THE KINGSTONE

VOLUME 10

BIBLE

The Apostle

RANDY ALCORN

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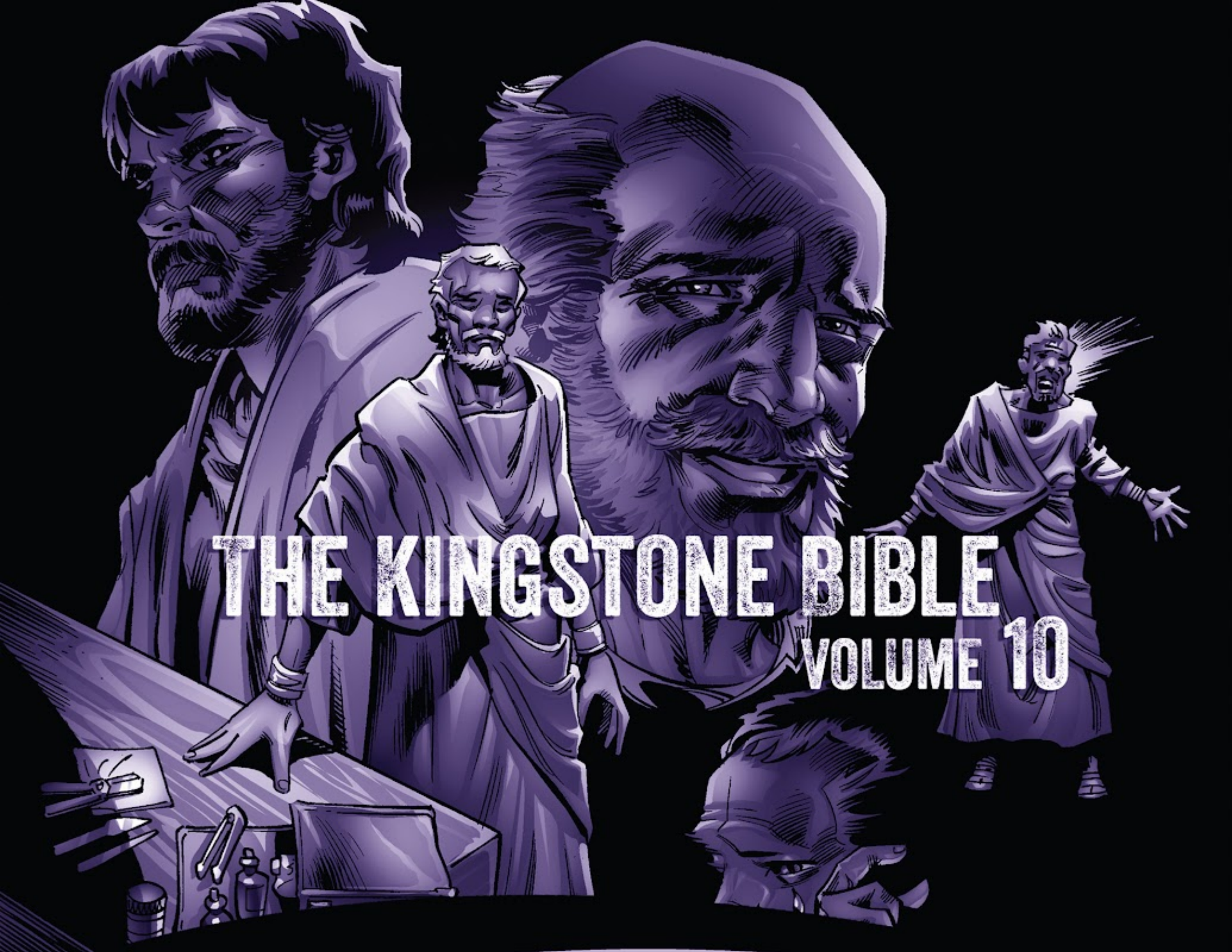

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THE KINGSTONE

BIBLE

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Note from the author

Writers routinely speculate about historical details and conversations. Pastors do this when they preach sermons from biblical passages.

In The Apostle, I've included, with painstaking accuracy (though having to condense), most of what the Bible tells us about Paul, while adding fictional details and dialogue to make the story work as a graphic novel. For instance, based on Paul's fondness for his friends, it was only natural to portray them talking and joking together.

I show Paul boxing with some of his companions. We know he was familiar with competitive running and boxing: "Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air" (1 Corinthians 9:26). Since Paul lived eighteen months in Corinth, he likely witnessed that city's famous Isthmian games, and undoubtedly heard them frequently referenced. These speculative scenes are my attempt to show Paul as what he was. . . a human being.

The biblical content of The Apostle is inspired by God. The added speculative elements are not. My design is never to contradict Scripture—only to fill out the story on these pages.

I encourage you to read Luke's two books: The Gospel of Luke, and The Acts of the Apostles. Each beautifully, powerfully and accurately speaks about Jesus, Paul and the early Christians. In my opinion, these are the most important stories you could ever read!

I've loved writing The Apostle, and working with these marvelous artists and Kingstone Comics. I hope you enjoy the results!

Randy Alcorn

YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT THE APOSTLE?

EVERYONE ASKS TO HEAR HIS STORY. YES, I CAN TELL YOU. NO MAN KNEW HIM BETTER THAN I.

A STORY IS NO MORE BELIEVABLE THAN ITS NARRATOR, SO FIRST LET ME TELL YOU WHO I AM.

I AM AN HISTORIAN AND A BIOGRAPHER.

I HAVE WRITTEN ABOUT CHRIST'S LIFE AND THAT OF HIS CHURCH.

I WAS BORN LOUKANOS, SON OF A GREEK NOBLEMAN.

MY FATHER WAS NAMED AFTER ALEXANDER THE GREAT, WHO CONQUERED THE WORLD BY AGE 33.

MY MOTHER OLYMPIA WAS A BEAUTIFUL AND CULTURED WOMAN.

I AM A TRAINED SURGEON AND A DOCTOR OF MEDICINE.

I HAVE STUDIED PLATO, ARISTOTLE, AND THE EPICS OF HOMER.

BUT WHAT I CARE ABOUT IS TRUTH!

I BELIEVE ONLY WHAT I SEE OR HAVE LEARNED FROM CREDIBLE WITNESSES AND CAREFUL RESEARCH.

PHILOSOPHY HAS VALUE, BUT IT'S HISTORICAL EVENTS THAT I RECORD!

WHEN I FIRST SAW THE APOSTLE, I NEVER IMAGINED THE WAYS OUR LIVES WOULD CONNECT.

IT WAS THREE YEARS AFTER LEAVING MY HOMELAND OF GREECE, AND I WAS HOMESICK.

I ROAMED THE CROWDED STREETS OF JERUSALEM LOOKING FOR A VENDOR WHO SOLD GREEK FOOD.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

LOOKS LIKE A MOB!

WHO COULD IMAGINE THE FAR-REACHING EFFECTS OF THIS MOB? OR THAT FORTY YEARS LATER I WOULD BE TELLING YOU THE STORY.

I RECOGNIZED THE DISTINCTIVE GARB OF THE TEMPLE GUARDS.

WHO IS HE?

STEPHEN, A FOLLOWER OF THE WAY!

WHAT IS HIS CRIME?

I TOLD YOU... HE IS A FOLLOWER OF THE WAY!

I KNEW THIS YOUNG MAN WOULD NEED A PHYSICIAN'S HELP.

THIS HAS GONE TOO FAR!

STOP!

IT'S TOO LATE, RABBAN GAMALIEL!

IT WAS GAMALIEL, A REVERED RABBI AND STUDENT OF HEBREW SCRIPTURES. NOT THE KIND OF MAN I EXPECTED IN A MOB!

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STEPHEN CONTINUED TO PREACH AFTER WE WARNED HIM NOT TO SPEAK THE NAME OF JESUS THE NAZARENE!

NOW HE MUST FACE THE CONSEQUENCES OF HIS BLASPHEMY.

THIS YOUNG MAN--STEPHEN'S AGE- WORE THE RED GARB AND CARRIED THE SWORD OF THE LEADER OF THE TEMPLE GUARD.

WHERE ARE YOU TAKING HIM?

TO THE OLD AMPHI-THEATER...

...WHERE THERE ARE PLENTY OF STONES!

SAUL, MY BELOVED STUDENT-- DO NOT DO THIS!

RABBAN, HE MUST BE SILENCED! SURELY IT IS THE WILL OF GOD!

BE SURE YOU DO NOT MISTAKE YOUR WILL FOR GOD'S!

AS I RAN ALONGSIDE THE MOB, I WAS ALARMED BY THE SEETHING ANGER.

I KNEW SOME HEBREW BUT STILL DIDN'T UNDERSTAND JEWISH TEACHINGS AND CUSTOMS.

I DIDN'T KNOW WHY THIS WAS HAPPENING!

GET UP OR DIE HERE AND NOW!

I WAS HORRIFIED AS THEY DRAGGED STEPHEN INTO A RUINED VERSION OF THE AMPHITHEATER WHERE I'D WATCHED GREEK DRAMAS IN PHILIPPI.

BUT THESE WERE NOT ACTORS-- THIS SCENE WAS REAL!

HE MUST BE PUT TO DEATH!

HE DISHONORS OUR TEMPLE AND THE LAW OF MOSES!

DO NOT SLAY HIM WITH THE SWORD!

THE LAW REQUIRES A DIFFERENT PUNISHMENT!

THE THREE WITNESSES MUST CHOOSE THEIR STONES!

HE IS THE ENEMY OF GOD AND MEN!

SAUL, SO INTELLIGENT AND DEVOUT...

...WHY WOULD HE TAKE PART IN SUCH MADNESS?

THE FACE OF THE CONDEMNED MAN WAS SERENE, PEACEFUL.

HOW COULD HE CAUSE SUCH MADNESS?

BAM

YAAHH!

THUD

LORD JESUS, RECEIVE MY SPIRIT...

...DO NOT HOLD THIS SIN AGAINST THEM!

HE CALLS US SINNERS?

HE IS THE SINNER!

WHAM

YOU'VE KILLED HIM!

THE BLASPHEMER DESERVED TO DIE.

THEIR HATEFUL ZEAL SHOOK ME TO THE CORE.

SAUL LOOKED LIKE A MAN WHO BELIEVED THAT THE EVIL HE HAD DONE WAS GOOD!

I HAD TAKEN THE SACRED PHYSICIAN'S OATH OF HIPPOCRATES TO "DO NO HARM."

I HAD FOLLOWED THE YOUNG MAN THINKING HE WOULD NEED A PHYSICIAN.

NOW, ALL HE NEEDED WAS A GRAVEDIGGER.

LOUD MOURNING FILLED MY EARS.

SWALLOWING HARD, I STARED AT THIS SAUL.

OF ALL THE MEN, GOOD AND BAD, I HAD EVER MET, SAUL WAS THE WORST. HE WAS THE LAST MAN ON EARTH I WOULD EVER TRUST.

THAT DAY I COULD NEVER HAVE IMAGINED THAT I WOULD SPEND THE BETTER PART OF SEVENTEEN YEARS IN THE COMPANY OF THIS FEARSOME SAUL OF TARSUS...

THE APOSTLE NO LONGER LIVES, BUT BECAUSE OF HIM AND THE ONE HE SERVED, THE WORLD WILL NEVER BE THE SAME.

THIS ONCE DESPISED MURDERER BECAME ONE OF MY DEAREST FRIENDS!

THAT IS JUST ONE OF MANY MIRACLES I, THE EDUCATED SKEPTIC, HAVE SEEN.

TO KNOW THE MURDERER OF STEPHEN, AND APPRECIATE HIS STORY, YOU MUST FIRST UNDERSTAND WHAT HISTORICAL EVENTS GAVE BIRTH TO THE MOB VIOLENCE THAT TERRIBLE DAY.

YOU MUST KNOW ABOUT JESUS, WHOM STEPHEN WORSHIPPED AND SAUL HATED...

...AND WHOSE LIFE--AND DEATH--I INVESTIGATED THOROUGHLY FOR MANY YEARS.

THREE YEARS BEFORE STEPHEN'S DEATH, SOON AFTER I CAME TO JERUSALEM FROM GREECE, I HEARD STORIES OF JESUS AND HIS FOLLOWERS.

I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE. NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER BUT BY ME.

THEY CALLED HIM MESSIAH, SAID HE WAS GOD'S PROPHET, A WORKER OF MIRACLES.

AND I DID NOT BELIEVE IT FOR A MOMENT.

JESUS WAS A TEACHER, BUT THEY ALSO SAID HE WAS A HEALER!

DO YOU KNOW OF THE DISEASE LEPROSY? THERE IS NO CURE.

THEY SAY HE MIRACULOUSLY HEALED THE LEPERS, THE BLIND, THE CRIPPLED!

DO YOU CLAIM TO FORGIVE SINS?

WHICH IS EASIER, TO SAY, 'YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN YOU,' OR, 'RISE AND WALK'?

I HAVE AUTHORITY TO SAY BOTH. GET UP AND WALK!

THE MORE PEOPLE JESUS HEALED, THE MORE THE PHARISEES RESENTED HIM.

AT FIRST IT ALL SEEMED JUST RUMORS AND HEARSAY.

THEN, I SPOKE TO ONE WITNESS AFTER ANOTHER.

PEOPLE WHO WATCHED HIM RIDE INTO JERUSALEM--CROWDS SINGING HIS PRAISES.

WITNESSES WHO WATCHED AS THE PHARISEES, KNOWING THEY WERE LOSING CONTROL...

...MANIPULATED THE POLITICAL SYSTEM UNTIL...

MATTHEW 18:10; LUKE 5:12-13, 5:18-20, 19:28-40, 22:47-54

...IT CAME TO THIS.

I HAVE FOUND IN HIM NO GUILT DESERVING DEATH.

BUT THE CROWDS WERE ADAMANT.

CRUCIFY HIM!

CRUCIFY HIM!

CRUCIFY HIM!

PUTTING JESUS TO DEATH SEEMED THE EASIEST WAY TO SOLVE THEIR PROBLEM.

FATHER, FORGIVE THEM, FOR THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY ARE DOING!

COULD THOSE WHO HEARD THIS UNDERSTAND THAT FORGIVENESS WAS WHY HE ALLOWED THIS TO HAPPEN?

PERHAPS NO MORE THAN SAUL OF TARSUS COULD LATER UNDERSTAND STEPHEN PRAYING FOR HIS MURDERERS, "LORD JESUS, DO NOT HOLD THIS SIN AGAINST THEM."

INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT.

COULD THEY UNDERSTAND THAT IN DYING, JESUS WAS ACTUALLY DEFEATING DEATH AND SIN?

NO, THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS BELIEVED THEY HAD DEFEATED A "FALSE MESSIAH." SURELY THEY'D PUT AN END TO THE NONSENSE!

AND YET, ONLY DAYS AFTER PUTTING HIS BODY IN A GUARDED TOMB...

LUKE 23:1-11, 20-25, 34, 46, 53; MATTHEW 27:65

WHERE IS HE?

HE SAID HE WOULD RISE FROM THE DEAD... IS IT POSSIBLE?

THE APOSTLES WHO HAD BEEN COWARDS, WHO HAD DENIED JESUS AND RUN AWAY, SUDDENLY CHANGED.

THEY CLAIMED THAT CHRIST HAD RISEN AND APPEARED TO THEM.

IT WAS NOT ONLY THE APOSTLES WHO SAW THE RISEN JESUS.

FOR NO LESS THAN 40 DAYS HE WALKED THE LAND.

COUNTLESS PEOPLE TOUCHED, SPOKE AND DINED WITH THE JESUS WHO HAD DIED BUT LIVED AGAIN, INCLUDING 500 AT ONE GATHERING.

I INTERVIEWED DOZENS. A PHYSICIAN AND HISTORIAN KNOWS WHO IS GULLIBLE OR MISLED.

I PRESSED THEM FOR DETAILS; AGAIN AND AGAIN THEIR STORIES STOOD UP TO MY SCRUTINY.

...YOU WILL RECEIVE POWER WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT COMES ON YOU. AND YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES IN JERUSALEM, AND IN ALL JUDEA AND SAMARIA, AND TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH!

THEY WATCHED HIM ASCEND TO HEAVEN.

BUT HE PROMISED TO SEND HIS HOLY SPIRIT AND GIVE THEM POWER TO TAKE THE GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION ALL OVER THE WORLD.

LUKE 24:1-12, 33-42; ACTS 1:3; 1 CORINTHIANS 15:6

MEN OF GALILEE, WHY DO YOU STAND HERE LOOKING INTO THE SKY?

THIS SAME JESUS, WHOM YOU SAW TAKEN INTO HEAVEN, WILL COME BACK IN THE SAME WAY!

JEWISH LEADERS THOUGHT JESUS' FOLLOWERS WOULD DISPERSE AND NO LONGER THREATEN THE STATUS QUO.

BUT SOMETHING VERY DIFFERENT HAPPENED, SOMETHING YOU MUST UNDERSTAND TO MAKE SENSE OF BOTH STEPHEN AND PAUL.

THE DISCIPLES, INCLUDING MARY THE MOTHER OF JESUS, GATHERED IN JERUSALEM, WAITING FOR WHAT JESUS PROMISED.

SUDDENLY, THE WHOLE ROOM SHOOK AND THOUGH THE DOORS WERE SHUT, THE WIND BLEW AND THE HOLY SPIRIT--THE VERY BREATH OF GOD--DESCENDED UPON THEM TO INDWELL AND EMPOWER THEM!

DOMINUS ET SALVATOR IESU, REX UNIVERSORUM.

耶穌是上帝和救主
宇宙之王

JESUS IS LORD AND SAVIOR, KING OF THE UNIVERSE!

Καὶ ὁ κύριος καὶ σωτὴρ ἐστὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς ὑπὲρ τὰ πάντα.

THEY PROCLAIMED JESUS AS LORD AND SAVIOR, KING OF THE UNIVERSE, IN LANGUAGES THEY DID NOT KNOW!

LUKE 24:51; ACTS 1:10-11, 2:1-4

WHEN THE HOLY SPIRIT ENTERED INTO THEM THEY WERE TRANSFORMED.

YESU NI BWANA NA MWOKOZI, MFALME WA ULIMWENGU.

