up” or made “to move in parallel” the people elders and scribes and they came suddenly upon Stephen (as they did Christ) and ceased him, setting him before the Sanhedrin. The libertines provided the pseudo-witnesses who said that Stephen never stops blaspheming the holy place and the law. “We heard him say, ‘Jesus of Nazareth himself will destroy this place and He (Jesus) changed or bartered **αλλαξει** the customs Moses gave us. Stephen uses the wonderful word “to look steadfastly” that appears is found in the narratives of the Birth of Christ, the Ascension.

*The looked steadfastly **ατενισαντες** at him and every single one of the 70 saw his face as if the face of an angel. The Greek word has a significant alternative meaning “They saw a problem”. Just as there was a problem with Jesus going up against gravity and leaving the apostles, so there was a problem equating **the saving power of God** with the bay in the manger and there was a problem condemning such an angelic man as Stephen.*

Stephen was a magnificent and beautiful and holy man. His face alone without opening his lips-his joyous and lovely visage swallowed the charges. People, even very religious people need to be disarmed; they need to see the loveliness of Christ. An English traveller in the 1600’s who when he hear Samuel Rutherford preach in Scotland discovered the “loveliness of Christ”.

Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me – all His wondrous compassion and purity
O Spirit divine, all my nature refine till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me”

ACTS 7

The first Christian Martyr

References, references

No chapter of the New Testament is studded with more references. There are 103 Old Testament references within these 60 verses. Stephen is **a foundational thinker** drawing his message from Genesis and Exodus, the history of Kings and Chronicles and also the Psalms.

His apologia features the Birth and Renewal of faith in Abraham and Joseph and the place of rising or abiding. It features Moses and Joshua and their contribution to preparing the tabernacle and David and then Solomon’s temple. Then he spoke of Jesus who tabernacled among us and of the church and doubtless the temple of the LORD that would rise in the latter day. Stephen’s statement “Christ sitting at the right hand” is included in “The Apostles’ Creed”.

1. Abraham & experiencing the God of Glory 1-19

God is seen by this best of the early church expositors as “manifesting Himself” – as Glorious. The call of God was in Mesopotamia but the first vision of God was by the oak in Shechem, the first altar since Noahic times to the God who saves. This association of life with worship and the glorious life-giving God was foundational. Now how did Stephen know God “appeared to Abraham in Mesopotamia”? We are told in Genesis 12.11 only that “God spoke” but Stephen was a great student. He had read Genesis 17.1, 24.40 and 48.15ff and discovered that Abraham like Joseph later had an experience of God’s presence made evident. God said of Gen.11.1 **“Come with me”** (*Hebrew Jlh*) he also “appeared” ארָאָה אֶת אַבְרָהָם and both verbs in the Hebrew are in the future tense attesting that God **was appearing to Abraham**. He had been “walking in front of the Lord as a child” all the way from Mesopotamia. He was a man under “covenant” who knew God and sought “perfection of heart. “So Abraham’s altar building as in 12.7, 13.18 and 22.9 was directly related to the conscious “presence” of God.

Near as not this Great God of the whole wide world was pleased to be worshipped in Mesopotamia and in Haran and in Shechem and in Jerusalem of course where He had chosen for his name to rest. Joseph’s experience of God’s shepherd care and presence is recorded in Genesis 48.15. The divine presence with Joseph in v10 was confirmed in Gen. 48 15-16. God revealed himself and walked behind the whole patriarchal family as they lived holy. The Glorious saviour provided a human counterpart; Joseph who was a type of the Christ hated but winsome in his love for his brothers and used to preserve or save Israel – as a mirror held up to the Christ who was to come.

2. Moses and experiencing the God of Glory 20-45

The “life of Moses” can be summarised from Stephen’s discourse.

He was no ordinary child: He thought his people would realise God was using him to rescue: He tried to reconcile:

The angel appeared to him in the bush: He who said, “God will raise up a prophet like me” “He was with the church in the desert”: The tabernacle was made “according to a visual pattern” – it lasted 300 years as the house of God

Moses was בּוֹרֵא – “cheery/pleasant/lovely in manner & physique”. The contending Jews asked “Who made you a defender who delivers?” Moses rejection mirrored that of Christ and paralleled that of Joseph.

Moses saw the angel of the bush in “A flame or wound חָבַל בְּבֵרֵךְ of fire. The bush “consumed” רָקַב but the bush was not “consumed” לָקַח. The thorn bush is a symbol of “sin” and that God should come and dwell with sinners is the wonder of the whole Exodus story. Yet was the curse of sin not destroyed. But the message and the work of the Spirit of holiness & the wrath of God were here first seen prophetically and in the assembly of the desert challenging sin: hence Moses the prophet; the “church” in a type and the tabernacle or the gospel of Christ by type.

The persistence of sin and the rejection of Moses are stated clearly here. The revolt to idolatry –to Molech and Remphan occurred despite the 300 year period the old tabernacle of witness to Christ bore its thready witness.

3. David and Solomon experiencing the God of Glory 46-50

The exercise of David was first commended then curtailed by Nathan. Latterly at the intervention of the Lord it was David's joy to learn that from his line a Saviour would be born. But Solomon built a house. Its glory was fabulous among men. It was one of many attempts to enthrone God but as Isaiah maintained and Solomon himself acknowledged God remained "in heaven" 2 Chronicles 6.21. Yet did the glory of God fill this temple at its inception (2Chronicles 7.1). God appeared to Solomon and said he had chosen the house as "a place for sacrifices" i.e. an altar. **God's eyes and heart would be there. However that was conditioned upon obedience.**

Isaiah 66.1 "Where is the house of my rest?" Rest is "drawing breathe" – being free of turmoil and trouble. This question is asked in the context of Isaiah's oracle on the end-times.

4. Christ and experiencing the God of Glory 51-53

Stephen spoke of the "stiff neck" and "uncircumcision of heart". He speaks of the nation as "resisting or falling upon the Holy Spirit" and killed the prophets of the coming "Righteous one". The angels came in a great battle-order with the law and God gave warning lest the people offend immediately. Stephen sees Israel's history as a catalogue of disobedience of which the latest episode was the severest iniquity. The greatest fault was not "watching" for the coming of the righteous.

Now observe what Stephen did. He looked steadfastly into heaven and saw what he was speaking about – the **Glory of God and Jesus at the right hand of God**. He testified "Look, I see heaven opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. That was an honour-Christ was ministering.

In a warlike assault they threw Stephen out of the city and stoned him. They clothes were laid at Saul's feet.

Stephen called on the LORD JESUS, naming Him as God – looking to his help and giving this supreme witness as he *called out επικαλουμενον*. His last word was "Adonai, lay not this sin to their charge." Thus he attested Jesus is Risen as the Judge and Saviour and High priest ministering in response to the prayers of believers—and glorious as ever still revealing himself as to ABRAHAM & MOSES & SOLOMON so to STEPHEN and the early church.

ACTS 8 Scattered

Persecution today

Take Bob who lived in Timbuktu. He told of a man who was buried to the neck and over him was poured honey. The ants ate that Christian martyr but God brought that martyr to Glory.

Take Jacqueline, whom I met. Her father was killed, her husband was killed, her children were killed yet she is still living for Jesus and worshipping – she still has Jesus! One day perhaps not too far ahead she will enjoy their company again and that forevermore. Yes, over the world persecution is a terrible reality; but God has his Elijahs too.

Psalm78.37

In the memorable challenge of Psal.78 we have Ephraim presenting a heart not “fixed in God, directed to God, confirmed or established in its walk with God” and we have David shepherding with “hidden gold” of heart.

In 8.21 Luke reports Peter’s challenge to Simon the sorcerer. He says, “Your heart is not ‘straight’ εὐθὺς – with the meaning “without reserve before” or “simple” or “without delay in approach to”. The best picture of the equivalent Hebrew word מִקֵּץ is “direct & swift as an arrow to its target”.

Persecution & scattering or “sowing” of the word of truth

The seventh and eighth historic matters of significance were the first of many early church persecutions (8.1-3) and the wonderful grace of God to Samaria. Evil spirits were exorcised, multiple manually disabled were healed and there was great joy in the city. Saints languished in prison in Jerusalem whilst souls were liberated in Samaria. So significant was the work in the north that good numbers believed and were baptised including one Simon – who was known as “the power of god”, an alternative force to the Holy Spirit! No prizes for naming the force in question. But he seemed to yield and then showed his colours by offering to buy with money power to be an apostle which was in the “word of Christ.”

Peter makes atypical use of a series of medical metaphors. “I see you as a man continuing with cholera-but vomiting bitterness and harshness – as a veritable ligament of evil” Simon responds like Pharaoh over the frogs flies & hail(Exodus 8 and 9).

This prayer is contexted by Isaiah 58.6 where God says true “fasting breaks spiritual chains”.

Hearts right with God-notice εὐαγγελίζομαι-hasting to preach v4, v12, v25, v36, v40

Being right with God means taking the gospel as fast as we can to those who need it. This we would do with bread for the hungry or water for the thirsty or clothes for the naked. This is the task of believers “in every place”

- (a) Believers in chains were being given *the wrong treatment* λυμαίνω by Saul but they were right with God
- (b) Philip in Samaria was helping many get “right with God”
- (c) Peter was right with God in a way the sorcerer probably never was. Simon continued his infamy in Rome
- (d) Philip was “right with God” in the sense of being immediately responsive.

Philip preaching

There are two texts here – **Isaiah 53**& 1Kings 18.12(cf. below) – for that was the “passage” to which the Ethiopian was directed. Philip must have gone on horseback; the distance was 70 miles and he arose early and rode till mid-day. The phrase “Philip ran” is one used most typically of “horse-running”. Philip had been instructed to “get near” and then “to join like the ivory inlay of the chariot to become part of it.” Philip heard him “reading” Isaiah. He asked “Are you sure you know exactly what you are reading?” ἀπα..γε

He pronounced that he was like a visitor to a city who needs a travel guide to show him the thoroughfares.

My need-said the eunuch – is to know about this man! How right!

(a) Jesus

“I have need of you or I beg of you – ‘Concerning whom does the prophet speak this – of himself or someone else?’”

The chariot was moving along at a gentle pace v36 both physically and spiritually. By now Philip would have spoken to Him of the baptism of Jesus and the command of **Jesus, the atoning lamb** – Matthew 29.11.

(b) A season of conviction

“They came **over** a certain water” **ὕδωρ** is used especially of **rain water** as so most appropriately of a Nahal. Perhaps the earlier *N.Soreq* or the *N.Lakish* (“*disentangle*” or “*late fruit*”) He had learned of “the call to follow and confess”. By now the Ethiopian was well and truly disentangled and went on his way to found a church that endures till this day.

(c) Baptism

The Eunuch said with illumination **φῆμι** “Here is a *Nahal stream*. The latter rains would have fallen as ever about Passover time in March April.

The Spirit had instructed Philip “Ride towards Gaza on the Jerusalem road continuing until mid-day.” The sun was high in the heaven when all this happened – and so as the Eunuch changed his garments Philip was off on his next mission. The Eunuch didn’t see him again – but he went on his homeward way rejoicing. Philip was found at a place called Azotus – “a lifeless place” where he was very thoroughly preaching the message of the gospel and so up the coast towards Caesarea. He was without doubt the John Wesley of the times – the Holy Spirit’s new Elijah-hence the reference to **1 Kings 18.12**.

ACTS 9

Conversion-a swift change

Conversion today

The conversion of Nikita Khrushchev in a little Ukrainian chapel primed the *east west thaw* which led in time to the collapse of communism. Conversion is awesome as a sovereign act of God. I shall never forget the conversion of the 95 year old Bill Jaegar. He read his bible through each year till his 99th year thereafter. Like the Ephesians he burned books that were incompatible with his faith. Conversions during the TV Alpha series during the winter of 2001-2 demonstrate the power the Spirit of God and the word of the cross to turn around a human life and so that it is delivered from the power of Satan and heaven bound.

There are no O.T. references in this chapter but there are 6 **εγενετο** “**It happened**” expressions.

It came to pass Saul was converted; it came to pass Paul led Jews to Jesus; it came to pass Peter was used to heal Aeneas; it came to pass Peter was used to raise Dorcas; it

came to pass Joppa was evangelised; it came to pass Peter stayed with Simon the Tanner.

North – The Damascus story – Saul’s conversion

“Damascus” is a name first found in 1Chron.18.5 & 2Chron.28.5. It is a Hebrew noun and means “hasty”, “alert”, “quick” with especial reference to traffic” and “damask” a speedily woven cloth(*even “silk” was known to be produced with the help of the locally endemic “silk worm”*)(Gesenius). In the Damascus road story of the conversion of St. Paul there are five references to “speed” of action. These notices show both the skill of Luke and serve to underscore how quickly the Lord can change lives!

1. Suddenly there shined around about Saul a light from heaven (“above the brightness of the sun at noon”Acts26.13) **He heard the voice of Jesus** and **saw the Lord** (9.17) The Lord identified with His persecuted followers. He was told “It is hard for you to kick like a horse against the spurs. Saul’s was instant surrender and obedience. He was quivering outside and astounded inside. Those near him “took it all in” i.e. considered it as they listened to Jesus speaking. Paul was in Damascus 3 days in the house of Judah-and fasting.

All this began “suddenly”^{v3} **εξαφνης**. The word means “unseen” “with no lead in” or better “the precise point of change from rest to motion”. To this “meeting Jesus” we can put down our whole spiritual progress

2. The **Lord** next appeared to Ananias (the one Jehovah guards) He was told to go to “Straight Street” or “express way”**ευθειαν**. It was not only straight but also busy. In the house of Judah Saul was “**giving himself to prayer**” It seems the Lord showed Saul to Ananias. In a vision Saul had seen Ananias coming and laying on of hands as the answer to his prayer. Ananias whom God protects faltered – “I have heard of him – creates havoc!” The Lord responded – “He is a chosen vessel” “He will carry my name before nations & kings. I will show him what he must suffer – this means “by presenting my sufferings to him”**υποδειξω**

3. Ananias went and spoke to Saul as a brother. He told him why he came and became agent of

sight restoration and the infilling of the Holy Spirit. “Immediately” **ευθεις** there fell as fish scales from his eyes. The wonder of his “looking up” is that the first

Christian he saw in Damascus was “the man God guarded”

4 He looked up – the vision of Jesus was gone but not the presence. It was a look of gratitude-he was baptised. Immediately **παραχημα** as the transaction was fulfilled by God who keeps His word. He took food for his prayer was granted.

5. The end of his 3-day hospitality stay with Judah led to a stay of certain days with believers. That was over a week if he preached in several synagogues. This was “immediate” [**ευθεις**]. Jews were mixed up aware as they were that he made havoc before and had come to lead Christians to Jerusalem – instead as two animals are led to mate Paul was so preaching Christ that Jews were being “brought to the Lord”. A few days were sufficient for a plot to emerge but the inventive disciples got Paul down the wall in a fish basket at night.

South Jerusalem

Subsequently he was introduced by Barnabas who guided the apostles thoroughly on his recent experience. He was bold in the name of the Lord and talked with the Greeks – holding debate with them. Again he was in danger of his life so the disciples gained him passage via Caesarea to Tarsus.

