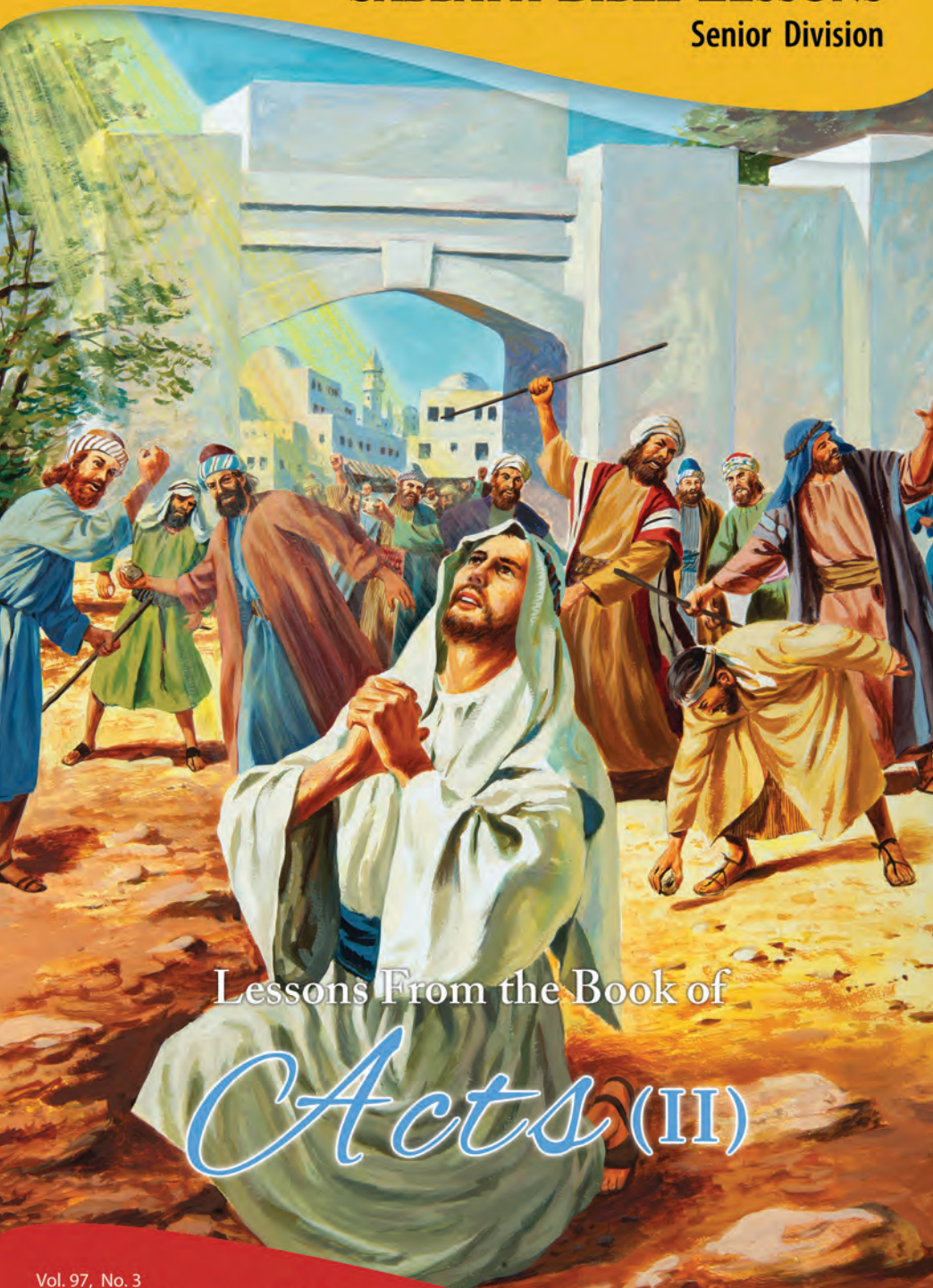


# SABBATH BIBLE LESSONS

## Senior Division



Lessons From the Book of

# *Acts* (II)

Vol. 97, No. 3

July–September, 2021

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**Illustrations:** Good Salt on the front cover; RF123 on pp. 30, 72; Map Resources on pp. 4, 51, 72.

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## ● U.S.A. AND CANADA

**Contact:** Telephone 1-540-366-9400 \* Fax 1-540-366-2814 \* Website: [www.sdarm.org](http://www.sdarm.org) \* E-mail: [info@sdarm.org](mailto:info@sdarm.org)

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## ● SOUTH AFRICA

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# Foreword

As Sabbath school students around the world continue studying the second part of *Lessons From the Book of Acts*, there is much for which to be thankful. The Holy Spirit is available to us just as it was to the early church—and is to be poured out without measure.

“Shall we be less earnest than were the apostles? Shall we not by living faith claim the promises that moved them to the depths of their being to call upon the Lord Jesus for the fulfillment of His word: ‘Ask, and ye shall receive’? John 16:24. . . .

“As the disciples, filled with the power of the Spirit, went forth to proclaim the gospel, so God’s servants are to go forth today. Filled with an unselfish desire to give the message of mercy to those who are in the darkness of error and unbelief, we are to take up the Lord’s work. He gives us our part to do in cooperation with Him, and He will also move on the hearts of unbelievers to carry forward His work in the regions beyond. Already many are receiving the Holy Spirit, and no longer will the way be blocked by listless indifference.

“Why has the history of the work of the disciples, as they labored with holy zeal, animated and vitalized by the Holy Spirit, been recorded, if it is not that from this record the Lord’s people today are to gain an inspiration to work earnestly for Him? What the Lord did for His people in that time, it is just as essential, and more so, that He do for His people today. All that the apostles did, every church member today is to do. And we are to work with as much more fervor, to be accompanied by the Holy Spirit in as much greater measure, as the increase of wickedness demands a more decided call to repentance.

“Everyone on whom is shining the light of present truth is to be stirred with compassion for those who are in darkness. From all believers, light is to be reflected in clear, distinct rays. A work similar to that which the Lord did through His delegated messengers after the Day of Pentecost He is waiting to do today. At this time, when the end of all things is at hand, should not the zeal of the church exceed even that of the early church? Zeal for the glory of God moved the disciples to bear witness to the truth with mighty power. Should not this zeal fire our hearts with a longing to tell the story of redeeming love, of Christ and Him crucified? Should not the power of God be even more mightily revealed today than in the time of the apostles?”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, pp. 32, 33.

“Work, brethren, work while you have the opportunity, while the day lasts. Work, for ‘the night cometh, when no man can work.’ How soon that night may come, it is impossible for you to tell. Now is your opportunity; improve it.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 732.

*The General Conference Sabbath School Department*

## First Sabbath Offering for a chapel and church school in Dibrugarh, Assam, India

The message of Reformation came to the northeastern region of India in the 1980's when Bro. D. Sureshkumar was ministering to the people of this area. By God's grace, we continue to have brethren in the northernmost part of Dibrugarh, a town known partly for its oil industry while also being situated within a vast community of tea plantations where various indigenous Tea-Tribes live and work.



Dibrugarh lies within the state of Assam, which is just south of the eastern Himalayas along the Brahmaputra and Barak River valleys. The state covers an area of 78,438 km<sup>2</sup> (30,285 sq. mi.) and is bordered by Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh to the north; Nagaland and Manipur to the east; Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram and Bangladesh to the south; and West Bengal to the west via the Siliguri Corridor, a 22-kilometer (14 mi.) strip of land connecting it to the rest of India.

Assam is one of the world's most populous subdivisions, currently home to approximately 31 million people—an increase of nearly 17% over the past 10 years. According to the 2011 census, 61.47% were Hindus, 34.22% were Muslims and 3.7% are Christian minorities. Other religions follow, include Jainism (0.1%), Buddhism (0.2%), Sikhism (0.1%) and Animism. The official and most common language is Assamese, followed by Bengali.

The tea-garden community is estimated to be around 6.5 million souls, of which an estimated 4 million dwell in residential quarters built within 799 tea estates spread across the tea-growing regions of Assam. Another 2.5 million reside in nearby villages just beyond. They are not a single ethnic group but rather consist of different ethnic groups speaking dozens of languages with some Assamese influence and various sets of cultures.

Our aim is to promote the everlasting gospel here by building a chapel and church school in Dibrugarh. This monument to the Lord is to be a shining light for this region and we need your help. Thus, we heartily appeal to all our brethren, sisters, and youth to donate generously to this project, "being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God" (2 Corinthians 9:11). For your kind help we declare our thanks and warm regards.

*Your brethren and sisters from Dibrugarh*

# Troubles and Hope

**MEMORY TEXT:** “Confirming the souls of the disciples and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22).

“[Paul] lost no opportunity of speaking of the Saviour or of helping those in trouble. From place to place he went, preaching the gospel of Christ and establishing churches.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 367.

**Suggested Reading:** *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 180–187.

*Sunday*

June 27

## 1. THE RESULT OF FAITH

- a. After the disciples of Christ were compelled to flee Iconium from persecution for their faith, what did they encounter in Lystra? Acts 14:8.
- 

“We should always be ready to relieve suffering and to help those in need.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 360.

- b. As the man listened to Paul speak, what did the apostle perceive about him—and what happened as a result? Acts 14:9, 10.
- 

“While Paul was telling the people of Christ’s work as a healer of the sick and afflicted, he saw among his hearers a cripple whose eyes were fastened on him and who received and believed his words. Paul’s heart went out in sympathy toward the afflicted man, in whom he discerned one who ‘had faith to be healed.’ In the presence of the idolatrous assembly Paul commanded the cripple to stand upright on his feet. Heretofore the sufferer had been able to take a sitting posture only, but now he instantly obeyed Paul’s command and for the first time in his life stood on his feet. Strength came with this effort of faith.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 181.

## 2. ALL GLORY TO GOD

- a. How did the Lystrians react to the miracle they saw? Acts 14:11–13.
- 

“ ‘When the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men.’ This statement was in harmony with a tradition of theirs that the gods occasionally visited the earth. Barnabas they called Jupiter, the father of gods, because of his venerable appearance, his dignified bearing, and the mildness and benevolence expressed in his countenance. Paul they believe to be Mercury, ‘because he was the chief speaker,’ earnest and active, and eloquent with words of warning and exhortation.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 181.

- b. What reveals that the apostles were firm to render all glory to Christ? Acts 14:14–18.
- 

“The Lystrians, eager to show their gratitude, prevailed upon the priest of Jupiter to do the apostles honor, and he ‘brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people.’ Paul and Barnabas, who had sought retirement and rest, were not aware of these preparations. Soon, however, their attention was attracted by the sound of music and the enthusiastic shouting of a large crowd who had come to the house where they were staying.

“When the apostles ascertained the cause of this visit and its attendant excitement, ‘they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people’ in the hope of preventing further proceedings. . . .

“Notwithstanding the positive denial of the apostles that they were divine, and notwithstanding Paul’s endeavors to direct the minds of the people to the true God as the only object worthy of adoration, it was almost impossible to turn the heathen from their intention to offer sacrifice. So firm had been their belief that these men were indeed gods, and so great their enthusiasm, that they were loath to acknowledge their error. . . .

“It was only after much persuasion on the part of Paul, and careful explanation regarding the mission of himself and Barnabas as representatives of the God of heaven and of His Son, the great Healer, that the people were persuaded to give up their purpose.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 181–183.

### 3. SWEEPED AWAY BY MALICIOUS RUMORS

- a. Explain what hindered the minds of the people of Lystra from accepting the gospel, and how their attitude changed. Acts 14:19.
- 

“The opposing Jews of Antioch, through whose influence the apostles were driven from that district, united with certain Jews of Iconium, and followed upon the track of the apostles. The miracle wrought upon the cripple, and its effect upon those who witnessed it, stirred up their envy, and led them to go to the scene of the apostles’ labor, and put their false version upon the work. They denied that God had any part in it, and claimed that it was accomplished through the demons whom these men served.

“The same class had formerly accused the Saviour of casting out devils through the power of the prince of devils; they had denounced Him as a deceiver; and they now visited the same unreasoning wrath upon His apostles. By means of falsehoods they inspired the people of Lystra with the bitterness of spirit by which they were themselves actuated. They claimed to be thoroughly acquainted with the history and faith of Paul and Barnabas, and so misrepresented their characters and work that these heathen, who had been ready to worship the apostles as divine beings, now considered them worse than murderers, and that whoever should put them out of the world would do God and mankind good service.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 59.

“The first conception of faith in the true God, and of the worship and honor due to Him, was being formed in their minds; and as they were listening to Paul, Satan was urging on the unbelieving Jews of other cities to follow after Paul to destroy the good work wrought through him. . . . The wonder and admiration of the people now changed to hate.”—*Early Writings*, p. 203.

“The disappointment that the Lystrians had suffered in being refused the privilege of offering sacrifice to the apostles, prepared them to turn against Paul and Barnabas with an enthusiasm approaching that with which they had hailed them as gods. Incited by the Jews, they planned to attack the apostles by force. The Jews charged them not to allow Paul an opportunity to speak, alleging that if they were to grant him this privilege, he would bewitch the people.

“Soon the murderous designs of the enemies of the gospel were carried out. Yielding to the influence of evil, the Lystrians became possessed with a satanic fury and, seizing Paul, mercilessly stoned him.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 183, 184.

#### 4. MIRACULOUSLY STRENGTHENED

- a. As shown by the way the Lystrians turned against Paul, what has Jesus foretold His people in advance? John 16:1–3, 4 (first part).
- 

“Those who believe and teach the truths of God’s word in these last days, meet with similar opposition [as did Paul in Lystra] from unprincipled persons who will not accept the truth, and who do not hesitate to prevaricate, and even to circulate the most glaring falsehoods in order to destroy the influence and hedge up the way of those whom God has sent with a message of warning to the world. While one class make the falsehoods and circulate them, another class are so blinded by the delusions of Satan as to receive them as the words of truth. They are in the toils of the archenemy, while they flatter themselves that they are the children of God. ‘For this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie; that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.’ ”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 60.

- b. How did the Lord miraculously strengthen Paul physically and spiritually in his extremely painful ordeal at Lystra? Acts 14:20, 21 (first part). How did He also use the apostle to strengthen the new believers there?
- 

“In this dark and trying hour the company of Lystrian believers, who through the ministry of Paul and Barnabas had been converted to the faith of Jesus, remained loyal and true. The unreasoning opposition and cruel persecution by their enemies served only to confirm the faith of these devoted brethren; and now, in the face of danger and scorn, they showed their loyalty by gathering sorrowfully about the form of him whom they believed to be dead.