و نجات عیسی مسیح خداوند پادشاه جهان اس دهنده،

DOMINUS ET SALVATOR IESU, REX UNIVERSORUM.

THE DISCIPLES WENT OUT IN PUBLIC AND CONTINUED TO SPEAK, SO ALL THOSE PRESENT HEARD THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS IN THEIR MOTHER TONGUES!

THE DISCIPLES--FOR 40 DAYS--HAD SEEN, HEARD, WALKED AND EATEN WITH A MAN THEY'D SEEN CRUCIFIED AND DEAD! HERE WERE NO FLEETING VISIONS OR GLIMMERS OF GHOSTS.

MERE RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES COME AND GO. BUT THEIR EXPERIENCE--THE RISEN CHRIST AND THE INDWELLING HOLY SPIRIT--CAME AND STAYED!

EVERYONE WHO CALLS UPON THE LORD SHALL BE SAVED. A MAN WHO DID MIGHTY WORKS AND WONDERS AND SIGNS THROUGH GOD'S POWER--THIS JESUS, YOU CRUCIFIED!

GOD RAISED HIM UP! WE ALL ARE WITNESSES! JESUS HAS POURED OUT THIS SPIRIT YOU ARE SEEING AND HEARING.

HE IS BOTH LORD AND MESSIAH!

BROTHERS, WHAT SHALL WE DO?

REPENT! BE BAPTIZED IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

YOUR SINS WILL BE FORGIVEN, AND YOU WILL RECEIVE THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

THE PROMISE IS FOR EVERYONE WHOM THE LORD OUR GOD CALLS TO HIMSELF.

THREE THOUSAND PEOPLE PLACED THEIR FAITH IN CHRIST, REPENTED OF THEIR SINS AND WERE BAPTIZED THAT DAY!

THE CHRIST-FOLLOWERS WERE VERY HAPPY.

THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS WERE VERY UNHAPPY.

BELIEVERS LISTENED INTENTLY TO THE APOSTLES' TEACHING.

EVERY DAY THEY GATHERED WITH GLAD AND GENEROUS HEARTS, TO EAT AND PRAY TOGETHER.

PRAISING GOD, THEY SOLD THEIR POSSESSIONS...

...AND SHARED THE PROCEEDS WITH ANYONE IN NEED.

THEIR GENEROSITY WON THE ADMIRATION OF OUTSIDERS, AND EVERY DAY MORE PEOPLE WERE SAVED.

ONE OF THE YOUNG LEADERS WHO ROSE UP WAS STEPHEN, AND HE BEGAN PREACHING IN THE STREETS.

THROUGH THE PREACHING OF PETER AND STEPHEN, PEOPLE WERE TURNING TO JESUS BY THE THOUSANDS.

ACTS 2:41, 44-47, 6:8

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MANY OF THE TEMPLE PRIESTS BELIEVED THE GOSPEL, OR "GOOD NEWS" ABOUT JESUS!

FAR MORE WERE FOLLOWING JESUS NOW THAN EVER FOLLOWED HIM IN HIS LIFETIME!

ALARMED, THE MEMBERS OF THE SANHEDRIN, THE RULING COUNCIL, ASSEMBLED TO DECIDE WHAT TO DO.

THE HIGH PRIEST INVITED THE ANGRY YOUNG MAN WHO WOULD BECOME, AGAINST ALL ODDS, THE APOSTLE.

WE HAVE REACHED A POINT OF CRISIS!

ARRESTING AND FLOGGING THOSE SO-CALLED APOSTLES, PETER AND JOHN, ACCOMPLISHED NOTHING.

DESPITE OUR WARNINGS THEY CONTINUE TO PREACH THE HERESY!

THEY SAID, "WE MUST OBEY GOD RATHER THAN MEN!"

THEY ACT AS THOUGH WE WERE GOD'S ENEMIES!

THEY DENY OUR AUTHORITY IN FRONT OF THE PEOPLE!

THE CRISIS GROWS WORSE EVERY DAY. I HAVE APPOINTED SAUL OF TARSUS CAPTAIN OF THE TEMPLE GUARD AND HAVE INVITED HIM TO SPEAK TO THE COUNCIL.

MY REVERED ELDERS, SONS OF ABRAHAM!

JERUSALEM IS PLAGUED BY THE FOLLOWERS OF THE FALSE MESSIAH, JESUS.

THEY ENTER OUR SYNAGOGUES AND HOMES, POISONING THE MINDS OF OUR PEOPLE.

POISONING THEIR MINDS?

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BY OPENING THE SCRIPTURES AND TEACHING ABOUT MESSIAH'S REDEMPTIVE SACRIFICE?

NO, NICODEMUS! BY SAYING A DEAD GALILEAN CARPENTER IS GOD'S CHOSEN ONE! A MAN WHO WAS SLAUGHTERED IN SILENCE AS A HELPLESS ANIMAL, DEFEATED BY OUR ROMAN OPPRESSORS!

WAS HE DEFEATED? OR DID HE SUBMIT TO DEATH--AS ISAIAH PROPHESIED--FOR THE PEOPLES' SINS?

ARE YOU NOW THE CARPENTER'S DISCIPLE, NICODEMUS?

SAUL, NICODEMUS IS A SENIOR MEMBER OF THE SANHEDRIN. SPEAK TO HIM WITH THE RESPECT HE DESERVES!

I UNDER-STAND YOUNG SAUL'S CONCERN. ONCE I MIGHT HAVE THOUGHT THE SAME.

THE DEVIL FAVORS FALSE MESSIAHS, DOES HE NOT?

MEMBERS OF THE HOLY COUNCIL! WILL YOU STAND HERE IDLY WHILE NICODEMUS ADVOCATES FOR THIS BLASPHEMER'S CULT?

SAUL OF TARSUS, I FEAR YOU WOULD NOT KNOW ISRAEL'S MESSIAH IF HE WORE THE CROWN OF KING DAVID AND SMOTE YOU WITH THE STAFF OF MOSES!

RABBAN GAMALIEL, ESTEEMED GRANDSON OF THE GREAT HILLEL.

I STUDIED AT YOUR FEET FIVE YEARS.

YOU TAUGHT ME THAT TORAH IS THE WAY, THE TRUTH, THE LIFE.

YET WE BOTH HEARD THE GALILEAN SAY, "I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH AND THE LIFE; NO ONE COMES TO THE FATHER BUT BY ME."

HE DIED IN HIS OWN SWEAT AND BLOOD. DOES NOT TORAH SAY, "CURSED ARE THOSE WHO HANG ON A TREE"?

MANY OF OUR PEOPLE, SOME OF OUR LEADERS, EVEN, DESERT US TO FOLLOW A DEAD MAN!

BUT WHAT IF THIS JESUS... IS NO LONGER DEAD? DO WE LOUDLY PROFESS OUR BELIEF IN THE RESURRECTION, WHILE THINKING NO MAN CAN RISE FROM THE DEAD?

BAH! HE NEVER DIED IN THE FIRST PLACE.

THEN WHERE IS HE? WHAT BECAME OF HIS BODY?

HIS DISCIPLES STOLE IT!

YOU THINK THOSE WEAK COWARDS OVER-POWERED ARMED ROMAN GUARDS AND MOVED THAT STONE?

THE DISCIPLES' HOMES AND THE COUNTRYSIDE HAVE BEEN RANSACKED BY THE TEMPLE GUARD. NO BODY WAS EVER FOUND!

I'VE HEARD THIS TOO MANY TIMES ALREADY! I DON'T WANT TO HEAR IT AGAIN!

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THE CARPENTER FROM NAZARETH WAS A BLASPHEMER!

A "BLASPHEMER" WHOM THREE OF US HERE, ALONG WITH 500 OTHERS, BEHELD IN PERSON A MONTH AFTER WE WATCHED HIM DIE!

I WARN YOU, IF WE DO NOT CRUSH THIS DOCTRINE HIS FOLLOWERS CALL THE GOSPEL OF GRACE, IT WILL BE THE END OF US AND OUR WAY OF LIFE!

WE MUST CALL OUR PEOPLE BACK TO THE LAW OF MOSES--THEIR ONLY HOPE OF SALVATION!

OR IS IT GOD WHO IS THEIR ONLY HOPE OF SALVATION?

A GOD WHO, PERHAPS, SENT HIS SON TO BE THE SACRIFICIAL LAMB FOR THE SINS OF THE WORLD?

STOP SPOUTING THAT FOOL'S...

...BLASPHEMY!!!

SAUL! WHICH PART OF MOSES' LAW TELLS YOU TO SHOW SUCH CONTEMPT FOR YOUR ELDERS?

RABBAN GAMALIEL. I... MEAN YOU NO OFFENSE.

IT IS NOT YOUR OFFENSE TO ME THAT SHOULD CONCERN YOU.

WHAT DOES GOD, THE JUDGE OF ALL MEN, THINK OF THE HATRED IN YOUR HEART?

DID YOU NOT TEACH ME THAT WE MUST DEFEND THE LAW OF GOD, AND HOLD HIS TRUTH ABOVE ALL?

MAY I READ FROM THE SCROLL OF THE PROPHETS?

ISAIAH SAYS OF MESSIAH:

"HE WAS PIERCED FOR OUR TRANSGRESSIONS, HE WAS CRUSHED FOR OUR INIQUITIES... BY HIS WOUNDS WE ARE HEALED."

"HE WAS LED LIKE A LAMB TO THE SLAUGHTER... HE DID NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH.

"HE WAS STRICKEN FOR THE TRANSGRES-SIONS OF MY PEOPLE."

DID YOU NOT SAY JESUS HUNG ON THE CROSS SILENTLY LIKE A SLAUGHTERED ANIMAL?

THAT HE WAS PIERCED BY THE ROMANS?

MIGHT HE BE THE ONE ISAIAH SAID WOULD DIE FOR THE TRANSGRESSIONS OF GOD'S PEOPLE?

IS HE THE MESSIAH? OR... IS HE NOT?

I SAY... WE MUST WAIT AND SEE.

MEN WHO LIE ABOUT EATING WITH A RESURRECTED GOD-MAN, WILL NOT HOLD TO SUCH A LIE IN THE FACE OF THE TORTURES THAT LIKELY AWAIT THEM.

BUT *IF* HE IS THE PROMISED MESSIAH, THEN WHO ARE WE TO OPPOSE THE PLANS OF ALMIGHTY GOD?

HE'S BEEN ARRESTED!

WE HAVE ARRESTED THE MAN STEPHEN!

HE WAS PREACHING AT THE SYNAGOGUE THAT JESUS IS THE MESSIAH!

SAUL! BRING HIM BEFORE THIS COUNCIL NOW, AND WE WILL PASS JUDGMENT!

WE CANNOT WAIT, GAMALIEL. WE MUST END THIS QUICKLY... AND DECISIVELY!

WHO ARE YOU TO INSTRUCT US, YOUNG MAN? YOU'RE NOT EVEN A MEMBER OF THIS COUNCIL!

I AM SAUL OF TARSUS. REGARDING THE LAW, I AM FAULTLESS. AND AS FOR ZEAL?

WATCH WHAT I WILL DO TO THE APOSTATE FOLLOWERS OF THAT GALILEAN PEASANT!

SAUL IS RIGHT. UNLESS WE MOVE WITH STRENGTH THESE JESUS-FOLLOWERS WILL KEEP TURNING THE HEARTS OF OUR PEOPLE FROM US...

...OR ROME WILL STEP IN AND SETTLE THE ARGUMENT!

WE MUST ACT NOW, OR IT WILL BE *TOO LATE*!

THIS MAN IS TOO YOUNG TO LEAD THE TEMPLE GUARD OR LECTURE OUR COUNCIL!

BUT HIS KNOWLEDGE OF THE LAW IS UNSURPASSED. SAUL WAS GAMALIEL'S MOST BRILLIANT STUDENT!

YES, HE WAS. I DON'T DOUBT HIS BRILLIANCE... ONLY HIS JUDGMENT.

WITHIN THE HOUR, SAUL AND HIS TEMPLE GUARDS RETURNED.

I INTERVIEWED THREE OF THE SANHEDRIN WHO TOLD ME WHAT HAPPENED NEXT.

STEPHEN'S WISDOM AND THE HOLY SPIRIT'S POWER PERSUADED PEOPLE THAT JESUS WAS MESSIAH.

HE ARGUED FROM SCRIPTURE SO PERSUASIVELY, THE LEADERS WHO OPPOSED HIM CONVINCED MEN TO SPEAK AGAINST HIM.

ARE THESE THE WITNESSES?

WE HEARD HIM SAY THAT THIS JESUS OF NAZARETH WILL DESTROY THE TEMPLE AND CHANGE THE CUSTOMS OF MOSES.

THE LAW SAYS *TWO* WITNESSES MUST SPEAK.

UH, WELL... I SAY... WHAT *HE* SAID!

ARE THESE CHARGES TRUE?

YOUNG STEPHEN STOOD, CONFIDENT IN HIS BELIEFS AND OBVIOUSLY MORE RIGHTEOUS THAN HIS ACCUSERS!

STEPHEN PREACHED THE SCRIPTURES.

SOME LISTENED ATTENTIVELY, BUT MOST OF THE LEADERS GRITTED THEIR TEETH IN DEFIANCE.

STEPHEN SPOKE OF GOD'S CALL TO ABRAHAM, HIS PROVISION OF ISAAC, AND HIS WORK IN EGYPT THROUGH JOSEPH.

THEN HE RECOUNTED THE RESCUE OF HIS PEOPLE THROUGH MOSES...

"THE LORD SAID TO MOSES, 'I HAVE SEEN THE OPPRESSION OF MY PEOPLE IN EGYPT-- I HAVE COME TO SET THEM FREE.'

"MOSES PERFORMED WONDERS AND SIGNS IN EGYPT, DIVIDED THE RED SEA AND CARED FOR GOD'S PEOPLE FORTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS."

DOES HE IMAGINE WE DO NOT KNOW THE SCRIPTURES?!

THIS IS THE MOSES WHO TOLD THE ISRAELITES, "GOD WILL RAISE UP FOR YOU A PROPHET LIKE ME FROM YOUR OWN PEOPLE."

STEPHEN SPOKE OF REBELLION, CONQUESTS, AND DAVID'S RISE TO THE THRONE OF ISRAEL.

SOLOMON, DAVID'S SON, BUILT A HOUSE FOR GOD.

YET THE MOST HIGH DOES NOT DWELL IN HOUSES MADE BY HANDS.

THE PROPHET SAYS, "'HEAVEN IS MY THRONE, AND THE EARTH IS MY FOOT-STOOL.

WHAT KIND OF HOUSE WILL YOU BUILD FOR ME, SAYS THE LORD... DID NOT MY HAND MAKE ALL THESE THINGS?'"

HE SPEAKS AGAINST THE TEMPLE!

THE TEMPLE IS GOD'S DWELLING PLACE! YOU BLASPHEME!

SUDDENLY, STEPHEN'S ATTENTION TURNED TO THE DEATH OF JESUS, AND THE LAMB BECAME A LION.

YOU STIFF-NECKED PEOPLE! YOU ALWAYS RESIST THE HOLY SPIRIT!
WAS THERE EVER A PROPHET YOU OR YOUR ANCESTORS DID NOT PERSECUTE?

DO YOU SEE?

STEPHEN ARGUED THAT JUST AS ISRAEL DID NOT REALIZE WHO MOSES, THEIR DELIVERER, REALLY WAS--

--THEY, TOO, DID NOT RECOGNIZE JESUS AS THEIR ULTIMATE DELIVERER!

YOUR FOREFATHERS KILLED THOSE WHO PROPHESIED THE COMING OF THE RIGHTEOUS ONE.

AND NOW YOU YOURSELVES HAVE MURDERED HIM!

SAUL'S HEART WAS UNMOVED BY STEPHEN'S ACCUSATION THAT THEY'D KILLED JESUS.

WHAT TROUBLED HIM WAS STEPHEN'S CHARGE THAT THEY HAD NOT OBEYED THE LAW!

YOU RECEIVED THE LAW THAT WAS GIVEN THROUGH ANGELS BUT HAVE NOT OBEYED IT!

COULD SAUL SENSE STEPHEN HAD SOME TRUE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD?

KNOWLEDGE THAT, DESPITE HIS SUPERIOR EDUCATION, SAUL HAD NEVER DISCOVERED?

ACTS 7:51-53

BRINGING US BACK TO WHEN I SAW THE MOB ON THE STREET AND FIRST LAID EYES ON STEPHEN AND SAUL...

I SEE HEAVEN OPEN AND THE SON OF MAN STANDING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD.

I DID NOT SEE WHAT STEPHEN SAW.

AT THE TIME, HIS WORDS SEEMED JUST A PRODUCT OF TRAUMA AND IMAGINATION.

BUT NOW, I BELIEVE HE SAW *EXACTLY WHAT HE DESCRIBED!*

STONES RAINED DOWN ON HIM, AND HE CRIED OUT:

LORD JESUS, RECEIVE MY SPIRIT.

LORD, DO NOT HOLD THIS SIN AGAINST THEM.

I LEARNED LATER THAT STEPHEN'S MASTER, JESUS, HAD SAID SOMETHING VERY SIMILAR WHEN HE HAD DIED ON THE CROSS.

AS I HELD STEPHEN'S BODY, I WONDERED IF HIS PRAYER HAD BEEN ANSWERED AND HIS GOD NOW HELD HIS SPIRIT...

STEPHEN'S NAME IS GREEK FOR CROWN.

HE WOULD WEAR THE CROWN OF THE FIRST MARTYR FOR JESUS.

UNTOLD NUMBERS WOULD SOON FOLLOW.

MARK MY WORDS: IN TEN YEARS NO ONE WILL REMEMBER THE NAME OF JESUS--

--OR THE NAME OF STEPHEN!

STILL, WE HAVE MORE WORK TO DO...

STEPHEN'S MURDER WAS THE BEGINNING OF A GREAT PERSECUTION AGAINST THE CHURCH IN JERUSALEM.

SAUL THREATENED TO KILL CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS, GOING TO HOUSE AFTER HOUSE, DRAGGING MEN AND WOMEN TO PRISON.

SAUL'S PERSECUTION FORCED CHRIST-FOLLOWERS OUT OF JERUSALEM...