West: Peter's witness in Lydda & Joppa

Four events follow in sequence. **εγενετο** v32, v37, v42, v43

- (1) The first took place at Lud or Lydda. A man who was named “praise” (Aeneas) had been bed-ridden 8 years. Peter raised him up immediately in Jesus’ name. It was a “Jehovah rophé” miracle. (Ex15.26). This news spread all along the “fertile plain” of Sharon towards Caesarea.-where Philip had already preached.
- (2) Then Tabitha (Hebrew “bright”) or Dorcas (“bright eyed” like the gazelle) suddenly died. Peter was near – he was called. They showed him the clothes she made as they wept. He put them out dropped on his knees and prayed. After a time he turned to her with the words “Tabitha, arise” She opened those bright eyes. She sat up looking at Peter-aware she had been brought back. He gave her his hand, raised her, called the saints and widows and presented her living.
- (3) It became known through the entire port town which was quite important for commerce. Many believed
- (4) But it happened that Peter had been sufficient days in Joppa along with Simon the Tanner. Simon probably prepared leather for belts and bags and wine-skins. The new wine of the gospel was certainly finding new wineskins-and Peter had learned to be like his Lord a man active on the behalf of the flock.

ACTS 10

Prejudice or Prosopopsia (face first relationships)

Not far from our home live people of many nations: from Persia, from Afghanistan, from Somalia, from Angola, from Rumania, and from Egypt. The need among them is compelling. Their stories are stranger than fiction. But often their faith and loveliness of character exceed ours in a pampered society. With nothing they appreciate love and deserve sincerity and a genuine listening ear. They have been for me a crash course in prejudice dismantlement

The whole counsel of God

There are four OT windows to this chapter. **The first** is Leviticus 11 where we have the food laws-abrogated by 1Timothy 4.4 for N.T believers. **The second** is based on Dt.10.17 & 2Chron.19.7 the impartiality of God. **The third** is the effect of the evangel – healing, melting and peace. **The fourth** is the final prophetic vision – invasion, illness, wandering, ignorance & sin ended. This is the process of history – we are at stage 3 “melting/thawing out & sewing up wounds”

Four important truths (εγενετο) v10, v13, v15, v25

They are transported beyond physical hunger in obeying the voice of God; following absolutely plain guidance and living for God’s own glory.

Prejudice crushers

The memorandum of God – attested by the angel
The vision of a parachuting vehicle full of cleansed animals
The acceptance of a gentile god-fearer
The proto-evangel and the universal necessity of the gospel
The work of the Holy Spirit of God

1. God's memorandum 1-8

μημοσονον “A memo” stands before God. It got God's instant attention. Prayer creates such memos-never forget it! It was sent by a Roman through and through – “seed” or “original source material” of the Roman army. It was prayed at the hour Christ died under another Roman centurion! He was pious and God-fearing with his whole house. He shared mercy gifts with the Jewish people and was a beggar with God – a great combination. God supplied his needs – he helped others! An angel visit left him gazing ατενιζω cf. Acts 1.10, 3.12

He was to send for Peter – a stranger by the harbour side at Joppa staying with Simon the Tanner. He called two servants and a devout soldier – his Mr. Steadfast προσκαρτερεω Ac1.14. He interpreted everything for them

2. The mighty vessel bound to linen 9-21

The strong linen of Christ's holiness cleanse worldwide by binding us to in the New Covenant thus making his church a noble instrument of ingathering. A hungry fisherman at a seaport would as Matthew Henry remarks *in loco* have broken down a stone wall for food – though like the 7 Jewish martyrs who preferred death to eating pork he was an O.T true blue. **The parachute [τις]** is termed in the received text “a certain vessel” (collective sense?) – ως – how great linen sailcloth? If all translations emphasise the “equation of sheet & vessel” let us learn from the equally valid “differential of the great sheet and cleansed vessel”. The three descents “above” Peter relate to progress in church understanding – here in Acts – then in Galatians – where Peter separated himself – and in later times when the church established its *esse* 2 Peter3.15

Peter had difficulty with the vision διαπορεω – “quirky” he might have thought – but the men from Cornelius showed up – enquired. By now Peter was “taking the vision to heart – drawing inferences” ενθυμew and the Spirit of God spoke in confirmation – **So-rise up....come down...March with them – no more self-examination! “I am the man you seek-what is the reason you are here?”** cf. 23b Peter had learned – he invited them to evening meal and to stop over night with his friend the Tanner. They had started after 3pm – it was now growing dusk. These three men had a great evening in the tannery with the big fisherman and the meal that was by now ready plus a glorious 30 miles of conversation as one to one they spoke with other Jews Peter brought with him on the return journey.

3 The acceptance of Gentile God-fearers 22-33

Cornelius was a thoroughly good man. His servants' account ran, “Centurion, righteous, god-fearer, the nation is witness, engaged by an angel in an arrangement to bring you to his home and hear you speak words by his side.

Well, they arrived and Cornelius was expecting them. He called his parental and family group and those (maybe related?) whom he had argued should come or constrained to be present **ἀναγκαιούς**. The imposing figure of Peter drew unwanted worship. “Up, I am a man”, and he entered conversing as a friend. Finding many gathered he said, “You are aware it is not our law to unite so closely as this or come voluntarily to the home of other nationalities. But God has taught me to call no man common or unclean (Gk) unclean or blood polluted(Ar) and I have no retort above or against this! I wish to enquire for myself therefore (i.e. as God is acting in this) concerning the particular word that made you send for me?” Cornelius responds by the classic answer: “I have fasted 4 days”(during which time Peter had eaten well) – and at hour nine(crucifixion “It is finished” hour) was praying in the nature of a vow at home when a man in bright raiment stood before me – and spoke to bring me light” – “Cornelius your vow is heard – your mercy to others is remembered before “the God”– therefore send to Joppa and call for Simon surnamed *Peter* (*Peter beamed visibly – that’s what I wanted to hear - he thought*) he is a guest of Simon a tanner along by the sea – coming to your aid or coming to maturity he will talk to you. I sent at that very point and you have done beautifully to come to my aid. Now we are all before ‘the God’ to hear once for all – all the orders you have already received under ‘the God’”

4. The gospel essential to all human kind 34-43

Here Peter sets out 12 principles. He introduces “Of a truth I have taken myself down a peg for God is no respecter of persons”

1. All who fear him & energetically work righteousness are “accepted” – he sent his word – the good news of peace to Israel. This is the Christmas message “Peace on earth to men on whom his favour rests”
2. He is **Lord of all**. You know the one who became the message through Judea originating from Galilee – Jesus of Nazareth.
3. Along with the baptism John heralded – Jesus of Nazareth
4. Whom “**the God**” anointed with the Spirit and Power
5. Who went throughout voluntarily doing good works
6. And haling all who had been down under the devil’s power. God was with him. We were witnesses of all done in Judea & Jerusalem
7. They killed Him & hanged Him on a tree
8. This Christ “**the God**” raised the third day
9. He was seen not of all but of witnesses handpicked before by “**the God**”. We ate and drank with Him after the resurrection
10. He announced alongside us then that we herald and witness that he is “ordained” on the horizon by “the God” as Judge
11. All the prophets witness to Him as the name of our forgiveness – Isa. 33.24,53.5-6,Jer31.34 Dan. 9.24
12. Forgiveness is through His name

The work of the Holy Spirit of God 44-48

The Holy Spirit fell on all who heard this precious word called in 9.7 & 10.6 “what is essential to do”. The circumcised Jews present were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured on Gentiles for they heard them speak in other tongues and magnify

“the God”. Peter asked “Who can forbid water?” to have these baptised who have received the Holy Spirit as we have? As well as asking the question he commanded that they be baptised in the name of **the Lord** – then they asked him to remain certain days.

Baptism of the believing subject was and is the ultimate seal of Christology – so it is the ordinance that opens up Christianity to the novitiate – the beginner. He therewith says “Christ is God and Judge, God and Christ, God and atoning Saviour – and in these ways my Lord”

ACTS 11 Christianity – badge of a missionary faith

Missionary work in the mid 20thC – my student days – focused on Africa (areas of SIM & SUM with Qua Iboe) Asia (OMF and OMS fields of labour) and South America (an SAGM and worldwide RBMU region). Many denominational and faith-led missions have now penetrated these & other European lands using ships aircraft and the media. Today the growth of Christianity is apace with world population and amid new foes missionaries of the cross seek to evangelise “to a finish” as John D. Mott once said – while we look for the Lord’s return & believe Mt. 29.11, Mt.24.14.

Gentiles receive Jehovah’s word 1-3

Rome was the overarching empire – and arguably still is. Her *pax* gathered nations under one rule. The Acts 10 outpouring within the Italian gens at Caesarea deserves to be called the Roman Pentecost. Jews were thoroughly critical. Peter, back in Jerusalem gave detailed testimony-here encompassing 13 verses (5-17) resulting in “silence of content, glorifying of “the God” (Jehovah) and certainty that God had changed the minds of these people to give them His life. So what did the Gentiles receive?

1. The name and experience of “the God” Jehovah
2. The revelation of God by vision, by the Spirit and ever in Christ
3. The power of speech – hence tongues – with the will to glorify Him and transmit His truth
4. The historical message as set forth in scripture
5. Christ as the wisdom of God

Peter-the argument for outreach 4-19

We must praise God that at Joppa where Jonah fled from outreach Peter rose to its challenge.

1. He laid out in order of succession or **what is on offer** from the beginning
2. I was in Joppa **praying** I saw a vision in a trance or removal from the then local sights etc
3. A certain **vessel** coming down in as a great linen sheet with four corners had flowed loosely down(as hair)
4. It came to me **αχις** (Menander & Timotheus use it for “coming to heart of knowing/liver of prophecy) also “continually”.
5. I stretched up/gazed into it to understand it.
6. Animals, wild beasts, reptiles, birds – **potential believers** – the world, territory, sin, & other things in mind
7. **A voice (I knew)** said “Arise kill eat”. “No Lord, not once have I eaten common or unclean”

8. A voice the second time from heaven replied “call not **what The God cleansed** common or unclean”
 9. It happened three times above me; and again the whole **was drawn up greedily** from its home – earth!
 10. At that point 3 men stood at the house; the men were sent from Caesarea for me
 11. The Spirit bade me go with them not judging myself
 12. Six of the brethren came with me to the man’s house
 13. He reported seeing an angel stand in his house saying “send to Joppa bring a man Simon surnamed Peter
 14. He will speak words in the doing of which you & your house will be saved
- Then Peter said, this was the start of my address – the Holy Spirit fell as on us at first. I remembered the Lord’s word,” John baptised with water – you will be baptised inward-by the Holy Spirit. If therefore “the God” gave them equal gift with us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to prevent “the God”?
- They were silent – they glorified “the God” Jehovah Adonai saying “Surely indeed God has given repentance unto life to the Gentiles.

Antioch-a missionary base

Those scattered after the tribulation that happened over Stephen went to Phenice Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to Jews only. But from them certain men – Cypriots and Cyrenians came into Antioch witnessing to Greeks and telling the good news of Jesus. God’s hand was on them; a great number believed and turned to **the Lord**. The church at Jerusalem heard the news. Barnabas was sent - who saw the grace of God & rejoiced.

He encouraged them with “calculation” or “public notice” of heart’s intent to remain steadfast to the Lord. He was a good man – full of the Holy Ghost and faith. A number big enough to cope with was placed (by baptism) in Christ or in fellowship.

More was needed. Barnabas set off for Tarsus and found Paul and wedded him to the need of the Antiochean church – the union was not to last for Paul was to travel to where Christ had not been preached. Neither was the friendship with Barnabas to endure – for a personnel dispute over Mark meant that they went their separate ways. Barnabas for his part probably accomplished much in Cyprus, Italy and Egypt. Paul’s journeys are very fully recorded by Luke.

Significant event No. 18 εγενετο

So it took place over a year they condoled in the church and had a sufficient number to teach. There was great reconstruction here and hurts were sorted. Paul who had begun this was mightily used to repair it.

In Antioch first by deliberation and conference the disciples first called themselves Christians

They wanted to trade under that name; they conferred about it. They took the title of their king. Their teacher Paul had as his hallmark of discipleship “Christ likeness” cf. “It pleased God to reveal Himself in me that I might teach” [*Galatians 1.16*]

Prophets from Jerusalem went to Antioch and most notably amongst these was Agabus (*Greek cognate of “agape”, thus prophet of “love”*). Through the Spirit he prophesied the AD 49 worldwide famine under Claudius. As the disciples prospered they looked

ahead to the horizon of need and each sent for the ministry to their brethren in Judea. This was sent to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul. Shortly afterward from this Antiochian platform the great Pauline missionary outreaches were to begin.

ACTS 12 Jesus has All Authority

The Lord protected Felix the Christian in the days of Luther as he lay in barn straw. The hen laid an egg near him but didn't cackle. Alexander Peden was more often saved by the ghoulish Scots mist than by his mask. Sadhu Sundar Singh was released from his prison by a stranger who disappeared in days when the only key hung on the belt of the Dalai Lama. These are notable escapades but that of Peter stands out as confirming the sovereign authority of Christ [Matthew 28.18]. Herod Agrippa died in 44 AD (12.23)

King Herod Agrippa

What can this avowed enemy of Jesus Christ - this king careful in Jewish observance do?

1. He can stretch out his hand (lit" throw himself at" as rugby player) to afflict "once for all" injury on the church.
2. He can be ready to try Peter
3. He can have a saint in his clutches
4. He can seek and not find that very saint – cf. **Alexander Peden, Sadhu Singh,**
5. He can quarrel with neighbours – in Ezek28.22 God anciently punished Sidon for "pride"
6. He can put on beautiful clothes and sit on a judgment throne
7. He can become proud and be struck down as was Herod – being eaten with **σκωλης α worm** (Hippocrates).

Peter guide notes on how the Lord led him out of prison v17

1. The angel of God **struck παραξας** him on the side. **Matthew 26.31** [*cf. the earlier spear thrust – this we must not miss – it reminds us that Christ of Calvary was behind it all*]. For Christ there was no evading death but for Peter there was freedom as the church ""made **continual** prayer" **εκτενης** – even at night. (a) Prayer extending outside the family (b) prayer exuberant – of enough firewood (c) "vehement" concerning one specially loved.
2. The angel said – "Put on your sandals, put on your outer coat" There was time enough
He did not realise the evident truth that this was happening through an angel – but thought he was seeing a vision. They passed through the first guard and the second and the Iron Gate opened **automatically** (*that's a Greek word borrowed by our language*) and "pointed" or "ushered" or "gave them passage" to the city.
3. Coming out they came before a single road and the angel left immediately. Peter came to himself and said "Now I know from seeing it that the Lord has made his angel an apostle and rescued me from Herod's hand and Jewish expectations."

Seeing the whole picture

When Peter saw it all, he went quickly to the home of John Mark. There Rhoda responded to his knocking. Here surprise meant he had to stand while he informed the praying believers who needed strong persuasion that it was not his apparition. Soon they opened to his knock and they were “out of themselves”. He waved for silence and told the above story adding “Tell James & the brothers” and with that was off to another well-know safe place.

Herod’s wrath

Come day the soldiers were distracted. Herod sought Peter without success. He interviewed and slew the guards and left in a hurry for business in Caesarea. Caesarea had by this time become something of a Christian refuge. Not for 5 years in 49AD would we hear again of Peter.

God exalts the humble and brings down the proud –Herod & Mark in contrast vv20-25

The “hot or desperate quarrel” with Tyre and Sidon now took the limelight. We read in 1Kings 5.11 and Ezekiel 27.17 that Tyre was historically dependant on Judah for food. Now Blastus, a companion of the bedchamber, brokered a peace which Herod as a shrewd worldling clung to in order to obtain renown for peace whilst notorious for persecution.

The man of the bedchamber prepared Herod’s robes and he sat in splendour on a Bema or judgment throne making his speech to public oration(*such as are filed with popular fallacies*) and was ***cheered to the echo επιφανεω***. The people shouted “It is not the voice of a man but of a god”.

