

LESSON 38
“Thou Hast Testified of Me”
Acts 21-28

OVERVIEW:

Paul reports his missionary journeys. Paul appears before the Sanhedrin. Paul testifies to King Agrippa. He is sent to Rome but is shipwrecked on the way. He is imprisoned in Rome.

SCRIPTURES:

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES
CHAPTER 21

Paul journeys to Jerusalem—He is persecuted, arrested, and bound.

1 AND it came to pass, that after we (including Luke, the author of Acts) were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the *day* following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara:

2 And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth.

3 Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden.

4 And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the ^aSpirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem.

5 And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till *we were* out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.

6 And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again.

7 And when we had finished *our* course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day.

8 And the next *day* we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto ^aCaesarea: and we entered into the house of ^bPhilip the ^cevangelist (Patriarch), which was *one* of the seven; (Philip was one of the stalwart leaders of the ancient church. He was set apart as one of the seven men entrusted with administrative and welfare duties (Acts 6:1-7). Later, he performed miracles as a powerful missionary (Acts 8:12-13). Finally, we are told that he served as an evangelist or patriarch. Tradition indicates that he was martyred by hanging in Phrygia. (Fate of the Apostles, *Times and Seasons*, vol. 4, No. 24 November 1, 1843)) and abode with him. (Joseph Smith said: "An Evangelist is a Patriarch, even the oldest man of the blood of Joseph or of the seed of Abraham. Wherever the Church of Christ is established in the earth, there should be a Patriarch for the benefit of the posterity of the Saints." (*History of the Church*, 3:381.))

9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did ^aprophecy.

10 And as we tarried *there* many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus.

11 And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the ^aHoly Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver *him* into the hands of the Gentiles.

12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem.

13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to ^adie at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. (We have covenanted to stand as

witnesses of Christ at all times, and in all places, and in all things.)

14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The ^awill of the Lord be done. (The meaning of the warning may have been that he should not go unless he was prepared to face the promised trials. DNTC, 2:181)

15 And after those days we ^atook up our carriages (made preparation, packed baggage), and went up to Jerusalem. (Out of his journey to Jerusalem came the arrest which enabled him, while in Roman custody, to testify before the Jews of Jerusalem, before Festus and then Agrippa, on the island of Melita (Malta), and in Rome itself. To take the witness of Christ to kings and rulers, it oftentimes seems to require the arrest and trial of the Lord's servants. Surely Paul's trip to Jerusalem tested his metal and ennobled his soul, and because of it, he gained opportunities to stand in defense of truth and righteousness which otherwise would have been denied him. DNTC, 2:181)

16 There went with us also *certain* of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an ^aold disciple, with whom we should lodge.

17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly.

18 And the *day* following Paul went in with us unto ^aJames; and all the elders were present. (James, the Lord's brother, was the presiding authority (most likely a member of the First Presidency.) in Jerusalem at the time. Likely, Peter and John were on missions preaching the gospel. James, the son of Zebedee had already been martyred (Acts 12:2). The context of events in Acts indicates that James, the Lord's brother, took his spot in the First Presidency of the early church. He apparently played a prominent role in the church at Jerusalem. Although the record does not give us many details, "all ancient ecclesiastical writers agree on this fact, that James, the Lord's brother, was the first bishop of Jerusalem." (A. A. Ramseyer, *Improvement Era*, 1915, Vol. Xviii. No. 12. Oct. 1915)

19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the ^aGentiles by his ministry. (This is Paul's missionary report, much like our missionaries do in reporting to the High Council.)

20 And when they heard *it*, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all ^azealous of the law: ("There is no question that Peter and the Brethren knew that the law of Moses was fulfilled by Christ. The doctrinal question was settled [see Acts 15]: The law was not any longer a requirement for salvation now that Jesus had made the Atonement. Missionary work among the Gentile nations could go forth directly and without impediment. But there remained a conflict between culture and doctrine. The Brethren were clear on the matter, but the long-standing culture and tradition persisted among many Jewish members of the Church even after the doctrinal question had been settled. There is generally a lag between revelation and actual practice. Latter-day scripture leaves no doubt that the law of Moses was fulfilled in Christ (3 Ne. 15:4-5; Moro. 8:8; D&C 74), yet we see that the moderate decision of the council allowed it to linger among Jewish Christians. The account of the Jerusalem council in the book of Acts gives our present generation an informative model as to how both Church members and nonmembers react when revelation confronts tradition and long-standing custom. Only prophets could correctly handle the situation then. Only living prophets can do so now." (Robert J. Matthews, *Behold the Messiah*, 309-10.)

21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to ^acircumcise *their* children, neither to walk after the ^bcustoms.

22 What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come. (Paul's teaching of the Gentiles that they no longer needed to obey the law of Moses was stirring up the Christian Jews in Jerusalem to the point that the brethren asked Paul to participate in a Mosaic ritual to show the Christian Jews that the Church could tolerate such practices.)

23 Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a ^avow on them; (Nazarene vow)

24 Them take, and purify thyself with them, and ^abe at charges with them (pay expenses for them), that they may ^bshave *their* heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed

concerning thee, are nothing; but *that* thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law.

25 As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written *and* concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from *things* offered to ^aidols, and from blood, and from (things) strangled, and from ^bfornication.