Black Sea
Asia Minor
Thessalonica
Philippi
Ephesus
Corinth
Carthage
Pisidian Antioch
Tarsus
Antioch
Cyprus
Damascus
Jerusalem
Alexandria
Cyrene
Mediterranean Sea
Africa
Egypt
Red Sea

CAUSING THEM TO CARRY THE GOOD NEWS TO THE ENDS OF THE KNOWN WORLD-- THEREBY FULFILLING THE WORDS OF JESUS:

YOU WILL BE MY WITNESSES IN JERUSALEM, JUDEA, SAMARIA AND TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.

...WE HAVE FORCED MANY JESUS-FOLLOWERS FROM JERUSALEM. BUT THEY SCATTER THEIR BLASPHEMY WHEREVER THEY GO.

YOU MUST CLOSE THEIR MOUTHS.

GIVE ME THE PAPERS I NEED SO I CAN TRAVEL TO DAMASCUS.

IF I CAN STOP THEM THERE, PERHAPS THEIR MOVEMENT WILL DIE WITH THEM.

DAMASCUS: THE CENTER OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE'S CARAVAN TRADING!

SAUL KNEW THAT IF HE DIDN'T STOP IT THERE, "THE WAY" COULD SPREAD TO MESOPOTAMIA--

--OR EVEN TO ROME!

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NO ONE, LEAST OF ALL SAUL, COULD HAVE DREAMED WHAT WOULD HAPPEN NEXT.

OR HOW IT WOULD CHANGE THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD.

WHA--?!?

OOF!

SAUL!

SAUL!

WHY ARE YOU PERSECUTING ME?

THE MEN TRAVELING WITH SAUL STOOD, SPEECHLESS.

THEY SAW THE LIGHT AND HEARD A THUNDERING SOUND BUT SAW NO ONE.

WHO...

WHO ARE YOU, LORD?

I AM JESUS OF NAZARETH, WHOM YOU PERSECUTE.

YOU KICK AGAINST ME, LIKE AN OX KICKING AGAINST HIS DRIVER.

IT'S HARD FOR YOU TO OPPOSE ME.

NOW GET UP ON YOUR FEET!

GO INTO THE CITY!

THERE YOU WILL BE TOLD OF MY PLANS FOR YOU.

WHAT HAPPENED?

I... I CANNOT SEE!

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

WE CONTINUE ON OUR COURSE.

WE GO TO THE CITY!

SAUL WAS LED TO THE HOUSE OF A MAN NAMED JUDAS, WHERE HE WAS CARED FOR.

BUT, STILL TRYING TO ABSORB WHAT HAD HAPPENED TO HIM, HE REFUSED TO EAT OR DRINK FOR THREE DAYS.

HE COULD SEE NOTHING...

...EXCEPT A MAN IN A VISION.

A JESUS-FOLLOWER FROM DAMASCUS.

A MAN BY THE NAME OF--

ANANIAS!

LORD? HERE I AM, LORD!

RISE AND GO TO THE STREET CALLED STRAIGHT.

AT THE HOUSE OF JUDAS LOOK FOR A MAN NAMED SAUL.

SAUL?

NOT THE SAUL WHO HAS DONE GREAT EVIL TO YOUR SERVANTS IN JERUSALEM?!

THEY SAY HE'S COMING TO DAMASCUS WITH AUTHORITY TO DO THE SAME HERE!

I KNOW WHAT HE HAS DONE.

BUT I HAVE CHOSEN HIM TO CARRY MY NAME THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, TO THE GENTILES AND TO ISRAEL!

THAT DAY ANANIAS LEARNED WHAT SAUL WOULD LEARN, AND WHAT I AM STILL LEARNING...

YOU CAN ARGUE WITH GOD, BUT YOU CAN'T WIN.

SAUL, IN TURMOIL, REPEATED THE PSALMS, AND BEGGED GOD'S MERCY.

ANANIAS?

HE WAS LIKE JONAH, SWALLOWED UP BY DARKNESS, YET IN HIS REPENTANCE BEGINNING TO SENSE THE LIGHT OF GOD.

YES. GOD SENT ME JUST AS HE TOLD YOU HE WOULD...

...TO HELP YOU SEE AGAIN AND TO BE FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.

SAUL ATE AND REGAINED HIS STRENGTH.

...HE SPOKE TO ME, ANANIAS!

ANANIAS, JESUS REALLY IS WHO THE PROPHETS PROMISED... THE MESSIAH!

WHEN THE LORD TOLD ME TO COME, I FEARED YOU.

SAUL OF TARSUS, IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE, BUT *WE ARE BROTHERS NOW!*

SAUL HAD BEEN PROUD OF THE NAME HE SHARED WITH THE FIRST KING OF ISRAEL.

NOW, HE BEGAN CALLING HIMSELF PAUL, WHICH MEANS "LITTLE" OR "HUMBLE."

OUR LORD TOLD US TO FORGIVE OUR ENEMIES, BUT DOES HE REALLY EXPECT US TO TRUST THIS MAN?

--AND THE JEWS WHO LISTENED TO HIM PREACH ABOUT JESUS BECAME ANGRY AS WELL. PAUL WASN'T POPULAR WITH ANYONE!

ISN'T THIS THE SAME MAN FROM JERUSALEM WHO THREW INTO PRISON THOSE WHO BELIEVED IN JESUS?

HE CAME TO STOP THOSE TEACHINGS FROM SPREADING!

NOW HE SPREADS IT HIMSELF?

HE MUST BE SILENCED!

WHEN PAUL DISCOVERED THE PLOT TO KILL HIM, HIS FRIENDS LOWERED HIM FROM THE CITY WALL IN A BASKET.

WHERE'S PETER AND HIS FISHERMAN MUSCLES WHEN WE NEED THEM?

AFTER ESCAPING DAMASCUS, PAUL SPENT THREE YEARS IN ARABIA, MOSTLY ALONE WITH GOD AS HIS TEACHER.

HERE HE STUDIED THE SCRIPTURES AND GREW IN HIS FAITH IN CHRIST.

THEN HE RETURNED TO DAMASCUS.

WE ALL KNOW THE EVIL SAUL OF TARSUS DID TO STEPHEN AND COUNTLESS OTHERS.

WE HEARD OF HIS CONVERSION YEARS AGO BUT WE'VE HEARD LITTLE SINCE.

SUDDENLY HE WANTS OUR APPROVAL. HOW CAN WE TRUST HIM?

I, OF ALL PEOPLE, SHOULD BE FIRST TO FORGIVE--

--CONSIDERING THE FULL PARDON MY LORD JESUS GRANTED TO ME AFTER I DENIED HIM THREE TIMES--

--YET I SHARE YOUR CONCERN, JAMES.

PETER, JAMES, JOHN-- ALL OF YOU, LISTEN!

I HAVE BEEN WITH PAUL! THE CHANGE IS REAL!

FROM HIS OWN LIPS I'VE HEARD "THROUGH JESUS, ALL WHO BELIEVE ARE GIVEN ETERNAL LIFE."

COULD SOMEONE WHO DOES NOT HAVE THE HOLY SPIRIT SAY SUCH A THING?

GALATIANS 1:11-12, 15-18; ACTS 9:26; MATTHEW 26:74

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BARNABAS THINKS WE SHOULD TRUST YOU WITH OUR LIVES EVEN THOUGH YOU INFLICTED GREAT SUFFERING ON US.

I TOLD YOU... HE'S SEEN OUR LORD FACE TO FACE! ON THE WAY TO DAMASCUS JESUS SPOKE TO HIM.

IT'S TRUE.

I LEFT JERUSALEM TO ARREST ANY WHO PROCLAIMED JESUS AND HIS RESURRECTION.

NOW I'VE RETURNED TO JERUSALEM TO TELL ANY-ONE WHO WILL LISTEN--

--THAT JESUS IS THE MESSIAH WHO DIED FOR OUR SINS, ROSE, AND OFFERS US ETERNAL LIFE.

JESUS REVEALED MUCH TO ME.

I WAS TAUGHT BY GOD IN ARABIA.

AND I HAVE HEARD STORIES OF JESUS AND HIS APOSTLES.

BUT NOW I WOULD LIKE TO LEARN FROM SIMON PETER.

I HAVE AS MANY QUESTIONS OF YOU AS YOU DO OF ME.

BUT I WELCOME YOU TO MY HOME.

SLOWLY, PAUL EARNED THE DISCIPLES' TRUST.

WE'VE ALL BEEN TOUCHED BY JESUS.

HE TOUCHED YOU AND HEALED YOU, GRAND-MOTHER!

YOU COULD SAY HE DID THE SAME FOR ME...

YOU HAVE A WONDERFUL FAMILY.

WITH ALL THE ARRESTS, I AM GRATEFUL TO COME BACK TO THEM YET AGAIN.

I TRUST GOD WILL TAKE CARE OF THEM IF ONE DAY I DON'T RETURN.

GOD HAS CALLED ME TO PREACH TO THE GENTILES.

THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS IS FOR EVERY-ONE.

YES, HE TOLD US TO TAKE THE GOOD NEWS TO ALL NATIONS.

I HAVE A STORY I THINK WILL INTEREST YOU.

"ONE DAY I WAS ON THE ROOFTOP PRAYING. I WAS HUNGRY. SUDDENLY I SAW A SHEET COMING DOWN FROM HEAVEN.

"IN IT WERE ALL KINDS OF ANIMALS. THOUGH ALL WERE FORBIDDEN BY THE LAW OF MOSES, I HEARD A VOICE SAY, 'RISE, PETER; KILL AND EAT.'"

"IT WAS THE VOICE OF JESUS."

MATTHEW 8:14-15; ACTS 10:9-13

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I KNOW THAT VOICE.

SO, I SAID, "LORD, I HAVE NEVER EATEN ANYTHING UNCLEAN."

THE VOICE SAID, "WHAT GOD HAS MADE CLEAN, DO NOT CALL UNCLEAN."

THIS HAPPENED THREE TIMES.

JESUS KNOWS I SELDOM LEARN THE FIRST TIME.

THEN THE SPIRIT SAID TO ME, "THREE MEN ARE COMING FOR YOU. RISE AND ACCOMPANY THEM."

WHEN THE SPRIT SPEAKS, WE ARE WISE TO DO AS HE SAYS!

"THEY LED ME TO THE HOME OF CORNELIUS, A CENTURION, AN UPRIGHT AND GOD-FEARING MAN."

"HE HAD BEEN TOLD BY AN ANGEL TO SEND FOR ME."

"IT WAS MY FIRST TIME BEING THE ONLY JEW IN THE ROOM. GENTILES EVERYWHERE!"

NO! STAND UP! I AM ONLY A MAN. WORSHIP JESUS ALONE!

"I EXPLAINED WHAT JESUS DID THAT WAS WORTHY OF OUR WORSHIP."

LET ME GUESS WHAT HAPPENED NEXT. THE HOLY SPIRIT FELL UPON THEM!

YES, YES! HOW DID YOU KNOW?

BECAUSE I HAVE SEEN IT.

JOHN 21:15; ACTS 10:16-20, 10:23-48

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"I BAPTIZED THEM IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST."

"WE ALL REJOICED THAT TO GENTILES AS WELL AS JEWS GOD GRANTS REPENTANCE THAT LEADS TO ETERNAL LIFE!"

I THOUGHT I WOULD HAVE TO CONVINCE YOU THAT GOD IS SAVING GENTILES!

BUT I SEE HE BROUGHT THAT MESSAGE WITHOUT MY HELP.

PAUL AND PETER SPENT FIFTEEN DAYS TOGETHER IN JERUSALEM.

OUR LORD STOOD RIGHT HERE AND TOLD A STORY TO SOME SELF- RIGHTEOUS RELIGIOUS LEADERS.

JESUS BEGAN, "TWO MEN WENT TO THE TEMPLE TO PRAY. THE PROUD PHARISEE SAID, 'LORD I THANK YOU THAT I AM NOT LIKE OTHER MEN.'

"THE TAX COLLECTOR, HEARTBROKEN, SAID, 'GOD HAVE MERCY ON ME, FOR I AM A SINNER.'"

JESUS TOLD US THE TAX COLLECTOR, NOT THE PHARISEE, WENT HOME FORGIVEN.

I WAS THAT FIRST MAN.

AND GOD'S GRACE TRANSFORMED ME INTO THE SECOND!

TOGETHER THEY VISITED PLACES WHERE JESUS HAD WALKED.

GALATIANS 1:18; LUKE 18:9-14

THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE...

"...HERE, OUR LORD PRAYED IN AGONY, KNOWING THE PATH THAT LAY BEFORE HIM.

"HE ASKED US TO PRAY FOR HIM. INSTEAD, WE FELL ASLEEP.

"CAN YOU IMAGINE"?

THE HIGH PRIEST'S COURTYARD...

...HERE THEY LED JESUS BEFORE THE HIGH PRIEST.

I HAVE BEEN THERE MANY TIMES.

WHILE I STOOD WARMING MY HANDS, I WAS RECOGNIZED AS HIS DISCIPLE.

THREE TIMES I DENIED KNOWING HIM...

GOLGOTHA...PLACE OF THE SKULL...SITE OF THE MESSIAH'S MURDER.

THE TOMB IN THE GARDEN...

...JOHN AND I RAN HERE WHEN WE HEARD JESUS HAD RISEN.

WE STILL COME HERE TO PRAY...

...AND REVISIT PLACES WE WALKED WITH HIM IN THE 40 DAYS AFTER HIS RESURRECTION...

MARK 14:32-42, 14:66-72; JOHN 20:1-9; ACTS 1:3

PAUL TOLD PETER HE TOO HAD A PLACE TO TAKE HIM.

I PARTICIPATED IN STEPHEN'S MURDER.

I TOLD MYSELF I WAS SERVING GOD!

THEN I HUNTED FOLLOWERS OF OUR SAVIOR, AS IF THEY WERE ANIMALS.

THUD

PETER, YOU KNEW AND LOVED STEPHEN AND OTHERS I KILLED.

YOU FELL ASLEEP IN THE GARDEN AND DENIED YOU KNEW CHRIST?

WELL, I DESPISED HIM AND MURDERED HIS SERVANTS. I AM THE CHIEF OF ALL SINNERS.

I WAS SIMON, NOW CALLED PETER. YOU WERE SAUL, NOW CALLED PAUL.

BY GOD'S GRACE, HE HAS CHANGED MORE THAN JUST OUR NAMES!

WE ARE FORGIVEN MEN. NEW MEN!

WITH THE APOSTLES' APPROVAL, PAUL PREACHED IN JERUSALEM, DEBATING AS STEPHEN HAD, WITH THE GRECIAN JEWS.

GOD COMMANDS US TO TURN FROM OUR SIN AND BELIEVE IN JESUS. HE PAID OUR DEATH PENALTY ON THE CROSS, AND CONQUERED SIN AND DEATH!

PLACE YOUR FAITH IN HIM, AND HE WILL SAVE YOU FROM HELL AND GIVE YOU ETERNAL LIFE IN HEAVEN!

HOW DARE YOU CALL US SINNERS?

YOU ARE A FOOL AND A FALSE PROPHET!

KILL HIM!

EVERY TIME HE PREACHED, PAUL RECEIVED DEATH THREATS.

FEARING FOR PAUL'S LIFE, THE JERUSALEM BELIEVERS PERSUADED HIM TO SAIL FROM CAESAREA--

--AND RETURN TO TARSUS, HIS CITY OF BIRTH, 350 MILES AWAY.

Ireland
Britain
Atlantic Ocean
Canterbury
Cologne
Paris
Germany
Gaul
Lyons
Milan
Spain
Toledo
Marseilles
Corsica
Italy
Rome
Sardinia
Naples
Cordoba
Thrace
Constantinople
Black Sea
Caesarea
Tarsus
Sicily
Carthage
Syracuse
Rhodes
Africa
Mediterranean Sea
Cyprus
Cyrene
Alexandria
Egypt

Tarsus
Antioch
Cyprus
Damascus
Jerusalem

SAUL, MY SON!

MOTHER! SISTER!

WE HAVE HEARD REPORTS ABOUT YOU. WE PRAYED THEY WERE NOT TRUE.

DID YOU HEAR THAT I WAS DEAD?

NO. WE HEARD YOU HAD TURNED FROM OUR FAITH TO FOLLOW A FALSE MESSIAH.

NOT A FALSE MESSIAH, MOTHER. JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE TRUE ONE.

BUT... HOW CAN YOU KNOW HE IS THE MESSIAH? AND... DIDN'T HE DIE?

I HAVE QUITE A STORY TO TELL YOU!

PAUL TOLD OF PERSECUTING CHRIST-FOLLOWERS, THEN MEETING JESUS ON THE ROAD TO DAMASCUS.

JESUS DID NOT COME TO DESTROY THE LAW BUT TO FULFILL IT.

YOUR FATHER SAID IF THE STORIES ARE TRUE, HE MUST DISOWN YOU.

BUT... NO MATTER WHAT, YOU WILL ALWAYS BE MY SON.

IS IT TRUE THAT YOU ABANDONED OUR FAITH?

NO, FATHER! IN FACT, I HAVE SEEN OUR FAITH REALIZED!

I DID NOT PAY FOR YOU TO BE TAUGHT BY THE GREAT GAMALIEL SO YOU COULD BECOME PART OF SOME CULT!

IT IS NOT A CULT! JESUS IS THE PROMISED LAMB OF GOD WHO SACRIFICED HIMSELF FOR THE SINS OF HIS PEOPLE... JUST AS FORETOLD BY THE PROPHET ISAIAH!

SILENCE! YOU HAVE BROUGHT SHAME UPON ME IN THE SYNAGOGUE! YOU HAVE BETRAYED OUR FAMILY NAME!

BUT FATHER...

YOU ARE NO LONGER MY SON.

YOU HAVE FORFEITED YOUR INHERITANCE.

GET OUT OF THIS HOUSE! I NEVER WANT TO SEE YOU AGAIN!

PAUL STAYED IN TARSUS FOR SOME TIME, RETURNING TO THE FAMILY TRADE OF TENT-MAKING, AND PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO ALL WHO WOULD LISTEN.

I KNOW YOU SAUL. YOU'D BE THE LAST PERSON TO MAKE UP THAT STORY ABOUT JESUS.

WHAT YOU SAY ABOUT HIM STIRS MY HEART.

I SEE A CHANGE IN YOU THAT ONLY GOD COULD MAKE.

ONE DAY A VISITOR SHOWED UP AT PAUL'S HOME.