“What was their surprise when in the midst of their lamentations the apostle suddenly lifted up his head and rose to his feet with the praise of God upon his lips. To the believers this unexpected restoration of God’s servant was regarded as a miracle of divine power and seemed to set the signet of Heaven upon their change of belief. They rejoiced with inexpressible gladness and praised God with renewed faith.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 184.



**5. CARING FOR THE BELIEVERS**

- a. What reveals Paul's forgiving spirit? Acts 14:21 (last part), 22.
- 
- 

"Neither Paul nor Barnabas was content to take up work elsewhere without confirming the faith of the converts whom they had been compelled to leave alone for a time in the places where they had recently labored. And so, undaunted by danger, 'they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith.' "—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 185.

- b. What can we learn from the apostles' method of labor? Acts 14:23–28.
- 
- 

"Those who in any place were by [Paul's] labor led to accept Christ as the Saviour were at the proper time organized into a church. Even when the believers were but few in number, this was done. The Christians were thus taught to help one another, remembering the promise, 'Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them.' Matthew 18:20.

"And Paul did not forget the churches thus established. The care of these churches rested on his mind as an ever-increasing burden. However small a company might be, it was nevertheless the object of his constant solicitude. He watched over the smaller churches tenderly, realizing that they were in need of special care in order that the members might be thoroughly established in the truth and taught to put forth earnest, unselfish efforts for those around them."—*Ibid.*, pp. 185, 186.

**PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Why was the man impotent in his feet enabled to walk?
2. How did the disciples respond when the Lystrians wanted to honor them?
3. Describe the tactic the enemy used to try to stop God's work in Lystra.
4. Why can I be encouraged by how Paul handled his trials at Lystra?
5. Explain the value of small churches in the sight of God.

# Clarifying the Doctrines

**MEMORY TEXT:** “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Corinthians 1:10).

“Brethren should esteem one another, counsel together, and pray together until there is unity among them.”—*The Review and Herald*, December 15, 1885.

**Suggested Readings:** *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 188–197;  
*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 426–443.

## Sunday

July 4

### 1. DIFFERENT IDEAS

- a. What idea did certain men from Judea promote among the Christians—and why did this cause dissension? Acts 15:1; Titus 1:10, 11.

---

“There were those in Paul’s day who were constantly dwelling upon circumcision, and they could bring plenty of proof from the Bible to show its obligation on the Jews; but this teaching was of no consequence at this time; for Christ had died upon Calvary’s cross, and circumcision in the flesh could not be of any further value.

“The typical service and the ceremonies connected with it were abolished at the cross. The great antitypical Lamb of God had become an offering for guilty man, and the shadow ceased in the substance. Paul was seeking to bring the minds of men to the great truth for the time; but these who claimed to be followers of Jesus were wholly absorbed in teaching the tradition of the Jews, and the obligation of circumcision.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1061.

“With great assurance these Judaizing teachers asserted that in order to be saved, one must be circumcised and must keep the entire ceremonial law.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 188, 189.

## 2. A NEED TO EXPAND THE UNDERSTANDING

- a. To ensure harmony with regard to circumcision and the ceremonial law that had pointed to Christ's first advent as the Lamb of God, what was needed? 1 Corinthians 1:10; Acts 15:2.
- 

- b. What news were the disciples from Antioch able to bring? Acts 15:3, 4.
- 

“Upon arriving at Jerusalem, the delegates from Antioch related before the assembly of the churches the success that had attended the ministry with them, and the confusion that had resulted from the fact that certain converted Pharisees declared that the Gentile converts must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses in order to be saved.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 64.

- c. Even after hearing the update of fulfilled prophecy in Gentile conversions, what did some of the believing Pharisees still insist—and why? Acts 15:5.
- 

“The Jewish converts generally were not inclined to move as rapidly as the providence of God opened the way. From the result of the apostles' labors among the Gentiles it was evident that the converts among the latter people would far exceed the Jewish converts in number. The Jews feared that if the restrictions and ceremonies of their law were not made obligatory upon the Gentiles as a condition of church fellowship, the national peculiarities of the Jews, which had hitherto kept them distinct from all other people, would finally disappear from among those who received the gospel message.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 189.

“The Jews had prided themselves upon their divinely appointed services; and they concluded that as God once specified the Hebrew manner of worship, it was impossible that He should ever authorize a change in any of its specifications. They decided that Christianity must connect itself with the Jewish laws and ceremonies. They were slow to discern to the end of that which had been abolished by the death of Christ, and to perceive that all their sacrificial offerings had but prefigured the death of the Son of God, in which type had met its antitype rendering valueless the divinely appointed ceremonies and sacrifices of the Jewish religion.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, pp. 64, 65.

### 3. THE STRUGGLE FOR UNITY

- a. **What did the delegation of Christians do about their disagreement—and why is this important for all of us? Romans 15:5, 6; Acts 15:6.**
- 

“The Lord has given us in His word definite, unmistakable instructions, by obedience to which we may preserve union and harmony in the church. Brethren and sisters, are you giving heed to these inspired injunctions? Are you Bible readers and doers of the word? Are you striving to fulfill the prayer of Christ that His followers might be one?”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 248.

- b. **What could Peter, Barnabas, and Paul all testify about the evidence of the Holy Spirit’s working among the Gentiles? Acts 15:7–12.**
- 

“Every soul saved in the former dispensation was saved by Christ as verily as we are saved by Him today.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1061.

- c. **Name one factor that posed a legitimate challenge to achieving full harmony between Jew and Gentile converts. Romans 14:19–21.**
- 

“The Gentiles were accustomed to eat the flesh of animals that had been strangled; while the Jews had been divinely instructed with regard to the food they should use. They were particular, in killing beasts, that the blood should flow from the body, else it was not regarded as healthful meat. God had given these injunctions to the Jews for the purpose of preserving their health and strength. The Jews considered it sinful to use blood as an article of diet. They considered that the blood was the life; and that the shedding of blood was in consequence of sin.

“The Gentiles, on the contrary, practiced catching the blood which flowed from the victim of sacrifice, and drinking it, or using it in the preparation of their food. The Jews could not change the customs which they had so long observed, and which they had adopted under the special direction of God. Therefore, as things then stood, if Jew and Gentile came to eat at the same table, the former would be shocked and outraged by the habits and manners of the latter.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, pp. 65, 66.

#### 4. COMING TO AN AGREEMENT

- a. Besides the idea of blood as food, what other Gentile habits caused reasonable concern to the Jewish converts? 1 Corinthians 8:9–13; 6:18.

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“Many of the Gentile converts were living among ignorant and superstitious people who made frequent sacrifices and offerings to idols. The priests of this heathen worship carried on an extensive merchandise with the offerings brought to them, and the Jews feared that the Gentile converts would bring Christianity into disrepute by purchasing that which had been offered to idols, thereby sanctioning, in some measure, idolatrous customs. . . .

“The Gentiles, and especially the Greeks, were extremely licentious, and there was danger that some, unconverted in heart, would make a profession of faith without renouncing their evil practices. The Jewish Christians could not tolerate the immorality that was not even regarded as criminal by the heathen.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 191, 192.

“We are living in an age of licentiousness, and men and youth are bold in sin. Unless our youth are sacredly guarded, unless they are fortified with firm principles, unless greater care is manifested in choosing their associates and the literature which feeds the mind, they will be exposed to a society whose morals are as corrupt as were the morals of the inhabitants of Sodom.”—*Messages to Young People*, p. 85.

“All fornicators will be outside the City of God.”—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 431.

- b. What balanced decision did James recommend? Acts 15:13, 19, 20.

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“James, in this instance, seems to have been chosen to decide the matter which was brought before the council. It was his sentence that the ceremonial law, and especially the ordinance of circumcision, be not in any wise urged upon the Gentiles, or even recommended to them. James sought to impress the fact upon his brethren that the Gentiles, in turning to God from idolatry, made a great change in their faith; and that much caution should be used not to trouble their minds with perplexing and doubtful questions, lest they be discouraged in following Christ.

“The Gentiles, however, were to take no course which should materially conflict with the views of their Jewish brethren. . . . They were required to keep the commandments, and to lead holy lives.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 69.

## 5. UNITED IN THE PRESENT TRUTH

- a. What resolution was approved by the delegation of Christian believers? Acts 15:22, 23, 28–31.
- 

- b. What should we realize, seeing there were some still dissatisfied with the final verdict concerning the ceremonial rites already fulfilled in the sacrifice of Christ? Galatians 6:12–15; 5:6.
- 

“The entire body of Christians was not called to vote upon the question. The ‘apostles and elders,’ men of influence and judgment, framed and issued the decree, which was thereupon generally accepted by the Christian churches. Not all, however, were pleased with the decision; there was a faction of ambitious and self-confident brethren who disagreed with it. These men assumed to engage in the work on their own responsibility. They indulged in much murmuring and fault-finding, proposing new plans and seeking to pull down the work of the men whom God had ordained to teach the gospel message. From the first the church has had such obstacles to meet and ever will have till the close of time.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 196, 197.

“The ceremonial law, given by God through Moses, with its sacrifices and ordinances, was to be binding upon the Hebrews until type met antitype in the death of Christ as the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. Then all the sacrificial offerings and services were to be abolished.”—*The Review and Herald*, September 27, 1881.

“To continue these rites [of the ceremonial law] would be an insult to Jehovah.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 5, p. 1140.

## PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What unnecessary yoke did some early Christians try to require of all?
2. In what ways might I be in danger of fostering a Pharisaical attitude?
3. Why was it helpful for the apostles and elders to come together to talk?
4. Fornication is prevalent today, but what must the church say about it?
5. Why should I not be surprised at dissenters existing today?

# Guided by the Holy Ghost

**MEMORY TEXT:** “And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us” (Acts 16:9).

“The Macedonian cry is coming to us from all directions.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 86.

**Suggested Readings:** *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 201–213;  
*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 43–48.

## Sunday

July 11

### 1. COMPASSION THAT FORTIFIES

- a. Following the delegation, what did Paul and Barnabas do—and why did they separate? Acts 15:35–39. What can we learn from how Barnabas’ confidence in John Mark helped him? 2 Timothy 4:11.

---

“[Paul] was not inclined to excuse Mark’s weakness in deserting the work for the safety and comforts of home. He urged that one with so little stamina was unfitted for a work requiring patience, self-denial, bravery, devotion, faith, and a willingness to sacrifice, if need be, even life itself.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 202.

“The sharp contention of Paul and Barnabas, the failings and infirmities of the prophets and apostles, are all laid bare by the Holy Ghost, who lifts the veil from the human heart. There before us lie the lives of the believers, with all their faults and follies, which are intended as a lesson to all the generations following them. If they had been without foible they would have been more than human, and our sinful natures would despair of ever reaching such a point of excellence. But seeing where they struggled and fell, where they took heart again and conquered through the grace of God, we are encouraged, and led to press over the obstacles that degenerate nature places in our way.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 12.

## 2. PAUL AND TIMOTHY

- a. Where did Paul go next—and who had been inspired by Paul's faith earlier at Lystra? Acts 15:40, 41; 16:1, 2.
- 

“Among those who had been converted at Lystra, and who were eyewitnesses of the sufferings of Paul, was one who was afterward to become a prominent worker for Christ and who was to share with the apostle the trials and the joys of pioneer service in difficult fields. This was a young man named Timothy. When Paul was dragged out of the city, this youthful disciple was among the number who took their stand beside his apparently lifeless body and who saw him arise, bruised and covered with blood, but with praises upon his lips because he had been permitted to suffer for the sake of Christ.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 184.

- b. What plan did Paul have—and with what results? Acts 16:3–5.
- 

“When Timothy was little more than a boy, Paul took him with him as his companion in labor. Those who had taught Timothy in his childhood were rewarded by seeing the son of their care linked in close fellowship with the great apostle.

“Paul loved Timothy because Timothy loved God. His intelligent knowledge of experimental piety and of the truth gave him distinction and influence. The piety and influence of his home life was not of a cheap order, but pure, sensible, and uncorrupted by false sentiments. The moral influence of his home was substantial, not fitful, not impulsive, not changeable. The Word of God was the rule which guided Timothy. . . . His home instructors cooperated with God in educating this young man to bear the burdens that were to come upon him at an early age.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 918.

“By the grace of Christ the apostles were made what they were. It was sincere devotion and humble, earnest prayer that brought them into close communion with Him. They sat together with Him in heavenly places. They realized the greatness of their debt to Him. By earnest, persevering prayer they obtained the endowment of the Holy Spirit, and then they went forth, weighted with the burden of saving souls, filled with zeal to extend the triumphs of the cross.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 32.



### 3. HEEDING THE CRY

- a. Seeing how the Holy Spirit continually guided the apostles, what should every believer soberly, prayerfully consider? Acts 16:6–10.
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“We are living in a most solemn time. Important responsibilities are resting upon us. New fields are being opened for our labor, and the Macedonian cry is coming from every direction, ‘Come over . . . and help us.’ Some beg for even a day of labor with them, if they can have no more. Angels of God are preparing ears to hear, and hearts to receive the message of warning. And in our very midst honest souls are living who have never yet heard the reasons of our faith. People are perishing for want of knowledge. Not one-hundredth part is being done that might be done to give the third angel’s message to the world. There are those who will be responsible for the souls who have never heard the truth.”—*The Review and Herald*, October 22, 1914.

“There are fields close to your own doors and also in foreign lands, that are ripening for the harvest. The Lord calls for volunteers now. Go forth, workers for God, weeping, bearing precious seed; for doubtless you will return with rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you. Your prayers and tears must accompany your labors, that the unholy traits of your own character may not mar the sacred work of God. Depend less upon what you can do, even through your best efforts, and more on what God can do for you in every effort for his name’s glory.”—*Ibid.*, December 15, 1885.

“The Macedonian cry is coming from every quarter. Shall men go to the ‘regular lines’ to see whether they will be permitted to labor, or shall they go out and work as best they can, depending on their own abilities and on the help of the Lord, beginning in a humble way and creating an interest in the truth in places in which nothing has been done to give the warning message?

“The Lord has encouraged those who have started out on their own responsibility to work for Him, their hearts filled with love for souls ready to perish. A true missionary spirit will be imparted to those who seek earnestly to know God and Jesus Christ, whom He hath sent. The Lord lives and reigns. Young men, go forth into the places to which you are directed by the Spirit of the Lord. Work with your hands, that you may be self-supporting, and as you have opportunity proclaim the message of warning.”—*Medical Ministry*, p. 321.