26 Then Paul took the men, (This was most likely uncomfortable for Paul to perform this Mosaic law ritual. It was done to accommodate the Jewish Christians) and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the ^aaccomplishment of the days of ^bpurification, until that an ^coffering should be offered for every one of them. (This is an extremely difficult passage to explain in such a way as to do credit to Paul, or to James the Lord's brother, or to the leading brethren in the Church, or to the Jewish segment of the Church established in Jerusalem. [They all knew that the Law of Moses had been fulfilled] and yet to humor Jewish-Christians – particularly church members who still practice false rites and cling to false ordinances; who are giving lip service to Christ while following the Mosaic performances which Christ abolished; who are Christian in name, but largely Jewish in act; who have had the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, but have never attained the spiritual maturity to gain the full companionship of that member of the Godhead – to humor these weak members of the Church, Paul is asked, officially, as a matter of church discipline to pretend that he is a Jew who keeps the Law of Moses. Why? What justification can there possibly be for these early saints to reject the spirit and practice of true religion and pretend to conform to the dead letter of a dead law, to a law which can lead nowhere except to spiritual death? The explanation lies in the semi-converted status of the Jewish saints of Jerusalem. As with all men, the Lord was giving gospel truths to them line upon line, precept upon precept. It was better to have them in the Church, seeking the Spirit, striving to keep the commandments, and trying to work out their salvation, than to leave them without the fold until they gained a full knowledge of all things. Even Peter was not converted to the full until long after he was ordained an apostle. And so it is today – conversion is a gradual process. There are many sectarian concepts and practices which individuals who are in the Church must abandon before the gospel system becomes perfect. If there is a lesson for us in these events, it is that staunch and stable members of the Church should be tolerant and charitable toward persons newly coming out of the darkness of the world into the light of the gospel. DNTC, 2: 184)

27 And when the ^aseven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia (western Turkey), when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him,

28 Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all *men* every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the ^atemple, and hath ^bpolluted this holy place.

29 (For they had seen before with him in the city ^aTrophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) (It would have been a capital offense to allow a gentile into the temple.)

30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut.

31 And as they went about to ^akill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an ^buproar.

32 Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief ^acaptain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.

33 Then the chief ^acaptain came near, and took him, and commanded *him* to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done.

34 And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the ^acastle.

35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people.

36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him. (The events in Acts 21 leave

one with a feeling of familiarity. We have Paul falsely accused of the Jews, with some crying one thing, and some another. We have Roman soldiers taking him captive, though he has broken no Roman law. We have the Jewish multitudes clamoring for the punishment of a man of God saying, 'Away with him.' And we have another Roman authority confused as to the cause of the Jewish uproar. History is famous for repeating itself. Less than 30 years prior, it was one Jesus who was falsely accused of teaching against the law and speaking against the temple. Back then, it was the Master who was taken by Roman authority before angry and jealous Jewish multitudes. Again, it was the people who wanted blood, crying 'Let him be crucified...His blood be on us, and on our children' (Matt 26:23-25). Hence, we are reminded that although the names and dates might change, Satan's servants employ the same methods year after year. But there is one significant difference. The Master, who could easily have talked his way out of any punishment, went before Pilate 'as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth' (Isa 53:7). But Paul is excited to have such a large crowd at his disposal. He did not squander the opportunity to testify 'of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation' (Rom 1:16). We can only imagine how great the silence was when Paul raised his hand to speak to the people.)

37 And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek? ("Although we do not know the Judaism of his age too well, it is probable that at about six years of age Saul was sent to an elementary school, in a room connected with the Jewish synagogue. Here, with other Jewish boys of his age, he would be instructed in the reading of Scripture. This may have been in the Greek version known to us as the Septuagint, because in later years he seems to have quoted extensively from it. It is difficult not to believe that he knew the Scriptures in their original Hebrew and Aramaic languages, because Aramaic would be the vernacular of his home, and for a would-be Rabbi not to know Hebrew would be unthinkable. It should be kept in mind that although Aramaic may have been the vernacular in his Jewish home, Saul would always be exposed to Greek on the street. His writings display a good knowledge of it. In after years, Paul found no difficulty in speaking Hebrew (possibly Aramaic is meant) to a Jewish mob that sought his life. (Acts 21:40; see also verse 37.) So well would the future Apostle learn the Scriptures...that they would be practically memorized by him and become an important part of his mental equipment." (Sidney B. Sperry, *Paul's Life and Letters* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1955], 5.))

38 Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers? ("Josephus, the Roman-Jewish historian, tells us of an Egyptian Jew who raised a large following in the wilderness and brought them to the Mount of Olives. (See Josephus...Wars 2. 13. 5) He promised his followers that the walls of Jerusalem would crumble when they approached and they could drive out the Romans with ease. Felix, the Roman governor, met them with his army and totally defeated them. However, the leader was not captured, and the chief captain mistakenly thought Paul was this man." (Institute Manual, *The Life and Teachings of Jesus & his Apostles*, 2nd ed., p. 341)

39 But Paul said, I am a man *which am* a Jew of ^aTarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city (a large city): and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people.

40 And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and ^abeckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great ^bsilence, he spake unto *them* in the Hebrew tongue (Aramaic), saying,

CHAPTER 22

Paul recounts the story of his conversion and also tells of seeing Jesus in a vision—He is accorded some privileges as a Roman citizen.