COULD IT BE? BARNABAS, THE SON OF ENCOURAGE-MENT?

PAUL, THE GREAT SCHOLAR AND ORATOR... WHOM PEOPLE ALWAYS WANT TO KILL?

WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE, MY BROTHER?

COME, SIT DOWN.

I HAVE BEEN SERVING JESUS IN ANTIOCH WHERE MANY GREEKS BELIEVE THE GOSPEL.

BUT WE NEED ONE THING!

WHAT?

WE NEED A BOLD PREACHER OF GOD'S WORD!

WE NEED *YOU*, MY FRIEND!

GOD SENT ME HERE TO TAKE YOU BACK TO ANTIOCH!

MANY OF THE SCATTERED CHRIST-FOLLOWERS PREACHED TO THE JEWS WHEREVER THEY WENT.

BUT IN ANTIOCH, THEY REACHED OUT TO THE GREEKS, TOO.

REMAIN FAITHFUL TO OUR LORD. BE STEADFAST!

YOU HAVE HEARD ME TELL OF MY FRIEND PAUL, A SCHOLAR AND TEACHER OF GOD'S WORD WHO IS NOW A FOLLOWER OF THE WAY OF JESUS.

PLEASE WELCOME HIM AS A BROTHER.

PAUL EXCELLED AT EXPLAINING THE SCRIPTURES.

THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH WAS HUNGRY TO HEAR GOD'S WORD.

PAUL WOULD TEACH FOR HOURS, THEN ANSWER QUESTIONS FOR HOURS.

SOME WISHED TO LEARN HEBREW, SO HE WOULD TEACH THEM FROM THE SCRIPTURES.

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PAUL AND BARNABAS SPENT A YEAR IN ANTIOCH, TEACHING AND ENCOURAGING MANY PEOPLE.

IT WAS IN ANTIOCH THAT THE DISCIPLES WERE FIRST CALLED CHRISTIANS.

AS WARNED BY THE PROPHET AGABUS...

...A FAMINE HIT HARD IN JERUSALEM.

THE ANTIOCH CHURCH GENEROUSLY SENT HELP TO CHRISTIAN BROTHERS AND SISTERS THEY'D NEVER MET.

PAUL, BARNABAS, AND ANTIOCH CHURCH LEADERS BROUGHT THE FUNDS TO THE JERUSALEM CHURCH, WHICH RECEIVED THEM GRATEFULLY.

WHILE PAUL AND BARNABAS WERE IN JERUSALEM, HEROD AGRIPPA ORDERED JAMES, BROTHER OF JOHN AND A KEY CHURCH LEADER, PUT TO DEATH.

THE CROWD'S RESPONSE TO THE EXECUTION OF JAMES PLEASED HEROD...

...SO HE THREW PETER IN JAIL, PLANNING TO EXECUTE HIM TOO!

BUT PETER NEVER MADE IT TO TRIAL.

WHEN PETER COULD NOT BE FOUND, HEROD EXECUTED HIS GUARDS INSTEAD.

BUT PETER WASN'T HEROD'S BIGGEST PROBLEM...

CITIZENS OF TYRE AND SIDON! YOU HAVE ANGERED ME, YET I CHOOSE TO BE MERCIFUL.

SO TRUE...

HE IS LIKE A GOD!

HE SPEAKS WITH THE VOICE OF A GOD, NOT A MAN!

WHEN HEROD ACCEPTED THE GLORY DUE TO GOD ALONE, AN ANGEL STRUCK HIM DOWN.

HE WAS CONSUMED WITH WORMS AND DIED.

AS THE GOOD NEWS SPREAD, THE WORDS OF JESUS CHANGED LIVES.

BARNABAS AND PAUL RETURNED TO ANTIOCH, TAKING BARNABAS'S YOUNG COUSIN JOHN MARK WITH THEM.

THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH HAD GREEKS AND AFRICANS AMONG ITS LEADERS.

WHILE FASTING, THEY HEARD GOD SAY:

SET APART BARNABAS AND PAUL FOR A NEW WORK.

LORD, GUARD AND GUIDE THEM AS THEY PROCLAIM KING JESUS TO THE WORLD!

PAUL AND BARNABAS SAILED TO CYPRUS, WITH JOHN MARK.

Antioch
Iconium
Colossae
Lystra
Perga
Attalia
PAMPHYLIA
Derbe
CILICIA
Tarsus
LYCIA
Seleucia
Myra
Antioch
Salamis
CYPRUS
SYRIA
PHOENICIA
ABILENE
Jerusalem
JUDEA

THEY PROCLAIMED THE GOOD NEWS IN THE SYNAGOGUES OF SALAMIS, BARNABAS'S HOME TOWN.

PAUL'S MASTERY OF SCRIPTURE AND MANY YEARS AS A PHARISEE MADE HIM WELCOME.

IN THE CITY OF PAPHOS, IN CYPRUS, THE PROCONSUL WANTED TO HEAR PAUL AND BARNABAS.

BUT ELYMAS, A SORCERER, OPPOSED THEM AND TRIED TO TURN SERGIUS PAULUS AWAY FROM THE GOSPEL.

YOU SPEAK LIES ABOUT THIS JESUS!

YOU CHILD OF THE DEVIL AND ENEMY OF WHAT'S RIGHT--FULL OF DECEIT!

MAY GOD STRIKE YOU BLIND!

HELP ME!

I EXPECTED TO *HEAR* ABOUT YOUR JESUS...

BUT NOW I *SEE* HIS POWER AT WORK!

SOON AFTER, PAUL, BARNABAS AND JOHN MARK SAILED TO PERGA.

BARNABAS, I DON'T THINK I CAN GO ON WITH YOU. MY MOTHER IS ALONE... I SHOULD RETURN TO JERUSALEM...

GOD BE WITH YOU, JOHN MARK.

JOHN MARK IS HOMESICK.

JOHN MARK IS A QUITTER!

IT'S A LONG JOURNEY. AND HE'S WORRIED ABOUT HIS MOTHER.

I HAVE NO TIME FOR THOSE WHO TURN ASIDE FROM GOD'S WORK!

THIS GOSPEL OF FORGIVENESS WE PREACH?

YES?

SHOULD WE NOT PRACTICE IT ALSO?

CROSSING THE TREACHEROUS TAURUS MOUNTAINS--NOTORIOUS FOR BANDITS...

...PAUL AND BARNABAS WALKED 100 MILES NORTHWEST TO ANOTHER ANTIOCH, IN PISIDIA.

EXHAUSTED, THEY SPENT SABBATH AT THE SYNAGOGUE.

FRIENDS, WE WELCOME YOU TO SHARE ANY WORDS FROM GOD.

LITTLE DID HE KNOW HOW PAUL WOULD TAKE ADVANTAGE OF HIS INVITATION!

FELLOW WORSHIPPERS OF GOD, LISTEN:

GOD DELIVERED HIS PEOPLE FROM THE NATIONS LIVING IN THE PROMISED LAND.

HE APPOINTED DAVID AS ISRAEL'S KING; AND DAVID'S DESCENDENT, JESUS, IS KING OF THE UNIVERSE!

BY CONDEMNING JESUS, JERUSALEM'S RULERS FULFILLED PROPHECY.

THEY PUT JESUS TO DEATH, BUT GOD RAISED HIM. AND THE RISEN CHRIST WAS SEEN BY HUNDREDS OF WITNESSES.

WE TELL YOU THE GOOD NEWS: JESUS TOOK THE PUNISHMENT FOR OUR SINS;

GOD RAISED HIM FROM THE DEAD; HE IS ALIVE!

AND THEN PAUL QUOTED THE SAME SCRIPTURES AS STEPHEN, THE DAY THEY STONED HIM!

THROUGH JESUS WE PROCLAIM FORGIVENESS AND FREEDOM FROM SIN.

OUR GOOD BEHAVIOR WON'T SAVE US, BUT GOD'S GIFT OF GRACE AND FAITH WILL.

MANY PEOPLE ACCEPTED THAT GIFT, CONFESSED THEIR SINS AND BECAME GOD'S CHILDREN!

PAUL AND BARNABAS WERE INVITED TO RETURN AND SPEAK AGAIN.

THE NEXT WEEKEND, BECAUSE OF THE CROWDS THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS WERE JEALOUS.

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE BRINGING TROUBLE TO OUR HOUSE OF WORSHIP?!

THESE MEN DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT.

THEY'VE COME TO DECEIVE AND ROB YOU!

WE BROUGHT THE WORD OF GOD TO YOU FIRST. SINCE YOU REJECT IT, WE WILL SPEAK TO THE GENTILES.

ISAIAH SAID ABOUT MESSIAH, "I HAVE MADE YOU A LIGHT FOR THE GENTILES, THAT YOU MAY BRING SALVATION TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH."

JESUS AND THE APOSTLES WERE ALL JEWISH. WHEN NON-JEWS HEARD THE GOOD NEWS, THEY WERE GRATEFUL JESUS HAD DIED FOR THEM TOO!

THEY HONORED GOD'S WORD, AND ALL WHO WERE APPOINTED FOR ETERNAL LIFE BELIEVED.

BUT THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS TURNED THE CIVIC LEADERS AGAINST PAUL AND BARNABAS.

WE DON'T WANT YOUR KIND HERE. YOU ARE RUINING OUR PEOPLE!

GET OUT AND STAY OUT!

BUT THE NEW BELIEVERS IN ANTIOCH, FILLED WITH JOY AND THE HOLY SPIRIT, CELEBRATED THEIR NEW FAITH.

THEY TRAVELED TO ICONIUM AND AGAIN TAUGHT JESUS AS MESSIAH.

BUT UNBELIEVERS POISONED PEOPLE'S MINDS AGAINST THEM.

THEY ARE LIARS.

HERETICS! MISFITS!

RABBLE-ROUSERS!

AS JESUS PREDICTED, THE GOSPEL CAUSED DIVISION BETWEEN LIGHT AND DARKNESS.

GOD WILL PROTECT US.

THEY ARE PLOTTING TO STONE YOU TOMORROW. BEFORE NOON!

BUT GOD PERMITTED STEPHEN'S STONING.

SURELY WE ARE NOT BETTER THAN HE.

NO. I AM FAR WORSE.

PAUL AND BARNABAS FLED BY NIGHT, HEADING TOWARD LYSTRA.

ORION AND THE SEVEN STARS OF PLEIADES. JOB AND AMOS SPOKE OF THEM, AND GOD PUTS THEM ON DISPLAY FOR US NOW.

THANK YOU, GOD, FOR SPEAKING THROUGH THE GLORY OF YOUR CREATION!

WE ARE TIRED AND WEAK, LORD, BUT YOU ARE GREAT AND STRONG. PLEASE SHOW US YOUR PLANS FOR US.

AFTER A FEW HOURS' SLEEP, PAUL AND BARNABAS WALK THE STREETS OF LYSTRA.

I HAVE NEVER WALKED. COULD THIS JESUS HEAL ME?

STAND UP!

JOB 38:31; AMOS 5:8

THE GODS HAVE COME IN THE LIKENESS OF MEN!

HERE IS ZEUS!

AND HERMES-- SPEAKER FOR THE GODS!

WE MUST OFFER SACRIFICES TO THEM.

NO! NEVER! WE ARE ONLY MEN. WORSHIP GOD ALONE!

STOP WORSHIPPING CREATION; HEAR THE CREATOR'S GOOD NEWS!

THE PEOPLE STARTED TO OFFER A SACRIFICE. PAUL AND BARNABAS BARELY RESTRAINED THEM!

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WITHOUT WARNING, RELIGIOUS LEADERS FROM ICONIUM PUSHED THROUGH THE CROWD.

THESE MEN ARE RIGHT TO SAY THEY ARE NOT GODS.

PAUL DOES NOT SPEAK FOR GOD. HE IS A LIAR!

WANT TO PLEASE YOUR GODS? SACRIFICE THIS MAN PAUL INSTEAD OF A BULL.

PERSUADED BY THE PHARISEE'S WORDS, THE CROWD SUDDENLY TURNED AGAINST PAUL...

...AND JUST AS WAS DONE TO STEPHEN, THEY DRAGGED PAUL AWAY...

...TO STONE HIM!

YAAHH!

IS HE ALIVE?

I DON'T THINK... WAIT...

WE THOUGHT THEY'D KILLED YOU!

APPARENTLY GOD HAD OTHER PLANS!

PAUL RESTED FOR A NIGHT, AND CONTINUED HIS TRAVELS THE NEXT DAY.

AS YOU'VE NOTICED, PAUL WASN'T SHY ABOUT SHARING HIS FAITH!

NOR WAS HE AFRAID OF THOSE WHO SPOKE AGAINST HIM.

HE AND HIS COMPANIONS TRAVELED BACK THROUGH PISIDIA.

AND EVEN RETURNED TO THE CITIES WHERE THEIR TROUBLES BEGAN.

BELIEVERS EVERYWHERE CELEBRATED GOD'S GIFT TO GENTILES THROUGH PAUL'S PREACHING.

ACTS 15:20-28

AFTER THEIR LONG JOURNEY, PAUL AND BARNABAS RETURNED TO JERUSALEM JUST IN TIME FOR A NEW CONTROVERSY.

BY GOD'S GRACE, WE NOW HAVE GENTILE BROTHERS AND SISTERS ALL ACROSS ASIA.

GOD'S CHILDREN MUST FOLLOW GOD'S RULES!

THEY MUST BE CIRCUMCISED AS GOD COMMANDED!

REMEMBER THE VISION GOD SENT ABOUT THE GENTILE CORNELIUS?

GOD REMOVED THE DIVISION BETWEEN US. HOW DARE WE REQUIRE OTHERS TO FOLLOW RULES WE CAN'T EVEN KEEP?

WE HAVE HEARD PAUL TELL OF MIRACLES PERFORMED DURING THEIR TRAVELS.

GENTILES ARE FAMILY NOW. LET'S ENCOURAGE THEM IN FAITH--NOT WEIGH THEM DOWN!

THEN ANOTHER MIRACLE OCCURRED...

EVERYONE AGREED!

A SMALL GROUP, INCLUDING PAUL, WAS SENT TO ANTIOCH WHERE THE LETTER WAS READ WITH GREAT JOY.

PAUL AND HIS COMPANIONS FELT IT WAS TIME TO TRAVEL AGAIN, THIS TIME RETURNING TO...

...ALL THOSE CITIES IN ASIA. LET'S SEE HOW OUR NEW BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST ARE DOING!

WONDERFUL! I WAS THINKING THE SAME THING!

JOHN MARK WILL JOIN US!

HAVE YOU STILL NOT FORGIVEN MY YOUNG COUSIN?

MY OPINION OF JOHN MARK IS UNCHANGED. HE DESERTED US!

BUT GOD USED THEIR UNFORTUNATE CONFLICT TO SPREAD HIS WORD STILL FURTHER.

WITH THE CHURCH'S BLESSING, THEY SET OUT AGAIN

BARNABAS SAILED WEST TO CYPRUS WITH JOHN MARK...

...WHILE PAUL TURNED NORTH, THIS TIME WITH SILAS AS HIS COMPANION.

PHILIPPI
NEAPOLIS
AMPHIPOLIS
THESSALONICA
APOLLONIA
BEREA
TROAS
ANTIOCH IN PISIDIA
ICONIUM
LYSTRA
EPHESUS
DERBE
ISSUS
TARSUS
CNIDUS
RHODES
ANTIOCH
SELEUCIA
CYPRUS
DAMASCUS
SIDON
TYRE
PTOLEMAIS
CAESAREA
JERUSALEM

THEY TRAVELED TO DAMASCUS, CONTINUED THROUGH SYRIA, BACK ACROSS THE MOUNTAINS, VISITING AND STRENGTHENING THE GROWING CHURCHES PAUL HAD PLANTED.

DURING HIS TRAVELS, PAUL KEPT HEARING GOOD THINGS ABOUT A YOUNG MAN NAMED TIMOTHY.

PAUL FINALLY MET TIMOTHY IN LYSTRA. TIMOTHY AGREED TO TRAVEL WITH PAUL, SPREADING THE GOOD NEWS ACROSS ASIA, HELPING MANY TO KNOW JESUS.

WHEN THEY REACHED TROAS, ON THE BANKS OF THE AEGEAN SEA, SOMETHING VERY SURPRISING HAPPENED.

I WAS IN THE AGORA WHEN I HEARD A VOICE I'D HOPED NEVER TO HEAR AGAIN.

SAUL OF TARSUS! THAT ARROGANT TERRORIST WHO'D MURDERED STEPHEN...

THIS JESUS OF WHOM I SPEAK TRULY IS THE SON OF GOD.

PREACHING THE SAME MESSIAH AS... STEPHEN?!

LUKE?!!! THE PHYSICIAN?

NEEDLESS TO SAY, I WAS NOT AS PLEASED TO SEE HIM AS HE SEEMED TO SEE ME... AND YET...

I AM PAUL... YOU ONCE KNEW ME BY ANOTHER NAME.

PAUL'S PERSECUTIONS HAD CAUSED BELIEVERS TO SCATTER ACROSS THE EMPIRE.

AS I'D TRAVELED FROM COUNTRY TO COUNTRY, EVERYWHERE I WENT, I HEARD WHAT THEY CALLED THE GOOD NEWS.

AND JESUS THE CHRIST TRANSFORMED ME TOO.

DESPITE PAUL... OR PERHAPS BECAUSE OF HIM.

I HATED YOU FOR WHAT YOU DID TO STEPHEN. I NEVER WANTED TO SEE YOU AGAIN.

BUT EVERYWHERE I WENT, I HEARD HOW YOU'D CHANGED. I DIDN'T BELIEVE IT... UNTIL NOW.

AN EDUCATED GREEK SKEPTIC, I NEVER IMAGINED I'D BELIEVE IN MIRACLES ... MUCH LESS BE PART OF ONE.

HELP US!

COME TO MACEDONIA!

HELP US!

WAKE UP! IT'S TIME FOR US TO MOVE ON!

WE'RE TO CROSS THE SEA AND SHARE GOD'S WORD IN THE WEST!

ARE YOU SURE?

I'M SURE. I HAD A DREAM...

ACTS 16:9-10

TO MY AMAZEMENT, I WAS NOW PART OF THE TEAM.

AND WE WERE GOING TO MY HOMELAND... GREECE!

WE TOOK THE FIRST DIRECT SHIP AND REMAINED IN PHILIPPI FOR MANY DAYS.