Now Luke writes in poetic justice and striking contrast to v.7 that Herod was struck by the angel of the Lord. In one of the extraordinary double missions of the bible he was struck because he did not give glory to God. He was eaten with worms and expired. So ends this proud antichristian ruler. The word of God increased and filled the land. Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem, their relief ministry complete. They took along with them JOHN MARK as a companion. A distinguished ministry was in the making but the unreadiness of this young man would split these men. That in the interim probably brought him nearer Peter and led to the writing of our earliest gospel record. His uncle, the brother of Mary in whose house the Christians met at Jerusalem, engaged him in his ministry. He would later join Paul at Rome from where he accompanied Timothy to Asia Minor (*2Tim4.11*). It is recorded by Eusebius as a tradition that the church in Alexandria, being a daughter of that at Rome, was founded by Mark (*History2.16*)

So the young man who left his garment in the hands of the temple guard in Gethsemane lived on to tell the tale of eternal truth alongside the big fisherman who first drew the sword then fed the lambs and one of his best jobs was to put relate his story of Jesus Christ, which is our Gospel of Mark whilst this valuable young man penned it faithfully. This sword in the hands of a new generation was to slay its ten thousands for the heavenly kingdom.

Acts 13

Opening up Paul's preaching of the offence of the cross

1. Teachers at Antioch

In accordance with the nature and life of the church in Antioch there were outstanding prophets and teachers, as Barnabas (Son of consolation – cf. also Acts 4.36-37) and Simeon named Niger (Hebrew meaning is “Flowing as a river”), and Luke the Cyrenian, also Manaen, who was brought up with Herod the tetrarch. (younger son of Herod the great – ruler of Galilee and Perea and quarry of John the Baptist – before whom Jesus appeared, and Saul. As these outstanding men gave of their substance in ministry and as they fasted, the Holy Spirit said, separate (or) send to the far horizon Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.

2 **Cyprus** Then fasting and making a vow (of support?) they appointed them (for distant fields) and released them from their ministry. Sent by the Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, thence sailing to Cyprus – Barnabas' homeland. And in the event (or) being in Salamis – presumably catching up on family matters they proclaimed the word in the synagogues – and they had John Mark as their helper – he helped carry their possessions. (Mark appeared previously in Acts 12. 12 – his mother had a home in Jerusalem – possible reference Mk. 14.51) Moving through to Paphos they discovered a certain Jewish magician and false-prophet, Bar-Jesus by name, who was with Sergius Paulos the proconsul, a man of intelligence.

3. **Sergius Paulos summoning Barnabas and Saul** sought to hear the detail of the word of God (*Greek επιζητηω* – used of “beating ground for grouse”). But Elymas the Magician opposed them (for that is the translation of his name – meaning “quiver” or “flute” in Greek – perhaps from the Hebrew BAROSH – but deceptively crafted to Bar-Jesus), sought to turn the proconsul from the faith... But Saul who is also of the “**Paulus**” gens, filled with the Holy Spirit, having fastened his eyes on him (*Greek ατενιζω* cf. Acts 1.10 & 3.4) said, “O you son of Diabolus, full of all treachery (*Greek δολος* is used of the Trojan horse and Vulcan's net and of a mousetrap) and of all fraud (especially as to accounts) – enemy of all righteousness, you do not cease to distort and twist the straight ways of the Lord. And now BEHOLD, a hand of the Lord over you and you will be blind, not seeing the sun until a season passes. With that transaction there fell on him a mist (*as over the eyes of the dying*) and darkness and he walked around seeking to be led by hand. BEHOLDING then what happened, the proconsul believed, amazed over the teaching of the Lord (*in the sense that God pointed out what was so wrong*).

4. Those around Paul going ahead to sail came to Perga in Pamphylia.

John Mark returned to Jerusalem. They passed Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia and entering the synagogue on the Sabbath, sat down. After the reading of the law and the prophets the leader said to them, “Men and brothers, if you have a word of encouragement for the people, tell us. Paul arose and waved his hand for silence at the stir over visitors and spoke to them.

In the first week of May 1999 the author and his wife were interviewed by Turkish TV asking our impressions of the land – prior to a march of Christian witness in commemoration of St Paul’s visit. That day the Papal and Orthodox hierarchy joined with free-churchmen in a goatskin tent to celebrate in song and speech and sermon the event of Acts13 actually in historic Pisidian Antioch.

5. Observations on the great sermon

Here Paul stands. He related in vv16-43 the choice of Israel by God. The God-given prosperity of Israel, the hand of God in the Exodus, the divine patience over 40 desert years, the overthrow of 7 nations in Canaan – 450 years of grace.

Then after the judges his namesake, Saul, the Benjamite king, reigned 40 years, followed by a man after God’s heart, David. Of his regal line came Jesus who was ushered in by the Baptist. Paul lifted the name of the unrecognised Saviour whom Pilate executed and God raised. He pointed to distinct scripture – Psalm2 “You are my Son” – the baptismal prophecy; the resurrection promise of Psalm 16 “Your holy one will see no decay” and the warning against rejection,” You who scoff, I am going to do something in your day you would not believe even if someone told you”.

The sermon drew a renewed invite to speak again – on which occasion the whole city sat in on the address. Quoting Isaiah 49.6 “I have made you a light to the Gentiles” Paul answered Jewish abuse by evangelising Gentiles – those called to be soldiers believed and though the apostles were expelled the disciples were filled with joy & the Holy Spirit.

6. Preaching-is sound-based on historical fact

Hebrews 13.22 states that the book of Hebrews exhibits this style – a factor in favour of Pauline authorship. There are many references to the Torah Neviim and Tehilim. Notice that the 7 nations included Hittites from their seat of power Hattusa in Paul’s province of Cappadocia – today’s Turkey. The **Hebrew Kerugma** or gospel showed a people **brought out of Egypt** and **brought into Canaan as Inheritors**

7. Preaching uses the law to display rebellion

The reading of the scriptures is ever cogent. The puritans spoke of “law work” and “gospel work”. Where did that idea come from? We have here Hebrew PROEM & YALAMEDDENU (For “divide and disciple” PRM & LMD – preaching divides. What happened in those days when great Jews preached was that the TEXT – in this case 13 vv22-23

8. Preaching majors on the heart “I have found David a man after my own heart” (1Sam13.14 v22) who is set against Saul – as those who entered Canaan are set against those who left Egypt, as Israel is set against the seven nations; as devout converts are set against abusive Jews - obedience as against rebellion is taught in the gospel – cf. v22.

9. *Preaching is Christ-centred*

- a. The Lord was raised up as David's seed – incarnate – virgin born v.23 “God raised a Saviour”(Greek ηγειρε)
- b. The Lord was crucified and raised in prophetic ministry as Messiah – vv30-31(Greek ηγειρεν)
- c. The Lord was raised from the tomb as Light of the World v.37.(Greek ηγειρεν)

10 *Preaching is full-orbed*

1. Repentance is vital and proud rebellion is its major target cf.v24B and the contrasting humility v.25
2. “Leading in”(Greek εισοδος) the bridegroom of the heart v.24A
3. Covenant mercies v.34 & Isa.55.3
4. **The cross or tree** v.29. With Deut. 31.23 (Gal.3.13) is at the heart of preaching i.e. **The curse** taken away only in **Jesus** whom **God** raised up v.30.
5. The perfect lamb v.33 and Psalm 2.7 (cf. Mark1.11)
6. Forgiveness available to the obedient v.38 Jeremiah 31.34
7. Justification by faith v.39 (cf. Romans 5.1)
8. The reality of Judgement v.41 with Habakkuk 1.5
9. Covenant Grace v.43
10. A call for decision v.46
11. The divine overarching sovereignty v.48 “enrolled” – cf. the book of life
12. The fullness of *the Spirit* v.52

ACTS 14 Church planting

For the Christian faith to take root in a hostile climate or at home five principles operate. Personal experience in neutral settings in Londonderry Ireland and Canning Road Merseyside confirmed these basics. 1. Centre work where people are; Teach or disciple; 2.Build in fluidity or flexibility & mobility, 3.Follow up i.e. Encourage adherence to “the faith” principles – cf. 10 36-43; 4. Warn of problems to face; 5. Insist on Christ as Lord & king; 6.support the church in their open choice of good leaders; 7. Pray with vows for the sick i.e. show that healthy life is to be lived for Jesus; and 8. Place the whole church at the board of Christ **παρατιθημι**.

Opposition - historically repetitive

(a) The 20th historical note of Luke is that here also the city divided on Christ

As in Pisidian Antioch so now in Iconium the approach was through invitation of the Rabbi to address the congregation. Public assembly as ever has rules. One clear evangelical address resulted in a great number believing Jews & Greeks. Unbelieving Jews roused the minds of Gentiles to think ill of the brothers. Therefore a sufficient period of time was spent speaking frank & bold on the subject (of the person/righteousness) of the Lord – who witnessed to **the word of His grace** by giving signs and wonders to be done by their hands.

Notwithstanding there was a vast schism in the city between those with the Jews and those with the apostles and this resulted in a plot.

(b) The 21st historical note of Luke – a plot to mistreat & stone – foiled by flight to evangelise Derbe & Lystra

This action of Paul & company accords with the Lord's own principle – cf. Matthew 9.23. The countryside around these latter towns is of a highly arable nature. It became known in sub-apostolic times as “the land of 1000 churches” – and personal acquaintance with its artesian wells and observation of its modern farming community – who are still kind and open – indeed during a visit we left one farmer an “in-jil” which he graciously accepted.

Their evangelism was executed swiftly as so often in Acts **ευαγγελιζόμενοι** (the “Liz” syllable indicates “swiftness”).

The seventh “intent look” ατενίζω

A man lame in both feet from birth lay in Paul's presence or was settled among the Lystra people. He had never walked/been taught. He heard Paul speaking. Paul looked at him closely & knowing he had faith to be saved said in a loud voice “Stand up straight on your feet.” And leaping up he walked around. Crowds beholding what Paul did lifted up their voice in Lycaonian speech and said “The gods have come down like men to us”. Barnabas they called Zeus and Paul Hermes – because he led in word. The priest of the time for the city brought bulls and laurels & white wool crowns before the gates. Along with the crowds he was willing to worship by sacrifice.

Paul and Barnabas tore their garments, ran among them and confessed to being men. Absolutely questioned their action he brought gospel news from the creator to whom he called them to turn – though He allowed older generations of the nations to go their own way – his present demands in line with the testimony of his providence in rain & fruit and food and joy of heart. Still they would scarcely refrain from worship.

The singular Lystra incident and the principles of the planter in Gods spiritual seasons

So Paul was stoned-and by the brave circle of Christians interposing themselves was spared to rise and continue the ministry. At this time Timothy would have been nurtured. The evangelists left for Derbe to the South East. There they evangelised and discipled in one visit.

So they returned to Lystra Iconium and Antioch to disciple others.

- (a) They made the disciples lean on the Lord-**στηρίζω** ... We need Jesus
- (b) They counselled them to remain “in the faith” i.e. its tenets... We need truths to hold
- (c) They waned of the fight ahead & assured them of the reward beyond in the kingdom... We need the big picture
- (d) They supported them in voting for church elders... we need leadership
- (e) They prayed with vows for the weak ones... we need prayer & guidance
- (f) They placed them as a family at the Lord's table... we need fellowship... all these are heart needs

Back to Antioch

The word was brought to Perga – where there was a very big synagogue. They had a very successful though far from trouble free mission – in no little due to the “prayerful commendation to the grace of God” v26. So “anchor prayer partners” held the ropes as William Carey would speak of such things and they announced to the gathered church the results like a story of spiritual battle. They told what “God did with them and how He opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. They were using the “Keys” that Christ spoke of when addressing Peter at Caesarea Philippi. They spent no little time with disciples at home. They too needed encouragement so we could say that besides the six “planter’s principles” above there is a seventh we must add, namely, “Spending time with other disciples telling the story of Gods dealings i.e. testimony!”

(g) They spent time in sharing testimony of how God by His word opens doors.

Acts 15 David’s tent restored

Telling the story

As the apostles went to Jerusalem they told of many conversions as the Lord worked with them in Asia. The story uplifted believers in Phenice (*Tyre & Sidon*) and Samaria. At the time there was a great **στουσις** “storm, weighing up, taking position and **συζητησις** “dispute” or “joint enquiry” about 8th day circumcision (Lev.12.3) as an essential for salvation. Hence the reports were of “conversion” not “salvation” (*change of mind not state!*). A “choosy” or “heretical” section of believing Pharisees in Jerusalem insisted on circumcision as “essential, a watchword to be handed down & to be observed” (NB 11.14).

Joint enquiry – the principle of “salvation by grace” is the outcome

The apostles and elders came together to look into the topic of the essentials of Salvation.

1. Peter’s presentation: vv7-11
God only knows the heart - He gave them the Holy Spirit.
He purified their hearts by faith.
Why put a yoke on their neck we and our fathers could not bear. It could not universally
be adhered to in past for they demurred on the circumcision of the prince of Adiabene.
Salvation is by **the grace of God.**
2. There was silence – following which Barnabas & Paul guided them through signs and wonders God did among the Gentiles through them but the same silence continued.
3. James stood up and brought them back to Peter’s address. He referred to Amos 9:11-12
He said the Lord would act when Israel was scattered upsetting the theocratic order and would “**restore again the tent of David**” **ανοικοδομησω** (One should envisage this as a first step to the new temple as it was in David’s day) and also restore her things trampled and brought to an end by war and restore her to life

ανορθω. This latter act would result in the residue of entire nations, including nations nominally or by nickname and imputation called “Christian” seeking the Lord. Amos says “In the day” God sieves Israel – destroys the house as a nation – but not Jacob or Israel. This judgment was to be by sword and disaster. But later the Lord **returns** as planter after reaping a great spiritual harvest (from the Gentiles).

Proposed resolution-the historic “era” of the church is clearly understood

James’ proposal may be rendered literally “I give determination that we do not set the stones of the shore awash while such cargo as was being harvested was being delivered” He stated “We do not trouble those turning to God **as ships are endangered by rocks near the shore παρενοχλω.** But that we write to them to avoid pollution through idolatry, sexual immorality, strangled or non-kosher meat and eating blood” (Lev. 3.17, 17.10-114, Gen9.4) On the latter “being cut off from the nation” and “having God’s face against one” were involved. James added that synagogues everywhere were upbeat on Moses but the Church’s business was conversion and Gods “to cleanse the heart” – in which he agreed with Peter. So “heart cleansing” and “conversion by repentance” with “faith” and “the gift of the Spirit” were accepted as salvation.

The significance of “David’s tent” is that “fellowship” on the least common denominator is there, “the sword” of the word is being used in the conversion of Gentiles. It is God building His church not men building Moses’ synagogue. Known to God from the AEON of David to the church AEON and the millennial AEON and the AEON of the day of eternity are the works He is energising. (cf. 2 Peter 3)

Letters emphatic of consecration re God, marriage & fellowship

(Kosher replaces circumcision as fellowship of believers replaces Jewish ness – an enlightened provision for fellowship of Jews in Gentile homes).

The determination was sent and a beefed up party including Judas Barsabas and Silas despatched to confirm that Jerusalem did not back the distressing seceders. They acknowledged the wholehearted work of Paul and Barnabas. The two representatives spoke in Antioch saying, “It seemed good not to lay any other weight on you than – avoid idolatry, blood and fornication and guard against those thoroughly. You do well so to do. Be Heroic!