1 MEN, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence *which I make* now unto you.

2 (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he

saith,)

3 I am verily a man *which am* a ^aJew, born in Tarsus, *a city* in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the ^bfeet of ^cGamaliel, *and* taught according to the perfect manner of the ^dlaw of the fathers, and was ^ezealous toward God, as ye all are this day. (Among Romans, Paul could boast of his Roman citizenship, but with the Jews, he could establish his social stature as a disciple of Gamaliel. The latter was undoubtedly one of the greatest rabbinical figures of his time. He was more properly called Rabban, a title which exceeded “Rabbi” in distinction and reputation. Gamaliel was also a member of the Sanhedrin which decided, at length to beat Peter and John, instead of kill them (Acts 5:29-40). The Jews must have been impressed by Paul’s association with the Rabban Gamaliel. But they were not impressed enough to hearken to his message. Paul leaves no doubt about his orthodox training: ‘Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee’ (Philip. 3:5)...The Mishnah outlines the education of the orthodox boy, who began studying scripture at five and advanced Rabbinical interpretation at fifteen...And in Jerusalem Paul studied with a rabbi [Gamaliel] whose character shows a combination of devotedness and breadth. Grandson of Hillel...he towers in the early Mishnah tradition: ‘When Rabban Gamaliel the Elder died, the glory of the Law ceased, and purity and abstinence died.’ And when the Sanhedrin was close to sentencing the apostles to death, ‘a Pharisee named Gamaliel’ arose, ‘a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all people’ (Acts 5:34)Paul was born about the beginning of the Christian era, since Acts calls him a ‘young man’ when Stephen was stoned about A.D. 33 (Acts 7:58). His formal study under Gamaliel would fall before A.D. 20, long before Jesus' public ministry began.”

(*Understanding Paul*, 23-24) Neal A. Maxwell said: “Not only are there intriguing truths only partially disclosed in holy scriptures, in terms of their implications, but there are also some individuals about whom we would especially desire to know more and about whom one day we shall. Gamaliel the Pharisee was such an individual; he was a much-respected doctor of the law (see Acts 5:34). Paul had been one of his pupils (see Acts 22:3). Gamaliel used his influence on one occasion in the Sanhedrin to give appropriate counsel which benefited the work of the Lord. ‘Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space; And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought. After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed. And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God. And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.’ (Acts 5:34-40.) “Did Gamaliel have any spiritual promptings which caused him to call for fair play for the Apostles? Did he later affiliate with the Church of Jesus Christ? We do not now know. But the wisdom of Gamaliel was surely significant.” (*Sermons Not Spoken*, 75.))

4 And I ^apersecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women.

5 As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received ^aletters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished.

6 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come *nigh* unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great ^alight round about me. (Heber J. Grant taught, “Many men say: ‘If I could only see an angel, if I could only hear an angel proclaim something, that would cause me to be faithful all the days of my life!’ It had no effect upon these men that were not serving the Lord, and it would have no effect today.” (*Conference Reports*, Apr. 1924, p. 159). “Brigham Young said, ‘Pray

that you never see an angel.' He was talking historically. Almost everybody who saw an angel left the Church. They came back, but they had these terrible problems. It gave them inflated egos, etc. They thought they were somebody special. They were, but they couldn't take it. It would be very dangerous if we were exposed to the other world to any degree. Only people that are very humble can do that. Not us, we can't do that. We are not that humble." (*The Teachings of the Book of Mormon*, Lecture 41, p.193))

7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, ^aSaul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am ^aJesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest.

9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the ^avoice of him that spake to me. (As you read verse 9, did you remember that Paul's earlier account says the opposite?

Did you remember that Acts 9:7 says that Paul's associates heard a voice but didn't see the light? "Here is one of the few outright contradictions in the scripture. Did Paul's companions see or hear the phenomena that accompanied his conversion? The Bible says they did, and the Bible says they did not."

(Dr. Sterling B. Talmage, *Improvement Era*, Vol. Xxxvii. No. 10, Oct., 1934) Do you think that the Prophet Joseph Smith remembered that these two verses are contradictory when he translated the New Testament? Not likely, but the Spirit inspired the Prophet to change Acts 9:7 to conform with Paul's personal testimony in Acts 22:9. In the Joseph Smith Translation, 'the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man' was changed to '*they who were journeying with him saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him who spake to him.*' (JST Acts 9:7) The correction of this seemingly insignificant contradiction is just one more bit of evidence testifying to the inspired nature of the Joseph Smith Translation.)

10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do.

11 And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.

12 And one ^aAnanias, a devout man according to the law, having a good ^breport of all the Jews which dwelt *there*,

13 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy ^asight. And the same hour I looked up upon him.

14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his ^awill, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth.

15 For thou shalt be his ^awitness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard.

16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be ^abaptized, and ^bwash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

17 And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a ^atrance;

18 And ^asaw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me.

19 And I said, Lord, they know that I ^aimprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee:

20 And when the blood of thy ^amartyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and ^bconsenting unto his death, and kept the ^craiment of them that slew him.

21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the ^aGentiles.