IT WAS SABBATH. WE WENT TO A PLACE OF PRAYER NEAR THE RIVER, WHERE SOME WOMEN GATHERED.

PAUL, NEVER TIMID, BEGAN SPEAKING.

DIRT MAY BE WASHED FROM CLOTHES IN THE RIVER...

...BUT LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT HOW SIN IS CLEANSED FROM THE SOUL...

A RICH MERCHANT NAMED LYDIA QUICKLY BELIEVED IN JESUS, AS IF SHE HAD BEEN WAITING TO HEAR THE GOOD NEWS.

SHE AND ALL HER HOUSEHOLD WERE BAPTIZED.

I INSIST THAT YOU ALL STAY AT MY HOUSE!

HOW COULD WE TURN DOWN AN OFFER OF SOFT BEDS AND GOOD FOOD?

AND THE BEST PART? IT WAS *GREEK* FOOD! LYDIA AND HER COOK KNEW WHAT THEY WERE DOING!!

ON OUR WAY BACK TO THE RIVERBANK A YOUNG FORTUNE-TELLER FOLLOWED US, SHOUTING:

LOOK! THESE MEN...

...THESE MEN SERVE GOD MOST HIGH...

...THEY PROCLAIM THE WAY OF SALVATION!

THIS POSSESSED GIRL WAS NOT THE SORT OF ENDORSEMENT WE WERE LOOKING FOR!

AFTER DAYS OF THIS, PAUL SUDDENLY GAVE A SURPRISING COMMAND.

I ORDER YOU IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST TO COME OUT OF HER!

THE GIRL WAS CONTROLLED BY A DEMON! GOD USED PAUL TO RESCUE HER!

BUT WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN A HAPPY ENDING WAS JUST THE BEGINNING OF MORE TROUBLE.

THE SLAVE GIRL WAS HAPPY NOW...BUT HER OWNERS WERE NOT.

THESE JEWS ARE TROUBLE-MAKERS!

THEY PREACH AGAINST OUR LAWS AND CUSTOMS!

THE DEMON TOOK HER FORTUNE-TELLING SKILLS AWAY WITH HIM!

AFTER THE BEATING, THROW THEM INTO PRISON!

IT NEARLY KILLED ME TO WATCH THIS... BUT I WAS POWERLESS.

I WAS ORDERED TO LOCK YOU UP TIGHT.

NOBODY GETS OUT OF MY JAIL!

IN YOU, O LORD, DO I TAKE REFUGE; IN YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS DELIVER ME!

INCLINE YOUR EAR TO ME; RESCUE ME SPEEDILY! BE A ROCK OF REFUGE FOR ME, A STRONG FORTRESS TO SAVE ME!

SINGING?

THE PRISONERS ARE *SINGING*!?

RRUMBLE

WHA... ???!!!

AFTER THE QUAKE, THE JAILER, SEEING CELL DOORS WIDE OPEN, ASSUMED THE PRISONERS HAD ESCAPED.

MY LIFE ISN'T WORTH A DENARIUS!

WAIT!

DON'T HARM YOURSELF. WE'RE ALL HERE!

SIR! WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS AND WHAT HE'S DONE FOR YOU...

...AND YOU AND YOUR HOUSEHOLD WILL BE SAVED!

PAUL EXPLAINED THE GOOD NEWS TO THEM.

AND THEY ALL BELIEVED-- A MIRACLE *GREATER* THAN THE QUAKE!

THANK YOU FOR WASHING OUR WOUNDED BODIES.

NOW WE'LL BAPTIZE YOU TO CELEBRATE JESUS' HEALING OF YOUR WOUNDED SOULS.

THANK YOU, GOD, FOR SINGING PRISONERS AND EARTHQUAKES!

RELEASE THE PRISONERS PAUL AND SILAS!

PAUL! THEY'RE LETTING YOU OUT... GO IN PEACE!

YOU BEAT US PUBLICLY YET EXPECT US TO LEAVE PRIVATELY? TELL YOUR LEADERS TO RELEASE US THEMSELVES!

WE ARE ROMAN CITIZENS! YET YOU IMPRISONED US WITHOUT A TRIAL.

WE DIDN'T KNOW. WE'RE SORRY!

WE'LL PERSONALLY ESCORT YOU FROM THE CITY!

SO PAUL AND SILAS WERE FREE TO VISIT THEIR CHRISTIAN SISTERS AND BROTHERS.

PAUL, SILAS AND TIMOTHY CONTINUED THEIR JOURNEY WEST ACROSS MACEDONIA ON THEIR WAY TO THESSALONICA.

I REMAINED IN PHILIPPI BUT HOPED TO SOMEDAY RE-JOIN PAUL.

THE MAN I HAD DESPISED WAS NOW A CLOSE FRIEND.

IN THESSALONICA, FOR THREE SABBATHS PAUL EXPLAINED HOW JESUS FULFILLED PROPHECY.

IT WAS NECESSARY FOR THE CHRIST TO SUFFER AND TO RISE FROM THE DEAD.

THOUGH MANY BELIEVED IN JESUS, JEALOUS SYNAGOGUE LEADERS STIRRED UP A MOB AGAINST PAUL AND SILAS.

JASON! OPEN UP!

HAND OVER THE HERETICS!

PAUL AND SILAS HAVE TURNED THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN.

JASON, HERE, WELCOMED THEM AND THEIR TREASONOUS TEACHING!

THESE ACCUSATIONS WORRIED THE AUTHORITIES, BUT THEY TOOK BAIL MONEY AND LET JASON GO.

ONCE AGAIN PAUL AND COMPANIONS FLED FARTHER WEST--

--THIS TIME TO BEREA WHERE THEY FOUND PEOPLE EAGER TO MATCH THEIR WORDS AGAINST SCRIPTURE AND SEE WHETHER THEY WERE SPEAKING THE TRUTH.

UNFORTUNATELY, TROUBLE FOLLOWED THEM FROM THESSALONICA...

AND AGAIN, THE CROWDS WERE STIRRED UP AGAINST PAUL.

SILAS AND TIMOTHY STAYED BEHIND WHILE PAUL WAS HURRIED OFF TO ATHENS.

PAUL WAS DISTURBED BY THE MANY IDOLS IN THE CITY.

JESUS DIED, WAS BURIED, AND ROSE AGAIN JUST AS SCRIPTURES PREDICTED HE WOULD.

YOU TELL US STRANGE THINGS.

WE DON'T UNDERSTAND... YET WE ARE INTRIGUED. TELL US MORE.

WHAT IS THIS BABBLER SAYING?

HE SEEMS TO SPEAK OF FOREIGN GODS.

PAUL WAS INVITED TO MARS HILL WHERE ATHENIANS LOVED TO GATHER AND DISCUSS NEW IDEAS.

PEOPLE OF ATHENS, OBVIOUSLY YOU ARE VERY RELIGIOUS.

AMONG YOUR MANY OBJECTS OF WORSHIP, ONE ALTAR CAUGHT MY EYE...

"TO THE UNKNOWN GOD."

I KNOW THAT GOD! HE MADE THE WORLD AND EVERYTHING IN IT.

BUT HE DOESN'T LIVE IN TEMPLES MADE WITH HUMAN HANDS...

...AND ONE DAY JESUS– WHOM GOD RAISED FROM THE DEAD--WILL JUDGE THE WHOLE WORLD.

SOME RIDICULED HIS BELIEF IN A RESURRECTION. SOME JOINED PAUL.

THEY WANTED TO HEAR MORE.

PAUL JOURNEYED 70 MILES FROM ATHENS TO CORINTH.

THIS STRATEGICALLY LOCATED CITY WAS A CENTER OF TRADE AND VICE.

MEAT MARKETS OF BOTH KINDS FLOURISHED.

SOON AFTER ARRIVING, PAUL MET AQUILA AND PRISCILLA, ALSO TENTMAKERS.

PAUL, YOU'RE SURPRISINGLY GOOD AT THIS!

I LIVED IN TARSUS, WHERE THE FINEST GOAT'S HAIR CLOTH IS PLENTIFUL.

MY FATHER TAUGHT ME.

HE MUST BE PROUD OF YOU.

ONCE... HE WAS.

NOW?

I AM DEAD TO HIM.

WE ARE HERE BECAUSE CLAUDIUS CAESAR BANISHED JEWS FROM ROME.

WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE, PAUL?

I AM HERE BECAUSE CAESAR'S PLANS ARE BUT DRIPS OF WATER IN GOD'S PALM.

PAUL?

SILAS! TIMOTHY!

COME MEET MY NEW FRIENDS.

AQUILA AND PRISCILLA!

THEY ARE SKILLED TENT-MAKERS.

HIGH PRAISE COMING FROM YOU, BROTHER PAUL!

LET'S EAT! WE BROUGHT PLENTY.

I WISH LUKE COULD SHARE THIS GOOD GREEK FOOD WITH US.

WE DIDN'T BRING *THAT* MUCH!

I WAS JUST ABOUT TO TELL MY NEW FRIENDS WHY WE'VE COME.

THEY DO NOT YET KNOW IT, BUT...

I THINK SOON THEY WILL BE FOLLOWERS OF THE CHRIST!

SURROUNDED BY STATUES OF APHRODITE, AND RAMPANT PROSTITUTION, PAUL WROTE TO THE THESSALONIANS:

God's will is that you avoid immorality and learn to control your bodies...

WHEN PAUL WASN'T MAKING TENTS, HE PREACHED IN CORINTH'S SYNAGOGUES.

OVER 700 YEARS AGO THE PROPHET ISAIAH WROTE:

"HE WAS WOUNDED BECAUSE OF OUR SIN, BEATEN BECAUSE OF OUR EVIL.

"WE ARE HEALED BY HIS SUFFERING.

"ALL OF US WERE LIKE LOST SHEEP--EACH GOING OUR OWN WAY.

"BUT HE TOOK UPON HIMSELF THE PUNISHMENT WE DESERVED."

YOU SAY THESE VERSES SPEAK OF MESSIAH?

YOU LIE! DEATH CANNOT DEFEAT OUR KING!

DEATH DID NOT DEFEAT KING JESUS.

LISTEN! HE ROSE FROM THE DEAD!

HE WILL RETURN TO RULE THE EARTH FOREVER!

BUT FIRST HE PAID FOR OUR SINS SO WE COULD BE HIS FRIENDS INSTEAD OF ENEMIES!

BLASPHEMY!

OUR SYNAGOGUE IS CLOSED TO YOU...

...AND ALL WORSHIPPERS OF THIS JESUS!

YOUR BLOOD BE ON YOUR OWN HEADS!

FROM NOW ON WE TAKE THIS GOOD NEWS TO THE GENTILES.

TITIUS JUSTUS! ARE YOU HOME?

PAUL!

YOU LOOK LIKE A HORNET JUST CRAWLED UNDER YOUR PRAYER SHAWL.

THIS SYNAGOGUE RULER, CRISPUS!

...HE HAS CLOSED HIS MIND TO THE VERY SCRIPTURES HE TEACHES!

SOUNDS LIKE A YOUNG ZEALOT NAMED SAUL I ONCE HEARD ABOUT.

THAT NIGHT.

WHAT'S BOTHERING YOU, CRISPUS?

A CURSE UPON THIS PAUL! THE WORDS OF ISAIAH TORTURE ME.

TELL ME, WHY DOES A SYNAGOGUE RULER FIND SCRIPTURE DISTURBING?

COULD... COULD JESUS BE THE PROMISED MESSIAH?

I THINK WE SHOULD TALK TO THIS MAN PAUL...

CRISPUS BELIEVED IN THE LORD, TOGETHER WITH HIS ENTIRE HOUSEHOLD.

ONE NIGHT JESUS CAME TO PAUL IN A VISION:

DO NOT BE AFRAID. SPEAK; DON'T BE SILENT.

I AM WITH YOU. NO ONE WILL HARM YOU. MANY IN THIS CITY ARE MY PEOPLE.

IN SPITE OF HOSTILITY, PAUL AND HIS COMPANIONS HELPED MANY BELIEVE IN JESUS.

ACTS 18:7-10

CORINTH WAS THE HOME TO THE ISTHMIAN GAMES, 2ND IN SIZE ONLY TO THE ATHENS OLYMPICS.

MY FATHER BROUGHT ME HERE AS A CHILD.

THANKS FOR COMING WITH ME!

SO MUCH IN THE GAMES ILLUSTRATES OUR LIFE IN JESUS.

WE ALL COMPETE IN A RACE. WE MUST TRAIN HARD.

AND WE MUST ALWAYS KEEP OUR EYES ON THE FINISH LINE.

GOD IS IN EVERY ASPECT OF LIFE, IS HE NOT?

INDEED, TIMOTHY. YOU WERE TRAINED IN BOXING. WOULD YOU TRAIN ME?

ARE YOU SURE? I MEAN... I'M YOUNG AND YOU'RE...

PAUL STAYED IN CORINTH FOR A YEAR AND A HALF, TEACHING GOD'S WORD AND SEEING MANY PEOPLE BECOME FOLLOWERS OF JESUS.

HE LEFT FOR A BRIEF STAY IN EPHESUS, THEN ON TO JERUSALEM, AND BACK TO ANTIOCH.

CORINTH
EPHESUS
PHRYGIA
GALATIA
ANTIOCH
CYPRUS
JERUSALEM

THEN HE WENT BACK THROUGH GALATIA AND PHRYGIA, VISITING AND STRENGTHENING ALL THE BELIEVERS.

PRISCILLA AND AQUILA TRAVELED WITH PAUL TO EPHESUS WHERE THEY STAYED. WHILE HE CONTINUED TO ANTIOCH.

GOD SENT HIS SON TO REMOVE OUR SINS.

THIS IS GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY--ALL WHO BELIEVE CAN BE SAVED!

JESUS THE KING, FULFILLS EVERY PROPHECY OF HOLY SCRIPTURES.

THE PROMISE OF ETERNAL LIFE IS FOR PEOPLE OF ALL NATIONS!

THIS IS THE MOST ELOQUENT PREACHER OF JESUS I'VE HEARD.

AND WE DON'T EVEN KNOW HIS NAME!

WE HEARD YOU PREACHING AND WANTED TO SPEAK TO YOU!

I AM APOLLOS. FROM ALEXANDRIA, IN EGYPT.

PRISCILLA AND AQUILA REALIZED THAT THOUGH ENTHUSIASTIC--

--THERE WERE THINGS APOLLOS DIDN'T YET KNOW.

...I SPENT COUNTLESS HOURS IN THE GREAT ALEXANDRIAN LIBRARY.

YET MY EDUCATION NEVER BROUGHT ME TO GOD.

BUT WHEN I HEARD THE GOSPEL OF JESUS, MY LIFE WAS TRANS-FORMED...

SO THEY TOOK HIM ASIDE AND EXPLAINED THE WAY OF GOD MORE ACCURATELY.

ALONG WITH PAUL, APOLLOS BECAME ONE OF THE GREATEST PREACHERS OF GOD'S WORD.

WHILE AQUILA AND PRISCILLA MENTORED APOLLOS IN EPHESUS--

--PAUL CONFRONTED AN OLD FRIEND IN ANTIOCH.

PETER, WHEN YOU FIRST ARRIVED, YOU ATE FREELY WITH THE GENTILE CHRISTIANS.

I DID.

AS YOU SHOULD.

BUT WHEN JEWISH FRIENDS CAME FROM JERUSALEM, YOU NO LONGER ATE WITH GENTILES.

IS THAT SO?

IT IS.

THEN I OPPOSE YOU TO YOUR FACE.

WHAT YOU DID WAS DEAD WRONG.

BUT, I...

NO EXCUSES!

YOU STILL FEAR THOSE WHO INSIST GENTILE CHRISTIANS BE CIRCUMCISED.

DO YOU DENY IT?

NO, BROTHER PAUL, I DO NOT DENY IT.

I WAS TOLD EVEN MY OLD FRIEND BARNABAS JOINED YOU IN THIS HYPOCRISY.

YOU ARE APOSTLES OF JESUS! PEOPLE SPEAK OF YOU WITH REVERENCE. YOU SHOULD KNOW BETTER!

WE DARE NOT BE PEOPLE-PLEASERS. WE MUST BE GOD-PLEASERS!

WE ARE MADE RIGHT WITH GOD BY FAITH IN JESUS, NOT BY KEEPING CEREMONIAL LAW!

WE HAVE BEEN CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST!

IT'S NO LONGER WE WHO LIVE, BUT CHRIST LIVES IN US!

WE MUST TRUST GOD'S SON, WHO LOVED US AND GAVE HIMSELF FOR US!

OF COURSE, YOU'RE RIGHT...

THANK YOU!

PAUL LEFT ANTIOCH AND TRAVELED TO THE GREAT PORT CITY OF EPHESUS.

THERE HE FOUND TWELVE DISCIPLES WHO HAD NOT HEARD ABOUT GOD'S HOLY SPIRIT WHO INDWELLS TRUE BELIEVERS IN JESUS.

FOR THREE MONTHS PAUL SPOKE BOLDLY IN THE SYNAGOGUE...

...REASONING FROM THE SCRIPTURES, PERSUADING PEOPLE ABOUT GOD'S KINGDOM.

WHEN SOME SPOKE EVIL ABOUT THE WAY, PAUL TAUGHT IN THE HALL OF TYRANNUS DAILY FOR TWO YEARS.

MANY TRAVELERS CAME TO THE SCHOOL TO LISTEN--

--AND TOOK THE GOSPEL THROUGHOUT ASIA.

GOD PERFORMED MANY MIRACLES THROUGH PAUL, CONFIRMING THE TRUTH OF THE GOSPEL HE PREACHED.

AS HE HAD GIVEN PETER AND OTHER APOSTLES, GOD GAVE PAUL THE POWER TO CAST OUT DEMONS.

SOME SOUGHT TO IMITATE PAUL'S MIRACLES.

SCEVA, THE JEWISH HIGH PRIEST, HAD 7 SONS.

THEY DECIDED TO PERFORM AN EXORCISM.

IN THE NAME OF THE JESUS PAUL PROCLAIMS, I COMMAND YOUR DEMONS TO DEPART!

JESUS I KNOW, AND PAUL I RECOGNIZE. BUT WHO ARE *YOU*?

AHHH!

AHHH!

HELP!