Silas or Silvanus emerges

The prophetic ministry of Barsabas and Silas strengthened the church. They carried the blessing of peace back to Jerusalem. The explanatory v.34 is interpolation. Silas or Silvanus according to [1Peter 5.12] did bear Peter’s letter to Asia Minor – could this have been now as colleague of Paul? Such a construction would intermesh the ministries of Paul and Peter - the suffering of the first believers Paul met would be in view 1Peter – accentuated by the famine under Claudius Ac.11.28 Jerusalem had detailed reports. Cf. 13.45, 50; 14.5, 19, 22; 15.26. The churches of this period are very new in the faith (cf. 1Peter2.2) and though James wrote about the dispute Peter did obviously write pastorally to the region and posted by Silvanus’ hand. The

reference to “Christian” 1Peter 4.16 links with Paul’s teaching in Antioch. It is also intriguingly possible that Mark before setting off with Barnabas sent cordial greetings to areas where he too well knew from bitter experience that Christians faced persecution and opposition. (1Peter 5.13)
(cf. *Foulkes in “Tyndale Commentaries”, Introduction, and Pages34-35 – Also Dean Alford in his Introduction to 1Peter – which he dates to 45AD*)

Paul - moved to revisit the Asian believers

Barnabas declined in favour of taking his nephew John Mark. Paul either did not think Mark worthy or consent – which appears in the light of the latter’s departure in Pamphylia – or he did not demand or press as Barnabas did that Mark be part of the team (cf. “imperfect of **ἀξιῶ**). There was irritation or exasperation so that they left one another in defeat. **ἀποχωρίζω** There were no winners. Barnabas took Mark alongside and sailed for Cyprus. Paul selected Silas and was commended to the grace of God by the brothers. He went throughout Syria and Cilicia strengthening the churches – literally “making the churches lean upon (Jesus)” **ἐπιστερίζω** through troubles – preparing to be used as the door of opportunity arises (*The picture is of a cart whose shafts rest ready for harnessing*).

Vital observation on The Rule of Faith

Western Christendom at Douay in France pronounced in 1654, “Our tenet is that the Rule of the Christian Faith is **Tradition**”. Reformers advanced the principle of “the Holy Spirit speaking clearly within Holy **Scripture**” as their supreme rule. What befell Judaism must serve as a marker – to centre Christianity in all its forms on the person and work of Christ and his teaching recorded in scripture. We can no more develop new tradition than scripture essential to salvation after the apostolic era. The attempt would be another faith!

Acts 16

Europe in step with the Spirit Galatians 5.25

Today –Turkey is still the bridge to Europe

Turkey wants to enter the Euro area. Greece is making a leap forward with Euro-funding egg in road-building.

Lystra is a remote utterly simple village today with no witness. The uplands to the south are still called “the place of 1000 churches. Artesian wells abound. We gave one farmer a copy of the Injil near his well.

Ours was a memorable visit to Philippi’s Roman ruins 1997. This springboard to European evangelism has a few evangelical Christians – a baptistery by the small river that still runs to its south east to the rear of the single street farm village of Lydia. In the office of its museum administrator a Greek evangelical Christian lady was secretary.

Nearby Kavalla (ancient Neapolis) is a thriving port today. The church led by Dr Katsarkis is still very alive.

Derbe & Lystra

The trio–Paul Silas and Mark entered a home where mother and son were believers. Timothy the boy had a great local witness as far a-field as Iconium in Asia Minor.

Timothy was circumcised by Paul and became a very useful companion with much knowledge of the church-now growing sizeably-so copies of the Jerusalem apostolic decree were given to each church. They “firmed” the basis of faith & they grew daily!

Macedonian call-In Step with the Spirit-a door opened to a new continent at Alexandrian Troas & Philippi

They attempted to go to Galatia -they were prevented by the Holy Spirit. They then tried to enter Bithynia where later the believers were persecuted under Pliny – but the Spirit did not allow them. Passing along by Mysia they came to Troas. Here Paul had a quite amazing night long vision. Dreams last seconds but this was a big thing. It involved a certain man (of rank, in leadership, in his prime, a warrior)”a man of Macedon” standing calling, saying” Cross over into Macedonia-you must help us. Barclay makes him “Alexander the Great”, Ramsay says it is “Luke”. I say it is the sweetest and greatest warrior we shall ever know and His identity can be found in v10. He may be recognised from the story of Joshua before Jericho! Cf The Lord working with them.

So immediately we sought to go into Macedonia “*gathering /by comparing /coming to terms with/reconciling to*” **συμβιβάζω** that the Lord had called us to evangelise them. Note:*The Volt Face from Bithynian borders to Troas and the appearance of Luke may signal health factors.

Lydia’s invitation-the heart door swings widely open

So they sailed straight to Samothrace and “sufficient for the next day” – to Neapolis (Kavalla of today) – thence to Philippi – city and Colonia Romae. There they were “studying or wasting time or wearing out their shoes/discoursing” certain days. There was no synagogue – no official way to begin. So on Sabbath they resorted to a prayer place by the river. They sat chatting with the women who resorted there – mixed prayer was not approved. A purple cloth saleswoman Lydia from Asiatic Thyatira, a God-fearer, was listening.

(a) The Lord opened her heart. (NB There is a special skill requisite to opening the *haemestoma purpura* shell – and the shellfish must die that purple cloth be made) She listened intently & attached herself devotedly to those things being spoken by Paul.

(b)So she was baptised (*here too there is a play on “dyeing - she took on a royal nature”*)

(c) She called him aside and said, “If you men have judged me faithful to the Lord – you can come into my own apartment” **οικία** – not guest room in the sense of a 3 day stay. She said “You may remain”. She biased them in this direction. She forced them against custom. As a business woman she was gifted with the force of uncommon persuasion. NB Thyatira means “**repeated sacrifice**” at the guilds to Tyrimnas - the mounted god with axe.

The Thyatira church of Revelation 2 18-29 contains references to the “morning star” and Jezebel (no habitation) – which were both definitive of the church as it passed through medievalism.

Pythoness's testimony – a battlefield opened – the power of Satan to God

This woman met the apostles as an adversary **απανταω** following the four men and possibly Lydia and some women right down to the riverside prayer house where vows to God were made. She was in a frenzy of demon possession and yelled out with accuracy “These men are servants of **the Most High God** who are proclaiming as their war cry **καταγγελλω** the message of salvation. Satan knows us and our Christ. Daily opposition from this servant of Satan ensured two things: (a) little gospel effectiveness and less prayer and (b) loss of opportunity over days.

Paul having striven and laboured with might and main turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of **Jesus Christ** come out of her.” And he left in the circle of that hour – this was a somewhat sustained engagement!

The deprived owners of this medium trailed Paul & Silas before the magistrates – alleging they were Jews making a start to trouble the city and declaring war on behalf of customs Romans may not receive. Magistrates ordered that they be stripped and beaten with rods with a supporting crowd joining in. They received many stripes.

Jailor's Conversion – darkness to light (cf Reformer's motto – “Light after darkness”)

Enter the jailor. He was commanded to “keep them safely” i.e. without himself falling down or failing in the job.

Receiving such a command he threw them into the inner secure prison. Then at midnight the 21st **εγενετο – The Lord (working with them) a. called them to Europe b. opened Lydia's heart c. now opened a great and effectual door.** Writing in 1 Cor. 16.9 two years later in 51AD the apostle rejoices that this door “remains” open.

1. Prayer “suddenly” **αφνω** in the sense “where no eye could see it” God moved. As God's work was unseen at the creation of the world so it was in this earthquake.

Singing believers felt it and other prisoners who listened too. The foundations men laid were yielding before new foundations God was building.

2. Freedom “suddenly” **παραχρημα** all doors opened and all bonds slackened. This action here is called a “transaction” – in the sense that it is a definite answer to prayer.

Paul & Silas sang & prayed. Psalm 50 perhaps, “In the day of trouble I will call on thee”; or my Psalm for 2003 Ps.61 “When overwhelmed seek the ‘higher rock’.

These doors and this slackening led other prisoners to seek God before all else. The fears of that dark room led no doubt to the first wonderful prison ministry of all time.

3. Conversion The jailor thought aloud (i.e. spoke with full belief) that the prisoners were fled. He drew his sword to kill himself and avoid the ignominy of trial & death.

Paul's words were nectar-“Do yourself no harm-all are here”

Asking light he leapt down on one mighty impulse **πηδαω** & trembling

“**embraced/fell by accident or prostrate**” – the 3 meanings are in order of usage. I take

no.1 – to correspond with his joy amid trembling. And leading them out or persuading

them of danger in so doing **προαγω** he spoke with light **φημι** “**What must I do under inspiration that I may be saved?** They said classically “Believe on the Lord Jesus

Christ and you will have been saved and your family likewise.

4. Baptism The night had no watching for him – It was a new day spiritually cf. “that hour of night” (unique NT) *he washed away from the wounds* (As Dr. Luke puts it – and on the “transaction” of sins washed away he & his baptised.

5. Fellowship. Leading them up from the bathing area-usually in the **outer** quad of a Roman villa they were taken to his apartment and a triangular table and couch placed where the whole house was in raptures of joy having believed in God.

Magistrates grant release & request departure

The magistrates sent the officers to say they were “released” and “Now therefore leave peacefully” But Paul spoke citing three wrongs:-

They beat us publicly without condemnation & proper trial; it is thus you treated Romans by birth; they threw us in prison and now secretly are throwing us out (*of a Roman Colonia*) – certainly not. But let them come and lead us out as Romans. The officers corresponded and the magistrates obliged – “called them in a friendly fashion” and “politely requesting them to leave the city”

But they went into Lydia’s house and seeing the brothers – Mark Timothy and Luke – no doubt shaken by the earthquake and more particularly brothers who had formed the nucleus of the first church at Philippi – and having encouraged them they went away. Now they were on the great Via Egnatia which led via the lion gate of Amphipolis to Thessalonica and westward toward Rome itself. Macedonia was now an open sesame to the gospel of Christ

ACTS 17

Communicating the Gospel

1. Thessalonica – Messiah and Lord 1-9

Paul and company made their way through the cities of Amphipolis (pressed on either side by rivers) and Apollonia (*city of the god of song soothsaying & strife*). The first on the river Strymon - represented a journey of 30 miles and the city was doorway to the timber and precious minerals of Mt. Pangaeus.

The second 27 miles further onward was a halt before crossing another broad river the Axios. They moved on to Thessalonica on the crossroads of the Via Egnatia and the route north. There by custom Paul went to synagogue and being invited to teach “widened the subject” over 3 weeks and “proposed” or “deposited” or in our idiomatic ‘dished up textual proof of’ his topic “IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT MESSIAH SUFFER & BE RAISED AND THAT

JESUS IS THE MESSIAH AND IT IS JESUS WHOM I DECLARE TO HAVE BEEN IN A DEATH STRUGGLE FOR YOU.” We have here the speechify, clarify and argufy aspects - to put it in the language of the cotton field preachers of long ago. Some were persuaded and were assigned by this verdict to Paul & Silas, also a big number of God-fearers and not a few leading women. However zealous Jews who dissented gathered a mob from the sub-strata of idlers or hucksters. They set the city in turmoil and stood before Jason’s house to hound the apostles before the people. They missed their quarry but “swept” Jason before the governors shouting “**These who have turned the inhabited or Roman world upside down are here**, Jason has welcomed them and they are all acting against Caesar’s decrees saying there is another king – Jesus. This disturbed both officials and the multitude and they took bail money from Jason and released them.

2. Berea-searching the scripture 10-15

So by night the Apostolic band moved 80 kilometres west to high ground at Berea north of the Via Egnatia. The people are described as “noble” or “graceful” in contrast to “nobility” –the same word **ευγενης** in 1 Cor.11.26 well understood in the countess of Huntingdon’s comment “Not many noble” not meaning “Not any noble or well-born”. They received the word readily kindly and “examined or queried” the scriptures to see if they “held” “supported” or “guided in that direction” **εχοι**. As soon as Jews in Thessalonica heard that the word of God was the centre of an agony i.e. “proclaimed” in Berea they came and put crowds in distress as ships on a stormy sea. The brothers sent Paul right away to go as quickly as possible by sea.

3. Athens-Agora Engagement 16-17..Areopagus Teaching on Christ 18-24 25-28 29-34

Paul had an escort or guards who brought him to Athens and received a letter for Timothy & Silas – urging them to join him quickly. “Spurred on like a horse having to move faster or exasperated like a father over erring children or feeling like a doctor as an unattended wound gets worse” Pausanius a traveller of 50 years later said “It is easier to find a god than a man in Athens.” That idolatry that idolised base passion annoyed Paul. He made his approach to the people of faith and discoursed by questions in the synagogue with Jew and God-fearer and in the agora daily with those whose hap or good fortune it was to be there. The Stoics and Epicureans engaged him in a skirmish. Certain said “What would this seed-picker say?” They sensed he had a strong purpose (**θελω not Βουλομαι**).

The stoics were of political kidney believing in a “world state” & equality; the Epicureans were of scientific bent believing life to be brief and without the eternal dimension, so seeking tranquillity.

Scriptures used here demonstrate **Creation**: Psa. 146.6, Isa.42.5; **Grace** Psa.50.12, Isa.42.5 **Inheritance** Dt.32.8

Reconciliation Psa.145.18, Isa. 55.6, Jer.23.23 **Repentance** Gen.1.27, Isa.40.18-20, 44.10-17; **Judgment** Psa.9.8, 96.13, 98.9

(a) **Creator** 18-24The philosophers initial appreciation summed up Paul as a campaigner for strange spiritual powers different from their demi-urge creator

Note “Altars to unknown Gods originate in a pestilence the antidote to which was to release black & white sheep from Areopagus and where each stopped offer to the unknown god of that locale. (*Diogenes Philosophers 1.110*)

Note “of one blood” Athenians claimed as Ionians they were **αυτοχθονες** sprung from Attic soil – not Edenic man.

Note “God does not settle in temples” The Parthenon (in view) housed Athena’s image. One of 7 wonders

Note Quotes from Poets (i) Epimenides of Crete “They fashioned a tomb for you, O Holy & High one – the Cretans, always liars, evil beasts, idle bellies! But you are not dead; you live and abide for ever; for in you we live and move & have our being” (*Liars because Minos told his father Zeus the Cretans were lying for Zeus never died*)

(ii) Aratus the Cician “Never O men let us leave Him unmentioned...all ways are full of Zeus and all meeting places of men, the sea and the harbours are full of him. In

every direction we have to do with Zeus for we are his offspring” (*Phenomena*) **Note** The Athene city patron at the opening of the Areopagus stated” *When man dies earth drinks up his blood – there is no resurrection.*”

He was seen as a campaigner for “gods of lower rank” who connected God & men **δαιμων**. This was because he brought the good news of Jesus and the resurrection to them. FF. Bruce in loco quotes F.H. Chase *The credibility of Acts* with approval that the philosophers associated **ιασις and Ιησους (the goddess of ‘health’)** with **σωτηρ – often used of health** “Taking or stopping Paul as an orator was stopped to have his documents examined **επιλαμβανω** they lead him to the Hill of Ares – the god of War” They said “We wish to be able to grasp with the mind ‘what is this new teaching you teach in Greek for you are bringing to our ears “strange living beings”. We are therefore in deliberation to grasp what he would he be so determined these things exist?”