**4. SOUL-WINNING IN MACEDONIA**

- a. Where was the apostles' main focus in Macedonia? Acts 16:11, 12.
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- b. Describe how the first conversions came to that area—and what we can learn from this. Acts 16:13–15; Psalm 25:9.
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“True meekness softens and subdues the heart and gives the mind a fitness for the engrafted word. It brings the thoughts into obedience to Jesus Christ. It opens the heart to the word of God, as Lydia’s was opened.”—*The Sanctified Life*, p. 14.

“Lydia received the truth gladly. She and her household were converted and baptized, and she entreated the apostles to make her house their home.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 212.

- c. Explain a situation whereby someone was making a true statement but was injuring the influence of the Author of all truth. Acts 16:16, 17.
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“This woman was a special agent of Satan and had brought to her masters much gain by soothsaying. Her influence had helped to strengthen idolatry. Satan knew that his kingdom was being invaded, and he resorted to this means of opposing the work of God, hoping to mingle his sophistry with the truths taught by those who were proclaiming the gospel message. The words of recommendation uttered by this woman were an injury to the cause of truth, distracting the minds of the people from the teachings of the apostles and bringing disrepute upon the gospel, and by them many were led to believe that the men who spoke with the Spirit and power of God were actuated by the same spirit as this emissary of Satan.”—*Ibid.*

- d. What was Paul constrained to do in her behalf? Acts 16:18.
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“Dispossessed of the evil spirit and restored to her right mind, the woman chose to become a follower of Christ.”—*Ibid.*, p. 213.

**5. SUFFERING WITH CHRIST**

- a. **When the soothsayer was miraculously delivered from Satan, how did the enemy direct his wrath against Paul and Silas? Acts 16:19–22.**
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“[The woman’s masters] saw that all hope of receiving money from her divinations and soothsayings was at an end, and perceived that, if the apostles were allowed to continue their work, their own source of income would soon be entirely cut off.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 74.

“Many others in the city were interested in gaining money through satanic delusions, and these, fearing the influence of a power that could so effectually stop their work, raised a mighty cry against the servants of God. . . .

“Stirred by a frenzy of excitement, the multitude rose against the disciples. A mob spirit prevailed and was sanctioned by the authorities.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 213.

- b. **Describe the incredible cruelty forced on the apostles—and their response. Acts 16:23–25.**
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“The apostles were left in a very painful condition. Their lacerated and bleeding backs were in contact with the rough stone floor, while their feet were elevated and bound fast in the stocks. In this unnatural position they suffered extreme torture; yet they did not groan nor complain, but conversed with and encouraged each other, and praised God with grateful hearts that they were found worthy to suffer shame for His dear name.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 75.

**PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. **Of whom might I be supportive as Barnabas was to Mark?**
2. **Whom could I be preparing to bear burdens as was done for Timothy?**
3. **How can I take action in response to the Macedonian cries of today?**
4. **Where might I find meek souls open to truth as Lydia was?**
5. **Why is the trying experience of Paul and Silas helpful for me to study?**

# Glory Inside a Dungeon

**MEMORY TEXT:** “Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me” (Micah 7:8).

“Christ was beside [Paul and Silas in the Philippian dungeon], and the light of His presence irradiated the gloom with the glory of the courts above.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 35.

**Suggested Reading:** *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 214–220.

## Sunday

July 18

### 1. RAVISHED BY LOVE

- a. **When Christ is in our hearts, what happens if we are thrust into prison for the truth’s sake? Micah 7:8.**

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“Our enemies may thrust us into prison, but prison walls cannot cut off the communication between Christ and our souls. One who sees our every weakness, who is acquainted with every trial, is above all earthly powers; and angels can come to us in lonely cells, bringing light and peace from heaven. The prison will be as a palace, for the rich in faith dwell there; and the gloomy walls will be lighted up with heavenly light.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 424. [1892 edition.]

“The glory of God has penetrated the prison walls, flooding with glorious beams of heavenly light the darkest dungeon. His saints may suffer, but their sufferings will, like the apostles of old, spread their faith and win souls to Christ and glorify His holy name.”—*The Upward Look*, p. 315.

“The Lord knows all about His faithful servants who for His sake are lying in prison or who are banished to lonely islands. He comforts them with His own presence. When for the truth’s sake the believer stands at the bar of unrighteous tribunals, Christ stands by his side. All the reproaches that fall upon him, fall upon Christ. Christ is condemned over again in the person of His disciple. When one is incarcerated in prison walls, Christ ravishes the heart with His love.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 669.

## 2. A LESSON FOR US

- a. As we consider the attitude of Paul and Silas in the Philippian dungeon, what should we ever keep in mind? *Philippians 2:14, 15.*
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“In the utter darkness and desolation of the dungeon, [Paul and Silas] encouraged each other by words of prayer and sang praises to God because they were found worthy to suffer shame for His sake. Their hearts were cheered by a deep and earnest love for the cause of their Redeemer. Paul thought of the persecution he had been instrumental in bringing upon the disciples of Christ, and he rejoiced that his eyes had been opened to see, and his heart to feel, the power of the glorious truths which once he despised.

“With astonishment the other prisoners heard the sound of prayer and singing issuing from the inner prison. They had been accustomed to hear shrieks and moans, cursing and swearing, breaking the silence of the night; but never before had they heard words of prayer and praise ascending from that gloomy cell. Guards and prisoners marveled and asked themselves who these men could be, who, cold, hungry, and tortured, could yet rejoice.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 213, 214.

“Paul and Silas suffered the loss of all things. They suffered scourging, and were in no gentle manner thrown upon the cold floor of a dungeon in a most painful position, their feet elevated and fastened in the stocks. Did repinings and complaints then reach the ear of the jailer? Oh, no! From the inner prison, voices broke the silence of midnight with songs of joy and praise to God. These disciples were cheered by a deep and earnest love for the cause of their Redeemer, for which they suffered.

“As the truth of God fills our hearts, absorbs our affections, and controls our lives, we also will count it joy to suffer for the truth’s sake. No prison walls, no martyr’s stake, can then daunt or hinder us in the great work. Come, O my soul, to Calvary. Mark the humble life of the Son of God. He was ‘a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.’ Behold His ignominy, His agony in Gethsemane, and learn what self-denial is. Are we suffering want? so was Christ, the Majesty of heaven. But His poverty was for our sakes. Are we ranked among the rich? so was He. But He consented for our sakes to become poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich. In Christ we have self-denial exemplified. . . . We are not doing a twentieth part of what we might do if we were awake.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 406, 407.

### 3. THE ALMIGHTY INTERVENES

- a. As the Omnipotent One heard the prayers and praises soaring from the dungeon at midnight, what did He do—and how can this uplift faithful souls in earth's final days? Acts 16:26; Psalm 103:13, 17–22.
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“Paul and Silas prayed and sang praise to God; and angels were sent from heaven to deliver them. The earth shook under the tread of these heavenly messengers, and the prison doors flew open, setting the prisoners free.”—*My Life Today*, p. 20.

“As the decree issued by the various rulers of Christendom against commandment keepers shall withdraw the protection of government and abandon them to those who desire their destruction, the people of God will flee from the cities and villages. . . . But many of all nations and of all classes, high and low, rich and poor, black and white, will be cast into the most unjust and cruel bondage. The beloved of God pass weary days, bound in chains, shut in by prison bars, sentenced to be slain, some apparently left to die of starvation in dark and loathsome dungeons. No human ear is open to hear their moans; no human hand is ready to lend them help.

“Will the Lord forget His people in this trying hour? Did He forget faithful Noah when judgments were visited upon the antediluvian world? Did He forget Lot when the fire came down from heaven to consume the cities of the plain? Did He forget Joseph surrounded by idolaters in Egypt? Did He forget Elijah when the oath of Jezebel threatened him with the fate of the prophets of Baal? Did He forget Jeremiah in the dark and dismal pit of his prison house? Did He forget the three worthies in the fiery furnace? or Daniel in the den of lions? . . .

“The Lord of hosts has said: ‘He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye.’ Zechariah 2:8.

“Though enemies may thrust them into prison, yet dungeon walls cannot cut off the communication between their souls and Christ. One who sees their every weakness, who is acquainted with every trial, is above all earthly powers; and angels will come to them in lonely cells, bringing light and peace from heaven. The prison will be as a palace; for the rich in faith dwell there, and the gloomy walls will be lighted up with heavenly light as when Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises at midnight in the Philippian dungeon.

“God’s judgments will be visited upon those who are seeking to oppress and destroy His people.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 626, 627.

#### 4. TOUCHED BY GOD'S MIRACLE

- a. How did the jailer react when he saw the earthquake had made it possible for the prisoners to escape—and what powerful witness for Christ did Paul demonstrate? Acts 16:27–30.
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“[The jailer] felt sure that death would be the penalty of his apparent unfaithfulness. He cried out in the bitterness of his spirit that it was better for him to die by his own hand than to submit to a disgraceful execution. He was about to kill himself, when Paul cried out with a loud voice, ‘Do thyself no harm; for we are all here.’

“The severity with which the jailer had treated the apostles had not roused their resentment, or they would have allowed him to commit suicide. But their hearts were filled with the love of Christ, and they held no malice against their persecutors. The jailer dropped his sword, and called for a light. He hastened into the inner dungeon, and fell down before Paul and Silas, begging their forgiveness. He then brought them into the open court, and inquired of them, ‘Sirs, what must I do to be saved?’

“He had trembled because of the wrath of God expressed in the earthquake; he had been ready to die by his own hand for fear of the penalty of the Roman law, when he thought the prisoners had escaped; but now all these things were of little consequence to him compared with the new and strange dread that agitated his mind, and his desire to possess that tranquility and cheerfulness manifested by the apostles under their extreme suffering and abuse. . . .

“He saw his own deplorable condition in contrast with that of the disciples, and with deep humility and reverence asked them to show him the way of life.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, pp. 77, 78.

- b. Describe how the Holy Spirit moved in this crisis. Acts 16:31–36.
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“A sanctifying influence diffused itself among the inmates of the prison, and the minds of all were opened to listen to the truths spoken by the apostles. They were convinced that the God whom these men served had miraculously released them from bondage.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 217.

**5. WORTHWHILE SUFFERING**

- a. When the magistrates learned that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, what did they do, and how did the apostles comply? Acts 16:37–39.
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“The magistrates feared the apostles’ influence over the people, and they also feared the Power that had interposed in behalf of these innocent men. Acting upon the instruction given by Christ, the apostles would not urge their presence where it was not desired.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 218.

- b. After the cruel ordeal Paul and Silas had faced—interestingly enough—before departing, who comforted whom? Acts 16:40. What did the apostles conclude about their time in Philippi? Philippians 1:29.
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“The apostles did not regard as in vain their labors in Philippi. They had met much opposition and persecution; but the intervention of Providence in their behalf, and the conversion of the jailer and his household, more than atoned for the disgrace and suffering they had endured. The news of their unjust imprisonment and miraculous deliverance became known through all that region, and this brought the work of the apostles to the notice of a large number who otherwise would not have been reached.

“Paul’s labors at Philippi resulted in the establishment of a church whose membership steadily increased. His zeal and devotion, and, above all, his willingness to suffer for Christ’s sake, exerted a deep and lasting influence upon the converts. They prized the precious truths for which the apostles had sacrificed so much, and gave themselves with wholehearted devotion to the cause of their Redeemer.”—*Ibid.*

**PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. If I am imprisoned for the truth’s sake, what should be my priority?
2. How should the suffering of Christ and His apostles motivate me?
3. What does the earthquake in Philippi teach me about the God I serve?
4. Describe how the brutal jailer was transformed.
5. What fruits resulted from God’s call for Paul to go to Macedonia?



# Appealing to Minds and Hearts

**MEMORY TEXT:** “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30).

“Our efforts are not to cease because public meetings have been discontinued for a time. So long as there are interested ones, we must give them opportunity to learn the truth.”—*Evangelism*, p. 337.

**Suggested Reading:** *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 225–242.

*Sunday*

July 25

## 1. REASONING FOR THREE SABBATHS

- a. After Philippi, describe the next mission of Paul and Silas. Acts 17:1–3.

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“After leaving Philippi, Paul and Silas made their way to Thessalonica. They were there privileged to address a large concourse of people in the synagogue, with good effect. Their appearance bore evidence of their recent shameful treatment, and necessitated an explanation of what they had endured. This they made without exalting themselves, but magnified the grace of God, which had wrought their deliverance. The apostles, however, felt that they had no time to dwell upon their own afflictions. They were burdened with the message of Christ, and deeply in earnest in his work.

“Paul made the prophecies in the Old Testament relating to the Messiah, and the agreement of those prophecies with the life and teachings of Christ, clear in the minds of all among his hearers who would accept evidence upon the subject.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, pp. 81, 82.

“Paul was an Adventist; he presented the important event of the second coming of Christ with such power and reasoning that a deep impression, which never wore away, was made upon the minds of the Thessalonians.”—*Ibid.*, p. 83.

## 2. AGITATION

### a. How was the message received in Thessalonica? Acts 17:4.

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“As the truths of the gospel were thus proclaimed in Thessalonica with mighty power, the attention of large congregations was arrested.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 229.

### b. Describe the way the enemy of souls manifested his jealous wrath—and what we today can learn from this experience. Acts 17:5–8.

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“[The envious Jews] excited the passions of the worthless mob by cunningly devised falsehoods, and incited them to make an uproarious assault upon the house of Jason, the temporary home of the apostles. This they did with a fury more like that of wild beasts than of men. They had been instructed by the Jews to bring out Paul and Silas, and drag them to the authorities, accusing them of creating all this uproar, and of raising an insurrection.

“When they had broken into the house, however, they found that the apostles were not there. Friends who had apprehended what was about to occur, had hastened them out of the city. . . .

“Those who preach unpopular truth in our day meet with determined resistance, as did the apostles. They need expect no more favorable reception from a large majority of professed Christians than did Paul from his Jewish brethren. There will be a union of opposing elements against them; for however diverse from each other different organizations may be in their sentiments and religious faith, their forces are united in trampling under foot the fourth commandment in the law of God.

“Those who will not themselves accept the truth are most zealous that others shall not receive it; and those are not wanting who perseveringly manufacture falsehoods, and stir up the base passions of the people to make the truth of God of none effect. But the messengers of Christ must arm themselves with watchfulness and prayer, and move forward with faith, firmness, and courage, and, in the name of Jesus, keep at their work, as did the apostles. They must sound the note of warning to the world, teaching the transgressors of the law what sin is, and pointing them to Jesus Christ as its great and only remedy.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, pp. 84–86.