TERRIFIED, THE SEVEN BROTHERS FLED THE HOUSE, ALL NAKED AND WOUNDED.

WORD SPREAD QUICKLY THROUGHOUT EPHESUS--

--ABOUT HOW PAUL, BY THE POWER OF JESUS, COULD OVERCOME DEMONS--

--WHILE OTHER RELIGIOUS LEADERS WERE POWERLESS.

PAUL, IN EPHESUS, HEARD DISTURBING REPORTS FROM CHURCHES IN GALATIA.

HE COULDN'T GO HIMSELF--

--SO HE HELPED THE ONLY WAY HE COULD.

...I THOUGHT IT WAS THE LAW THAT I LOVED, BUT IT WAS MY OWN SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS.

THOUGH PROFESSING CHRIST, SOME GALATIANS ARE LIKE I WAS BEFORE I MET JESUS.

THERE *IS* NO OTHER GOSPEL, BUT SOME ARE DISTORTING IT.

LET ANYONE WHO PREACHES A DIFFERENT GOSPEL-- EVEN IF IT'S AN ANGEL-- BE ACCURSED!

IF I WERE STILL TRYING TO PLEASE MAN, I WOULD NOT BE A SERVANT OF CHRIST.

YOU FOOLISH GALATIANS...

...YOU'RE SO QUICKLY DESERTING CHRIST...

YOU AREN'T HOLDING ANYTHING BACK!

I CAN'T AFFORD TO!

DELIVER THIS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!

I HOPE THIS WALK HELPS YOU CALM DOWN!

IT'S HARD TO HEAR OF BELOVED FRIENDS PUTTING THEIR FAITH IN LAW-KEEPING RATHER THAN JESUS!

WHAT'S GOING ON OVER THERE?

YOU TAUGHT SCRIPTURE SHOWING THE EVIL OF OCCULT PRACTICES...

...NOW EPHESIANS ARE BURNING THEIR MAGIC BOOKS!

THOSE SCROLLS ARE WORTH OVER 50,000 PIECES OF SILVER!

THE NEW CITIZENS OF HEAVEN ARE RETURNING THE DEVIL'S WORK TO THE FIRES OF HELL!

LORD JESUS, FORGIVE US FOR ALLOWING THESE EVIL WRITINGS INTO OUR HOMES!

NO MORE MAGIC ARTS OR TALKING TO THE DEAD!

SCRIPTURE WILL BE OUR ONLY GUIDE!

A FEW DAYS LATER DEMETRIUS, A SILVERSMITH, GATHERED TOGETHER CRAFTSMEN AND VENDORS.

MEN!

OUR SURVIVAL DEPENDS ON INCOME FROM SHRINES AND IDOLS OF OUR GODDESS ARTEMIS!

BUT PAUL IS PERSUADING MANY THAT GODS MADE BY US ARE NOT GODS AT ALL!

THESE FOREIGNERS INSULT OUR RELIGION AND RUIN OUR ECONOMY!

GREAT IS ARTEMIS OF THE EPHESIANS!

PLEASE, LISTEN!

THIS PAUL DOESN'T SPEAK FOR ALL OF US!

YOU'RE A JEW, JUST LIKE HIM!

GET HIM OUT OF HERE!

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GREAT IS ARTEMIS OF THE EPHESIANS!

GREAT IS ARTEMIS OF THE EPHESIANS!

THEY DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THEY'RE SAYING!

FOR TWO HOURS THE CROWD ANGRILY SHOUTED PRAISE TO ARTEMIS AND STIRRED UP HATRED TOWARD THE GOSPEL OF JESUS.

I MUST SPEAK THE GOSPEL TO THIS AUDIENCE.

THIS IS NOT AN AUDIENCE– IT'S A MOB!

THEY WILL KILL YOU!

FINALLY, THE MAYOR ADDRESSED THE CROWD.

PEOPLE OF EPHESUS! OUR GREAT CITY IS THE GUARDIAN OF ARTEMIS'S TEMPLE!

NOTHING THESE MEN SAY CAN CHANGE THAT! IF DEMETRIUS AND HIS CRAFTSMEN HAVE A CASE--

--LET THEM TAKE IT UP IN THE COURTS!

BUT IF ROME BELIEVES WE ARE RIOTING, OUR CITY WILL SUFFER!

PLEASE *GO HOME*!

AFTER THREE YEARS IN EPHESUS, I'M EAGER TO RE-VISIT THE GREEK CHURCHES.

AND THEN, GOD WILLING, TO ROME ITSELF!

WHAT BETTER PLACE TO REACH THE WHOLE WORLD WITH THE GOSPEL?!

I HADN'T SEEN PAUL FOR THREE YEARS.

WHEN I HEARD HE WAS BACK IN PHILIPPI I RUSHED TO SEE HIM.

TIMOTHY TAUGHT ME A LITTLE SOMETHING IN CORINTH...

HA! YOU MISSED!

THIS IS WHY THEY CALL YOU "THE APOSTLE." NOT "THE BOXER."

YOU MUST MOVE YOUR FEET. BE PATIENT. DON'T PUNCH THE WIND.

YOU'RE JUST AFRAID OF ME. ADMIT IT!

I LIKE BOXING. IT'S A MARVELOUS ILLUSTRATION OF SPIRITUAL WARFARE.

I HOPE YOU HAVEN'T BEEN DOING THIS IN THE SYNAGOGUES!

REALLY, PAUL! IT'S SO GOOD TO SEE YOU!

FUNNY YOU SHOULD SAY THAT.

IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU TOO, EXCEPT... I'M NOT SEEING YOU VERY CLEARLY.

SO I THOUGHT.

AS YOU KNOW, I'VE NEVER PUT TOO MUCH STOCK IN DOCTORS.

NOR I IN RABBIS.

I SEE THAT THE DEGENERATION HAS CONTINUED. AND I NOTICED IT IN YOUR LETTERS.

NOTICED WHAT?

YOUR HANDWRITING GETS LARGER AND LARGER.

IT'S PART OF WHAT I CALL MY "THORN IN THE FLESH."

I'VE BEGGED GOD TO HEAL ME, BUT HE'S CHOSEN NOT TO.

GOD CAN GIVE SIGHT TO THE BLIND... AND YET, I SUPPOSE IF HE ALWAYS HEALED US, WE'D NEVER DIE!

AND WE WOULD TRUST MORE IN OURSELVES AND OUR GOOD HEALTH, AND LESS IN HIM.

CAN YOU DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT?

NO.

UNLESS GOD INTERVENES, IT WILL GET WORSE.

ONE WORD OF GOOD NEWS: IN THE RESURRECTION, YOUR SIGHT WILL BE BETTER THAN IT'S EVER BEEN!

THAT IS GOOD NEWS INDEED.

GOD HAS SENT ME A MESSAGE THROUGH THIS DISEASE...

"MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR YOU; MY STRENGTH IS MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS."

WHAT DID JOB SAY?

"THE *LORD* GIVES ME WHAT I HAVE, AND HE CAN TAKE IT AWAY."

"BLESSED BE THE NAME OF THE *LORD*!"

2 CORINTHIANS 12:7-9; JOB 1:21

PAUL RETURNED TO CORINTH FOR THE THIRD TIME...

IT'S GREAT TO BE BACK.

IT'S GOOD TO RETURN TO THOSE YOU LOVE...

BUT MY HEART ACHES FOR ROME!

WHY DOES ROME WEIGH SO HEAVILY ON YOU?

THE CHURCH THERE IS AT A CROSS-ROADS. AT THE HEART OF THE EMPIRE.

THEY FACE FALSE TEACHINGS ABOUT THE GOSPEL...

...AND THERE ARE DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN JEWISH AND GENTILE BELIEVERS!

I'D LOVE TO WRITE TO THEM. ENCOURAGE AND TEACH THEM. PREPARE THEM FOR MY EVENTUAL VISIT...

WHY DON'T YOU?

YOU KNOW WHY. I STRUGGLE TO SEE THE WORDS I'M WRITING.

WE CAN'T AFFORD ALL THE PAPYRUS MY LARGE LETTERS WOULD REQUIRE!

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THE NEXT DAY, I SURPRISED PAUL...

TERTIUS IS AN EXCELLENT SCRIBE.

HE'LL WRITE ON PAPYRUS AS YOU SPEAK.

THEN HE'LL MAKE COPIES ONTO DURABLE VELLUM, TO BE TAKEN TO ROME.

I USED TO BE MY OWN SCRIBE.

YES, AND YOU USED TO WIN FOOT RACES, OR SO YOU TELL ME.

REPEATED FLOGGINGS AND BEING STONED NEARLY TO DEATH TEND TO TAKE A TOLL!

COME IN, TERTIUS.

AND THANK YOU.

AND SO, PAUL BEGAN WRITING PERHAPS HIS MOST IMPORTANT LETTER.

GIVE ME THE WORDS, LORD. YOUR WORDS.

FROM PAUL, A SERVANT OF CHRIST JESUS, AN APOSTLE CHOSEN...

...AND CALLED BY GOD TO PREACH HIS GOOD NEWS...

...PROMISED LONG AGO BY GOD THROUGH HIS PROPHETS.

TO ALL OF YOU IN ROME: GRACE TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD OUR FATHER.

AS THE SCRIPTURES SAY, NO ONE IS RIGHTEOUS-- NOT EVEN ONE...

ALL HAVE SINNED AND FALL SHORT OF GOD'S GLORIOUS HOLINESS.

BY FAITH, WE HAVE PEACE WITH GOD BECAUSE OF CHRIST'S WORK.

GOD SHOWED HIS GREAT LOVE FOR US BY SENDING JESUS TO DIE FOR US WHILE WE WERE STILL SINNERS.

FOR THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH, BUT THE FREE GIFT OF GOD IS ETERNAL LIFE.

SO NOW THERE IS NO CONDEMNATION FOR THOSE WHO BELONG TO CHRIST.

I AM CONVINCED THAT NOTHING CAN EVER SEPARATE US FROM GOD'S LOVE. NEITHER DEATH NOR LIFE, NEITHER ANGELS NOR DEMONS.

NOT OUR FEARS OR OUR WORRIES ABOUT TOMORROW--NOT EVEN THE POWERS OF HELL...

...WILL EVER SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD REVEALED IN CHRIST OUR LORD!

EVERYONE WHO CONFESSES WITH THEIR MOUTH AND BELIEVES IN THEIR HEART THAT GOD RAISED HIM WILL BE SAVED!

THE GOD OF PEACE WILL SOON CRUSH SATAN UNDER YOUR FEET.

THE GRACE OF OUR LORD JESUS BE WITH YOU.

NOW... TO THE ONLY WISE GOD BE GLORY FOREVER THROUGH JESUS CHRIST! AMEN.

PAUL HAD DICTATED THE LETTER FOR HOURS, PAUSING ONLY TO ASK GOD WHAT TO SAY NEXT.

THIS IS... AMAZING.

THESE WORDS... I BELIEVE THEY MIGHT OUTLAST THE WORLD ITSELF.

I HAD NO DOUBT THAT HIS WORDS CAME INTO THIS WORLD FROM ANOTHER.

THE APOSTLE HAD COMPOSED THE GREATEST LETTER EVER WRITTEN.

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FROM CORINTH WE WENT TO TROAS. ON SUNDAY WE GATHERED FOR COMMUNION.

PAUL TAUGHT THE SCRIPTURES UNTIL MIDNIGHT.

GIEEE!

EUTYCHUS!

OUR SON...HE'S DEAD!

DON'T WORRY. GOD HAS BROUGHT HIM BACK.

THIS ISN'T THE FIRST TIME SOMEONE HAS FALLEN ASLEEP DURING ONE OF YOUR SERMONS.

NO. BUT WHEN WORD GETS AROUND, IT MAY BE THE LAST!

HAVING BEHELD THIS MIRACLE, THE GROUP STAYED, TALKING WITH US UNTIL DAYBREAK.

NO ONE SAT BY THE WINDOW.

FROM TROAS WE SAILED TO SEVERAL PLACES, INCLUDING MILETUS.

PAUL DECIDED TO SAIL PAST EPHESUS. HE WANTED TO BE IN JERUSALEM FOR PENTECOST.

SO PAUL ASKED THE EPHESIAN ELDERS TO MEET HIM IN MILETUS.

GOD'S SPIRIT COMPELS ME TOWARD JERUSALEM.

MANY HAVE WARNED ME NOT TO GO.

GOD TELLS ME IMPRISONMENT AND AFFLICTIONS AWAIT ME.

BUT I DO NOT ACCOUNT MY LIFE AS PRECIOUS...

...IF ONLY I MAY FINISH MY COURSE AND TESTIFY TO THE GOSPEL OF GOD'S GRACE.

REMEMBER... I DID NOT SHRINK FROM DECLARING TO YOU THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD.

GUARD YOURSELVES AND ALL THE FLOCK...

...WOLVES IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING, MASQUERADING AS PROPHETS, WAIT TO DEVOUR YOU.

YOU WON'T SEE ME AGAIN IN THIS WORLD.

WE SAILED TO PALESTINE AND WALKED TO JERUSALEM.

BROTHER PAUL!

WE ARE SO GLAD TO HEAR OF GOD'S WORK AMONG THE GENTILES!

NOW, TRY TO STAY OUT OF TROUBLE WHILE YOU'RE HERE!

BUT PAUL WAS NOT GIFTED AT STAYING OUT OF TROUBLE.

HE'D SHAVED HIS HEAD TO FULFILL A TEMPLE VOW, BUT IT STILL DIDN'T MAKE HIM POPULAR.

HE BROUGHT GREEKS INTO THE TEMPLE!

PLEASE LET ME SPEAK TO THE PEOPLE.

THAT CROWD WOULD SOONER KILL YOU THAN LISTEN...

...SHOULD BE ENTERTAINING.

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PAUL WENT FROM SPEAKING PERFECT GREEK TO PERFECT HEBREW:

I AM A JEW, BORN IN TARSUS, BUT BROUGHT UP HERE IN JERUSALEM--

--EDUCATED AT THE FEET OF RABBI GAMALIEL TO STRICTLY FOLLOW OUR JEWISH LAW.

I PERSECUTED AND IMPRISONED MEN AND WOMEN OF THE WAY.

THE COUNCIL CAN BEAR ME WITNESS.

AS I NEARED DAMASCUS TO ARREST FOLLOWERS OF JESUS...

...A GREAT LIGHT SHONE AROUND ME. A VOICE FROM HEAVEN SAID:

"I AM JESUS OF NAZARETH WHOM YOU ARE PERSECUTING."

AWAY WITH HIM!

SUCH PEOPLE SHOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO LIVE!

PAUL WAS TURNED OVER TO BE BEATEN--

IS IT LAW-FUL FOR YOU TO FLOG AN UN-TRIED ROMAN CITIZEN?

I BOUGHT MY CITIZENSHIP.

I'M A CITIZEN BY BIRTH.

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THE NEXT DAY PAUL WAS TAKEN BEFORE THE SANHEDRIN--

--THE SAME PLACE HE'D ARGUED THAT STEPHEN SHOULD DIE FOR THE SAME GOSPEL.

BROTHERS, I AM A PHARISEE, A SON OF PHARISEES.

PAUL KNEW THAT BOTH SADDUCEES, WHO DIDN'T BELIEVE IN THE RESURRECTION, AND PHARISEES, WHO DID, WERE LISTENING.

AND I'M ON TRIAL FOR BELIEVING IN THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD!

AT THIS THE PHARISEES AND SADDUCEES FOUGHT FURIOUSLY ABOUT THE RESURRECTION.

THE RESURRECTION IS NONSENSE!

LET'S GO BEFORE THEY TEAR THE PRISONER TO PIECES!

THE RESURRECTION IS GOD'S TRUTH!

THAT NIGHT IN HIS PRISON CELL, PAUL HAD ONE VISITOR...GOD'S SON!

TAKE COURAGE. YOU HAVE TESTIFIED ABOUT ME IN JERUSALEM...SO YOU MUST DO IN ROME.

...AND THEN ANOTHER.

YOUR NEPHEW?

YES! IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE I'VE SEEN YOU!

I WISH I HAD GOOD NEWS...

...I OVERHEARD MEN TALKING TO THE TEMPLE LEADERS!

THEY SAID...

...WE HAVE MADE A VOW!

WE WILL NOT EAT OR DRINK UNTIL PAUL IS DEAD!

AND WE ARE WILLING TO KILL HIM OURSELVES!

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THERE ARE MORE THAN FORTY OF THEM!

THE SANHEDRIN WILL SUMMON YOU.

WHILE YOU ARE BEING TRANSFERRED, FORTY MEN WILL MURDER YOU!

WHAT?

PLEASE, TAKE MY NEPHEW TO THE COMMANDER.

HE HAS VERY IMPORTANT INFORMATION!

THANK YOU!

MOTHER SENDS HER LOVE.

FAREWELL, UNCLE!

LET'S GO!

THE DEATH OF A PRISONER IN THEIR POSSESSION WAS UNACCEPTABLE TO THE ROMANS.

GET HIM SAFELY TO CAESAREA, TO GOVERNOR FELIX.

IN CAESAREA, THE HIGH PRIEST ANANIAS EMPLOYED THE LAWYER TERTULLUS TO BRING CHARGES AGAINST PAUL.

GOVERNOR FELIX, THIS TROUBLE-MAKER STIRS UP RIOTS AMONG THE JEWS.

HE IS A RINGLEADER OF THE SECT OF THE NAZARENES!

I CHEERFULLY MAKE MY DEFENSE.

I FOLLOW THE WAY OF JESUS; MY HOPE IS IN GOD.

I AM FAMILIAR WITH THIS "WAY" YOU SPEAK OF.

MY BELIEF IS THAT ALL PEOPLE WILL BE RESURRECTED...

...TO STAND BEFORE THE CREATOR, THE JUDGE OF ALL.

FELIX LISTENED TO BOTH SIDES.

WHILE AWAITING HIS DECISION, PAUL WAS ALLOWED VISITORS AND FREEDOM TO SEE HIS FRIENDS.

LATER, FELIX BROUGHT HIS WIFE DRUSILLA TO HEAR PAUL.

I BRING YOU GOOD NEWS OF ETERNAL LIFE IN GOD'S ONLY SON.

THERE IS JUDGMENT TO COME FOR OUR ACTIONS!

BUT THERE IS ALSO FORGIVENESS, THROUGH JESUS THE MESSIAH!