22 And they gave him ^aaudience unto this word, and *then* lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a *fellow* from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live. (Hugh Nibley said: "...the multitude 'were cut to the heart' when Stephen accused them of rejecting what had been brought 'by the disposition of angels' (Acts 7:53-54). But the last straw was when he had the effrontery to say, 'Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. *Then* they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city,

and stoned him' (Acts 7:56-58). If Stephen had spent his life, as innumerable philosophers have, denouncing the vices and follies of the age, he might have died peacefully in bed. But those fatal words, 'I see,' were his death warrant. And what did Paul say to make the Jews cry out in utter horror: 'Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live,' as 'they . . . cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air?' (Acts 22:22-23.) What indeed? These were the unforgivable words that made him unfit to live: 'Suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest' (Acts 22:6-8). Paul could have won his audience over by speaking as a scholar, but when he bore witness to what he had seen and heard, he was asking for trouble." (*The World and the Prophets*, 3rd ed., 14 - 15.))

23 And as they cried out, and cast off *their* clothes, and threw dust into the air,

24 The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the ^acastle, and bade that he should be examined by ^bscourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him.

25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a ^aRoman, and uncondemned?

26 When the centurion heard *that*, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman.

27 Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea.

28 And the ^achief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was *free* born.

29 ^aThen straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, ~~and~~ because he had bound him (, and he loosed him from his bands.)

30 On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was ^aaccused of the Jews, he ~~loosed him from his bands, and~~ commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them. (*The Sanhedrin.*)

CHAPTER 23

Paul smitten at Ananias' order—The Lord again appears to Paul—Forty Jews plot his death—He is delivered over to Felix.

1 AND Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men *and* brethren, I have lived in all good ^aconscience before God until this day.

2 And the high priest ^aAnanias commanded them that stood by him to ^bsmite him on the mouth.

3 Then said Paul unto him, God shall smite thee, *thou* ^awhited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law? (Bruce R. McConkie said: "It is a common habit of writers and commentators to compare Paul unfavorably with Jesus, even though Paul's immediate and appropriately worded apology does itself show forth a divine dignity worthy of a Greater even than he. Let us grant that none can compare with the Master, but even then, why speak ill of Paul for proclaiming, almost by instinct, the very curse that Ananias deserved, a curse which did in fact in later years come upon him when he was slain by an assassin during the Jewish war?" (Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2: 191.))

4 And they that stood by said, ^aRevilest thou God's high priest?

5 Then said Paul, I ~~wist not~~ (*did not know*), brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ^bruler of thy people. (It was as though a Mormon elder, converted from Catholicism, was voluntarily submitting to an investigation before a Papal court. Paul was thus being overly gracious to his captors. DNTC, 2:190)

6 But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the

council, Men *and* brethren, I am a ^aPharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the ^bhope and ^cresurrection of the dead I am called in question.

7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided.

8 For the ^aSadducees say that there is no ^bresurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both.

9 **And there arose a great cry: and the ^ascribes *that were* of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an ^bangel hath spoken to him, let us not ^cfight against God.**

10 And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring *him* into the castle. (Antonia fortress near the temple.)

11 **And the night following the ^aLord ^bstood by him, and said, Be of good ^ccheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at ^dRome.** (Bruce R. McConkie said: "In his persecuted and straitened state, Paul needed comfort and assurance from on high. How shall such be given him? The Lord could have sent an angel; he could have spoken by the power of the Holy Spirit to the spirit within Paul; or he could have opened the heavens and let him see again the wonders of eternity. But this time—thanks to his valiant service, his unwearying devotion, his willingness to suffer even unto death in the Cause of Christ—this time Paul was blessed with the personal ministrations of the Lord of heaven himself. Jesus stood at his side. Without question much was said and much transpired, of which there has been preserved to us only the promise that the Lord's special apostle would yet bear witness of the Master in Rome." (Bruce R. McConkie, *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2: 192.))

12 **And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a ^acurse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had ^bkilled Paul.**

13 **And they were more than forty which had made this ^aconspiracy.**

14 And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul.

15 Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you to morrow, as though ye would enquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, ^aor ever (before) he come near (or before he gets here), are ready to kill him.

16 And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul.

17 Then Paul called one of the centurions unto *him*, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him.

18 So he took him, and brought *him* to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto *him*, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee.

19 Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went *with him* aside privately, and asked *him*, What is that thou hast to tell me?

20 And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to morrow into the council, as though they would enquire somewhat of him more perfectly.

21 But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an ^aoath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee.

22 So the chief captain *then* let the young man depart, and charged *him*, See thou tell no man that thou hast shewed these things to me.

23 And he called unto *him* two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred (470 men), at the third hour of the night; (3 AM)

24 And provide *them* beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring *him* safe unto Felix the governor. (Paul

is sent away for his own protection.)

25 And he wrote a letter after this manner:

26 Claudius ^aLysias unto the most excellent governor Felix *sendeth* greeting.

27 This man was taken of the Jews, and ^ashould (would) have been killed of them: then came I with an ^barmy, and rescued him, having understood that he was a ^cRoman. (“Prior to Augustus the power of the governor in his province was virtually absolute, and in New Testament times he remained the chief military, executive, and judicial officer, with protection of citizens his special concern. Roman society was based on status, and civil rights followed this system. Slaves had the least protection, and citizens had the most. The latter were mainly either Italians or provincial families that were rewarded for usefulness to Rome. Since they generally served by political or economic influence, Roman citizens in any city were probably at least middle class, the implication of Paul telling the examining tribune that he was born a citizen. (See Acts 22:28.) On that occasion the mere claim of citizenship immediately stopped an intended interrogation under the whip. In the letter of Pliny to Trajan discussed earlier, that governor simply executed provincial Christians who did not forsake their religion, but others ‘possessed of the same folly’ received better treatment: ‘Because they were Roman citizens, I signed an order for them to be transferred to Rome.’ Paul could demand the same, which he did after facing either the danger of being murdered in another Jerusalem trial or further imprisonment after already being in custody for two years. He received fair treatment on several other occasions because of his Roman rights. Obviously the Lord called an apostle to the gentiles especially suited to survive the dangers of hot controversy.” (Richard Lloyd Anderson, “The Church and the Roman Empire,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1975, 12))

28 And when I would have known the cause wherefore they ^aaccused him, I brought him forth into their council:

29 Whom I perceived to be accused of ^aquestions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of ^bdeath or of bonds.