(b) Creature 25-29 Paul stressed that God does not need the worship **θεραπεια** of our hands (indeed we need His healing) nor beg from any mortal. Man is a creature – from one blood to colonise (from their first home) and God fixed the horizons or mountain bounds of their founding fathers or governments **κατοικιας**. He made or inspired us to seek the Lord – “if by prayer **certainly [αραγε]** we might “**touch**” **ψηλαφω (Lk24.39)** Him and find Him. Though with equal certainty we can say He is ready and real now **υπαρχοντα** not far from any of us. In His circle we live & move (or) meddle in sacred things (or) stir up things (or) search under every stone and are moved stirred and sought **κινεοσμαι**

(c) Judgment 30-34 God **commands all** to “repent” The antimony is that man is not truly free till he repents. God has appointed a day of judgment – for **all men**. The resurrection of Christ the sin-bearer & judge is witness He has exhibited “proof” or “assurance of friendship” **to all men** in the resurrection. Some joked at resurrection-the Epicureans believed only in the continuance of the soul – not the body – this was the prevalent view. Certain significant men “were welded or fitted like parquetry” Dionysius the Areopagite (*a member of the court with power of life or death & his wife?*), Damaris and others too. The message centred in the Lord who “had been touched by apostles” and been seen by Paul who renders us this account. v27.

J.S. Stewart commented “I used to think this polite evasion; now I think they were really moved but in bondage to unfriendly stars.”

Acts 18 **What makes a leader?**

Leadership is a vital issue in religion and politics and business of all descriptions. The Modern leader creates a good climate; states expectations; listens; encourages; is patient, offering opportunities keeping promises & rewarding. Gordon Selfridge finds it is coaching, respecting goodwill, inspiring enthusiasm, sharing, fixing demonstrating and instigating action. Like William of Ockham separate the essential and unnecessary (he called for ecclesiastics to get out of politics in the 1300’s) A leader must train, must not fear the crowd, spot talent or gift, create confidence in others not in yourself, must explain.

Five New Testament leaders

(1) Aquila & Priscilla (2) Paul (3) Crispus (4) Sosthenes (5) Apollos

(1) Aquila who led Apollos to Christ CAPACITY FOR HUMBLE SERVICE

(meaning edible fruit of the evergreen oak) vv1-4 & 26-27,

Aquila was born in Pontus – south of the Black Sea i.e. northern Turkey near the borders of modern Georgia. He had moved away from Italy lately προσφατης (“the late slaying” – if taken literally). Prisca his wife might have been from an “old” Roman family (an option FF. Bruce refers to linked a cemetery in Rome created by a woman of this name) Paul willingly came to stay being of the same trade. He remained with them and it was “a going concern” for they were tentmakers. Paul from there taught in synagogue on the Sabbath and afterward from home discussed *διαλεγω* widened the discussion with Jews and Greeks.

This couple took Apollos (*as hospitable Jews do for 3 days*) and set out for him more accurately the way of God. They were competent to redirect a man of rhetoric and an historian of scripture. It was the fact that they could both witness to and explain the Christian life they exemplified. Leadership is “widening” or broadening the grasp of the faith & taking other through proven experience of the faith

(2) Paul who led Crispus to Christ CAPACITY FOR GOD (*Paul means “Little one” cf. the “gens Paulus” – a patrician family with a luminous war record one of whose ancestors granted liberty to Greece – perhaps contributing to Paul’s considerable interest in that country.*)

While Paul waited for Silas and Timothy he was saved from falling to pieces in spirit by testifying of his experience of Jesus as Christ to the Jews. They opposed and blasphemed. He tore his garments & said, “Your blood on your head; I am clean, from now I campaign among gentiles.” Ez. 3.18, 20; 33, 4, 6, 8.

He parted from Aquila and went to stay with Justus, a god fearer. His house for guests and lodgers adjoined the synagogue. Crispus – ruler of synagogue No1 believed & his family. Many Corinthians also – they were baptised. Paul’s significance was also that he was directly led. 2 Cor. 12.11 “I desire to come to visions or revelations – “advents” – my precious times mysterious beyond Eleusis. There are five *οραμα* cf. Acts 9 & 22, Acts 16, Acts 27.23, Acts 18 & Gal. 1.12 & also 3 *αποκαλυψις* Eph. 3.3, 1 Cor. 2.9, 1 Thess. 4.15.

Leadership advantages by seeking God-but also by “wanting” to have God speak directly.

(3) Crispus led his family to Christ CAPACITY FOR FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

(curly-headed/wrinkled)

This man like the ruler in Capernaum honoured Christ – in fact Crispus believed in the messianic claim – in the Lordship or deity of Christ (Adonai being the vernacular for Jehovah). So did his family. However, that so many Corinthians should be converted and baptised whilst Paul was working so closely with the Rabbi must have led to tensions. The Lord gave Paul a vision in the night. Jesus was speaking all the way through the vision – saying “Testify”, don’t be secretive. Jesus further said “I am with

you – people may talk and speak ill but not even one will “put a lid on” you or “penalise and limit” you.

επιτιθημι for the reason that I have much people in this *self-governing or free city πολις* (This statement would relate to the Gallio judgment which did not interfere with Corinthian religion or Jewish for that matter cf. v17). Paul's 18 month stay must have built a very open indeed modern democratic approach since Greece is the oldest democracy in the world and was even then enjoying our privileges. We are not given details but in the latter period of that ministry Crispus had resigned as no doubt discipleship demanded baptism (v8 may hold a hint of this).

Summary: Crispus was trained like Paul and Aquila from youth in scripture. This is a fine foundation for leadership and self-discipline. He had the benefit of a first class teacher over an extended period. He had his household with him as witnesses to Christ. No doubt his resignation enabled them to follow through their profession of faith. Justus “fair” or “regular” lived up to his name helping Paul regularise his lodging as suited his dual ministry. The Lord assured Paul He had provisions for the religious change in Corinth.

(4) **Sosthenes** (The name means “The deposit of salvation” or “ordained to salvation” even “capacity to bear hardship”). The accession of Gallio 51(ended in early AD 52 with a Mediterranean cruise in support of his health). He was a moderate of generally affable ways and a brother of Seneca and sometime tutor of Nero coincided with the Jews rising up with one mind against Paul. The charge was that “alongside the Law which of course demands worship of Jehovah Paul persuades men of all races to honour God (Christ)

With Paul ready to speak Gallio interposed “If it is any unrighteousness or evil lewdness/fraud, O Jews, I would “tolerate” or “listen to your speech” (**ανεχομαι** “bear with strangers”). If it is on the other hand a dispute about a “word” or “life principle” or “names” and the law as you see it, you yourselves must look into that for I am not interested to be judge of these things and he expelled them from the Bema (*option*). This judicial exclusion was vital & since Seneca was close to Nero affected Paul's mind on how apology for the faith should proceed. The Greeks seized him as “goods for default of payment” and beat him right in front of the Bema. This did not concern Gallio. Sosthenses is referred to in 1Cor.1.1 and in Eusebius “Ecc.Hist.”(One of the 70) and figures as the “beaten Jew” who obtained treasure after suffering? So it very often is!

(5) **Apollo** “to lose one's life/destroy/the sun/God of soothsaying” Paul stayed sufficient days saying farewell or setting positions in order among the brethren αποταξαμενος. He went to Syria by boat – cutting his hair at Cenchrea(*Saronic port*)for he had a vow or self-commitment to God! Priscilla & Aquila were with him. At Ephesus they left him. But in the synagogue there he was questioned by the Jews in connection with an extended stay. He did not “nod consent” **επινευω** saying “It is absolutely necessary to make Jerusalem for Passover (cf. *weather!*)but I will circle back by chariot **ανακαμφω** God willing!” He left came to Caesarea-greeted the church at Jerusalem, went to Antioch spent time and then left for Galatian country & Phrygia successively strengthening disciples (cf. *area debarred to him earlier!*) It is called “country” now **χωρα** “land assigned”. This lies behind his

vow! But a Jew Alexandrian by birth – a skilled speaker & learned in history came in contest to Ephesus - with some teaching of “the way” he had himself gathered (*middle of verb*). He spoke with zeal, from experience and accurately as far though he knew only John’s baptism. Aquila instructed him on the “way” (*cf. Isa.35 & 40 & Jn.14*). Then he went with commendation to Achaia where he related experience to facts for those who by grace believed. He questioned Jews to a standstill, showing Jesus is the Christ with the sinewy force of an orator.

ACTS 19 **Sovereign over all**

Today in Ephesus a “Tyrannus” bible school operates. The title means “imperial” and the development of the faith recorded in this chapter is definitive for society-the teaching Socratic dialectic-“God is sovereign or man is sovereign – one of the two must be true” [Marx].

An English tourist visiting Scotland heard “Robert Blair and was impressed by his preaching on “The majesty of God” and by Thomas Dickson’s power to declare to the hearer “all his own heart”. Once show men God in all His majesty and they will soon seek a mediator to reconcile them to Him.

1. The Lord the Spirit (2Cor3.17) 1-7

In its day Ephesus was a great city, its Diana temple a wonder of the world – its lighted streets, its library, baths, and its trade in metals, wool and timber renowned. But when Paul followed Apollos visit he found people disciplined in repenting **but unaware of the coming of the Spirit**. He taught baptism in the name of Christ as Lord (Adonai). He laid his hands on the group who were remarkably 12 men – it was like Pentecost in Asia. They gave their experience animatedly and spoke of the light that had entered their lives.

2. Light after darkness Tyrannus’s school (M.Henry – city governor’s place) 8-13

Paul spoke boldly in the synagogue – using the dialectic method i.e. asking questions that supposed dogmatic answers *διαλεγομαι* and persuaded of the kingdom of God. But when/since (causal/modal *ως*) many were becoming hardened and not believing, speaking evil of “the way” (i.e. the uniqueness of redemption & forgiveness by Christ) before the full group, Paul went from them and separated the disciples (often *αφοριζω*) is used of “defining propositions” which tended to illustrate difference. He increased his teaching by dialectic or rather use of Socratic Method so that a daily school was held where Tyrannus held lectures which might feature commentary on arts or things philosophical. It appears to have been a sort of two year course by which the full message of Christ reached all Asia – both Jew & Gentile. Besides God did miracles not in the routine of divine providence-not miracles of “coincidence” *τυγχανω* – so that from the skin *χρωα* (*used of the shaven face – cf. vow earlier*) workman’s head coverings *σουδαρια ορ σιμικινθια* i.e. half-aprons (*both used as he worked in tent-making-it may be small Talliths or prayer tents were used or the items I have noted*) were placed on those too weak to work and they were released

from their sickness that required nursing and evil spirits withdrew to avoid trial. In v15 the spirits said “I know Paul (*’s skill to battle*)” ἐπιστημι.

3a The priesthood of Christ – Christ restores body soul mind spirit (Mark 5.15) 14-16

Certain Jews from those around at the time lifted up their hands to exorcise evil spirits in the name of the Lord Jesus, saying “We bid you depart in the name of Jesus whom Paul preaches”. The *spirit* replied “Jesus I discern (as between God & men) and Paul I understand as to his skill in “spiritual” battle – but who are you?” He leaped on them, mastered them - for he was stronger, so they fled naked, wounded & defeated **τραυματιζω** from the house. The name of the Lord Jesus was magnified.

3b The Lordship of Christ among His people – Be clear & clean in testimony! 17-22

Fear fell on the city. Many who had believed came now into real discipleship or from backsliding and confessed Christ clearly making public statement of their acts. A considerable number of those who practiced magic (*i.e. enough to make a magic circle*) brought their books (*cf. 5th book of Moses etc.*) and burned them in public – books to the value of 5000 silver pieces. So by its power to hold and **change the word of the Lord** grew and became strong. As these things were fulfilled Paul prepared the road in his soul in the circle of the Spirit going through Macedonia and Achaia to Jerusalem, saying that after he had been there it was essential for him (alone) to go to Rome. But sending two deacons Timothy and Erastus to Macedonia he stayed in Asia for time.

4. No little disorder – Be open to advice! Advice of the Asiarchs 23-32

There is always “no little trouble, stir, disturbance, agitation, uproar” over the unique message we hold as Christians. Some say it is dogmatism, narrow, uncompromising. It is just how God’s love interposes to save the sinner who won’t be dragged squealing from his or her ways!

Demetrius – silversmith that he was, corralled or “joined together” the technicians and workers who supplied the silver temple Penates of Artemis urging that Paul had persuaded enough people over nearly all of Asia to disbelieve in handmade gods, destroyed thereby Diana’s majesty, who, that apart, is venerated worldwide. The men chanted “Great is Diana” as if to bolster the idol – disrupted the city and “came to anchor” **ορμω** like a rudderless ship at the theatre – snatched Gaius and Aristarchus Paul’s friends who left home for the gospel and Paul would have ventured to face them in the Assembly of the Commons but friendly Asiarchs or religious officials advised against making a defence before this fickle crowd. Contrary shouts went up, most didn’t know why they had “poured together” In a moment the clerk would have dismissed them - but for harmful Alexander cf. 2Tim4.14

5. The foolhardy Alexander Here is a clear case of God behind the powers that be! - saving Paul from the beasts of Ephesus. Be kind to those with whom you differ! 33-40

The Jews raised the stakes by pushing Alexander the coppersmith forward to speak. He opposed Paul but he was prevented by a 2 hour chant **μεγαλε**

η Αρτεμις Εφεσίων “Great is Diana”. Then the clerk spoke. “Who does not know that the city of Ephesus is a **νεωχορος** “temple sweeper” of Diana – it was on every Ephesian coin! The image is not man-made originally – it came down from heaven: a shrewd defence! It is essential to “calm down” **καταστελλω** and not to act headlong fashion. These men you brought here are neither sacrilegious nor blasphemers of your goddess. **This is guidance on how careful we should be of other’s religious scruples.** If Demetrius has a case the courts are open - there are proconsuls. They can bring charges. If there is anything else let it be settled in lawful assembly. He spoke of the danger of being called in question about the discord and the difficulty of answering about the mob that “twisted” **συστροφης** like a cyclone through town.

ACTS 20

Successful living

ONLY ONE LIFE *Only one life t’will soon be past only what’s done for Christ will last.* Dr Paul Rees – “Success as heaven measures it – not the blaring of bands on Broadway but the tinkle of water in a foot wash basin” When Luther and Zwingli were at odds Zwingli they saw on the Swiss Mountains 2 goats – one going up one down. The goat below laid down the one descending walked over him – humility”. Success is like a duck in water “unruffled on top paddling furiously underneath”. “Don’t tell the world about the labour pains – show them the baby!” A.Glasgow. “God has all there was of me to have” (Rom12.1) - General Booth. “Better to dare mighty things...though one suffer much...than to live in the grey twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat” said Teddy Roosevelt. “Worldly successes exposes a man to the dictatorial demands of incessant expansion” to quote Spurgeon. “Charlie the lousy mailman – left teaching to deliver letters in New Jersey. Mother pleaded – stop him resigning. Others get back at 2pm; Charlie at 6pm. What’s the difference? James1.27! You’d never believe how many lonely people are on my route!” – Tony Campolo.

Months of long discourse in Macedonia Greece & Asia (20.2, 20.3 20.7)1-6

EARLY APRIL *After the Stir he called the disciples alongside for comfort. He embraced them – showing love amid struggle - and set out on his journey to Macedonia. Passing those parts he comforted them in strong or valuable or long account(of Christ)or reason for Christian conviction λογω πολω He went to Greece doing three months there(in same style).Through a treacherous design by the Jews when he was about to sail for Syria. His resolve or guidance happened to be(εγενετο 26) to return through Macedonia. He was accompanied by security until they left for Asia by seven men. About the 7th of April (a Wednesday) Paul sent on to Troas these seven Asians-who believed through his ministry – bearers of help for Judean Christians. On the Wednesday following unleavened bread he set out from Philippi for Troas. He arrived Sunday and stayed till Sunday following.*

Sunday in Troas - a day of deep emotion (cf. 1Kings 17.21) 7-12

The disciples gathering συναγω to break bread at the end of his stay is now reported. He discoursed Socratic style with them - ready to leave in the morning (Monday)

stretching himself to the limit/prolonging his address till midnight. If the use of the Lord's Day be sought:

(a)Pliny(10th epistle to Trajan circa 112 "On an appointed day(Sunday)they had been accustomed to meet before daybreak and to recite a hymn antiphonally to Christ as to God and to bring themselves by an oath."