### 3. DEALING WITH DIFFERENT MINDS

- a. What blessings were found at Berea—and how is this a lesson for us? Acts 17:10–12.
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“Apostasies have occurred and the Lord has permitted matters of this nature to develop in the past in order to show how easily His people will be misled when they depend upon the words of men instead of searching the Scriptures for themselves, as did the noble Bereans, to see if these things are so.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 394.

“Let every one who claims to believe that the Lord is soon coming, search the Scriptures as never before; for Satan is determined to try every device possible to keep souls in darkness, and blind the mind to the perils of the times in which we are living. Let every believer take up his Bible with earnest prayer, that he may be enlightened by the Holy Spirit as to what is truth, that he may know more of God and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent. Search for the truth as for hidden treasures, and disappoint the enemy. The time of test is just upon us, for the loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer. This is the beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth. For it is the work of every one to whom the message of warning has come, to lift up Jesus, to present Him to the world.”—*Ibid.*, bk. 1, pp. 362, 363.

- b. To what kind of place was Paul hurried away, and why? Acts 17:13–15.
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“The city of Athens was the metropolis of heathendom. Here Paul did not meet with an ignorant, credulous populace, as at Lystra, but with a people famous for their intelligence and culture. Everywhere statues of their gods and of the deified heroes of history and poetry met the eye, while magnificent architecture and paintings represented the national glory and the popular worship of heathen deities. The senses of the people were entranced by the beauty and splendor of art. On every hand sanctuaries and temples, involving untold expense, reared their massive forms. Victories of arms and deeds of celebrated men were commemorated by sculpture, shrines, and tablets. All these made Athens a vast gallery of art.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 233, 234.

#### 4. INTELLIGENT . . . YET DECEIVED

a. Describe Paul's introduction to Athenian culture. Acts 17:16–21.

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"In this great city, where God was not worshiped, Paul was oppressed by a feeling of solitude, and he longed for the sympathy and aid of his fellow laborers. So far as human friendship was concerned, he felt himself to be utterly alone. In his epistle to the Thessalonians he expresses his feelings in the words, 'Left at Athens alone' (1 Thessalonians 3:1). Obstacles that were apparently insurmountable presented themselves before him, making it seem almost hopeless for him to attempt to reach the hearts of the people.

"While waiting for Silas and Timothy, Paul was not idle. He 'disputed . . . in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him.' But his principal work in Athens was to bear the tidings of salvation to those who had no intelligent conception of God and of His purpose in behalf of the fallen race. The apostle was soon to meet paganism in its most subtle, alluring form. . . .

"Some were prepared to ridicule the apostle as one who was far beneath them both socially and intellectually. . . .

"[Yet, all] who came in contact with him, soon saw that he had a store of knowledge even greater than their own. His intellectual power commanded the respect of the learned; while his earnest, logical reasoning and the power of his oratory held the attention of all in the audience. His hearers recognized the fact that he was no novice, but was able to meet all classes with convincing arguments in support of the doctrines he taught. Thus the apostle stood undaunted, meeting his opposers on their own ground, matching logic with logic, philosophy with philosophy, eloquence with eloquence."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 234–236.

b. What point is missed by environmental worshipers today? Acts 17:22–28.

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"Of himself [man] cannot interpret nature without placing it above God. He is in a condition similar to that of the Athenians, who, amidst their altars dedicated to the worship of nature, had one inscribed: 'To the unknown God.' God was indeed unknown to them. He is unknown to all who, without the guidance of the divine Teacher, take up the study of nature. They will assuredly come to wrong conclusions."—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 257.

## 5. REALITY AND FOCUS

- a. **What appeal made to the Athenians is a sobering reminder to us who are entrusted with much greater light than they—and living as we are in the time of investigative judgment? Acts 17:29–31.**
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“Before any can enter the mansions of the blessed, their cases must be investigated, and their characters and their deeds must pass in review before God. All are to be judged according to the things written in the books and to be rewarded as their works have been. This judgment does not take place at death. Mark the words of Paul: ‘He hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath raised Him from the dead.’ Acts 17:31. Here the apostle plainly stated that a specified time, then future, had been fixed upon for the judgment of the world.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 548.

- b. **How did Paul’s work in Athens conclude? Acts 17:32–34.**
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“At the close of his labors he [Paul] looked for the results of his work. Out of the large assembly [in Athens] that had listened to his eloquent words, only three had been converted to the faith. He then decided that from that time he would maintain the simplicity of the gospel. He was convinced that the learning of the world was powerless to move the hearts of men, but that the gospel was the power of God to salvation.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1062.

## PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. **What can I learn from the apostles’ zeal after their pain in Philippi?**
2. **How will Paul’s general experience in Thessalonica soon be repeated?**
3. **What attitude found in Berea is vital for us today?**
4. **In what ways is society today similar to what existed in Athens?**
5. **What lesson learned by Paul in Athens do I need to learn as well?**

## First Sabbath Offering for the GC Education Department

Now, more than ever, there is a need to invest in the education of our children. Bombarded as they are by the things of this world, it is increasingly difficult to protect them from the wiles of the enemy. What was once limited in its accessibility is now literally attached to our children through the “smart” phones and other devices. How can we be fitted for the work of evangelism when our own children cannot be prepared for it?



“True education is missionary training. Every son and daughter of God is called to be a missionary; we are called to the service of God and our fellow men; and to fit us for this service should be the object of our education.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 395.

For many years the church has hoped for an easily accessible curriculum for educating our children. Now the GC Council is making this a priority. By partnering with our educators and units worldwide, the work of preparing this curriculum is well underway.

The project is huge and your generous contributions can help with three things: To prepare the materials, translate the materials, and make them available to those in places of poverty.

A full kindergarten through 12th grade curriculum is needed. This requires time, resources, and well-qualified personnel to prepare the textbooks and workbooks. Your support makes it possible for us to prepare materials of the highest quality so that the students using them will be “qualified for usefulness in this life and for the service of God throughout eternity.”—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 495.

The materials are being prepared for ease in translation to be readily adapted throughout the worldwide church. Your support enables us to prepare materials for use in both home and church schools.

In some places, access to this material is beyond the financial abilities of many. Your support will allow us to provide these materials in impoverished places and to disenfranchised communities at a price-point they can afford. We understand this project is extensive, but it is well worth it. With your generosity we will produce materials from math to language to social sciences that will prepare the youngest among us to give the gospel message in all the world.

Thank you in advance, and may God bless the gifts and givers.

*General Conference Education Department*

# Self-Supporting Outreach

**MEMORY TEXT:** “I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. . . . That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Corinthians 2:2, 5).

“If ever [Paul’s] ardor in the path of duty flagged, one glance at the cross and the amazing love there revealed, was enough to cause him to gird up the loins of his mind and press forward in the path of self-denial.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 246.

**Suggested Reading:** *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 243–254, 272–274, 355–358.

## Sunday

August 1

### 1. CAUTIOUS AS AN EXAMPLE

- a. When Paul left Athens to come to Corinth, where did he go in order to earn his livelihood—and why? Acts 18:1–3.

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“When Paul came to Corinth, he solicited work from Aquila. The apostles counseled and prayed together, and decided that they would preach the gospel as it should be preached, in disinterested love for the souls who were perishing for lack of knowledge. Paul would work at tentmaking, and teach his fellow laborers to work with their hands, so that in any emergency they could support themselves. . . .

“Paul was highly educated, and was admired for his genius and eloquence. He was chosen by his countrymen as a member of the Sanhedrim, and was a rabbi of distinguished ability; yet his education had not been considered complete until he had served an apprenticeship at some useful trade. He rejoiced that he was able to support himself by manual labor, and frequently declared that his own hands had ministered to his necessities. While in a city of strangers, he would not be chargeable to anyone. When his means had been expended to advance the cause of Christ, he resorted to his trade in order to gain a livelihood.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, pp. 1062, 1063.

## 2. IN CORINTH

- a. What was Paul's first step in reaching out in Corinth? Acts 18:4. How can we be inspired by his example? Luke 14:23.
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“As a laborer in the gospel, [Paul] might claim his support, instead of sustaining himself; but this right he was willing to forego, fearing that the acceptance of means for his support might possibly stand in the way of his usefulness. Although feeble in health, he labored during the day in serving the cause of Christ, and then toiled a large share of the night, and frequently all night, that he might make provision for his own and others' necessities.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 409, 410.

“In many places self-supporting missionaries can work successfully. It was as a self-supporting missionary that the apostle Paul labored in spreading the knowledge of Christ throughout the world. While daily teaching the gospel in the great cities of Asia and Europe, he wrought at the trade of a craftsman to sustain himself and his companions. . . .

“Many today, if imbued with the same spirit of self-sacrifice, could do a good work in a similar way. Let two or more start out together in evangelistic work. Let them visit the people, praying, singing, teaching, explaining the Scriptures, and ministering to the sick. Some can sustain themselves as canvassers; others, like the apostle, can labor at some handicraft or in other lines of effort. As they move forward in their work, realizing their helplessness, but humbly depending upon God, they gain a blessed experience. The Lord Jesus goes before them, and among the wealthy and the poor they find favor and help.

“Those who have been trained for medical missionary work in foreign countries should be encouraged to go without delay where they expect to labor, and begin work among the people, learning the language as they work. Very soon they will be able to teach the simple truths of God's word.

“Throughout the world, messengers of mercy are needed. There is a call for Christian families to go into communities that are in darkness and error, to go to foreign fields, to become acquainted with the needs of their fellow men, and to work for the cause of the Master. If such families would settle in the dark places of the earth, places where the people are enshrouded in spiritual gloom, and let the light of Christ's life shine out through them, what a noble work might be accomplished.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 154–156.



### 3. DIVINE PROTECTION

#### a. Why did Paul's ministry bear fruit amid trials? Acts 18:5–8.

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“[Paul’s] words were spoken with solemn earnestness, and his hearers could not but discern that he loved with all his heart the crucified and risen Saviour. They saw that his mind was centered in Christ, that his whole life was bound up with his Lord. So impressive were his words, that only those who were filled with the bitterest hatred against the Christian religion could stand unmoved by them.

“But the Jews of Corinth closed their eyes to the evidence so clearly presented by the apostle, and refused to listen to his appeals. The same spirit that had led them to reject Christ, filled them with wrath and fury against His servant; and had not God especially protected him, that he might continue to bear the gospel message to the Gentiles, they would have put an end to his life. . . .

“Avoiding complicated, far-fetched reasoning, the messengers of the cross dwelt upon the attributes of the Creator of the world, the Supreme Ruler of the universe. Their hearts aglow with the love of God and of His Son, they appealed to the heathen to behold the infinite sacrifice made in man’s behalf. They knew that if those who had long been groping in the darkness of heathenism could but see the light streaming from Calvary’s cross, they would be drawn to the Redeemer.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 247–249.

#### b. What fortified Paul in Corinth? Acts 18:9–11; 1 Corinthians 2:2, 5.

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“Though Paul had a measure of success in Corinth, yet the wickedness that he saw and heard in that corrupt city almost disheartened him. The depravity that he witnessed among the Gentiles, and the contempt and insult that he received from the Jews, caused him great anguish of spirit. He doubted the wisdom of trying to build up a church from the material that he found there.

“As he was planning to leave the city for a more promising field, and seeking earnestly to understand his duty, the Lord appeared to him in a vision. . . . [Acts 18:9, 10 quoted.] Paul understood this to be a command to remain in Corinth and a guarantee that the Lord would give increase to the seed sown. Strengthened and encouraged, he continued to labor there with zeal and perseverance.”—*Ibid.*, p. 250.

#### 4. GOD'S CARE FOR HIS LABORERS

- a. In harmony with His promise to Paul, how did God use Gallio to cause the next plot against the apostle to backfire? Acts 18:12–17.
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“For the first time during Paul’s labors in Europe, the mob turned to his side; under the very eye of the proconsul, and without interference from him, they violently beset the most prominent accusers of the apostle.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 253.

- b. What ministry did Paul continue—and whom did God use to raise up Apollos to become another asset to the gospel? Acts 18:22–28.
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“[Paul] illustrated in a practical way what might be done by consecrated laymen in many places where the people were unacquainted with the truths of the gospel. His course inspired many humble toilers with a desire to do what they could to advance the cause of God, while at the same time they supported themselves in daily labor. Aquila and Priscilla were not called to give their whole time to the ministry of the gospel, yet these humble laborers were used by God to show Apollos the way of truth more perfectly. The Lord employs various instrumentalities for the accomplishment of His purpose, and while some with special talents are chosen to devote all their energies to the work of teaching and preaching the gospel, many others, upon whom human hands have never been laid in ordination, are called to act an important part in soulsaving.

“There is a large field open before the self-supporting gospel worker. Many may gain valuable experiences in ministry while toiling a portion of the same time at some form of manual labor, and by this method strong workers may be developed for important service in needy fields.

“The self-sacrificing servant of God who labors untiringly in word and doctrine, carries on his heart a heavy burden. He does not measure his work by hours. His wages do not influence him in his labor, nor is he turned from his duty because of unfavorable conditions. From heaven he received his commission, and to heaven he looks for his recompense when the work entrusted to him is done.”—*Ibid*, pp. 355, 356.

## 5. INSPIRATION FOR LAYPEOPLE

- a. How is the example of Paul's voluntary missionary work to inspire and motivate us today? Acts 20:33, 34; Psalm 126:6.

"In humble dependence upon God, families are to settle in the waste places of His vineyard. Consecrated men and women are needed to stand as fruit-bearing trees of righteousness in the desert places of the earth. As the reward of their self-sacrificing efforts to sow the seeds of truth, they will reap a rich harvest. As they visit family after family, opening the Scriptures to those in spiritual darkness, many hearts will be touched.

"In fields where the conditions are so objectionable and disheartening that many workers refuse to go to them, most remarkable changes for the better may be brought about by the efforts of self-sacrificing lay members. These humble workers will accomplish much because they put forth patient, persevering effort, not relying upon human power, but upon God, who gives them His favor. The amount of good that these workers accomplish will never be known in this world.