IT IS NOT DIFFICULT TO RECOGNIZE OUR SINS!

AND WE SHOULD PRACTICE SELF-CONTROL--

THAT'S ENOUGH FOR NOW!

FELIX KEPT PAUL IN CUSTODY FOR TWO YEARS IN CAESAREA.

HE HOPED TO RECEIVE A BRIBE TO PURCHASE PAUL'S RELEASE.

PAUL USED HIS SITUATION TO TELL EVERYONE WHO WOULD LISTEN ABOUT JESUS.

EVENTUALLY FESTUS TOOK FELIX'S PLACE.

THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS ASKED HIM TO SEND PAUL TO JERUSALEM--

--PLANNING YET ANOTHER AMBUSH.

HE SPEAKS AGAINST OUR LAWS.

HE SPEAKS AGAINST THE TEMPLE.

HE IS AN ENEMY OF CAESAR.

THEY WERE UNABLE TO PROVE ANY OF THEIR CHARGES.

SO ON RETURNING TO CAESAREA, FESTUS HAD PAUL BROUGHT BEFORE HIM.

DO YOU WISH TO GO TO JERUSALEM AND BE TRIED ON THESE CHARGES BEFORE ME?

YOU KNOW THEIR CHARGES ARE BASELESS.

I APPEAL TO CAESAR HIMSELF!

YOU ARE A ROMAN CITIZEN.

TO CAESAR YOU HAVE APPEALED; TO CAESAR YOU SHALL GO!

BEFORE PAUL SAILED FOR ROME, KING HEROD AGRIPPA...

...AND HIS WIFE BERNICE JOINED FESTUS TO HEAR PAUL SPEAK.

...THIS IS PAUL, WHOM THEY CALL THE APOSTLE.

KING HEROD, I CONSIDER MYSELF FORTUNATE TO MAKE MY DEFENSE BEFORE YOU.

FOR YOU ARE FAMILIAR WITH JEWISH CUSTOMS AND DOCTRINES.

I WAS AN ENEMY OF JESUS OF NAZARETH...

IN A RAGING FURY, I PERSECUTED HIS FOLLOWERS...

THEN JESUS APPEARED TO ME SAYING, "I AM SENDING YOU TO OPEN THEIR EYES...

THAT THEY MAY RECEIVE FORGIVENESS OF SINS."

THEREFORE, O KING AGRIPPA, I WAS NOT DISOBEDIENT TO THE HEAVENLY VISION.

I DECLARE THAT ALL SHOULD REPENT AND TURN TO GOD.

FOR THIS REASON THEY TRIED TO KILL ME.

PAUL, YOU ARE OUT OF YOUR MIND!

YOUR GREAT LEARNING IS DRIVING YOU MAD!

NO. I SPEAK TRUE AND RATIONAL WORDS.

KING AGRIPPA KNOWS ABOUT THESE THINGS.

PAUL, IN SUCH A SHORT TIME WOULD YOU PERSUADE ME TO BE A CHRISTIAN?

WHETHER SHORT OR LONG, I WANT NOT ONLY YOU BUT ALL WHO HEAR ME...

...TO BECOME SUCH AS I AM--EXCEPT FOR THESE CHAINS.

HAD HE NOT APPEALED TO CAESAR, HE WOULD BE FREE.

A CENTURION NAMED JULIUS TOOK PAUL AND OTHER PRISONERS ABOARD A SHIP BOUND FOR ROME.

I GAINED PASSAGE AS WELL, ALONG WITH OUR BROTHER ARISTARCHUS OF THESSALONICA.

JULIUS WAS KIND TO PAUL...

...ALLOWING HIM TO MOVE FREELY ABOARD SHIP.

WE SAILED FROM CAESAREA TO SIDON, THEN IN STRONG WINDS SAILED NEAR CYPRUS, COMING TO MYRA.

GALATIA

CILICIA

CNIDUS

PAMPHYLIA

MYRA

CRETE

SALMONE

FAIR HAVENS

CYPRUS

CAUDA

SIDON

CAESAREA

JERUSALEM

EGYPT

WE HAD TO HUG COASTLINES WHEREVER WE COULD.

ACTS 26:28-32, 27:1-5

HAVE YOU MET FOLLOWERS OF JESUS IN EGYPT?

I HAVE. MY OWN BROTHER IS ONE OF THEM!

BUT I AM NOT A MAN OF FAITH.

AH!... BUT YOUR LIFE IS NOT YET OVER, IS IT?

WE SAILED SLOWLY AND WITH DIFFICULTY, THE WINDS AGAINST US.

BUT, WE ENJOYED LONG CONVERSATIONS ABOUT THE GOSPEL.

STILL FIGHTING THE WINDS, WE SAILED TO CRETE, AT CNIDUS AND FAIR HAVENS, BY THE CITY OF LASEA.

THE WEATHER PLAGUED THE PLANS OF JULIUS AND THE CAPTAIN.

PAUL WAS EAGER TO GET TO ROME, BUT HE BELIEVED THE WEATHER WAS IN GOD'S HANDS!

WINTER IS COMING. THE WEATHER WILL GET WORSE BEFORE IT GETS BETTER.

THIS TIME OF YEAR THE SHIP CAN'T HARBOR LONG IN THIS UNPROTECTED PORT.

WE'LL WINTER IN THE SAFER HARBOR OF PHOENIX.

WE'LL LOSE NOT ONLY THE CARGO AND THE SHIP, BUT OUR LIVES!

WE'LL MAKE IT!

I'VE SPENT MY LIFE ON THE SEA.

AND I HAVEN'T DROWNED YET!

JULIUS POLLED THE SOLDIERS WHO SOON REGRETTED THEIR VOTE TO RETURN TO SEA.

BUT AFTER RIDING THE WAVES, THE WEATHER CALMED. THERE WAS ONLY A GENTLE SOUTH WIND.

WEIGH ANCHOR.

SEE, YOU WERE WRONG, MY FRIEND.

ACTS 27:9-13

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SUDDENLY A TEMPEST AROSE. ANCHOR ROPES WERE CUT TO KEEP THE SHIP FROM BEING TORN APART.

FOR THE NEXT 24 HOURS IT WAS NONSTOP. WE SEEMED BLOWN IN THE STORM LIKE A LEAF.

JETTISON EVERYTHING BUT FOOD AND FRESH WATER!

THE STORM BATTERED US RELENTLESSLY.

STOP! EVERY-THING CAN BE REPLACED BUT HUMAN LIVES!

BY THE THIRD DAY THE DESPERATE CAPTAIN...

...HAD EVEN THE SHIP'S TACKLE AND RIGGING TOSSED OVERBOARD.

WE ABANDONED ALL HOPE OF BEING SAVED.

PAUL, I BRING YOU A MESSAGE FROM THE KING OF KINGS!

MEN, I HATE TO SAY I TOLD YOU SO, BUT...

YOU SHOULD HAVE STAYED IN CRETE.

I URGE YOU TO TAKE HEART, FOR NO LIVES WILL BE LOST...

...ONLY THE SHIP.

THIS VERY NIGHT AN ANGEL OF GOD TOLD ME, "DO NOT BE AFRAID, PAUL; YOU MUST STAND BEFORE CAESAR.

AND GOD WILL SPARE THE LIVES OF ALL WHO SAIL WITH YOU."

FOURTEEN NIGHTS PASSED AND STILL WE WERE BEING DRIVEN ACROSS THE ADRIATIC SEA.

LAND! I SEE LAND!!!

FIFTEEN FATHOMS. PUT DOWN ANCHORS BEFORE WE HIT THE ROCKS!

UNLESS THESE MEN STAY IN THE SHIP, YOU CANNOT BE SAVED.

SOLDIERS CUT AWAY THE ROPES OF THE SHIP'S BOAT AND LET IT GO.

FOR TWO WEEKS YOU'VE LIVED WITH FEAR AND WITHOUT FOOD.

NOW EAT!

YOU NEED STRENGTH.

THANK YOU, FATHER, FOR YOUR PROMISE TO DELIVER US.

RESCUE THESE MEN FROM SIN'S DARKNESS TO THE LIGHT OF JESUS' GOSPEL.

RUN AGROUND ON A REEF, THE BOW STUCK, THE STERN WAS BATTERED BY THE SURF.

WE MUST KILL THE PRISONERS LEST THEY ESCAPE!

NO!

ALL WHO CAN SWIM: INTO THE WATER NOW!

THE REST, GRAB PLANKS FROM THE SHIP TO FLOAT ASHORE!

IT TURNS OUT WE HAD WASHED UP ON THE ISLAND OF MALTA.

THE NATIVE PEOPLE SHOWED US UNUSUAL KINDNESS.

IT IS OUR MOST DEADLY SNAKE. HE WILL DIE WITHIN MINUTES.

THIS MAN MUST BE A MURDERER.

HE ESCAPED THE SEA; BUT THE GODDESS JUSTICE WILL NOT ALLOW HIM TO LIVE.

THE NATIVES WAITED FOR HIM TO SWELL UP AND DIE.

WHEN THEY REALIZED HE WOULD LIVE, THEY CHANGED THEIR OPINION.

NO MAN HAS EVER SURVIVED THAT SERPENT'S POISON!

HE MUST BE A GOD!

I AM ONLY A MAN! GET UP AND LISTEN TO ME.

I WILL TELL YOU ABOUT THE ONE TRUE GOD.

HE IS ALL-POWERFUL AND HOLY, BUT HE HAS GOOD NEWS FOR YOU!

YOU SHOULD BE DEAD!

YES, AFTER YEARS OF BEING YOUR PATIENT, I SHOULD BE.

NO SERPENT, NOT SATAN HIMSELF, WILL KEEP ME FROM PREACHING THE GOSPEL IN ROME.

A WEALTHY MALTAN, PUBLIUS, TREATED US ROYALLY FOR THREE DAYS.

ON THE SEA YOU HAD A TASTE OF HELL. HERE YOU HAVE A TASTE OF HEAVEN.

JESUS CAME TO DELIVER YOU FROM HELL TO HEAVEN.

WILL YOU TURN FROM YOUR SINS, TO HIM?

I HEARD ABOUT YOUR MIRACLE SNAKE BITE!

DOES YOUR GOD ONLY DO MIRACLES FOR YOU?

MY FATHER IS ILL.

VERY ILL.

TAKE ME TO HIM.

GENESIS 3:15; ACTS 28:7

HE HAS A FEVER. AND DYSENTERY.

FOR A SKEPTICAL PHYSICIAN, WITNESSING TRUE MIRACLES OF HEALING IS BREATHTAKING.

AFTER HEALING PUBLIUS'S FATHER--

GOD USED PAUL TO HEAL MANY MORE SICK PEOPLE FROM ALL OVER MALTA.

FINALLY WE PREPARED TO SAIL TO ROME.

THE MALTANS GAVE EVERY-THING WE NEEDED AND MORE.

WE SAILED TO SYRACUSE, SICILY, THEN NORTH TO ROME, FINALLY WALKING THE APPIAN WAY.

AS WORD SPREAD THAT THE APOSTLE WAS COMING TO ROME...

...FOLLOWERS OF JESUS WELCOMED US AS WE NEARED THE CITY.

ROME WAS HUGE, WITH PEOPLE EVERYWHERE, OVER A MILLION OF THEM.

PAUL, UNDER HOUSE ARREST, WAS ALLOWED TO RENT A ROOM...

...WHICH HE SHARED WITH A GUARD, TO WHOM HE WAS OFTEN CHAINED.

I STAYED NEARBY, BRINGING HIM FOOD, BOOKS AND WRITING MATERIAL.

...AND LISTENING AS HE COMPLAINED ABOUT MY DOCTORING.

NERO'S MOTHER MURDERED THE EMPEROR, CLAUDIUS, AND HIS SON, TO GET NERO ON THE THRONE.

NERO LATER MURDERED HIS MOTHER, AND FAMILY RIVALS.

NERO BECAME INCREASINGLY SELF-OBSESSED.

HE GAVE COMMAND PERFORMANCES AS A POET AND LYRE PLAYER.

SOME SAID HE WALKED THE STREETS AT NIGHT, RANDOMLY MURDERING FOR ENTERTAINMENT.

PAUL, ONCE A GREAT PERSECUTOR OF BELIEVERS, WOULD SOON MEET THE GREATEST ENEMY BELIEVERS WOULD EVER FACE.

BUT, AS IMPRISONMENTS GO, THIS WASN'T PAUL'S WORST.

HE HAD PERMISSION TO MEET LOCAL JEWISH LEADERS.

BROTHERS, I DID NOTHING AGAINST OUR PEOPLE OR OUR CUSTOMS.

THE ROMANS WISHED TO SET ME FREE, BUT SOME RELIGIOUS LEADERS OBJECTED.

WE DESIRE TO HEAR YOUR VIEWS...

...BUT PEOPLE EVERYWHERE SPEAK AGAINST THE CHRISTIAN SECT.

LATER, THE JEWISH LEADERS CAME TO PAUL'S LODGING.

BROTHERS, I LOVE THE HOLY SCRIPTURES AS MUCH AS YOU DO.

THE LAW OF MOSES AND THE PROPHETS TESTIFY THAT MESSIAH HAS COME!

FROM MORNING TO EVENING PAUL TAUGHT.

NO! I REFUSE TO BELIEVE THE MESSIAH KING COULD DIE ON A ROMAN CROSS!

BUT YOUR WORDS ABOUT THIS JESUS ARE CONVINCING.

YET ISAIAH SAID MESSIAH WOULD DIE FOR OUR SINS.

PAUL LIVED TWO YEARS UNDER HOUSE ARREST--

--BUT BECAUSE HE HAD SOME FREEDOM, HE WELCOMED ALL--

--PROCLAIMING GOD'S KINGDOM AND TEACHING BOLDLY AND WITHOUT INTERFERENCE.

PAUL HAD TRAVELED FAR AND WIDE TO PREACH THE GOSPEL.

NOW ROMAN SOLDIERS--SIX PER DAY--BECAME HIS NEW MISSION FIELD.

SOME, TRANSFORMED BY THE GOOD NEWS, SHARED IT WITH THEIR FELLOW SOLDIERS.

PAUL ALSO TAUGHT HIS BELOVED CHURCHES THROUGH HIS LETTERS.

BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN PHILIPPI, MY IMPRISONMENT SERVES TO ADVANCE THE GOSPEL.

OUR FELLOW BELIEVERS NOW BOLDLY SPEAK GOD'S WORD WITHOUT FEAR!

FOR TO ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST, AND TO DIE IS GAIN.

MY DESIRE IS TO DEPART AND BE WITH CHRIST, FOR THAT IS FAR BETTER.

BUT TO REMAIN HERE IS MORE NECESSARY FOR YOU...

...AND IT'S GOD'S PLAN THAT YOU SHOULD NOT ONLY BELIEVE BUT SUFFER FOR HIS SAKE.

DO NOTHING FROM SELFISH AMBITION OR CONCEIT.

HAVE THE ATTITUDE OF JESUS, WHO, THOUGH HE WAS GOD, HUMBLED HIMSELF TO DIE ON A CROSS.

EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW, AND EVERY TONGUE CONFESS THAT JESUS CHRIST IS LORD.

I HOPE TO SEND TIMOTHY SOON--NEWS OF YOU WILL CHEER ME.

TIMOTHY HAS SERVED WITH ME AS MY SON IN THE GOSPEL.

WHATEVER I GAINED FROM RELIGION, I GAVE UP FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST.

I COUNT EVERYTHING AS LOSS COMPARED TO THE EXTREME VALUE OF KNOWING JESUS MY LORD.

I HAVE NO RIGHTEOUSNESS BUT THAT WHICH COMES THROUGH FAITH.

REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS; AGAIN I SAY, REJOICE.

DO NOT WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING...

...BUT WITH PRAYER AND THANKS, TELL GOD YOUR TROUBLES.

AND GOD'S PEACE WILL GUARD YOUR HEARTS AND YOUR MINDS IN CHRIST JESUS.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS DURING MY CONFINEMENT!

I HAVE LEARNED TO BE CONTENT IN EVERY SITUATION...

...AND CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME.

ALL THE SAINTS HERE IN ROME GREET YOU...

...ESPECIALLY THOSE OF CAESAR'S HOUSEHOLD.

EVENTUALLY PAUL WAS RELEASED, AND MADE HIS FINAL JOURNEY TO MANY CITIES.

AMONG THEM WERE CORINTH, MILETUS, TROAS, CRETE, EPHESUS--

--AND, AS PROMISED, PHILIPPI.

MEANWHILE, IN ROME, NERO GREW MORE AND MORE CORRUPT.

A GREAT FIRE STARTED IN ROME.

MANY BELIEVED NERO STARTED IT TO MAKE ROOM FOR A MORE OPULENT PALACE.

HE BLAMED THE FIRE ON JESUS' FOLLOWERS...

...SUCCESSFULLY TURNING PUBLIC OPINION AGAINST CHRISTIANS.

NERO OUTLAWED CHRISTIANITY.

A SYSTEMATIC PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS FOLLOWED.

NERO PUT CHRISTIANS IN THE ARENA WITH LIONS--

--SOMETIMES DRESSING THEM IN BLOODY ANIMAL SKINS.

NERO CRUCIFIED CHRISTIANS AT PUBLIC GATHERINGS--

--AND EVEN ORDERED THAT BELIEVERS BE LIT AS TORCHES FOR HIS PALACE GROUNDS.

SOME VIEWED HIM AS THE ANTICHRIST.

HE WAS BUT ONE OF MANY.

2 TIMOTHY 4:13, 20; TITUS 1:5, 3:12

WHEN PEOPLE SAW CHRISTIANS BRAVELY FACE DEATH AND SPEAK OF A GLORIOUS AFTERLIFE, SOME WERE DRAWN TO THE GOSPEL.

THEY SOUGHT OUT THE ILLEGAL GATHERINGS OF CHRIST-FOLLOWERS, KNOWN AS CHURCHES.

PETER AND PAUL ARRIVED IN ROME SEPARATELY.

BOTH HAD THE SAME MISSION: TO ENCOURAGE THOSE CHURCHES.

I CHERISH MEMORIES OF THE FIFTEEN DAYS I SPENT WITH YOU IN JERUSALEM, PETER.

AS DO I. EVEN AFTER THIRTY YEARS!