30 And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent ^astraightway (immediately) to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what *they had* against him. Farewell.

31 Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought *him* by night to Antipatris.

32 On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, *and* returned to the castle:

33 Who, when they came to Caesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him. (50-60 miles from Jerusalem to Caesarea.)

34 And when the governor had read *the letter*, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that *he was* of ^aCilicia;

35 I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herod’s ^ajudgment hall (praetorium (the governor’s headquarters)).

CHAPTER 24

Paul is accused of sedition—He answers in defense of his life and doctrine—He teaches Felix of righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come.

1 AND after five days ^aAnanias the high priest descended with the elders, and *with* a certain orator *named* Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul. (“Ananias and the elders of the Jews who accused Paul brought with them before Felix ‘a certain orator named Tertullus’ (Acts 24:1). Tertullus delivered his speech to Felix, and then Paul followed with his account of the events. The word used in the Greek New Testament for *orator* is *rhetor*—a rhetorician. The Jews knew that to argue their case before the Roman judges they needed someone trained in Roman rhetoric. “Little is known about him, but Tertullus was probably a typical product of rhetorical education during the Second Sophistic. He seems to have been a professional public speaker who argued legal cases for a fee. He knew the

conventions and manner of speaking at the Roman court. His Latin name indicates that he may have spoken Latin and was probably a Roman citizen. In his speech, Tertullus aligned himself with the leaders of the Jews and claimed to be an eyewitness to the events, but that was probably a rhetorical strategy...Tertullus was a rhetorical 'hired gun,' as Paul implied in his response." (Gary Layne Hatch, *The Apostle Paul, His Life and His Testimony: The 23d Annual Sidney B. Sperry Symposium* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1994], 69-70.))

2 And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse *him*, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence,

3 We accept *it* always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness.

4 Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words.

5 For we have found this man *a pestilent fellow*, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes: ("Early Christians were apparently called Nazarenes, since Paul was accused of being a leader of this sect. (See Acts 24:5.) Early historians refer to a Christian group as Nazarenes, Christian Jews who neither would nor could give up their Jewish mode of life. Paul taught that the Mosaic Law was not binding upon gentiles or Jews, having been fulfilled by Christ. Later Nazarenes rejected Paul because of this, even though he had been known as a Nazarene during his lifetime. Later Nazarenes were absorbed within Judaism and Christianity by the end of the fifth century. However, the term *Nozri* (Nazarene) remains as the Hebrew word for Christian." (Victor L. Ludlow, "Major Jewish Groups in the New Testament," *Ensign*, Jan. 1975, 26))

6 Who also hath gone about to profane the ^atemple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law.

7 But the chief ^acaptain Lysias came *upon us*, and with great violence took *him* away out of our hands, 8 Commanding his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things, whereof we accuse him.

9 And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so.

10 Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself:

11 Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship.

12 And they neither found me in the temple ^adisputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city:

13 Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.

14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the ^aprophets: (We today are called heretics but we have the true gospel.)

15 And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a ^aresurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

16 And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a ^aconscience void of offence toward God, and toward men. (Interestingly, this is almost the verbatim language used by Joseph Smith when he was being taken to Carthage two or three days previous to his assassination. DNTC, 2:196)

17 Now after many years I came to bring ^aalms to my nation, and offerings.

18 Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me ^apurified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult.

19 Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought against me.

20 Or else let these same *here* say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council,

21 Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the ^aresurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.

22 And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of *that* way, he deferred them, and said, When ^aLysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter. (“Felix refused to make a decision in the case, saying that he would wait until the chief captain of the military came from Jerusalem to Caesarea. This was a thinly veiled stalling tactic adopted by Felix because he did not want to offend the Jews by making a decision favorable to Paul (Felix's own wife, Drusilla, was a Jewess of the Herod Agrippa family); yet Felix didn't want to turn a Roman citizen, whom he knew was innocent, over to the Jews and certain death.” (Robert J. Matthews, *Selected Writings of Robert J. Matthews: Gospel Scholars Series*, 290.))

23 And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let *him* have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him.

24 And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ.

25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, ^atemperance (self control), and judgment to come, Felix ^btrembled (feared), and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.

26 He hoped also that ^amoney should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. (Felix had hoped that Paul would bribe him for his release.)