"Self-supporting missionaries are often very successful. Beginning in a small, humble way, their work enlarges as they move forward under the guidance of the Spirit of God. Let two or more start out together in evangelistic work. They may not receive any particular encouragement from those at the head of the work that they will be given financial support; nevertheless let them go forward, praying, singing, teaching, living the truth. They may take up the work of canvassing, and in this way introduce the truth into many families. . . . They bear the message God gives them, and their efforts are crowned with success. Many will be brought to a knowledge of the truth who, but for these humble teachers, would never have been won to Christ."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, pp. 22, 23.

## PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Regarding material possessions, what example is given to Christians?
2. What steps can I take to resemble Paul's outreach in Corinth?
3. Why can I be encouraged by the dream Christ gave to Paul there?
4. Whom that I know may become an "Apollos" I can lead to Jesus?
5. Name some promises for all who sow the seeds of God's word.

# Deliverance From Darkness

**MEMORY TEXT:** “And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds” (Acts 19:18).

“Many a sincere follower of Christ has had a similar experience [as the disciples at Ephesus]. A clearer understanding of God’s will, places man in a new relation to Him. New duties are revealed. Much which before appeared innocent, or even praiseworthy, is now seen to be sinful.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 133.

**Suggested Readings:** *Messages to Young People*, pp. 271–282;  
*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 281–290;  
*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 191–199.

## Sunday

August 8

### 1. COMING INTO GREATER LIGHT

- a. What can we learn from the step taken by certain disciples in Ephesus who came to greater light in their experience? Acts 19:1–7.

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“When [the Jewish converts in Ephesus] received baptism at the hand of John they did not fully comprehend the mission of Jesus as the Sin Bearer. They were holding serious errors. But with clearer light, they gladly accepted Christ as their Redeemer, and with this step of advance came a change in their obligations. As they received a purer faith, there was a corresponding change in their life. In token of this change, and as an acknowledgment of their faith in Christ, they were rebaptized in the name of Jesus.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 285.

“It is a matter to be treated as a great privilege and blessing, and all who are rebaptized, if they have the right ideas upon this subject, will thus consider it. . . .

“The Lord calls for a decided reformation. And when a soul is truly reconverted, let him be rebaptized. Let him renew his covenant with God, and God will renew His covenant with him.”—*Evangelism*, p. 375.

## 2. TRUE vs. FALSE MIRACLES

- a. Describe Paul's work during his two years in Ephesus. Acts 19:8–12.
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“As Paul was brought in direct contact with the idolatrous inhabitants of Ephesus, the power of God was strikingly displayed through him. The apostles were not always able to work miracles at will. The Lord granted His servants this special power as the progress of His cause or the honor of His name required. Like Moses and Aaron at the court of Pharaoh, the apostle had now to maintain the truth against the lying wonders of the magicians; hence the miracles he wrought were of a different character from those which he had heretofore performed. As the hem of Christ's garment had communicated healing power to her who sought relief by the touch of faith, so on this occasion, garments were made the means of cure to all that believed; ‘diseases departed from them, and evil spirits went out of them.’ Yet these miracles gave no encouragement to blind superstition. When Jesus felt the touch of the suffering woman, He exclaimed, ‘Virtue is gone out of me.’ So the Scripture declares that the Lord wrought miracles by the hand of Paul, and that the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified, and not the name of Paul.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, pp. 1063, 1064.

- b. How was the sacredness of Christ's name vindicated, causing many to re-examine some wrong practices in their lives? Acts 19:13–18.
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“The discomfiture and humiliation of those who had profaned the name of Jesus, soon became known throughout Ephesus, by Jews and Gentiles. Unmistakable proof had been given of the sacredness of that name, and the peril which they incurred who should invoke it while they had no faith in Christ's divine mission. Terror seized the minds of many, and the work of the gospel was regarded by all with awe and reverence.

“Facts which had previously been concealed were now brought to light. In accepting Christianity, some of the brethren had not fully renounced their heathen superstitions. The practice of magic was still to some extent continued among them. Convinced of their error by the events which had recently occurred, they came and made a full confession to Paul, and publicly acknowledged their secret arts to be deceptive and Satanic.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, pp. 136, 137.

### 3. SURRENDERING ALL

- a. What type of steps reveal true conversion in the life? Acts 19:19, 20.
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“When the Ephesians were converted, they changed their habits and practices. Under the conviction of the Spirit of God, they acted with promptness, and laid bare all the mysteries of their witchcraft. They came and confessed, and showed their deeds, and their souls were filled with holy indignation because they had given such devotion to magic, and had so highly prized the books in which the rules of Satan’s devising had laid down the methods whereby they might practice witchcraft. They were determined to turn from the service of the evil one, and they brought their costly volumes and publicly burned them. Thus they made manifest their sincerity in turning to God. . . .

“The books the Ephesians committed to the flames on their conversion to the gospel, they formerly delighted in, and permitted them to rule their consciences and guide their minds. They might have sold them, but by so doing the evil would be perpetuated. They afterward abhorred the satanic mysteries, the magical arts, and regarded with aversion the knowledge they had obtained from them. I would ask the young who have been connected with the truth, Have you burned your magical books? . . .

“The world is deluged with books which sow the seeds skepticism, infidelity, and atheism, and to a larger or less degree you have been learning your lessons from these books, and they are magical books. They put God out of the mind, and separate the soul from the true Shepherd.”—*Messages to Young People*, pp. 275, 276.

- b. Name some ancient Heaven-sent warnings against magic and sorcery. Isaiah 47:9–14; Malachi 3:5.
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“Through spiritualism many of the sick, the bereaved, the curious, are communicating with evil spirits. All who venture to do this are on dangerous ground. . . .

“The magicians of heathen times have their counterpart in the spiritualistic mediums, the clairvoyants, and the fortune-tellers of today. . . . Wherever an influence is exerted to cause men to forget God, there Satan is exercising his bewitching power.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 290.

**4. “NO NEW THING UNDER THE SUN”**

- a. What warnings against magic (spiritualism) and sorcery are re-emphasized for our day? Ephesians 5:11; Revelation 22:14, 15.
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“There are many who shrink with horror from the thought of consulting spirit mediums, but who are attracted by more pleasing forms of spiritism. Others are led astray by the teachings of Christian Science, and by the mysticism of Theosophy and other Oriental religions.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 210.

“The mysteries of heathen worship are replaced by the secret associations and séances, the obscurities and wonders, of the sorcerers of our time. Their disclosures are eagerly received by thousands who refuse to accept light from God’s word or from His Spirit. While they speak with scorn of the magicians of old, the great deceiver laughs in triumph as they yield to his arts under a different form.

“His agents still claim to cure disease. They attribute their power to electricity, magnetism, or the so-called ‘sympathetic remedies.’ In truth, they are but channels for Satan’s electric currents. By this means he casts his spell over the bodies and souls of men. . . .

“Not a few in this Christian age and Christian nation resort to evil spirits rather than trust to the power of the living God. The mother, watching by the sickbed of her child, exclaims: ‘I can do no more. Is there no physician who has power to restore my child?’ She is told of the wonderful cures performed by some clairvoyant or magnetic healer, and she trusts her dear one to his charge, placing it as verily in the hands of Satan as if he were standing by her side. In many instances the future life of the child is controlled by a satanic power which it seems impossible to break.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 193, 194.

- b. What was Paul’s next goal after Ephesus—yet what complication arose in the meantime? Acts 19:21–29.
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“An extensive and profitable business had grown up at Ephesus from the manufacture and sale of small shrines and images, modeled after the temple and the image of Diana. Those interested in this industry found their gains diminishing, and all united in attributing the unwelcome change to Paul’s labors.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 292.

## 5. GOD'S INTERVENTION

- a. Describe the danger posed by the mob of craftsmen. Acts 19:30–34.
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“Paul’s place of concealment was not far distant, and he soon learned of the peril of his beloved brethren. Forgetful of his own safety, he desired to go at once to the theater to address the rioters. But ‘the disciples suffered him not.’ Gaius and Aristarchus were not the prey the people sought; no serious harm to them was apprehended. But should the apostle’s pale, care-worn face be seen, it would arouse at once the worst passions of the mob and there would not be the least human possibility of saving his life.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 293.

- b. How did God use the town clerk to stop the uproar? Acts 19:35–41.
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“In his speech Demetrius had said, ‘This our craft is in danger.’ These words reveal the real cause of the tumult at Ephesus, and also the cause of much of the persecution which followed the apostles in their work. Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen saw that by the teaching and spread of the gospel the business of image making was endangered. The income of pagan priests and artisans was at stake, and for this reason they aroused against Paul the most bitter opposition.

“The decision of the recorder and of others holding honorable offices in the city had set Paul before the people as one innocent of any unlawful act. This was another triumph of Christianity over error and superstition. God had raised up a great magistrate to vindicate His apostle and hold the tumultuous mob in check. Paul’s heart was filled with gratitude to God that his life had been preserved and that Christianity had not been brought into disrepute by the tumult at Ephesus.”—*Ibid.*, p. 295.

## PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why was rebaptism appropriate for the twelve disciples in Ephesus?
2. Why weren’t the vagabond Jews blessed by using the name of Jesus?
3. What are some “magical books” that I should get rid of?
4. Which traps of modern spiritualism could endanger me personally?
5. How does God sometimes use unexpected ways to deliver His people?



# Selfless Missionary Work

**MEMORY TEXT:** “I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:33–35).

“Not only with our words should we speak to the people, but everything pertaining to our person should be a sermon to them.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 618.

**Suggested Reading:** *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 296, 297, 389–407.

## Sunday

August 15

### 1. A MIRACLE FROM GOD

a. Where did Paul go after Ephesus? Acts 20:1–5.

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b. What happened on Saturday night when Paul was at Troas, as he preached in an upper chamber with many lights? Acts 20:6–12.

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“Upon the last evening of [Paul’s] stay the brethren ‘came together to break bread.’ The fact that their beloved teacher was about to depart, had called together a larger company than usual. They assembled in an ‘upper chamber’ on the third story. There, in the fervency of his love and solicitude for them, the apostle preached until midnight.

“In one of the open windows sat a youth named Eutyclus. In this perilous position he went to sleep and fell to the court below. At once all was alarm and confusion. The youth was taken up dead, and many gathered about him with cries and mourning. But Paul, passing through the frightened company, embraced him and offered up an earnest prayer that God would restore the dead to life. His petition was granted.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 391.

**2. ON A MISSION FOR CHRIST**

- a. Why did Paul briefly separate from his fellow travelers? Acts 20:13.
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“The ship on which Paul and his companions were to continue their journey, was about to sail, and the brethren hastened on board. The apostle himself, however, chose to take the nearer route by land between Troas and Assos, meeting his companions at the latter city. This gave him a short season for meditation and prayer. The difficulties and dangers connected with his coming visit to Jerusalem, the attitude of the church there toward him and his work, as well as the condition of the churches and the interests of the gospel work in other fields, were subjects of earnest, anxious thought, and he took advantage of this special opportunity to seek God for strength and guidance.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 391.

- b. Where was Paul headed—and what did he do on the way? Acts 20:14–17.
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- c. What solemn message did Paul have for the Ephesians? Acts 20:18–27.
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“Paul had not designed to bear this testimony; but, while he was speaking, the Spirit of Inspiration came upon him, confirming his fears that this would be his last meeting with his Ephesian brethren.”—*Ibid.*, p. 393.

- d. What do pastoral leaders ever need to keep foremost in mind? Acts 20:28.
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“He who holds the truth in unrighteousness, who declares his belief in it, and yet wounds it every day by his inconsistent life, is surrendering himself to the service of Satan and leading souls to ruin.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 142.

“The church of God is purchased with the blood of Christ, and every shepherd should realize that the sheep under their care cost a priceless sum. . . . They should consider the sheep intrusted to their care of the highest value, and realize that they will be called to render a strict account of their ministry.”—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 125.

### 3. THE POWER OF THE TRUTH

- a. Of what grave danger is the church to beware? Acts 20:29, 30.
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“Never, never was there a time when the truth will suffer more from being misrepresented, belittled, demerited through the perverse disputings of men than in these last days. . . . The people are charmed with some strange, new thing, and are not wise in experience to discern the character of ideas that men may frame up as something. But to call it something of great consequence and tie it to the oracles of God does not make it truth. Oh, how this rebukes the low standard of piety in the churches. Men who want to present something original will conjure up things new and strange, and without consideration will step forward on these unstable theories that have been woven together as a precious theory, and present it as a life and death question.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1064.

- b. How did Paul’s example and words reflect the teachings of Christ Himself? Acts 20:31–35.
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“[Paul’s] toil-worn hands, as he presented them before the people, bore testimony that he was not chargeable to any man for his support. They detracted nothing, he deemed, from the force of his pathetic appeals, sensible, intelligent, and eloquent beyond those of any other man who had acted a part in the Christian ministry. . . .

“We do not think it is obligatory on all ministers to do in all respects as Paul did. Yet we say to all that Paul was a Christian gentleman of the highest type. His example shows that mechanical toil does not necessarily lessen the influence of anyone, that working with the hands in any honorable employment should not make a man coarse and rough and discourteous.”—*Ibid.*

- c. What reveals how deeply the people were touched by Paul’s heartfelt appeals? Acts 20:36–38.
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**4. FEARLESS AND DETERMINED**

- a. As the missionaries journeyed, what warning came at Tyre—and what did they do before their departure from there? Acts 21:1–5.

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- b. Where did they go next? Acts 21:6–9.

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- c. Describe how another warning came to Paul—and the way he responded. Acts 21:10–14. How can his dedication inspire us?

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“Paul attracted warm hearts wherever he went; his soul was linked to the soul of his brethren. When he parted with them, knowing and assuring them that they would never see his face again, they were filled with sorrow, and so earnestly besought him to still remain with them that he exclaimed, ‘What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart?’ His sympathetic heart was breaking as he witnessed and felt their grief at this final separation. They loved him, and felt that they could not give him up. What Christian does not admire the character of Paul? Firm as a rock when standing in defense of the truth, he was affectionate and gentle as a child when surrounded by his friends.”—*The Review and Herald*, September 8, 1885.

“Keep the soul right. Let this be the language of the soul: I believe in God, in His providence, in the Bible, and in truth and clearness of purpose. I cannot, I will not, swerve one jot from my duty and the claims that the Lord has upon me. I cannot, I dare not, sacrifice in the least degree my vital interest in holy things in order to gain relief from the pressure of temporal embarrassment. I will wait any time; walk humbly with God; walk in meekness, in humility, in simplicity of soul till the Lord gives me success and victory in His own time and way.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 12, p. 107.

- d. When Paul arrived at Jerusalem, what news was brought to him? Acts 21:15–21.