(b)"After the conclusion of this ceremony it was their custom to depart and meet again to take food." – the love-feast

1Corinthians 14 It would seem that in this connection a period of worship was entailed. In Corinth this could entail numerous songs of praise, practical lessons, sure words, vision/ apocalyptic, exposition/ interpretation – which Paul would restrict to two or three with one interpreter and 3 messages from preachers. (It is of interest that the prophetic word is not debarred from the lips of Christian women but discipline and the ministry of teaching was not given Paul's consent because women were not to be in the front line of battle.)**ἡσυχία**

1Tim. 2.12) cf. entrusting 1Cor 14.34 **ἐπιτετραπται**

The safety factor There were sufficient torches in the upper room; maybe a mild criticism. Some easily fell drowsy with fumes! Luke would know the effect! A young man **νεανίας** named "good fortune" sat by the folding shutters of the window. This young man "sank down like a lowering torch" **καταφερομενος** into a deep sleep while Paul taught with questions until rather late/full time(it was the Lord's day)Having been overtaken by sleep he fell from the 2nd floor – and was lifted up dead-a corpse. Paul "fell upon him" and embracing/comprehending the said" He is alive-don't murmur get annoyed or like a confused army. Going up again he broke bread and had something tasty and he held a friendly intercourse on practical matters until dawn. So he left. And they led the youth away as a living servant of Christ **παιδα ζωντα**-and they were not encouraged in a mediocre sense.

Shipping detail 13-17

We, going to the ship sailed to Assos – took Paul aboard – for he made this separate arrangement, being ready to go on foot. They "pitched in together" and sailed to Mitelene. There may be a financial consideration in **συμβάλλω** (cf. I have known how to be in want and how to abound).We sailed from there coming next day opposite Chios. We stayed at Trogyllium and next day came to Miletus. Paul judged to pass Ephesus to reach Jerusalem by Pentecost. But he called the Ephesian elders to Miletus.

Address to the Ephesian elders 18-21

1. Paul was consistent – the Ephesians were sure of that." How I have been the whole time"
2. Paul was sage & purposeful in his humble attitude or humble in his sage mind.
3. Paul was deeply sympathetic-"many tears"- their sorrow was his sorrow.
4. Paul was of enduring metal of character - faced with many snares and stratagems of the Jews
5. He never cloaked the truth, lowered sail for fear of wind.

6. Man with the right message – tidings **αναγγελω** literally from battle from which no warrior returns i.e. of death of Christ and taught Jew and Gentile publicly and in house repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

Danger signal 22-23

Paul has bound himself in spirit to march into Jerusalem openly, well aware from recent plotting of what adversity awaits, more than that having inner witness as the Holy Spirit speaks city by city that bonds and trouble remain.

How a martyr sees it (cf. O.T. especially *Psa. 74.2; Dt. 33.3-4; 1Sam12.3*) 24-35

1. I will not even now speak one word of defence/apology/litigate – for I don't consider my life precious for my sake
2. I will finish my course with joy i.e. it is vital to maintain joyful service under pressure
3. I will complete the **διακονια** I have received alongside the Lord Jesus to witness the gospel of the grace of God
4. Ephesians, I came to you to preach the kingdom & have inner witness today I am clean from the blood of all men
5. I have not shrunk from declaring the complete desire and will of God for you
6. Look well to leadership and the flock to feed and lead those whom Christ by blood died to win and keep **περιποιεω**
7. Strong Wolves (lit. “weighty” endemic) bringing misery & burden will come after me and from inside a resurrection of men with animated words to absolutely turn you about in separating **δαποσπαιω** the disciples after them
8. Watch - remember my 3years of tears “I placed the word in your minds with pruning, honey, checking pride, moderating injury **νους - τιθημι + κολαζω**(here “noutheo” is used as a monitoring term covering all learning) Word - oral teaching of Jesus
9. I commend you to God and the Word of his grace – up building word – confirming inheritance and enabling personal sanctification (insofar as we give ourselves to Him and it and appreciate its circle or boundaries) **εν ηγιασμενους**
- 10 I set my heart upon nothing belonging others – cf. Romans 7.7 & 13.10. Paul loved others-never traded on them!
- 11 Self-support; you know these hands – probably quite rough – ministered to my needs & those of my team
- 12 Give cf. Luke 6.13 & 11.13 Jesus said” It is more blessed to give than to receive” – so work assist and support the weak.

How love takes its leave (27TH *ΕΨΕΝΕΤΟ* - or historical event) 36-38

As he quoted Jesus he placed his knees. This is a direct quotation from Luke 22.44 though the former is an imperfect middle speaking of repeated action.

θεις τα ψονατα αυτου(προσηυχετο) προσηυζατο Whereas In Gethsemane Jesus sweated “tears of blood” cf. v28. There was “enough” sobbing **κλαυθμος** – they wept like children. This was a great occurrence – it is a perpetual reminder to them of Gethsemane-the shepherd heart of Christ in operation

The response of love followed – like the Father heart of God in operation - again a quote from Luke 15.20

επεπεσεν επι τον τραχηλον (κατεφιλησεν – κατεφιλουν) Whereas the Father kissed the Son in one embrace - this was repeated.

So theirs was immediate confidence their prayer was heard whereas their love was of a sadder sort. Inside they were most sharply sorry about his remark that they should probably not μελλουσι see his face again/they were destined not to. Then they escorted him to the ship as a bride is escorted to her bridegroom's home with joy & song. So they knew the implication – He was going to Jesus!

It is of first importance to note that Luke writes into this narrative direct takes from Luke 15 and Luke 22 – so it may very well be that during the latter missionary journeys his gospel was in a near complete form-thus constituting the “word” entrusted to believers!

Acts 21

Miletus to Tyre, Ptolemais & Jerusalem – Paul's arrest & speech

Teaching the church to pray

Paul knelt with the Ephesian elders (20.36) and again with the disciples on the beach αγιαλος at Tyre – the shore over which the sea washed gave them time to pray and the incoming tide on which the ship sailed limited the time together. In the first instance in face of the World famous Diana or Artemis Cult and in the second at the holy island and mother city of the Baalim cult (Tyre's king Itobulus or Ithbaal was considered divine and the high-priest of the people. In Revelation 4, 5, and 22(8) & 20 we have the devout elders and apostle John doing just as Paul and the Ephesian elders – and of course John and Paul both ministered and taught lowly devotion to the Ephesians. So as the mission of Paul draws to a close the example of prayer abides. Man in Genesis 3 was clothed with skins from sacrifice(s) made (previously?) – In (the midst of?) the garden. God spared our race an automatic, irreversible and distressful fate – by preventing Adam “put forth his hand” to gain a remote future or eternity of distance from God ml [I] Genesis3.22. In the New Testament garden of Gethsemane Christ encourages us to kneel and commune with God to achieve new strength against temptation. The apostles who sought Jesus teaching doubtless also learned His attitude.

Sailing home to prophetic messages 1-6

Paul and his party left Miletus and called at Coos then Rhodes and Patara in Lycia and on to **Phenice** – a west facing bay in southern Crete covered by volcanic magma. (The vessel itself was going on to Tyre). They left with feelings akin to **parting with home and family ανασπαιω** when the days to equip the vessel were fulfilled – a week to encourage the church and a week to lade the vessel – off again the apostle went after embraces and prayer. They visited Ptolemais and the believers there for a day. The next days he spent with Philip the believers there the deacon – and his four daughters at Caesarea(cf. Acts 8.40) Here is a gap from 35-7 to 59-60 of 25 years-during which young ladies of Philip's household had become prophetically gifted.

Whilst there Agabus bg[(“breathing” – cognate of Agape). Going back to Paul's “breathing out threats & slaughter” we have quite another form of “breathing” here.

The Loving breathe of the Spirit of God directing and **preparing**. God was preparing Paul for the hardest and most high profile step of his life thus far – to testify before kings and to die.

This man who reliably predicted the famine of 49AD a decade before now bound Paul hand and foot with his own (Paul's) belt. He then stated that the HOLY SPIRIT said, "The owner of this belt Jews will bind at Jerusalem, deliver to Gentile hands. Here Luke and the family of Philip besought Paul not to go. Paul responded, why weep and break my heart, for I have prepared myself for bonds and death at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. When he was not persuaded they became silent saying "The Lord's will be done".

So disciples – after preparation of bags or horses! (*F.F. Bruce*) mainly of equipment or transportation – led Paul and company to an old disciple – a stranger to Paul – **Mnason "remembering"** – a Cypriot – where they stayed – and according to Ramsay a source of material for Luke's earlier Acts stories – as being a convert of Peter's Sharon ministry.

Circumcision and custom debated 17-26

1. Initial welcome – "The brothers (*others as Mnason on outskirts*) received us warmly"

(*ἡδομαι* – "with delight").

2. Next day Paul and Luke and co. "went in" to Jerusalem to see James and all the elders had arrived.

3. Paul embraced them (*cf. warmth of fellowship*) and reported on each detail God had done in their gentile ministry.

4. On one hand they glorified the Lord and said to Paul "you see, brother, how many thousands of Jews believe - all zealots - on the other hand there is this-they have been instructed for baptism *as concerning you (or your teaching)* that you teach apostasy from Moses and all the customs of the Jews, instructing Gentiles not to circumcise children, nor to adopt our customs /teach them" (*cf. strong terms used by James... αποστασια... περιπατειν*) What is there to be done?

5. "It is essential the whole multitude come together (*Pentecost was close cf. 20.16*) and news of Paul's return prompted wide interest. This, therefore, we advise you to do - there are four men who have a joint vow or prayer involving them all - take them with you and join in their purification, bearing the cost of the shaving of their heads, and all will know that there is nothing in the report of your teaching, but you yourself keep the canons *στοιχοι* of the law. Concerning believing Gentiles we sent letters, judging that they should not have to keep this sort of direction but to avoid food sacrificed to idols, blood non-kosher meat and idolatry. Paul took the men; went next day to the temple and was cleansed with them. This announced the completion of the days of cleansing at which time an offering would be made for each of them individually. (Mishnah - 7days). The shortest vow was for 30 days – I refer the reader to the Nazarite vow as described in Numbers 6. Dean Alford aptly remarks that this vow did no prejudice to the doctrine of justification by faith.

Paul's arrest 27-36

Just as the seven days expired Asian Jews spotted Paul in the temple - gathered a mob and grabbed Paul shouting "Men of Israel, help" They vilified him "This man teaches

everywhere against the nation, against the law, against the temple-also he still brings Gentiles into the temple and defiles the holy place” They had spotted Trophimus of Ephesus in the city thinking he had been in the temple with him. The city was disturbed and it is a fact **εγενετο No.25** Jews came running together. They trailed Paul out and shut the doors immediately. While they sought to kill Paul clear evidence **φασις** reached the **commander χιλιαρχος** (Usually young commander of 600 - a cohort) of the Roman manipulus **σπειρος** (often only 2 centuries) that Jerusalem as a whole had been pouring to one place. He took soldiers and centurions and ran down 2 flights of stairs between Antonia & the temple (Josephus). The sight of the commander himself & soldiers was enough to make them lay off Paul. The commander came near and lifted Paul up and commanded him to be bound with two chains. He enquired who he was and what had taken place. As other shouted to other in the crowd he could not come to a fail-safe judgment on the disturbance. He commanded Paul be taken to the barracks (cf. Hebrews12.11). At the ascent of the stairs he had to be carried by the soldiers on account of the anger of the crowd-for the mob of people pursued shouting “Get him”. When they were about to go in Paul asked the commander if he were permitted to speak. Surprised that he used Greek –an imagining he had the revolutionary Egyptian who some time before led 4000 sicarii into the desert (promising Moses – like miracles & conquests) in custody. Paul said, “I am a Jew – of Tarsus-a citizen of no mean city” “I beg you-allow me address the people”. And he did. Paul waved his hand; the crowd fell silent and he called out to them in the Hebrew dialect (Aramaic).”

After all the years he was back where Stephen had been years before – and on the same side and with the same introduction and making defence of his life.

ACTS 22 **Paul's defence**

Paul makes what is called in the Greek translation an "apologia" or an account of his life. We would call it "Paul's story"- it gives testimony to his birth in Tarsus, Cilicia; to earlier times of rabbinic study under Gamaliel; to his zeal and aborted mission to persecute the people of The Way in far-off Damascus and to the interposition of Christ who appeared to him on the Damascus Road. He tells of his subsequent meeting in Damascus with a Jew called Ananias–himself a believer in Jesus, whose prayer lead to the restoration of his sight. Upon his return to Jerusalem the Lord Jesus appeared to him in the temple itself, hastening his departure as His apostle to the Gentiles. The remainder of the chapter explains the untangling of the melee where a Roman centurion and troops became embroiled in violence against Paul whose claim of Roman citizenship then led to the calling of the Roman commander & Jewish Sanhedrin.

1. The people were patient to hear of potential triumph in Syria 1-5

Paul’s pedigree and training under Gamaliel. Paul referred to his zeal by a term **απολογια**(Greek) that might be translated "a zealot lieutenant". He confesses to indiscriminate imprisonment of men and women. The initial persecution was inspired by the Sadducee High Priestly opponents of the faith (Acts5.17) Paul here confesses to complicity in the stoning of Stephen (Acts6)

The scene painted in v5 is not less than a “triumph”. Christians from another state led into Jerusalem for punishment.

2. The people were patient while his vision remained within Jewry 6-16 A further historic act of Acts – No.27 Acts 22.6

This is the 27th highly significant event and testimony to “the LORD working with them”. As Paul was travelling and nearing Damascus, about Mid-day (*The Greek word is like our term for the mesembrianthemum – a flower that opens to the sun*)

“suddenly” and this word means “absolutely unseen” or with total stealth “sufficient light shined round about me” from heaven. The term “sufficient (*Greek ικανος*) is often used of “witness”. So this was enough to convince Paul of Jesus. He records falling on the “pavement” or “road”– though the term εδαφος (*Greek*) can also mean “foundation” as if he was beginning again.

It may also be a play on “seed falling into the soil”. With that came a voice speaking as to Abraham, Moses and Samuel and saying “Saul, Saul, why persecute me?” Paul asked “Who are you Lord?” and the LORD replied identifying Himself as the “I am” just as he did to Moses. In the same word the LORD owned that He was “Jesus of Nazareth”. Those with Paul watched the light and they were trembling but they did not hear the voice. Paul said “What shall I do, Lord?” The Lord told him to go on into Damascus and await orders.

Blinded by the glorious light Paul testified to being taken by the hand like a baby. He testified of the visit of Ananias. Ananias was a righteous man accredited among the settler Jews, who visited, accepted him as a brother and said three important things to him.

1. “Look up”. As he did so his sight returned.
2. “You were before chosen to make known the Lord’s will, to see the righteous one and to hear his very own voice.”
3. “Now why delay, arise, be baptised and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the LORD.” Paul who asked His name now was like Jacob to recognise its power.