27 But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix' room (Festus replaced Felix): and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound. (Paul in prison 2 years awaiting his trial. Bruce R. McConkie said: “Without a formal trial, to appease the Jews, and in hope of receiving money for his release, the Roman governor of Judea, Antonius Felix, kept Paul a prisoner for two wearisome years. True the Apostle was thereby protected from the murderous hatred of the Jews and the persecuting zeal of the Sanhedrin; true he was granted sufficient liberty to write and do some teaching; but nonetheless as a prisoner in the Cause of Christ, he was denied the full missionary privileges of the past quarter century. We must assume that the Church did not grow as rapidly and that its members were not perfected as speedily as would have been the case had the great persuasive powers and energies of this mighty proselyter been used to the full during this period. No doubt this experience taught Paul that even he was not indispensable, and perchance his soul was further sanctified by suffering, but with it all the Lord's apostle was in fact a prisoner, held wickedly and unjustly by the forces of evil, all to the detriment of the work.” (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2: 197.))

CHAPTER 25

Paul, before Festus, appeals unto Caesar—Agrippa desires to hear Paul.

1 NOW when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem.

2 Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him,

3 And desired favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to ^akill him.

4 But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly *thither*. (Clearly it is the design of Deity to use Paul's imprisonment as the means of taking the testimony of Jesus to the great and the mighty of the world. The gospel is for the poor and for the privileged. It is to be “proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world, and before kings and rulers.” D&C 1:23. What matters is that Augustus sits amid Roman might and splendor, with the power of life and death over millions of people, yet his hope, if any, of peace here and eternal life hereafter, is in the hands of the prisoner of Christ, who though in bonds, has eternal power from on high. How better could the witness of the truth be borne to Felix, Festus, Agrippa, and Augustus, with all their

court retinues forced to give ear? DNTC, 2:198)

5 Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with *me*, and accuse this man, if there be any ^awickedness in him.

6 And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought.

7 And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove.

8 While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all.

9 But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me?

10 Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest.

11 For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto ^aCaesar. (Bruce R. McConkie said: "Falsely imprisoned, with no specific or substantial charge against him, Paul declines to go willingly back to Jerusalem, back to stand in jeopardy before the fanatical mob which had caused the crucifixion of his Lord. Instead, Roman citizen that he was, he appeals unto Caesar. And Caesar's Procurator decrees that unto Caesar shall Christ's apostle bow. But why? Why all this imprisonment? Why these repeated mock-like-trials before one ruler after another—all to no avail as far as freeing the innocent Paul is concerned. Why does not the Lord send an angel to deliver his apostle, as he did when Peter was imprisoned by Herod? (Acts 12:1-19.) Clearly it is the design of Deity to use Paul's imprisonment as the means of taking the testimony of Jesus to the great and the mighty of the world. The gospel is for the poor and for the privileged. It is to be 'proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world, and before kings and rulers.' (D. & C. 1:23.)" (*Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, 2:198))

12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go. ("Paul's firm decision to invoke his right as a Roman citizen was probably an unpleasant one to Festus. It was embarrassing enough for a procurator ever to have his decisions appealed to Caesar, but to have his first administrative decision thus appealed was to prejudice the imperial government against him. But after conferring with the Council, composed of administrative legal advisers, Festus decided that Paul's appeal was a valid one. He turned to the Apostle and said, 'Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go.' (Acts 25:12)" (Sidney B. Sperry, *Paul's Life and Letters* [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1955], 221.))

13 And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus.

14 And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Paul's cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix:

15 About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed *me*, desiring *to have* judgment against him.

16 To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him.

17 Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the ~~morrow~~ (day following) I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth.

18 Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed:

19 But had certain questions against him of their own ^asuperstition (religion), and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive.

20 And because I ^adoubted of such manner of questions (was perplexed concerning this inquiry or

dispute), I asked *him* whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters.

21 But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar.

22 Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him.

23 And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus' commandment Paul was brought forth.

24 And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and *also* here, crying that he ought not to live any longer.

25 But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of ^adeath, (It is important to note that Festus as Procurator held the same position as Pontus Pilate. And just as Pontus Pilate had exclaimed to the Jews of Christ, "Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined *him* before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him" (Luke 23:14), Festus also testified that Paul was innocent of perverting the people, "I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death" (Acts 25:25. Taylor Halverson, Lesson 38 Meridian Magazine.) and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him. (Augustus was not the emperor at the time spoken of, and of course, Festus knew that. The time is about 60 AD, and the emperor was Nero, but it seems that the reign and reputation of Augustus was so incredible that his very name became synonymous with the exalted office of emperor. Now Paul was in Rome under house arrest, awaiting the outcome of his 'appeal unto Caesar.' (Acts 25:11.) Nero was that Caesar; he had ruled since A.D. 54 and would commit suicide in 68, about six years hence. Paul would precede him in a martyr's death by a year or two (66-67).") (Rodney Turner, *Studies in Scripture, Vol. 6: Acts to Revelation*, edited by Robert L. Millet, 107.))

26 Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write.

27 For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes *laid* against him. (Festus had to have a valid reason to send Paul to Rome for trial. He was not guilty of violating any Roman laws.)

CHAPTER 26

Paul recounts (His third account of his conversion.) his former persecution of the saints as a Pharisee—He testifies of the appearance of Jesus on the Damascus road—Agrippa is 'almost persuaded' to be a Christian.