AS CHIEF APOSTLE, YOU WERE KIND TO GIVE TIME--

--TO THIS UNWORTHY ZEALOT WHO HAD PROUDLY PERSECUTED CHRIST'S CHURCH.

AND NOW, BROTHER PAUL, GOD HAS MADE YOU APOSTLE TO THE WORLD! WHEREVER I GO YOUR LETTERS ARE COPIED AND READ IN THE CHURCHES!

YOU ARE FAMILIAR WITH MY LETTERS?

"ALL THINGS WORK TOGETHER FOR THE GOOD OF THOSE WHO LOVE GOD AND ARE CALLED ACCORDING TO HIS PURPOSE."

I WROTE THAT TO THE CHURCH HERE IN ROME!

YES. I HAVE BEEN READING YOUR MAIL!

NERO WILL SOON KNOW WE ARE BOTH HERE. OUR DAYS OF FREEDOM GROW SHORT.

YES. WE HAVE WALKED INTO THE LION'S DEN.

I THINK WE WILL SEE EACH OTHER NEXT IN A FAR BETTER PLACE.

IF NERO PUTS US TO DEATH, LET US DIE WELL.

THE DAY PETER AND PAUL SPOKE OF CAME SOON.

FIRST FOR PETER--

--AND LATER--

CRASH

--FOR PAUL.

BY ORDER OF EMPEROR NERO, SIMON PETER IS SENTENCED TO DEATH.

I AM UNWORTHY TO DIE IN THE SAME WAY AS MY LORD.

I HAVE A FAVOR TO ASK.

WELCOME TO ROME'S MAMERTINE HOTEL, WHERE I KNOW ALL THE RATS BY NAME.

LUKE, YOU LOOK DISTRESSED. WHAT IS IT?

I HAVE NEWS ABOUT PETER.

HE'S GONE HOME, HASN'T HE?

LINUS AND I SAW IT. PETER ASKED... TO BE CRUCIFIED UPSIDE DOWN...

BECAUSE HE THOUGHT HIMSELF UNWORTHY TO DIE LIKE HIS LORD.

THANK YOU FOR GIVING HIM THE STRENGTH, LORD JESUS...

...THAT HE DID NOT DENY YOU.

PLEASE TELL PETER FOR ME... WELL DONE!

PETER AND I LAST ATE TOGETHER HERE IN ROME.

WE THREE WILL FEAST TOGETHER AGAIN... IN THE NEW JERUSALEM!

DO NOT GRIEVE, OLD FRIEND.

SINCE I'M A CITIZEN, THEY WILL NOT CRUCIFY ME.

NOT EVEN THE MADMAN NERO WILL SET FIRE TO A ROMAN.

DURING PAUL'S EARLIER IMPRISONMENT, NEARLY ANYONE COULD VISIT HIS QUARTERS.

NOW HE WAS ALONE IN A COLD, FILTHY CELL WITH ONLY VERMIN FOR COMPANY--

--AND THE OCCASIONAL HUMAN VISITOR.

AT LAST THEY LET US BRING IN WRITING MATERIALS.

THANK GOD FOR HIS KINDNESS!

I HAVE MISSED YOU, TITUS.

I HAVE ONE FINAL LETTER TO WRITE--TO OUR FRIEND TIMOTHY.

I WISH I HAD A CUP OF WINE TO OFFER MY OLD FRIENDS!

THE CONDITIONS HERE ARE BAD ENOUGH...

--MUST I ALSO ENDURE A SECOND CLASS SCRIBE?

I WILL TRY TO STAY AWAKE AS YOU DICTATE, OLD MAN.

FORTUNATELY, THERE IS NO WINDOW FOR ME TO FALL OUT OF!

PAUL, AN APOSTLE OF CHRIST JESUS... IN KEEPING WITH THE PROMISE OF LIFE THAT IS IN HIM...

TO TIMOTHY, MY DEAR SON...

NIGHT AND DAY I CONSTANTLY REMEMBER YOU IN MY PRAYERS.

RECALLING YOUR TEARS, I LONG TO SEE YOU, SO THAT I MAY BE FILLED WITH JOY.

I AM REMINDED OF YOUR SINCERE FAITH...

DO NOT BE ASHAMED OF THE TESTIMONY ABOUT OUR LORD OR OF ME HIS PRISONER. RATHER, JOIN WITH ME IN SUFFERING FOR THE GOSPEL, BY THE POWER OF GOD.

"OUR LORD SAVED US--NOT BECAUSE OF OUR WORK BUT BECAUSE OF HIS GRACE.

"JESUS DESTROYED DEATH. HE BRINGS ETERNAL LIFE TO LIGHT THROUGH THE GOSPEL."

"I WAS APPOINTED A HERALD AND AN APOSTLE OF THIS GOSPEL."

I KNOW THE ONE I BELIEVE IN, AND I AM SURE THAT HE WILL GUARD WHAT HE ENTRUSTED TO ME.

"JOIN WITH ME IN SUFFERING, LIKE A GOOD SOLDIER OF CHRIST JESUS."

ATHLETES RECEIVE THE VICTOR'S CROWN ONLY WHEN THEY COMPETE ACCORDING TO THE RULES.

I MAY BE CHAINED, BUT GOD'S WORD IS NOT CHAINED!

"EVERYONE WHO WANTS TO LIVE A GODLY LIFE IN CHRIST JESUS WILL BE PERSECUTED...

"PRESENT YOURSELF TO GOD AS AN UNASHAMED WORKER...

"... WHO CORRECTLY HANDLES THE WORD OF TRUTH."

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"FROM INFANCY YOU HAVE KNOWN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, WHICH ARE ABLE TO MAKE YOU WISE FOR SALVATION THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST JESUS."

I AM ALREADY BEING POURED OUT LIKE A DRINK OFFERING; THE TIME FOR MY DEPARTURE IS NEAR.

I HAVE FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT, I HAVE FINISHED THE RACE, I HAVE KEPT THE FAITH.

NOW THE CROWN AWAITS, WHICH THE LORD WILL AWARD TO ME ON THAT DAY...

...AND NOT ONLY TO ME, BUT TO ALL WHO LONG FOR HIS APPEARING.

ALL SCRIPTURE IS GOD-BREATHED--USEFUL FOR TEACHING, CORRECTING AND TRAINING IN RIGHTEOUSNESS--

PREACH THE WORD; BE PREPARED... REBUKE AND ENCOURAGE--WITH PATIENCE AND CAREFUL INSTRUCTION.

A TIME WILL COME WHEN PEOPLE WILL NOT PUT UP WITH THE TRUTH...

THEY WILL FLOCK TO TEACHERS WHO SAY WHAT THEIR ITCHING EARS WANT TO HEAR.

TIMOTHY, DO YOUR BEST TO COME TO ME QUICKLY.

OF THE ORIGINAL GROUP, ONLY LUKE IS STILL WITH ME. THE OTHERS HAVE LEFT.

"BRING JOHN MARK WITH YOU-- HE'S HELPFUL TO MY MINISTRY."

THE SAME JOHN MARK YOU LEFT BEHIND?

THE SAME. LOVE IS PATIENT AND KIND.

I WAS NEITHER TOWARD JOHN MARK. BUT GOD DID NOT GIVE UP ON HIM. OR ME.

"BRING THE CLOAK THAT I LEFT WITH CARPUS AT TROAS...

"... AND MY SCROLLS, ESPECIALLY THE PARCHMENTS."

"DO YOUR BEST TO GET HERE BEFORE WINTER.

"IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER LUKE'S DOCTORING WILL KILL ME BEFORE NERO DOES."

YOU CAN CROSS OUT THAT LAST LINE, SCRIBE.

ARE YOU AFRAID TIMOTHY WON'T RECOGNIZE YOUR WEAK ATTEMPT AT HUMOR?

A WEEK LATER, THEY ALLOWED ME INTO THE PRISON AGAIN.

YOU BROUGHT YOUR ACCOUNT OF THE GOSPEL, AS I REQUESTED?

PLEASE READ IT TO ME!

SINCE I HAVE CAREFULLY INVESTIGATED EVERYTHING--

--IT SEEMED GOOD TO ME TO WRITE AN ORDERLY ACCOUNT--

--SO THAT YOU MAY KNOW THE CERTAINTY OF WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN TAUGHT.

FOR TWO AND A HALF HOURS I READ, SURPRISINGLY WITHOUT INTERRUPTION.

WHILE JESUS WAS BLESSING THEM, HE LEFT THEM AND WAS TAKEN UP INTO HEAVEN.

THEN THEY WORSHIPED HIM AND RETURNED TO JERUSALEM WITH GREAT JOY.

YOU MUST HIRE A SCRIBE TO MAKE COPIES.

YOU THINK SO?

IT'S TOO PRECIOUS TO BE LOST.

HOW ARE YOU DOING ON YOUR SECOND VOLUME?

I AM MOSTLY DONE; WRITING OF THE SHIPWRECK IN MALTA.

I BELIEVE I WILL END IT WITH YOUR FIRST ROMAN IMPRISON-MENT...

WHAT WILL YOU CALL IT?

THE ACCOUNT OF THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

MUCH OF IT WILL CONCERN THE LIFE OF A DEAR FRIEND I HAVE CLOSELY OBSERVED FOR MANY YEARS...

THOSE WERE MY FINAL MOMENTS ALONE WITH PAUL, FOR NOT LONG AFTER...

PAUL OF TARSUS, AS A ROMAN CITIZEN YOU MUST RENOUNCE YOUR FAITH IN A FALSE RULER.

SAY THE WORDS, "CAESAR IS LORD," AND THE GREAT AND MERCIFUL NERO WILL SAVE YOU.

I AM A CITIZEN OF ANOTHER COUNTRY. AND CHRIST'S MERCY HAS ALREADY SAVED ME.

BOW YOUR KNEE TO CAESAR AND YOU SHALL BE FREED.

I BOW MY KNEE BEFORE ONE KING ONLY, THE KING OF KINGS. HE HAS ALREADY SET ME FREE.

I AM CAESAR, THERE IS NO OTHER KING. OF WHOM DO YOU SPEAK?

KING JESUS, MY LORD AND SAVIOR.

I COMMAND YOU TO SAY "KURIOS CAESAR... *CAESAR* IS LORD!"

IN OBEDIENCE TO THE ONLY TRUE RULER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH...

I SAY, *KURIOS IESOUS*... JESUS IS LORD!

HOW DARE YOU DEFY ME? AS EMPEROR, I AM A SON OF THE GODS!

I DENY ALL FALSE GODS!

GOD'S SON, OUR ONLY SAVIOR, IS JESUS CHRIST!

BEHEAD THIS MAN!

THIS BLOW WILL MARK THE END OF THIS VILE RELIGION!

THEY WILL KILL YOU TOO, LUKE!

PAUL DOES NOT WANT THAT!

THE APOSTLE TOLD ME YOU MUST LIVE TO FINISH YOUR BOOKS!

BEG FOR MERCY, YOU PATHETIC OLD FOOL!!!

DO YOU THINK I FEAR ONE SO SMALL AS YOU?

THE WORST YOU CAN DO TO ME IS SEND ME TO THE PARADISE I LONG FOR--

--WHERE I WILL FOREVER SERVE KING JESUS--

--COMMANDER OF ALL THE ANGEL ARMIES.

SILENCE HIM!

HE'S A MADMAN, A DEMON!

BEHEAD HIM!

NOW!

IT'S ALL RIGHT, JUSTUS, MY FRIEND. REMEMBER THE GOOD NEWS I SHARED WITH YOU.

I CANNOT PUT YOUR HEAD TO THE BLOCK. I WILL NOT!

YOU DON'T HAVE TO.

WHACK

THAT DAY THE WORST MAN IN THE WORLD FACED THE BEST MAN.

I SAW ONE MAN POSSESSED BY SATAN, PRINCE OF DARKNESS--

--AND THE OTHER POSSESSED BY JESUS, CREATOR OF LIGHT AND LORD OVER ALL.

BUT SOON, THE MAN WHO ORDERED THE END OF MY FRIEND'S LIFE--

GENERAL GALBA IS NEARING ROME.

THE SENATE HAS DECLARED YOU A PUBLIC ENEMY!

THEY SAY YOU MUST BE... EXECUTED.

--FACED THE END OF HIS OWN.

WHILE MOBS ASSEMBLED AND HIS WORLD CRUMBLED AROUND HIM, NERO WEIGHED HIS OPTIONS.

POWERLESS AGAINST HIS MANY ENEMIES, THE SO-CALLED "GOD" NERO KILLED HIMSELF.

SO, SHORTLY AFTER THE APOSTLE LEFT THIS WORLD, THE EMPEROR FOLLOWED.

I HAVE OFTEN CONTEMPLATED WHAT AWAITED THEM BOTH.

NERO LIVED IN SELF-INDULGENT OPULENCE ONLY MILES AWAY FROM PAUL WHO SUFFERED IN A RAT-INFESTED PRISON.

BUT WHERE ARE THESE TWO MEN NOW?

ONE BOWED TO JESUS AS LORD. HE LIVES FOREVER WITH HIS KING.

ONE CALLED HIMSELF LORD. HE EXISTS IN THE MISERY OF A CHRISTLESS ETERNITY.

THE CAESAR LEFT HIS TREASURES BEHIND; THE APOSTLE SENT ALL HIS TREASURES AHEAD.

NERO KILLED COUNTLESS CHRIST-FOLLOWERS.

THE BLOOD OF THE MARTYRS WAS THE SEED OF THE CHURCH.

INTENDING TO CRUSH THE GOSPEL, JESUS' ENEMIES INSTEAD HELPED SPREAD IT.

TWO YEARS AFTER NERO'S DEATH, THE ROMAN GENERAL TITUS DESTROYED JERUSALEM.

THE LAST OF THE CITY'S CHRIST-WORSHIPPERS WERE SCATTERED.

ROME
Persecution: 60-70 AD

JERUSALEM
Persecution: 30-70 AD
Destruction: 70 AD

CHRISTIANITY SPREAD THROUGH-OUT THE EMPIRE, AND BEYOND.

THE STORY OF THE APOSTLE, THE "SENT ONE," IS ALMOST OVER.

AND YET IT CONTINUES.

A PHARISEE, WHO ONCE WOULD NEVER EAT WITH NON-JEWS, BECAME APOSTLE TO THE WHOLE WORLD.

THE CHRISTIAN FAITH IS NO INWARD-CENTERED SECT.

IT INCLUDES PEOPLE OF EVERY TRIBE, NATION AND LANGUAGE.

NOW TITUS VESPASIANUS, WHO DESTROYED JERUSALEM, RULES ROME. HIS STATUES ARE EVERYWHERE.

BUT THERE ARE TWO EMBLEMS I SEE MORE OFTEN THAN THE EMPEROR'S STATUE.

ONE IS THE "ICHTHUS"-- THE FISH WITH GREEK LETTERS THAT STAND FOR JESUS CHRIST, GOD'S SON, SAVIOR.

THE OTHER IS THE CROSS, SYMBOLIZING JESUS' REDEMPTIVE DEATH.

AS A BOY, 'OUR' TITUS LIVED ON THE STREETS OF JERUSALEM--

--HELPING THE BEGGAR LAZARUS, WHOSE STORY I TELL IN MY GOSPEL. *

HE BECAME LIKE A SON BOTH TO PAUL AND TO ME, AND SERVED AS AN IMPORTANT CHURCH LEADER.

BUT HE NEVER CONSIDERED HIMSELF TOO IMPORTANT TO CARE FOR ME IN THESE LAST YEARS.

LIKE PAUL AND PETER, MOST APOSTLES WERE KILLED FOR THEIR FAITH.

WE CHRIST-FOLLOWERS CONTINUE TO BE UNPOPULAR WITH THE GOVERNMENT--

--OFFICIALS DO NOT WANT PEOPLE TO BELIEVE IN A POWER ABOVE THE STATE.

OF THE APOSTLES, ONLY JOHN REMAINS ALIVE, IN EXILE ON THE ISLAND OF PATMOS.

(*FOOTNOTE: THE STORY OF LAZARUS AND THE RICH MAN, AND WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM AFTER THEY DIED, IS TOLD IN *ETERNITY*, BY RANDY ALCORN, ART BY JAVIER SALTARES, KINGSTONE COMICS.)

I HOPE YOU TOO WILL MEET US ONE DAY, PAUL AND ME AND OUR COMPANIONS.

TO DO SO, YOU MUST FIRST MEET JESUS, THE GOD-MAN.

IF YOU DO NOT KNOW HIM, I INVITE YOU TO READ...

...WHAT SOME CALL LUKE'S GOSPEL--THE GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY IN JESUS.

THE STORY OF JESUS CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS--PETER, THE APOSTLES, AND MY FRIEND PAUL--IS IN MY SECOND BOOK, CALLED ACTS.

NOW, I LOOK FORWARD TO THE DAY I'LL BE REUNITED WITH MY FRIENDS--

--AND CAN, AT LAST, SEE MY SAVIOR FACE TO FACE.

LOOK, GOD'S HOME IS NOW AMONG HIS PEOPLE! HE WILL LIVE WITH THEM, AND THEY WILL BE HIS PEOPLE...HE WILL WIPE EVERY TEAR FROM THEIR EYES, AND THERE WILL BE NO MORE DEATH OR SORROW OR CRYING OR PAIN.

ALL THESE THINGS ARE GONE FOREVER... JESUS SAID, "I AM THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA--THE BEGINNING AND THE END. TO ALL WHO ARE THIRSTY I WILL GIVE FREELY FROM THE SPRINGS OF THE WATER OF LIFE."

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"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23).

The desire of Kingstone Comics is that all would have a relationship with God through the great salvation He offers in Jesus Christ. The gift of eternal life that God offers cannot be purchased through religious observances, church attendance or even good moral deeds. Salvation can be found through no other means than Jesus Christ, who is the Son of God.

The Bible indicates that we are all sinners and in need of God's grace and forgiveness. If you have been reading this graphic novel and something is stirring inside you to begin a personal relationship with God, we encourage you to talk with God and pray something similar to this:

Prayer – Dear God, I confess that I am a sinner and ask you to forgive me of the many wrong things I have done against you and against others. I believe that Jesus Christ died in my place on the cross, that he is indeed the Son of God, and today I ask him to come into my life and forgive me of my sins. Today I surrender my life to Jesus Christ and seek to live for him. Amen.

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