3. The people were furious when he spoke of Christ’s separate commission – Yet another historic act of Acts – 22.17(No.28) 17-21

Paul had by now returned to Jerusalem and was still calling on the Lord. He was praying in the temple. Again he saw the Lord in an ecstasy-an experience of being “in the spirit” who said, “Haste quickly from Jerusalem for they will not receive your witness of me”. Again Paul objected - “These men know I was binding & imprisoning believers on you from the synagogues and when your martyred Stephen’s blood flowed I was prefect and commander over those who took pleasure making away with his body and guarded the clothes of those killed or carried him away. It seems possible Stephen’s corpse went to Gehenna – from where just men buried him. The Lord said, “March, I will send you distant nations”

4. The riot resulted in Paul’s transference to Antonia

They listened till then and raised heir voice, “Take this man from the earth for there is no duty for him – no divine appointment” While they yelled tore their clothes and

threw dust aloft the tribune commanded he be taken to Antonia and examined by flogging (an easy way of extracting confession from an alien) to understand the reason for the shouting. As they stretched him forwards with cords he said to the centurion, "Watch what you are doing for this man is a Roman" He said, "Are you?" He replied "Yes". He replied, "I bought this citizenship at a high cost" Paul replied, "I was born a Roman". (There were metal certificates that soldiers could show, hence "This citizenship".) Paul may even have had a small wooden carved proof with him. Those about to put forth their hands in violence withdrew. The centurion was afraid, having read his Roman credentials, and knowing what it meant that he was in chains (i.e. he could be penalised).

5. The Sanhedrin is called by a tribune determined to get to the truth

The tribune held him overnight to clear the matter – what was the Jewish charge, so he loosed Paul's bonds, and commanded the high priests and whole council to attend and led Paul down to them. This phrase "led down" is one of Luke's puns. It may mean Paul was restored to the council – where he may earlier have been a member – or he was led in triumph by the Tribune. It would seem the soldier desired to distinguish the without fail or ultimate truth in all this and the Jewish accusation. The soldier saw something!

ACTS 23

Paul (homo tricubitalis – man of 4'6" that he was) gazed at the Sanhedrin

1. Opening statement and the High priestly response 1-5

His opening statement is quite remarkable. "I have lived by conscience as a citizen with God till this day; he meant" as a citizen of the kingdom of God" i.e. of heaven. The instant response of Ananias (the high-priest) was to order those nearby to strike Paul on the mouth. Paul responded, "God is about to strike you, You whitewashed wall, do you sit judging me and yet contrary to law command that I be struck. Those standing by said, "Do you call for a plague on God's high priest?" Paul spoke in this light, "I did not know by sight, brothers, that he is high-priest (*Paul had quickly checked this out-v1 and made a gentlemanly correction*) for it is written," You shall not bring a curse on the prince of your people"(Exodus22.28-the high priest was considered prince of the Levites)

2. Paul's follow up statement on the resurrection divides Sanhedrin 6-8

Paul knew from his initial inspection that part of the council was Sadducees and part Pharisees. He cried out, "I am a Pharisee, son of a Pharisee. I am judged on the hope of the resurrection of the dead. As he said this a conflicting union of Pharisee over against Sadducee happened. It is called in Greek (σπασίς). Luke is speaking of a significant theological break-a sort of sedition. Sadducees disagree with resurrection and the spirit or angel – Pharisees accept both.

3. Paul finds the tacit agreement of the Pharisees 9-11

In a great clamour quite humorously Luke says there was a "resurrection" of teachers of part of the Pharisee body who carried the contest thoroughly, saying, "We find no

fault in this man” “If a spirit or angel spoke to him we should not fight against God”(Here is a group in the mould of Gamaliel – Acts 5.39).

There was massive infighting so the commander feared Paul would be torn apart and sent in the soldiers, seized him and led him to Antonia.

That night the Lord stood as a commander(cf. vv26,27,29,30,23.10) and said, “Paul, be confident to the point of recklessness” or “be like a soldier, as you have thoroughly witnessed to me in Jerusalem so it is essential you go also to Rome as my witness.”

4. The timely action of Paul’s nephew 2-22

Next day some Jews made a *compact* (*συστροφή* Greek a word often used for “a swarm of bees”). On pain of anathema or being cut off from Israel 40 men swore to kill Paul before they tasted food again. Since their plot failed it remains a moot issue whether they died or were even punished. These 40 asked the high priests and elders to give notice to the tribune of a second interview for clarification so that en route they might set upon Paul. Paul’s nephew heard of the plot or even where it would be and braved it to approach Paul in Antonia. He in turn called a centurion and asked for an interview for his nephew with the commander. The detail following shows Paul’s confidence in the tribune. He sent his nephew with a centurion to speak with him and the centurion took the nephew by the hand in private and enquired of the news, “What have you to tell me?” “The Jews have planned to ask you to bring Paul to the Sanhedrin tomorrow as if to enquire more precisely about him. You should not be persuaded on that account for more than 40 men have anathematised themselves to kill him before they taste food or drink; they are now preparing as they expect a reply from you.” The tribune released the youth ordering him to tell no-one that he had given notice of this to him.”

5. The preparation of chariot & horse for Paul Caesarea 23-26

The tribune called a certain pair of centurions and prepared 200 soldiers, 70 horse and 200 spearmen to start for Caesarea at 9pm in the evening. Provide several horses (*perhaps a chariot*) for Paul that he may be move to safety and in that act be brought to Felix the governor for a proper hearing. Then Lysias wrote a cover note describing the case.

6. The commander’s epistle. 27-30

In a sense, chapters 22 & 23 belong to the commander (*who is referred to 10 times*) and the commander-in-chief-Jesus. **It is apparent the Lord is working through this Roman army tribune** (*who acts flawlessly time after time*) each step of the way. His name was Claudius Lysias. His name means “deliverer” and he lives up to it. At this time Paul’s confidence in Roman administration is strongly boosted.

“To the mightiest (or best) governor, Felix, greetings. This man was held by the Jews, and about to be killed by them. Interposing with my military I rescued him, learning he is a Roman. Determined to know why they called him in I brought him to the Sanhedrin, found him accused of questions of law, but not charged with anything worthy of death or bonds. Uncovering a plot against him I sent him to you and ordered his accusers to present their case before you. Be a Roman.”(*With the undertone “Act with the courage of a Roman”*)

7. The two stage journey 31-35

The soldiers thoroughly carried out the orders of Lysias, took up Paul, leading through the night to Antipatris – a ride of 42 miles and 26 miles short of Caesarea. Next day they allowed the cavalry to travel with him. The 2 infantry legions and 2 legions of spear did not proceed but returned to base under one centurion. As they entered Caesarea they gave the letter to Felix and placed Paul in his charge. Felix read the letter and asked (Paul) from which province he came. Paul gave answer “Cilicia.” Felix then promised, “I will listen to you thoroughly, when your accusers arrive. But he commanded that Paul be guarded in the palace of Herod. So the apostle ends up after a journey of about 70 miles in the palace of a king. The Caesarea palace, incidentally, had the finest Roman bath facilities and accommodation of the day. He had four days to live and pray and rest there ahead of the next confrontation. God wonderfully provided for his faithful servant.

ACTS 24 Felix tries Paul

Introduction

The opening ambit is Tertullus’ brief. Then the Jews echoed his accusation. This was followed by Paul’s statement on his intent in visiting Jerusalem; His purpose was to do worship not rabble rouse. He stated that his added purpose was to bring offerings. In both parts of his statement he asserted his faith in the resurrection as the real bone of contention. At this point there was an adjournment. Then a further interview was granted with Drusilla his wife present. This Paul used to challenge the governor. The sequel was a two year stay on proceedings pending a bribe which was not given. So this so called excellent Roman proved a temporiser who kept Paul under house arrest and so curried favour with the prosecuting Jews.

1. The Orator & High Priest 1-8

The assassins forgotten, five days later the scheming High Priest arrives with an Orator who both brought written statements against Paul. Thus the High Priest kept a low profile. Tertullus began, “We have been fortunate to have a long period of peace because of you and your foresight has brought success as things are done well in the nation. Every where and in every way we fully accept, you are a most able governor Felix, and we do so with all gratitude. But so that I may not further interrupt you (*Greek εγκοπιω*), I beseech you to listen to an abridged statement in the moderate manner typical of you. Because we are discovering that this man is a plague or incubates disorder, and stirs riots against the Jews right across the inhabited world. He is chief leader of the heresy of the Nazarenes. He even tried to desecrate the temple. We held him and were determined to bring him to justice under our law. (*This phrase is supported by Codices Sinaiticus, Alexandrinus and Vaticanus, Bodmer and Leningrad – though it seems to weaken the case*). His addendum was stated with prejudice and somewhat inaccurately in view of the conspiracy the commander averted. He added as a final persuader “Lysias the commander with great force took him out of our hands, commanding his accusers to come before you. You will be able by examining him yourself to understand fully all these things of which we accuse him. And all the Jews united pretending that these things were so. The effect is

Tertullus got a united “here, here” from the Jews”. The tone is one of antipathy to Lysias – whose fairness they seem to question: for this reason and because his opinion seems not to be factored in (v22 &v27). It would appear that the reference was part of the case.

2. The reply of Paul 10-21

When the governor nodded to him Paul made his reply.

“Because I know you have been for many years in office as judge of this nation, so the more cheerfully I make my defence as you are able to check that not above 12 days ago I came up to Jerusalem to worship; and I was neither found debating with any in the temple or inspiring a riotous throng, either in the synagogues or in the city. Nor are they able to substantiate the charges alleged. But on the one hand I confess this to you, that according to the Way – which they call heresy – so it is I worship **the Fatherly God** (Greek τῷ πατρῷ θεῷ), believing all those things written in the law and by the prophets, holding hope in God, which these men also have received, that there is to be a resurrection of the dead, both just and unjust. On the other hand I strive in this to hold on to a conscience that does not stumble in the presence of God or men through everything.

Looking at my life long-term; over many years I have been inspiring and bringing compassionate aid to my nation. In this context certain Jews from Asia found me ceremonially clean in the temple, neither with a mob nor with turbulence. They should have been present here or laid charges if they held anything against me. These who have spoken if they found any unrighteousness while I was in the Sanhedrin or **concerning the one thing I voiced** which I called out when among them, that concerning the resurrection of the dead I am judged by you today (*They should have laid charge*).”

3. The adjournment sine die and the shadowy side of this vain governor 22-27

Felix adjourned proceedings having sufficiently bottomed the dispute i.e. being acutely aware of the teachings of the “people of the way”. He summed up, “Then Lysias comes down I will learn thoroughly of the things you report. He ordered the centurion to hold Paul but to allow him freedom and not to prevent his own womenfolk ministering to him (*the normal use of the Greek υπερντεω*) or coming to him.

After a time Felix with Drusilla, his Jewish wife, sent for Paul and heard him on the subject of faith in Christ. When Paul spoke on righteousness and temperance and the coming judgment which will be Felix trembled and responded, “I have to go now, but in a short time I will adopt new customs and call you to a different part of the palace.” He was hoping Paul would give money for release. So as many as were the pillars in the streets of Caesarea so many interviews did he hold with Paul sending for him time after time to speak with him in private. After two full years Portius Festus succeeded him and **to do a final favour to the Jews** his final act was to put Paul in bonds. We get the distinct impression of a temporiser whose word meant little and who rested on his laurels.

ACTS 25

Paul before Festus and Agrippa

1. Festus acts but in anxiety to please is readily swayed by the Jews 1-12

Three days after arriving in the province to a welcome of cups (Greek επαρχια) Festus went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem. The very first business was the appearance of the high-priest and Jewish rulers on business about Paul. They invoked him, asking his favour, how he could send him to Jerusalem, while hatching a plot to kill him en route. Therefore Festus replied that Paul would be well guarded in Caesarea, until he himself returned there soon. Let some among you come with me and bring charges if there is anything out of place in this man, lay a charge against him. Festus spending full ten days among them, Festus left for Caesarea. We might say he was well briefed or brainwashed by this time. The next day he sat on his Bema or throne and called Paul. When Paul came along the Jews from Jerusalem surrounded him and condescending to many weighty charges against Paul which they could not demonstrate. Paul made defence that neither against Jewish law nor the temple no Caesar had he acted in breach of law. But Festus desired to show a favour to the Jews and replied to Paul "Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem to face these charges before me there?" Paul answered, "I am before the judgement seat of Caesar I stand- where I must be tried. I have not offended against the Jews as you well understand. If I have acted unrighteously or done anything worthy of death, I do not plead against sentence."

Paul now makes a statement that rebukes the weakness of Festus. "If there is nothing in the things of which I am accused, no-one is able to hand me over as a favour to these men. I appeal to Caesar." Festus spoke with the Sanhedrin and replied, "You have appealed to Caesar, and to Caesar you will go."

2. Festus seeks a second opinion from Agrippa 13-27 Festus' personal explanation to Agrippa 13-22

David De Silva terms Festus' attitude "self accrediting mendacity". It is a valid assessment.

"When certain days had passed Agrippa the king and **Bernice** came down to Caesarea."

This Jewess was named after a *racehorse of King Hiero*—the Red Rum of the day. It means the horse that "carries off the big win". Agrippa means "wild olive". Their visit was one of welcome. As they passed whole days there Festus brought up the things about Paul saying, "There is a certain man left prisoner by Felix. When I came to Jerusalem the high priests and rulers of the Jews informed me, bringing a charge against him. I replied that it was Roman practice not to hand over any man to destruction till he had faced the charge of his accusers and had an opportunity of defending himself. Therefore they all came here, I made not the least delay and next day sat on the Bema and called the man. When they stood up the accusers carried not one charge which I had thought of, but they had certain questions for him about their own piety (or "god-fearing views") and of a certain dead Jesus whom Paul asserted or pretended (Greek *φασκα*) was alive. I was helpless (or) without resources for the question about this man. I asked if he was willing to go to Jerusalem to be judged there

on these matters. Paul appealed or threw in my teeth to be reserved for resolution by Caesar.” Here Luke uses the word “**diagnosis**” as if Paul trusted rather to a second opinion much as we look to a better medical practitioner. “I ordered him detained till I could send him to Caesar.” Agrippa said, “I have purposed to hear this man myself”(In this I agree with Calvin not Alford, as it seems to me Agrippa had heard of the stir, was conversant with the case and may even have had a private agenda for his visit). Festus said, “Tomorrow **he** will hear him” – a sort of melodramatic reply of men in spirited form or whose tongue is loosened by wine.

Festus statement before the nobility 23-27

Next day Agrippa and Bernice came in with great ostentation & show and entered the audience room together with the tribunes and powerful men of the city. Festus ordered Paul to be brought and said, “King Agrippa and all the men present with us, see (*Greek θεωρεω – a theatrical word*) this man, concerning whom most of Jewry here and in Jerusalem have petitioned me, shouting out ‘he is unfit to live.’ I know nothing that he has done worthy of death, so as this man has petitioned Caesar, I decided to send him to Rome, but I am not sure what I can write to the Lord. So I brought him before you, most of all before you, O King Agrippa, so that I might have something from the coming judgement to write. To me it seems irrational to send a prisoner without indication of the charge against him.” *All this seems sweet enough were it not for the background of long delay in justice and his hope for a bribe.*

ACTS 26

Paul before Agrippa

Agrippa was the last of the Herods – great grandson of Herod the Great In company with Bernice listened to the testimony of Paul (She was born in 28AD – married at 13 to her uncle – but became the incestuous wife of Agrippa 2 and was then married to Polemon king of Cilicia. She deserted again for her brother and then became lover of Titus & Vespasian. Agrippa gave Paul permission to speak and he began his defence stretching forth his hand.