1 THEN Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself:

2 I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews:

3 Especially *because I know* thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently.

4 My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews;

5 Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a ^aPharisee. ("[Paul] defended himself as 'a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee' (Acts 23:6) and called the Pharisees the 'strictest' party in Judaism (Acts 26:5, NKJB). Recent committee

translations agree on that term, which means ‘most exact’ or ‘most careful’ in this context. The Mishnah, the Jewish law written down about A.D. 200, preserves the thinking of the Pharisees, whose fundamental tradition was, ‘Be deliberate in judgment, raise up many disciples, and make a fence around the Law.’ Thus, Paul walked in the path of his father and of the fathers of his people, who sought to protect the Mosaic code, which was the central ‘Law.’ Josephus, a young Pharisee who lived at the time of Paul, explains, ‘The Pharisees had passed on to the people certain regulations handed down by former generations and not recorded in the Laws of Moses.’ The Mishnah summarizes these rules about rules, condensing and compacting them into some eight hundred pages in the standard English translation...For Jesus Christ, the process had gone too far, as he accused the Pharisees of cluttering the meaning of God's greatest commandments: ‘Ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups, and many other such like things ye do. . . . Ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition’ (Mark 7:8-9).” (Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Understanding Paul*, 22 - 23.)

6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: (“The triumph and hope of Israel is yet future. In part it will be realized during the millennial era, but the final inheritance, the fulfillment of the hope in the eternal sense, will come after this earth becomes a celestial sphere, for in that day ‘the poor and the meek of the earth shall inherit it.’ (D. & C. 88:17.)” (*Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed., 367.))

7 Unto which *promise* our ^atwelve tribes, ^binstantly (**earnestly, intently**) serving *God* day and night, hope to come. For which hope’s sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews.

8 Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should ^araise the dead?

9 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things ^acontrary to the ^bname of Jesus of Nazareth.

10 Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the ^asaints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to ^bdeath, I gave my ^cvoice (**vote**) against *them*.

11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled *them* to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted *them* even unto ^astrange (**foreign**) cities.

12 Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, (None of the three versions of Paul’s conversion experience are exactly the same (compare Acts 9:3-18, Acts 22:6-16, and Acts 26:12-19). Does this mean there are significant discrepancies which detract from the reality of his vision? In this last account, Paul tells of his calling to be ‘a minister and a witness’ to the Gentiles (v. 16-18). This precious morsel was not recorded in earlier versions. Do we have need to worry about these differences? Critics love to dwell on supposed inconsistencies in Joseph Smith’s spontaneous accounts of his first vision. But people normally give shorter and longer accounts of their own vivid experiences when retelling them more than once. Joseph Smith was cautious about public explanations of his sacred experiences until the Church grew strong and could properly publicize what God had given him. Thus, his most detailed first vision account came after several others—when he began his formal history. This, too, parallels Paul’s experience. His most detailed account of the vision on the road to Damascus is the last of several recorded. (See Acts 26:9-20.) And this is the only known instance in which he related the detail about the glorified Savior prophesying Paul’s work among the Gentiles. (See Acts 26:16-18.) Why would Paul include this previously unmentioned detail only on that occasion? Probably because he was speaking to a *Gentile* audience, rather than to a group of Jewish Christians. Both Paul and Joseph Smith had reasons for delaying full details of their visions until the proper time and place.” (Richard Lloyd Anderson, “Parallel Prophets: Paul and Joseph Smith,” *Ensign*, Apr. 1985, 12) “On at least four different occasions, Joseph Smith either wrote or dictated to scribes accounts of his sacred experience of 1820...The four surviving recitals of this theophany were prepared or rendered through different scribes, at different times, from a different perspective, for different purposes and to different audiences. It is not surprising, therefore, that each of them emphasizes different aspects of his experience...In an important way, the existence of these different accounts helps support the integrity of the Latter-day Saint Prophet. It indicates that Joseph did not deliberately create a

memorized version which he related to everyone. In the legal profession, attorneys and judges recognize that if a witness repeats an incident by using precisely the same language, the court might challenge the validity of such a statement. ...Like Paul, Joseph Smith did not relate all the details of his profound experience of 1820 at any one time. When Paul found that his Gentile ministry was in question, he recalled (years after his vision) how the Lord had outlined his mission to the non-Jewish nations at the time of his first vision.” (Milton V. Backman Jr., “Joseph Smith’s Recitals of the First Vision,” *Ensign*, Jan. 1985, 8))

13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a ^alight from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.

14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, ^aSaul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? *it is hard for thee to kick ^bagainst the pricks.* (“At his first vision, Paul was told that it was hard for him ‘to kick against the pricks’ (Acts 26:14), the last word referring to the sharp jab of the pointed stick against which balky animals fought. So Paul was resisting spiritual impressions prior to his Damascus vision. He had heard Stephen’s testimony before his death: ‘Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God’ (Acts 7:56). Saul was prepared not by the mere mechanics of emotional reversal, but by the direct example of Stephen’s vision. Not yet digesting the significance of what he had seen, Paul continued ‘breathing out threatenings and slaughter’ (Acts 9:1).” (Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Understanding Paul*, 26 - 27.))

15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

16 But **rise, and stand upon thy feet:** for I have ^aappeared unto thee for this purpose, **to make thee a minister and a ^bwitness** (Missionaries of today should be ready with strong testimonies of the gospel.) both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;

17 Delivering thee from the people, and *from* the Gentiles, unto whom now I ^asend thee,

18 To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from ^adarkness to ^blight, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

19 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not ^adisobedient unto the heavenly ^bvision:

20 But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and *then* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.

21 For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to ^akill *me*.

22 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 ^aprophets and Moses did say should come:

23 That Christ should ^asuffer, *and* that he should be the first that should ^brise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.