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**5. PLACED IN SERIOUS DANGER**

- a. Explain the advice given to Paul and how he submitted. Acts 21:22–26.
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“This concession was not in harmony with [Paul’s] teachings nor with the firm integrity of his character. His advisers were not infallible. Though some of these men wrote under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, yet when not under its direct influence they sometimes erred.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1065.

- b. Describe the disastrous result of this act—and how only Paul’s life was spared. Acts 21:27–32. How does history repeat itself?
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“Elijah was declared to be a troubler in Israel, Jeremiah a traitor, Paul a polluter of the temple. From that day to this, those who would be loyal to truth have been denounced as seditious, heretical, or schismatic. Multitudes who are too unbelieving to accept the sure word of prophecy will receive with unquestioning credulity an accusation against those who dare to reprove fashionable sins. This spirit will increase more and more. And the Bible plainly teaches that a time is approaching when the laws of the state will so conflict with the law of God that whosoever would obey all the divine precepts must brave reproach and punishment as an evildoer.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 458.

**PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. When was the meeting on the first day of the week—and how do we know?
2. What does the apostle Paul teach me about guiding souls in the faith?
3. Explain the contrast between Paul and many professed preachers today.
4. Why was Paul such a devoted missionary and how can I be more like him?
5. How and why will the persecution like that against Paul soon be repeated?

# The Apostle Under Siege

**MEMORY TEXT:** “And [the LORD] said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles” (Acts 22:21).

“Those who are called to unite with Christ must leave all, in order to follow Him.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 36, 37.

**Suggested Reading:** *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 408–418.

*Sunday*

August 22

## 1. REVEALING CHRIST

- a. **Of what does the treatment of Paul remind us?** Acts 21:33–36; Luke 23:18.

“When the Son of God was on trial, the Jews cried out, ‘Away with Him, crucify Him!’ because His pure life and holy teaching convicted them of sin and condemned them; and for the same reason many in their hearts cry out against the word of God.”—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 425.

- b. **Why did divine Providence open the way in Paul’s defense?** Acts 21:37–39.

“In the midst of the tumult the apostle remained calm and self-possessed. His mind was stayed upon God, and he knew that angels of Heaven were about him. He could not leave the temple without making an effort to set the truth before his countrymen. He therefore turned to the commanding officer, and in a deferential manner addressed him in Greek, saying, ‘May I speak with thee?’ . . . and begged that he might be permitted to speak to the people. The Lord had given his servant an influence over the Roman officer, and the request was granted.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 218.

## 2. A NOBLE DEFENSE

- a. Name some highlights of Paul's defense. Acts 21:40; 22:1–11.
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“The apostle could never forget his conversion from a persecutor of all who believe on Christ, to a believer in Him. What a bearing this conversion had on all his afterlife! What an encouragement it was as he worked on the side of Him whom he once ridiculed and despised. He could never forget the assurance conveyed to him in the first part of his ministry. He could speak intelligently because he had an experience, a personal knowledge, of the Lord Jesus Christ. He had a living, abiding faith, for he cultivated a sense of the presence of Christ in all his works. He received strength in prayer, and as a faithful soldier of Christ he ever looked to his Captain for orders.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1065.

- b. Why was Paul quite certain of his calling from God to minister to the Gentile world? Acts 22:12–21.
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“The Lord had given Paul his commission to enter the broad missionary field of the Gentile world. To prepare him for this extensive and difficult work, God had brought him into close connection with Himself and had opened before his enraptured vision views of the beauty and glory of heaven.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 159.

- c. How did the crowd react to Paul—and with what result? Acts 22:22–24.
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“[The Roman captain] had not understood Paul's Hebrew address, and concluded from the general excitement that his prisoner must be guilty of some great crime. . . .

“The body of the apostle was stretched out, like that of a common malefactor, to receive the lashes. There was no friend to stand by him. He was in a Roman barrack, surrounded only by brutal soldiers.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 220.

- d. Why was Paul spared from suffering an even worse ordeal? Acts 22:25–29.
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### 3. BEFORE THE COUNCIL

- a. How did Paul's hearing before the council begin—and what did he prophesy? Acts 22:30; 23:1–5.
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“Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, Paul uttered a prophetic denunciation similar to that which Christ had uttered in rebuking the hypocrisy of the Jews. The judgment pronounced by the apostle was terribly fulfilled when the iniquitous and hypocritical high priest was murdered by assassins in the Jewish war.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1065.

- b. How did Paul wisely redirect the focus of the hearing? Acts 23:6–9.
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“The Pharisees were very strict in regard to the outward observance of forms and customs, and were filled with haughty, worldly, hypocritical self-righteousness. The Sadducees denied the resurrection of the dead and the existence of angels, and were skeptical in regard to God. This sect was largely composed of unworthy characters, many of whom were licentious in their habits.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 1077.

“The two parties began to dispute between themselves, and thus the strength of their opposition against Paul was broken. . . .

“In the confusion that followed, the Sadducees were eagerly striving to gain possession of the apostle, that they might put him to death; and the Pharisees were as eager in striving to protect him.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 411, 412.

- c. How was Paul protected—and what does this make us recall? Acts 23:10.
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“Our standing before God depends, not upon the amount of light we have received, but upon the use we make of what we have. Thus even the heathen who choose the right as far as they can distinguish it are in a more favorable condition than are those who have had great light, and profess to serve God, but who disregard the light, and by their daily life contradict their profession.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 239.



#### 4. WHEN ALONE IN THE DARK

- a. **What were Paul's thoughts while alone at night in the castle prison—and what brought him comfort? Acts 23:11.**
- 

“Later, while reflecting on the trying experiences of the day, Paul began to fear that his course might not have been pleasing to God. Could it be that he had made a mistake after all in visiting Jerusalem? Had his great desire to be in union with his brethren led to this disastrous result?

“The position which the Jews as God's professed people occupied before an unbelieving world, caused the apostle intense anguish of spirit. How would those heathen officers look upon them?—claiming to be worshipers of Jehovah, and assuming sacred office, yet giving themselves up to the control of blind, unreasoning anger, seeking to destroy even their brethren who dared to differ with them in religious faith, and turning their most solemn deliberative council into a scene of strife and wild confusion. Paul felt that the name of his God had suffered reproach in the eyes of the heathen.

“And now he was in prison, and he knew that his enemies, in their desperate malice, would resort to any means to put him to death. Could it be that his work for the churches was ended and that ravening wolves were to enter in now? The cause of Christ was very near to Paul's heart, and with deep anxiety he thought of the perils of the scattered churches, exposed as they were to the persecutions of just such men as he had encountered in the Sanhedrin council. In distress and discouragement he wept and prayed.

“In this dark hour the Lord was not unmindful of His servant. He had guarded him from the murderous throng in the temple courts; He had been with him before the Sanhedrin council; He was with him in the fortress; and He revealed Himself to His faithful witness in response to the earnest prayers of the apostle for guidance. [Acts 23:11 quoted.]”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 412, 413.

- b. **What reveals God's willingness to comfort us in the darkness, just as He did for Paul—and for David alone in the wilderness? Psalm 63:5, 6.**
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“At all times and in all places, in all sorrows and in all afflictions, when the outlook seems dark and the future perplexing, and we feel helpless and alone, the Comforter will be sent in answer to the prayer of faith.”—*Christian Service*, p. 251.

**5. FROM HIS OWN NATION**

- a. The next day, what plan did the enemy of souls devise? Acts 23:12–15.
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“While the Lord encouraged His servant, Paul’s enemies were eagerly plotting his destruction.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 413.

- b. Whom did the Lord use to expose the evil plot? Acts 23:16–21.
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- c. How only could the chief captain overrule the plan—and what should the persecution against Paul make us realize? Acts 23:22–33.
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“The case of Paul was not the first in which a servant of God had found among the heathen an asylum from the malice of the professed people of Jehovah. . . .

“While the Jewish leaders professed to have great zeal for the honor of God and the good of Israel, they were enemies of both. By precept and example they were leading the people farther and farther from obedience to God—leading them where He could not be their defense in the day of trouble.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 416, 417.

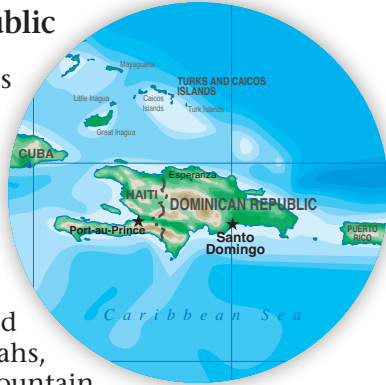
“Satan is constantly working through his agents to dishearten and destroy those whom God has chosen to accomplish a great and good work. They may be ready to sacrifice even life itself for the advancement of the cause of Christ, yet the great deceiver will suggest to their brethren doubts concerning them which, if entertained, would undermine confidence in their integrity of character, and thus cripple their usefulness.”—*Ibid.*, p. 418.

**PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. How did Paul’s behavior contrast with that of his countrymen?
2. What made it possible for Paul to endure the suffering heaped on him?
3. Who treated Paul the worst—the heathen, Pharisees, or Sadducees?
4. Why can we be comforted by God’s care for Paul in the castle prison?
5. Explain the contrasting attitude between the Roman captain and the Jews.

## First Sabbath Offering for Chapels in the Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic forms the eastern part of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, shared with Haiti on the west and bordered on the north by the Atlantic Ocean. It is a beautiful, tropical country known for world-class beaches, resorts, golfing, and its warm, friendly people. The natural beauty found here includes rainforests, savannahs, and highlands, with the tallest mountain in the Caribbean. The capital city of Santo Domingo dates back five centuries and is rich in historic architectural sites.



Spanish is spoken by 80% of the 10.8+ million people, followed by Haitian Creole and Samana English; the economy relies primarily on mining, agriculture, trade, and services. The official religion is Roman Catholicism, with around 40% of the population being practicing Catholics, 29% non-practicing Catholics, 18% evangelical Protestants, and 11% who profess no religion.

The SDA Reform Movement arrived in this nation in the early 1970's through missionary-minded Dominicans living in the USA who shared the present truth with their friends and families back home. Some of these enthusiastic believers then relocated back to their native island to promote the message more effectively in person. A minister was sent to the area—and through the power of God, the beloved SDARM hymn about the 144,000 was key to opening many doors for Bible studies, and the work was organized in 1976. Since that time, the message has spread further and now there are over 150 church members and around 400 regular Sabbath school students.

With this growth, the need has naturally arisen for chapels in which to worship the Lord. By God's grace, we have land for this purpose in La Salvia, Bonao in the northern part of the island. Construction has already begun here, and we are planning also to dedicate to the Lord a house of worship in the Los Mina sector of the city and province of Santo Domingo. The brethren have donated freely of their means, but in order for these goals to come to fruition, we need your help.

When the First Sabbath Offering is gathered, please give generously, that monuments may shine to the glory of God in this island nation. It is our prayer that the Lord may richly bless the gifts and the givers!

*Your brethren and sisters from the Dominican Republic*

# Testifying With a Clean Conscience

**MEMORY TEXT:** “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men” (Acts 24:16).

“A conscience void of offense toward God and man, a heart that feels the tenderest sympathy for human beings, especially that they may be won for Christ, will have the attributes that Christ had. All such will be imbued with His Spirit. They will have a reservoir of persuasion and a storehouse of simple eloquence.”—*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 120.

**Suggested Reading:** *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 419–426.

## Sunday

August 29

### 1. TERTULLUS, THE ORATOR

- a. Describe how flattering hypocrisy and lies were used to introduce Paul’s hearing before Felix the governor. Acts 23:34, 35; 24:1–9.

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“Tertullus here descended to bare-faced falsehood. The character of Felix was base and contemptible. . . . His acts of cruelty and oppression caused him to be universally hated. The treacherous cruelty of his character is shown by his brutal murder of the high priest Jonathan, to whom he was largely indebted for his own position. . . .

“Through the deceptive arts of Simon Magus, a Cyprian sorcerer, Felix had induced [Drusilla] to leave her husband and to become his wife. Drusilla was young and beautiful, and, moreover, a Jewess. She was devotedly attached to her husband, who had made a great sacrifice to obtain her hand. There was little indeed to induce her to forego her strongest prejudices and to bring upon herself the abhorrence of her nation for the sake of forming an adulterous connection with a cruel and elderly profligate.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, pp. 235, 236.

“Those who heard Tertullus knew that his flattering words were untrue, but their desire to secure the condemnation of Paul was stronger than their love of truth.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 419, 420.

## 2. IN PERFECT PEACE

- a. How did Paul candidly begin his defense before Felix? Acts 24:10–13.
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“Felix had sufficient penetration to read the disposition and character of Paul’s accusers. He knew from what motive they had flattered him, and he saw also that they had failed to substantiate their charges against Paul. Turning to the accused, he beckoned to him to answer for himself. Paul wasted no words in compliments, but simply stated that he could the more cheerfully defend himself before Felix, since the latter had been so long a procurator, and therefore had so good an understanding of the laws and customs of the Jews. Referring to the charges brought against him, he plainly showed that not one of them was true. He declared that he had caused no disturbance in any part of Jerusalem, nor had he profaned the sanctuary.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 420, 421.

- b. What concept did Paul present to the governor? Acts 24:14, 15.
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“In consequence of Adam’s sin, death passed upon the whole human race. All alike go down into the grave. And through the provisions of the plan of salvation, all are to be brought forth from their graves.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 544.

- c. Why is the aim of Paul’s life beneficial to all? Acts 24:16; Isaiah 26:3, 4.
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“Inward peace and a conscience void of offense toward God will quicken and invigorate the intellect like dew distilled upon the tender plants. The will is then rightly directed and controlled, and is more decided, and yet free from perverseness. The meditations are pleasing because they are sanctified. The serenity of mind which you may possess will bless all with whom you associate. This peace and calmness will, in time, become natural, and will reflect its precious rays upon all around you, to be again reflected upon you. The more you taste this heavenly peace and quietude of mind, the more it will increase. It is an animated, living pleasure which does not throw all the moral energies into a stupor, but awakens them to increased activity. Perfect peace is an attribute of heaven which angels possess. May God help you to become a possessor of this peace.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 327.

**3. ETERNITY vs. CONVENIENCE**

a. What issue had triggered the Jewish rage against Paul? Acts 24:17–21.

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b. In what way was Felix weak on how to handle the case? Acts 24:22, 23.