Paul’s defence

1. His Espousal of the hope of Resurrection 1-8

Concerning all of which he was accused Paul counted himself fortunate to be **destined** (**μελλω**) to make his defence that day before Agrippa, aware as he was that the king was extremely knowledgeable in all Jewish customs and questions. Paul besought the king to hear him with longsuffering.

1. History. “**It has to be true** all the Jews know my life from youth was lived from the beginning among my nations in Jerusalem. They have known me from the beginning, if they were willing to witness to it, that according to the strictest principles and school of our religious worship (or) observance **θησκειαι I lived as a Pharisee.**”

2. Charge “And now on account of the hope (*of resurrection*) that came to our fathers under God I stand self-condemned, concerning which hope our twelve tribes have served with all zeal or “on the rack” or fully (*hinting it’s arrival*) concerning which hope, O king Agrippa, I am accused by the Jews. Why is it judged incredible by your people that God should raise the dead?”

2. His opposition to Jesus 9-12

It has to be true (μεν) “I thought it necessary myself to act in stern opposition to the name of Jesus of Nazareth – which I did in Jerusalem, and many of these holy people I shut in prison, receiving authority to do so from the high priests, also when they were killed I gave my vote against them. (Does the context admit of references to both Stephen and James the apostle?) – often going to all the synagogues, punishing (the word could mean “honouring”) them – forcing them to blaspheme, even being as downright mad with them as to pursue them to cities beyond. Among which cities I marched to Damascus with authority and by direction of the high priests.

3. His encounter with Christ 13-18

At midday, according to the way I saw, O king, from heaven – above the brightness of the sun – a light shining around me and those that travelled with me. We all fell to the ground and I heard a voice speaking to me in the Hebrew tongue, **‘Saul Saul why are you persecuting me, it is hard fro you to kick against the goads’** (i.e. pangs or incentives). We can take it that the wounds rendered to innocent persons were weighing heavily with Paul’s conscience. Paul adds, “But I said, **‘Who are you Lord?’** He said **‘I am or Jehovah Jesus – whom you are persecuting – rise up – stand on your feet – for this reason I appeared to you to take you in hand to prepare you as a minister and witness of things of mine that you have seen and which I will yet show you liberating you from the nation and from the Gentiles unto whom I now send you (1) to open their eyes, (2) to turn them from darkness to light and (3) from the power of Satan to God (4) in order that their sins may be taken away and they may be made holy by faith that is in me.’**

4. His instant response to the vision 19-23

“Whence O King Agrippa I did was no disobedient to the heavenly vision, but first to those in Damascus and Jerusalem – also in the whole land of Judea and among the Gentiles I preached that they should repent and turn to God and do works worthy of repentance. Because of these things the Jews having laid hold of me in the temple were trying to slay me. Therefore (because of obedience) obtaining reinforcement **επικουρια** – that from **God**, I have stood my ground as a witness to small and great – saying nothing except what the prophets and Moses prophesied would come. Here Paul speaks with especially strong emotion as is shown by his use of **ει** for when “if” is used in a highly charged emotional statement it becomes “that”. So we read “That **Christ** should suffer and that He should be first to rise from the dead and proclaim light is come to the nation and the world” (i.e. a new day has dawned).

5. Festus breaks the silence

Festus picked up Paul’s word “frenzy” in verse 11 and said with a great voice “Paul you are mad; many writings or great learning has turned you upside down into a frenzied (prophet)” Paul replied “I am not mad, but speak under inspiration (**αποφθεγγομαι**)

I speak the action words of truth and wisdom. The king also is set in charge concerning these things (i.e. as to High-priests etc.) before whom I speak with confidence, for I

don't believe that any of these things is a secret to him – for this has not happened in a corner. King Agrippa, you believe the prophets? I know that you believe.”

6. Agrippa breaks his silence

And Agrippa said to Paul, “You are rapidly persuading me to become a Christian”. Paul said, “I pray to God that not only quickly but for the duration (“good and all” as we say) not only yourself but also all who hear me today might become such as I am – excepting these bonds.

7. The verdict

As he spoke these words – the king rose and the prefect and Bernice, and those seated with them. As they left they were speaking to one another – saying that this man had done nothing worthy of death or bonds – ‘this man is able have been away free **ἀποἰέλυσθαι** – had he not appealed to Caesar’

In this whole address there was absolute decorum and politeness. The hand is stretched once for all-so he holds the audience in his hand. He is not deflected by the jibe of Festus. The reality and sincerity of Agrippa should not be doubted – equally his desire to avoid the evidently personal thrust of Paul – less frivolous, less disinterested, but not ready to accept the challenge.

Like Herod before John he had respect but his relationship with Bernice did not fit into the morals of either John or Christ.

Paul's testimony uses battle field words – and he conveys the fact that he is in contention for souls.

The discourse is profoundly prophetic. For background to the appearance of the Light of the world read Isa.35.5, 42 6-16, 49.6, 61.1. Paul spoke of Jesus as “light” revealed to him and as risen again to bring light and forgiveness to the whole world.

ACTS 27

The legend of the chapter is the figure of salvation τροπος v.27

Paul sails with other prisoners from Caesarea to Crete; is caught in a storm which raged for days – he is given a vision and a figure he interprets to guide them to safety

1. The ship sails - this is a picture of the unexpected dangers all men meet 1-12

Thus it was decided we were to sail for Italy, Paul and the other prisoners were handed over to a centurion named Julius, of the core of the Imperial regiment. Clearly Luke is aboard too. The ship was homeward bound to Adramyttium a port of Mysia plying the coast for business. Here her masters get a commission for Rome. The prisoners embark – Aristarchus a Macedonian from Thessalonica was also with Paul & Luke. On the next day they came to port at Sidon. Julius showed real humanity and kindness to Paul allowing him to go and enjoy care from friends. From there we set out and sailed, protected from the open sea by Cyprus because of contrary winds. We sailed through the heavy sea to the coastal shelter of Myra in Lycia. There the centurion found an Alexandrian based vessel due to sail for Italy. He had us embark on it. After **sufficient days of slow sailing** we came with difficulty to Cnidus, the wind preventing us keep

our course we sailed in the lee of Crete facing Salamis. We crept along the Cretan coast and came to a place called “Fair havens” near the city of Lasea. **Sufficient time had been lost** and sailing was now precarious, because the fast had already gone by (October 5th AD59). Paul warned them saying, “Men, I can see this playing out in damage and great loss not only of cargo and of the vessel but also to our lives. But the centurion preferred to believe the pilot and owner of the vessel rather than Paul’s words. Since the harbour was no place to spend the winter the majority decision was to sail on, hoping we could arrive at Phoenix and winter there. Crete had both south-west and north-west facing harbours.

2. The storm breaks Anchor of revelation 13-26

When a moist south-west wind got up, they seemed to have gained hold of their purpose. They took up anchor and sailed along the coast of Crete. It was not long before a typhoon (*Greek τυφωνικός “a storm giant”*) the Euroclydon storm threw itself against the mild air and the ship was not able to defy the wind. The vulgate calls this wind the “eastern eagle”. It is known as the spring-time Gregali, the Mediterranean’s most violent wind. Here Luke portrays the classic sea duel between a man-made craft and the elements. The ship was carried powerless before it. They could scarcely secure the lifeboat fearing to as they ran in the lee of Clauda. They used ropes to put a belt around the ship’s body. Clearly the timbers were staining and a better belt would have been listening to the truth of God. Fearing to be driven on the sandbar of Surtis (*off the Libyan coast*) they dropped anchor as they were fast borne south. So tempest-tossed were they that next day they threw the cargo overboard. Away went spare sail into the air and cables into the sea. No bearings from the stars, the storm raging, hope gone. They subjected themselves to a long **time without food**. Paul stood up among them to say, “Had you taken my advice, stayed at Crete, you would have avoided danger and this loss. Now I advise ‘Be cheerful for not one soul is to be thrown away cheap, only the ship-for in the night the angel of God, whose I am and whom I serve stood alongside me, saying, ‘Fear not, Paul, you must stand alongside Caesar, and behold God has been gracious to you **giving you all that float with you.**’” So be cheerful for I believe in God that it is going to be even as the figure in which He spoke. It must be we are going to be cast on a certain island.

3. Act of Providence vv27-38

No.38 Anchors of praying faith and of communion-276 souls

It was night 14, driven on the Adriatic, the night-watch sailors sensed land – maybe the anchor hit something – maybe less commotion. Then they lowered lead for a sounding. It was 20 fathoms or 120 feet deep and after a short wait 15 fathoms or 90 feet.

Fearing rugged rocks, they cast 4 anchors from the ship’s stern and **prayed for daylight**. Some sailors sought to escape by lifeboat, pretending they were putting some anchors over the bow. Paul spoke to the centurion and soldiers – “if these do not remain in the ship you cannot be saved”. Then the soldiers cut the ropes holding the lifeboat and allowed it to fall into the sea. **This was a big act of faith**. As dawn broke Paul requested that they all eat, saying, “For 14 days you have expected land and gone without. It is essential for your survival”. One has to assume he gave thanks after the

long abstinence and committed the company to God. The parallel with communion is latent here at least in the “oneness” God required. “Not one of you will lose a hair from his head”. With this **he took bread, gave thanks to God before** them all, broke it and began to eat. They cheered up and ate well lightening the ship throwing grain into the sea.

4. The sight of land and the final drama Providence No.39 39-41

The day came and they did not recognise the land, but were observing a bay with a beach and determined if possible to run the ship aground. Wrapping the anchors round they allowed them to go in the sea and untied the crossbar that held the tiller and rudder together. They hoisted the sail which hung down to the wind and made for the shore. They ran aground and stuck fast on a bank deposited where two sea currents met. The bow stuck beyond re-floating, the prow was broken by pounding waves.

5. The soldiers overruled – Paul spared Providence No.40 42-44

The decision of the soldiers was to kill the prisoners who might swim & run away. The centurion to save Paul prevented their plan.

6. The centurion saves the day Providence –Anchor No.4 the cross No.41

He ordered swimmers to jump ship and swim ashore, and that the rest on wood (Greek=στανεσις –wood such as was used to crucify) and parts of the ship itself.

Acts 28

Ashore on Malta - Arrival in Rome - Meets with Jews

1. Malta. Island of healing and the cross of St.John’s brigade 1-6

When they were all ashore safely they realised why the island was called “Malta” (a Canaanite name for “Refuge”) the barbarian rude inhabitants there showed us providential kindness, lighting a fire and welcoming us all because of the pouring rain and the cold. Paul gathered a mass of brushwood and as he put it on the fire a viper driven out by the heat settled to bite his arm (or set aflame with poison *απτω*). When the inhabitants saw the beast devoting itself to his arm they said, “There can be no doubt this man is a murderer, saved from the sea, yet divine **justice** (Greek *Δικη* (*βωμος*) – goddess or justice of the tomb) has not permitted him to live. When he shook the beast off into the fire without hurt, while they thought he would have an inflamed swelling or suddenly fall dead. They were waiting and watching but nothing unusual happened to him, so they changed quickly and said he was a God.

2. Providential act of God No.42 7-10

In those parts near the scene there was land belonging to Publius, the governor, who received and entertained us kindly (*lit. “with warm smile and embrace”*...Greek *φιλοφρονης*) for three days. It happened to be that his father was in bed with a fever and dysentery. Now Dr.Luke did not prescribe – rather Paul went in and prayed with vows and laying his hands on him healed him – and all the others who had sicknesses

on the island were being brought and healed. They showed their esteem in many practical ways and when we were leaving gave us what we needed.

3. Rome 11-16

After 3 months Paul and company left on an Alexandrian merchant vessel that had wintered alongside the island. The vessel carried the ensign “Castor & Pollux” (Gemini) taken as tutelary deities of sailors because in myth they cleared the Hellespont of Pirates. *David knew God’s names for the stars—and in Hebrew Pollux means “The one who comes to suffer” (Herculean figure of the Greeks-accompanying Apollo, the God of light – a star with an orange hue—together a perfect picture of the divine & human in Christ).* They put in at **Syracuse** (a city of Sicily and birthplace of Archimedes – meaning “Goats hair or badger skin”) which indeed proved just a 3-day tabernacle – like stop over. Thence they arrived at **Rhegium** meaning “the little wreck” (a reminder that others too have suffered), and so on to **Puteoli** (meaning “wells” and signifying “refreshment”) to be greeted by Christians. They spent a week there after which they arrived at **Rome** (“bodily strength”).

Brothers from distant Rome, twenty seven miles away met them at **Appius’ Forum** and **Three taverns**. *Taverna charging extortionate prices lined the route in those days. The Brothers probably undertook any charges incumbent upon Paul.* Paul gave thanks – having gained a long sought objective (*Romans 1.10*). He took courage for the battle ahead. When we arrived Paul gave the prisoners to the charge of the jailer for foot chains but allowed Paul allowing Paul to stay by himself with a military guard.

4. Conference with Roman Jewry. Divine providence No 43 17-22

After 3 days Paul called the existing leaders of the Jews, and they came together. He said, ‘Men & brethren, having done nothing against the people or customs of the fathers, I was handed over bound to the Romans who gave judgement and decided to release me, because there was no capital charge against me. The Jews spoke contrary and I had to resort to appealing to Caesar, as holding nothing against my own people as a charge (*Paul knew of their calumny but forgave it*). For this reason I have asked to see and talk with you. For the hope of Israel I am “kept” or “blockaded like a ship” (Greek περικειμαι) in this chain.’ (*Traceable Pauline humour based on wintering ships*).

They replied, “We have received no letters about you from Judea, nor has any of the brethren come to report or say anything evil about you. We would on the one hand listen earnestly to you while you demonstrate the things you believe and practice, for the other side we know that this sect (Greek αρεσις- “A choice” “A view taken” otherwise “the way” cf. Mt.7.14, Mt.21.32, Mt.22.16, Lk1.79, Ac16.17,18.26,19,9,23) is spoken against everywhere.

5. A second larger hearing 23-31

They set the day and even more Jews came to him at his lodging. There adequate space and food was obviously available for them. From early morning till sunset he set out for them and bore thorough witness to the kingdom of God, persuading them on the things of Jesus both from the law and the prophets. On the one hand there were some persuaded by what he said, on the other they were not. They left without agreement

(Greek ἀπολλω..ασυμφωνοι..) among themselves with Paul speaking one historic word. “The Holy Spirit spoke once for all beautifully through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, saying, ‘March to this people and proclaim, “Hearing you will hear and not put it all together; seeing you will see and not behold. For the heart of this people has been clotted/enlarged and they are hard of hearing and they have closed their eyes i.e. dropping off to sleep – deadly sleep! (*Again Paul’s ironic humour closes the evening session with this wake up call to sleepy Jews*) Lest they should behold and hear and understand and be converted and I should heal them.” The condition stems not from age but from an unwillingness to look and listen and so the other inner faculties of conscience & emotion remain unmoved and understanding is impaired. Therefore let it be clear and understood by you, that the salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles and they will hear. As he spoke these things the Jews left leaving with a lot of searching among themselves. But Paul was a whole two year period in his own rented accommodation and received all who came to him, heralding the kingdom of God and teaching the things of the Lord Jesus Christ with all
In Philippians 1.24 the apostle speaks of his hope in due time upon his release to follow Tychicus, the carrier of the prison epistles. Paul possibly envisaged travelling by corn carrying ship to Philippi. Then in Philemon 22 he speaks of going on to Colossae which he had never visited in AD 62 or 63.

Finis

Bob Coffey

L’shuvkha Marya

(To the glory of the Lord)

Aramaic & Greek Bible Companion