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“The apostle spoke with earnestness and evident sincerity, and his words carried with them a weight of conviction. Claudius Lysias, in his letter to Felix, had borne a similar testimony in regard to Paul’s conduct. Moreover, Felix himself had a better knowledge of the Jewish religion than many supposed. Paul’s plain statement of the facts in the case enabled Felix to understand still more clearly the motives by which the Jews were governed in attempting to convict the apostle of sedition and treasonable conduct. The governor would not gratify them by unjustly condemning a Roman citizen, neither would he give him up to them to be put to death without a fair trial. Yet Felix knew no higher motive than self-interest, and he was controlled by love of praise and a desire for promotion. Fear of offending the Jews held him back from doing full justice to a man whom he knew to be innocent. He therefore decided to suspend the trial until Lysias should be present.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 421, 422.

c. How does an attitude like that of Felix grieve the Spirit? Acts 24:24, 25.

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“[Felix] had slighted his last offer of mercy. Never was he to receive another call from God.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 427.

“[The community of Bro. K.] thought that if they did not war against the truth they would be doing quite well, but the light they neglected to receive and cherish went out in darkness. They endeavored to quiet conscience by saying to the Spirit of God: ‘Go Thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for Thee.’ That convenient season has never come. They neglected the golden opportunity that has never again returned to them, for the world has shut out the light that they refused. The interests of this life and the charm of exciting pleasures absorb their minds and hearts, while their best Friend, the blessed Saviour, is rejected and forgotten.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 108.

#### 4. EXCUSES, EXCUSES . . .

- a. Name some common excuses for not committing fully to Christ—and the outcome of all of them. Luke 14:15–20, 24.
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“The excuses urged for refusing the invitation to the feast cover the whole ground of excuses for refusing the gospel invitation. Men declare that they cannot imperil their worldly prospects by giving attention to the claims of the gospel. They count their temporal interests as of more value than the things of eternity. The very blessings they have received from God become a barrier to separate their souls from their Creator and Redeemer. They will not be interrupted in their worldly pursuits, and they say to the messenger of mercy, ‘Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.’ Acts 24:25. Others urge the difficulties that would arise in their social relations should they obey the call of God. They say they cannot afford to be out of harmony with their relatives and acquaintances. Thus they prove themselves to be the very actors described in the parable. The Master of the feast regards their flimsy excuses as showing contempt for His invitation.

“The man who said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come,’ represents a large class. Many there are who allow their wives or their husbands to prevent them from heeding the call of God. The husband says, ‘I cannot obey my convictions of duty while my wife is opposed to it. Her influence would make it exceedingly hard for me to do so.’ The wife hears the gracious call, ‘Come; for all things are now ready,’ and she says, ‘I pray thee have me excused.’ My husband refuses the invitation of mercy. He says that his business stands in the way. I must go with my husband, and therefore I cannot come.’ The children’s hearts are impressed. They desire to come. But they love their father and mother, and since these do not heed the gospel call, the children think that they cannot be expected to come. They too say, ‘Have me excused.’

“All these refuse the Saviour’s call because they fear division in the family circle. They suppose that in refusing to obey God they are insuring the peace and prosperity of the home; but this is a delusion. Those who sow selfishness will reap selfishness. In rejecting the love of Christ they reject that which alone can impart purity and steadfastness to human love. They will not only lose heaven, but will fail of the true enjoyment of that for which heaven was sacrificed.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 224, 225.

## 5. POURED OUT WITHOUT MEASURE

- a. Instead of making excuses, what happens as we fully surrender to the Holy Spirit's leading? Acts 3:19; Isaiah 44:22, 23; Psalm 110:3.

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"We are engaged in a conflict for eternal life; and in this battle, grace is arrayed against nature and the whole strength of self is opposed to the victory. Few find the path of self-denial, which is lined with crosses, and fewer still pursue it. . . . Will you persevere and not become weary in well doing? This Christian warfare is one of strife and eternal vigilance. Perfect victory may be yours if you will cheerfully lift the cross of Christ."—*Letters and Manuscripts*, Letter 48, 1888.

"Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers. Satan also works with lying wonders, even bringing down fire from heaven in the sight of men. Revelation 13:13. Thus the inhabitants of the earth will be brought to take their stand.

"The message will be carried not so much by argument as by the deep conviction of the Spirit of God. The arguments have been presented. The seed has been sown, and now it will spring up and bear fruit. The publications distributed by missionary workers have exerted their influence, yet many whose minds were impressed have been prevented from fully comprehending the truth or from yielding obedience. Now the rays of light penetrate everywhere, the truth is seen in its clearness, and the honest children of God sever the bands which have held them. Family connections, church relations, are powerless to stay them now. Truth is more precious than all besides. Notwithstanding the agencies combined against the truth, a large number take their stand upon the Lord's side."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 612.

## PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why did Ananias, the high priest, bring Tertullus to Paul's hearing?
2. Why is it vital to keep a clean conscience by confession and repentance?
3. How might I be procrastinating in some areas of life as Felix did?
4. What lame excuses might I be making that quench the Spirit?
5. How can I partake of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in fullness?



# Witnessing to a King

**MEMORY TEXT:** “Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come” (Acts 26:22).

“The crown of Christ is to be uplifted above the diadems of earthly potentates.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 402.

**Suggested Reading:** *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 427–438.

## Sunday

September 5

### 1. THE RESULT OF REJECTING LIGHT

- a. As Felix put worldly pleasure, greed, and ambitious politicizing ahead of the light brought by Paul, what followed in his life? Acts 24:26, 27.

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“[Felix] intimated that by the payment of a large sum of money Paul might secure his release. The apostle, however, was of too noble a nature to free himself by a bribe. He was not guilty of any crime, and he would not stoop to commit a wrong in order to gain freedom.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 426, 427.

“[In a feud in Caesarea between Greeks and Jews,] Felix, whose animosity toward the Jews had increased every year, now gave his soldiers liberty to rob the houses of the wealthy.

“These daring acts of injustice and cruelty could not pass unnoticed. The Jews made a formal complaint against Felix, and he was summoned to Rome to answer their charges. He well knew that his course of extortion and oppression had given them abundant ground for complaint, but he still hoped to conciliate them. Hence, though he had a sincere respect for Paul, he decided to gratify their malice by leaving him a prisoner. But all his efforts were in vain; though he escaped banishment or death, he was removed from office, and deprived of the greater part of his ill-gotten wealth. Drusilla, the partner of his guilt, afterward perished, with their only son, in the eruption of Vesuvius. His own days were ended in disgrace and obscurity.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1066.

## 2. SAFETY IN UNEXPECTED WAYS

- a. Explain the policy of Festus, who replaced Felix. Acts 25:1–6.
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“Festus held firmly to his purpose of giving Paul a fair trial at Caesarea. God in His providence controlled the decision of Festus, that the life of the apostle might be lengthened.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 429.

- b. How did the hearing proceed—and with what result? Acts 25:7–12. Why was it safer for Paul to go to Caesar than Jerusalem? 2 Timothy 3:12.
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“Festus knew nothing of the conspiracies of the Jews to murder Paul, and he was surprised at this appeal to Caesar. However, the words of the apostle put a stop to the proceedings of the court. . . .

“Because of hatred born of bigotry and self-righteousness, a servant of God was driven to turn for protection to the heathen. . . . And this hatred the people of God living in this age have yet to meet. Among many of the professing followers of Christ there is the same pride, formalism, and selfishness, the same spirit of oppression, that held so large a place in the Jewish heart. In the future, men claiming to be Christ’s representatives will take a course similar to that followed by the priests and rulers in their treatment of Christ and the apostles. In the great crisis through which they are soon to pass, the faithful servants of God will encounter the same hardness of heart, the same cruel determination, the same unyielding hatred.

“All who in that evil day would fearlessly serve God according to the dictates of conscience, will need courage, firmness, and a knowledge of God and His word; for those who are true to God will be persecuted, their motives will be impugned, their best efforts misinterpreted, and their names cast out as evil. Satan will work with all his deceptive power to influence the heart and becloud the understanding, to make evil appear good, and good evil. The stronger and purer the faith of God’s people, and the firmer their determination to obey Him, the more fiercely will Satan strive to stir up against them the rage of those who, while claiming to be righteous, trample upon the law of God. It will require the firmest trust, the most heroic purpose, to hold fast the faith once delivered to the saints.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 430, 431.

### 3. A DIVINE APPOINTMENT

- a. In God's providence, who else was to meet Paul? Acts 25:13–22.
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“Paul had appealed to Caesar, and Festus could not do otherwise than send him to Rome. But some time passed before a suitable ship could be found. . . . This gave Paul opportunity to present the reasons of his faith before the principal men of Caesarea, and also before King Agrippa II, the last of the Herods.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 433.

- b. Describe the scene and introductory encounter between Paul and Agrippa in the court—and how Heaven viewed it. Acts 25:23–27.
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“In honor of his visitors, Festus had sought to make this an occasion of imposing display. The rich robes of the procurator and his guests, the swords of the soldiers, and the gleaming armor of their commanders, lent brilliancy to the scene.

“Paul, still manacled, stood before the assembled company. What a contrast was here presented! Agrippa and Bernice possessed power and position, and because of this they were favored by the world. But they were destitute of the traits of character that God esteems. They were transgressors of His law, corrupt in heart and life. Their course of action was abhorred by heaven.

“The aged prisoner, chained to his soldier guard, had in his appearance nothing that would lead the world to pay him homage. Yet in this man, apparently without friends or wealth or position, and held a prisoner for his faith in the Son of God, all heaven was interested. Angels were his attendants. Had the glory of one of those shining messengers flashed forth, the pomp and pride of royalty would have paled; king and courtiers would have been stricken to the earth, as were the Roman guards at the sepulcher of Christ.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 434, 435.

“All Heaven was interested in this one man, now held a prisoner for his faith in the Son of God. Says the beloved John: ‘The world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.’ The world knows not Christ, neither will it know those who exemplify Christ. They are sons of God, children of the royal family; yet their princely claims are not perceived by the world. They may excite their curiosity, but they are not appreciated or understood. They are to them uninteresting and unenvied.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 254.

**4. REPENTANT SINNERS TO SPEAK UP**

- a. What can we learn from how Paul opened his testimony? Acts 26:1–8.
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“Christianity will make a man a gentleman. Christ was courteous, even to His persecutors; and His true followers will manifest the same spirit. Look at Paul when brought before rulers. His speech before Agrippa is an illustration of true courtesy as well as persuasive eloquence. The gospel does not encourage the formal politeness current with the world, but the courtesy that springs from real kindness of heart.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 123.

- b. How did humility of heart radiate from the apostle? Acts 26:9–11.
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“The examples in God’s word of genuine repentance and humiliation reveal a spirit of confession in which there is no excuse for sin or attempt at self-justification.

“Paul did not seek to shield himself; he paints his sin in its darkest hue, not attempting to lessen his guilt. [Acts 26:10, 11 quoted.]. . . He does not hesitate to declare that ‘Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.’”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 641.

- c. How did Paul relate his experience—and what duty entrusted to him is also given to us now, just before Jesus’ return? Acts 26:12–18.
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“[Christ’s] kingdom will not come until the good tidings of His grace have been carried to all the earth. Hence, as we give ourselves to God, and win other souls to Him, we hasten the coming of His kingdom. Only those who devote themselves to His service, saying, ‘Here am I; send me’ (Isaiah 6:8), to open blind eyes, to turn men ‘from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified’ (Acts 26:18)—they alone pray in sincerity, ‘Thy kingdom come.’ ”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 108, 109.

**5. A PRICELESS OPPORTUNITY GRANTED**

a. What did Paul explain as the burden of his heart? Acts 26:19–23.

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b. How did Festus reveal a lack of spiritual discernment? Acts 26:24–26.

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c. Explain how the Holy Spirit was powerfully drawing Agrippa—and, tragically, what finally caused him to resist it. Acts 26:27–32.

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“Did the mind of Agrippa at these words revert to the past history of his family, and their fruitless efforts against Him whom Paul was preaching? Did he think of his great-grandfather Herod, and the massacre of the innocent children of Bethlehem? of his great-uncle Antipas, and the murder of John the Baptist? of his own father, Agrippa I, and the martyrdom of the apostle James? Did he see in the disasters which speedily befell these kings an evidence of the displeasure of God in consequence of their crimes against His servants? Did the pomp and display of that day remind Agrippa of the time when his own father, a monarch more powerful than he, stood in that same city, attired in glittering robes, while the people shouted that he was a god? Had he forgotten how, even before the admiring shouts had died away, vengeance, swift and terrible, had befallen the vainglorious king? Something of all this flitted across Agrippa’s memory; but his vanity was flattered by the brilliant scene before him, and pride and self-importance banished all nobler thoughts.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, pp. 1066, 1067.

**PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. How does the close of Felix’ life remind us that earthly glory fades?
2. What qualities do we need to possess when faced with betrayal?
3. As in Paul’s case, why does the Lord sometimes delay a voyage?
4. In praying, “Thy kingdom come” (Matt. 6:10), what must I realize?
5. How might I be in danger of being distracted by the world’s glitter?

# Trust Amid a Tempest

**MEMORY TEXT:** “Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me” (Acts 27:25).

“God’s special purpose was fulfilled in the journey of Paul upon the sea; He designed that the ship’s crew might thus witness the power of God through Paul.”—*Early Writings*, p. 207.

**Suggested Reading:** *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 439–445.

## Sunday

September 12

### 1. CHAINED ABOARD SHIP

- a. What was the scene of Paul’s next ordeal—yet, besides Luke, who else was a comfort? Acts 27:1, 2; Colossians 4:10 (first part).

“Roman soldiers were held responsible with their own lives for the security of their prisoners, and this had led to the custom of chaining prisoners by the right wrist to the left wrist of soldiers, who relieved each other in turn. Thus not only could the apostle have no movement free, but he was placed in close and constant connection with men of the most uncongenial and absolutely repulsive character; men who were not only uneducated and unrefined, but who, from the demoralizing influence of their surroundings, had become brutal and degraded.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 262.

“Mariners directed their course largely by the position of the sun and stars; and when these did not appear, and there were indications of storm, the owners of vessels were fearful of venturing into the open sea. During a portion of the year, safe navigation was almost impossible.

“The apostle Paul was now called upon to endure the trying experiences that would fall to his lot as a prisoner in chains during the long and tedious voyage to Italy. . . . It was from choice that Aristarchus shared Paul’s bondage, that he might minister to him in his afflictions.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 439, 440.

## 2. A TREACHEROUS VOYAGE

- a. What reveals the well-deserved confidence Paul soon earned from Julius, who held him in custody on the voyage to Rome? Acts 27:3.
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“This permission [to go to his friends] was greatly appreciated by the apostle, who was in feeble health.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 440.

- b. How did the voyage go—and what did Paul warn? Acts 27:4–10.
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“The winds were still contrary, and the ship’s progress was difficult. . . .

“At Fair Havens they were compelled to remain for some time, waiting for favoring winds. Winter was approaching rapidly; ‘sailing was now dangerous;’ and those in charge of the vessel had to give up hope of reaching their destination before the season for travel by sea should be closed for the year. The only question now to be decided was, whether to remain at Fair Havens, or attempt to reach a more favorable place in which to winter.

“This question was earnestly discussed, and was finally referred by the centurion to Paul, who had won the respect of both sailors and soldiers. The apostle unhesitatingly advised remaining where they were.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 440, 441.

- c. What was finally decided—but with what results? Acts 27:11–17.
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“The centurion decided to follow the judgment of the majority. . . .

“Driven by the tempest, the vessel neared the small island of Clauda, and while under its shelter the sailors made ready for the worst. The lifeboat, their only means of escape in case the ship should founder, was in tow and liable to be dashed in pieces any moment. Their first work was to hoist this boat on board. All possible precautions were then taken to strengthen the ship and prepare it to withstand the tempest. The scant protection afforded by the little island did not avail them long, and soon they were again exposed to the full violence of the storm.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 441, 442.

### 3. HOPE TO THE DESPAIRING

- a. Describe the struggles that occurred at sea. Acts 27:18–20.
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“All night the tempest raged, and the ship leaked. The next day, all on board—soldiers, sailors, passengers, and prisoners—united in throwing overboard everything that could be spared. Night came again, but the wind did not abate. The storm-beaten ship, with its shattered mast and rent sails, was tossed hither and thither by the fury of the gale. Every moment it seemed that the groaning timbers must give way as the vessel reeled and quivered under the tempest’s shock. The leak rapidly increased, and passengers and crew worked constantly at the pumps. There was not a moment’s rest for one on board. . . . A gloomy apathy settled upon those three hundred souls, as for fourteen days they drifted, helpless and hopeless, under a sunless and starless heaven. They had no means of cooking; no fire could be lighted, the utensils had been washed overboard, and most of the provisions were water-soaked and spoiled. In fact while their good ship was wrestling with the tempest, and the waves talked with death, no one desired food.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 265.

- b. What did Paul do at this moment—and how could he soon bring hope to all on board? Psalms 55:22; 56:3; Acts 27:21–26.
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“While all around were looking only for swift destruction, this man of God, in the serenity of a blameless conscience, was pouring forth his earnest supplications in their behalf.”—*Ibid.*, p. 266.

“[Paul] grasped by faith the arm of Infinite Power, and his heart was stayed upon God. He had no fears for himself; he knew that God would preserve him to witness at Rome for the truth of Christ. But his heart yearned with pity for the poor souls around him, sinful, degraded, and unprepared to die. As he earnestly pleaded with God to spare their lives, it was revealed to him that his prayer was granted.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 442.

“Physically the greatest sufferer of them all, [Paul] had words of hope for the darkest hour, a helping hand in every emergency.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 266.



#### 4. IMMINENT DANGER

- a. **What deceptive ploy did the selfish sailors begin in an attempt to save only their own lives (and not the others')? Acts 27:27–30.**
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“[Passengers and crew] were now threatened by a new danger, of having their ship driven upon some rock-bound coast. They immediately cast out four anchors, which was the only thing that could be done. All through the remaining hours of that night they waited, knowing that any moment might be their last. The leak was constantly increasing, and the ship might sink at any time, even if the anchors held.

“At last through rain and tempest the gray light fell upon their haggard and ghastly faces. The outlines of the stormy coast could be dimly seen, but not a single familiar landmark was visible. The selfish heathen sailors determined to abandon the ship and crew, and save themselves in the boat which they had with so much difficulty hoisted on board. Pretending that they could do something more to secure the safety of the ship, they unloosed the boat, and began to lower it into the sea.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, pp. 267, 268.

- b. **How did Paul disarm their plot that would not have succeeded? Acts 27:31.**
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“Had [the selfish heathen sailors] succeeded, they would have been dashed in pieces upon the rocks, while all on board would have perished from their inability to handle the sinking vessel.

“At this moment, Paul perceived the base design, and averted the danger. With his usual prompt energy and courage he said to the centurion and soldiers, ‘Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.’ The apostle’s faith in God did not waver; he had no doubt concerning his own preservation, but the promise of safety to the crew had been conditional upon their performance of duty.”—*Ibid.*, p. 268.

- c. **Explain how, even now, the apostle inspired cheer. Acts 27:32–38.**
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**5. EXACTLY AS FORETOLD**

- a. Describe the final shipwreck. Acts 27:39–41.
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- b. How did God miraculously preserve all on board? Acts 27:42–44.
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“Paul and the other prisoners were now threatened by a fate more terrible than shipwreck. The soldiers saw that while endeavoring to reach land it would be impossible for them to keep their prisoners in charge. Every man would have all he could do to save himself. Yet if any of the prisoners were missing, the lives of those who were responsible for them would be forfeited. Hence the soldiers desired to put all the prisoners to death. The Roman law sanctioned this cruel policy, and the plan would have been executed at once, but for him to whom all alike were under deep obligation. Julius the centurion knew that Paul had been instrumental in saving the lives of all on board, and, moreover, convinced that the Lord was with him, he feared to do him harm. He therefore ‘commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land; and the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.’ ”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 445.

“When the roll was called, not one was missing. Nearly three hundred souls, sailors, soldiers, passengers, and prisoners, stood that stormy November morning upon the shore of the island of Melita. And there were some that joined with Paul and his brethren in giving thanks to God, who had preserved their lives and brought them safe to land through the perils of the great deep.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1067.

**PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. How has God lightened my burdens as He did for Paul in chains?
2. How might I be in danger of rejecting an inconvenient warning?
3. What can I learn from Paul’s care for the heathen aboard ship?
4. Why would the selfish plot with the lifeboat never have prospered?
5. What should I learn from how Paul’s prophecy was exactly fulfilled?

# In Chains of Honor

**MEMORY TEXT:** “Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it” (Acts 28:28).

“[The power of persecution] cannot hinder the operation of the word of truth upon hearts and consciences. Paul may be bound, he may be a prisoner in chains, but the word of God cannot be bound. It will accomplish the work whereunto it is sent, and human forces cannot prevent it.”—*The Review and Herald*, September 11, 1888.

**Suggested Reading:** *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 445–454, 485–497.

## Sunday

September 19

### 1. ON THE ISLAND OF MELITA

- a. How were the shipwrecked men received on the island of Melita—and what enabled Paul to reveal God’s power right away? Acts 28:1–6.

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“[Paul’s] hands brought the wood to kindle the fire for the benefit of the chilled, shipwrecked passengers. When they saw the deadly viper fasten upon his hand, they were filled with terror; but Paul calmly shook it into the fire, knowing it could not harm him; for he implicitly trusted in God.”—*My Life Today*, p. 334.

- b. Explain the ways by which the Lord provided opportunities for Paul to minister to the islanders. Acts 28:7–10.

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“During the three months that the ship’s company remained at Melita, Paul and his fellow laborers improved many opportunities to preach the gospel. In a remarkable manner the Lord wrought through them. For Paul’s sake the entire shipwrecked company were treated with great kindness.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 446.

## 2. MEMORABLE MOMENTS

- a. As the journey resumed, what blessing was at Puteoli? Acts 28:11–14.
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“In this place there were a few Christians, and they entreated the apostle to remain with them for seven days, a privilege kindly granted by the centurion.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 447.

- b. Describe the amazing arrival of Paul in Rome. Acts 28:15, 16.
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“Julius willingly granted the apostle every favor which it was in his power to bestow; but he could not change his condition as a prisoner, or release him from the chain that bound him to his soldier guard. It was with a heavy heart that Paul went forward to his long-expected visit to the world’s metropolis. How different the circumstances from those he had anticipated! How was he, fettered and stigmatized, to proclaim the gospel? His hopes of winning many souls to the truth in Rome, seemed destined to disappointment.

“At last the travelers reach Appii Forum, forty miles from Rome. As they make their way through the crowds that throng the great thoroughfare, the gray-haired old man, chained with a group of hardened-looking criminals, receives many a glance of scorn and is made the subject of many a rude, mocking jest.

“Suddenly a cry of joy is heard, and a man springs from the passing throng and falls upon the prisoner’s neck, embracing him with tears and rejoicing, as a son would welcome a long-absent father. Again and again is the scene repeated. . . .

“As the warmhearted disciples eagerly flock around their father in the gospel, the whole company is brought to a standstill. The soldiers are impatient of delay, yet they have not the heart to interrupt this happy meeting; for they, too, have learned to respect and esteem their prisoner. In that worn, pain-stricken face, the disciples see reflected the image of Christ. They assure Paul that they have not forgotten him nor ceased to love him; that they are indebted to him for the joyful hope which animates their lives and gives them peace toward God. In the ardor of their love they would bear him upon their shoulders the whole way to the city, could they but have the privilege.

“Few realize the significance of those words of Luke, that when Paul saw his brethren, ‘he thanked God, and took courage.’ ”—*Ibid.*, pp. 448, 449.

### 3. STRENGTHENED FOR THE TASK

- a. How was Paul later to express how comforted he was by the way he was received at Rome? 2 Timothy 1:16, 17.
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“In the midst of the weeping, sympathizing company of believers, who were not ashamed of his bonds, the apostle praised God aloud. The cloud of sadness that had rested upon his spirit was swept away. His Christian life had been a succession of trials, sufferings, and disappointments, but in that hour he felt abundantly repaid. With firmer step and joyful heart he continued on his way. He would not complain of the past, nor fear for the future. Bonds and afflictions awaited him, he knew; but he knew also that it had been his to deliver souls from a bondage infinitely more terrible, and he rejoiced in his sufferings for Christ’s sake.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 449.

- b. Although it could have put his life at risk once again, within three days, what did Paul promptly do in Rome? Acts 28:17–20.
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“At Rome the centurion Julius delivered up his prisoners to the captain of the emperor’s guard. The good account which he gave of Paul, together with the letter from Festus, caused the apostle to be favorably regarded by the chief captain, and, instead of being thrown into prison, he was permitted to live in his own hired house. Although still constantly chained to a soldier, he was at liberty to receive his friends and to labor for the advancement of the cause of Christ.

“Many of the Jews who had been banished from Rome some years previously, had been allowed to return, so that large numbers were now to be found there. To these, first of all, Paul determined to present the facts concerning himself and his work, before his enemies should have opportunity to embitter them against him. Three days after his arrival in Rome, therefore, he called together their leading men and in a simple, direct manner stated why he had come to Rome as a prisoner. . . .

“He said nothing of the abuse which he had suffered at the hands of the Jews, or of their repeated plots to assassinate him. His words were marked with caution and kindness. He was not seeking to win personal attention or sympathy, but to defend the truth and to maintain the honor of the gospel.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 449, 450.

#### 4. TESTIFYING AGAIN

##### a. How did the Jews respond to Paul's introduction? Acts 28:21–23.

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“Since [the Jews] themselves desired it, Paul bade them set a day when he could present to them the truths of the gospel. At the time appointed, many came together, ‘to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.’ He related his own experience, and presented arguments from the Old Testament Scriptures with simplicity, sincerity, and power.

“The apostle showed that religion does not consist in rites and ceremonies, creeds and theories. If it did, the natural man could understand it by investigation, as he understands worldly things. Paul taught that religion is a practical, saving energy, a principle wholly from God, a personal experience of God's renewing power upon the soul.

“He showed how Moses had pointed Israel forward to Christ as that Prophet whom they were to hear; how all the prophets had testified of Him as God's great remedy for sin, the guiltless One who was to bear the sins of the guilty. He did not find fault with their observance of forms and ceremonies, but showed that while they maintained the ritual service with great exactness, they were rejecting Him who was the antitype of all that system.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 451, 452.

##### b. How did the meeting conclude for Paul's benefit? Acts 28:24–29.

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“Many months passed by after Paul's arrival in Rome, before the Jews of Jerusalem appeared in person to present their accusations against the prisoner. They had been repeatedly thwarted in their designs; and now that Paul was to be tried before the highest tribunal of the Roman Empire, they had no desire to risk another defeat. Lysias, Felix, Festus, and Agrippa had all declared their belief in his innocence. His enemies could hope for success only in seeking by intrigue to influence the emperor in their favor. Delay would further their object, as it would afford them time to perfect and execute their plans, and so they waited for a while before preferring their charges in person against the apostle.”—*Ibid.*, p. 453.

**5. GOD'S TRUTH VINDICATED**

- a. Before Paul was later martyred, what was he able to do—and what could he declare? Acts 28:30, 31; 2 Timothy 4:6–8.
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“While apparently cut off from active labor, Paul exerted a wider and more lasting influence than if he had been free to travel among the churches as in former years.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 454.

- b. What is to fortify us in the days to come? Psalms 76:10; 119:126.
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“God has always wrought for His people in their greatest extremity, when there seemed the least hope that ruin could be averted. The designs of wicked men, the enemies of the church, are subject to His power and overruling providence. He can move upon the hearts of statesmen; the wrath of the turbulent and disaffected, the haters of God, His truth, and His people can be turned aside, even as the rivers of water are turned, if He orders it thus. Prayer moves the arm of Omnipotence. He who marshals the stars in order in the heavens, whose word controls the waves of the great deep, the same infinite Creator will work in behalf of His people if they call upon Him in faith. He will restrain the forces of darkness until the warning is given to the world and all who will heed it are prepared for the conflict.

“[Psalm 76:10 quoted.] God means that testing truth shall be brought to the front and become a subject of examination and discussion, even if it is through the contempt placed upon it. The minds of the people must be agitated. Every controversy, every reproach, every slander, will be God’s means of provoking inquiry and awakening minds that otherwise would slumber.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 452, 453.

**PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. How might situations like being stranded provide opportunities?
2. What reveals the power that Paul’s epistles had on believers?
3. How does God use events like Paul’s arrival in Rome to uplift us?
4. What experience of Paul reminds us that God’s timing is perfect?
5. How can God use me to spread the truth in hard circumstances?

# First Sabbath Offerings



**JULY 3**

for a chapel and church school in Dibrugarh, Assam, India  
(see p. 4.)

**AUGUST 7**  
for the Education Department  
(see p. 30.)



**SEPTEMBER 4**

for the Dominican Republic  
(see p. 51.)