24 And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee ^amad.

25 But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.

26 For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; **for this thing was not done in a corner.** (Gordon B. Hinckley said: “As I have gone about the world, I have had opportunity for interviews with representatives of the media. This is always a worrisome undertaking because one never knows what will be asked. These reporters are men and women of great capacity, who know how to ask questions that come at you like a javelin. It is not exactly an enjoyable experience, but it represents an opportunity to tell the world something of our story. As Paul said to Festus and Agrippa, ‘This thing was not done in a corner’ (Acts 26:26). We have something that this world needs to hear about, and these interviews afford an opportunity to give voice to that. (“This Thing Was Not Done in a Corner,” *Ensign*, November 1996, p. 48.))

27 King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou ^abelievest.

28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou ^apersuadest me to be a ^bChristian. (This is sarcastic.)

29 And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds. (Paul made his defense before King Agrippa, and related the account of the vision he had when he saw a light, and heard a voice; but still there were but few who believed him; some said he was dishonest, others said he was mad; and he was **ridiculed and reviled**. But all this did not destroy the reality of his vision. He had seen a vision, he knew he had, and all the persecution under heaven could not make it otherwise; and though they should persecute him unto death, yet he knew, and would know to his latest breath, that he had both seen a light and heard a voice speaking unto him, and all the world could not make him think or believe otherwise. So it was with me. I have actually seen a light, and in the midst of that light I saw two Personages and they did in reality speak to me; and though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true; and while they were persecuting me, reviling me, and speaking all manner of evil against me falsely for so saying, I was led to say in my heart: Why persecute me for telling the truth? I have actually seen a vision; and who am I that I can withstand God, or why does the world think to make me deny what I have actually seen? JS-H 1:24-25.)

30 And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them:

31 And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of ^adeath or of bonds.

32 Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto ^aCaesar. (By this saying, one might think that Paul made a mistake when he appealed to Caesar. After two years of imprisonment, Agrippa seems willing to let him go. Did Paul make a mistake in appealing to Caesar? **It is doubtful that Agrippa really would have let him go.** Besides, the Lord's plan was to have his most vocal apostle testify before the greatest political authority on the earth. Paul had been told, 'Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome' (Acts 23:11). The Lord's plan for Paul was to testify in Rome. Paul knew it, and this is why he appealed to Caesar—not because he was trying to free himself. Paul was comfortable to suffer for Christ's name as 'the prisoner of Jesus Christ' (Eph 3:1).)

CHAPTER 27

Paul, in a perilous voyage, travels toward Rome—An angel comforts him—He uses the gift of seership—He is shipwrecked.

1 AND when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto *one* named Julius, a centurion of Augustus' band.

2 And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; *one* ^aAristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us. ("During the Apostle's subsequent long journey to Jerusalem, Aristarchus was to be found by his side (Acts 20:4). It is reasonable to suppose that this faithful friend remained in Palestine during Paul's two years' imprisonment there, for we find him again accompanying the Apostle when the latter shipped for Rome as a prisoner in charge of the centurion Julius (Acts 27:2)...He had been so long faithful to his friend the Apostle that it would rather appear as if he had thrown in his lot with him altogether and had no intention of forsaking him at all, and this view is strengthened by the fact that we find him sharing Paul's imprisonment throughout the two years during which the latter dwelt in his own hired house in Rome (Col. 4:10 and Philemon 24). So far as one can gather from the few instances in which his name is mentioned, he was always near the Apostle, ready to render him service and to work with and for him in the cause of the gospel from the time that he was converted in Thessalonica in A. D. 53 up to the close of Paul's first Roman imprisonment in A. D. 64. This friendship was therefore one of several years' standing, and must have been a source of considerable comfort and consolation to the aged Apostle in the trying circumstances of

his later life, and during his weary and lengthy imprisonments both in Palestine and in Imperial Rome.” (St. Paul's Companions in Rome. by Col. R. M. Bryce-Thomas, *Improvement Era*, 1909, Vol. Xii. August, 1909. No. 10))

3 And the next *day* we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave *him* liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.

4 And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary.

5 And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, *a city* of Lycia.

6 And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein.

7 And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone;

8 And, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called The fair havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea.

9 Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the ^afast was now already past, Paul admonished *them*, (The fast spoken of is presumed to be associated with the Feast of Tabernacles which was celebrated in October (Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Understanding Paul*, 234). This places the time of the voyage in late fall, 60 or 61 AD.)

10 And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives.

11 Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the ^aowner of the ship (shipmaster, captain), more than those things which were spoken by Paul.

12 And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, *and there* to winter; *which is* an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west.

13 And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained *their* purpose, loosing *thence*, they sailed close by Crete.

14 But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon. (A tempestuous northeast wind which blows in the Mediterranean. I thought they called the wind Moriah.)

15 And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let *her* drive. (Fearing that fierce winds would overturn the ship, the crew takes down the sails, allowing the ship to be driven before the tempest. Later (v. 17), they would raise the sails attempting to avoid getting stuck in shallow water by the island of Clauda. “Historians of Rome have long noted that Luke’s description of this exciting journey is one of the most important primary sources available on ancient seamanship. Students of Paul’s life cannot help but be impressed with his spiritual leadership and unfailing trust in the Lord under the most trying circumstances.” (C. Wilfred Griggs, “Paul: The Long Road from Damascus,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1975, 57))

16 And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat:

17 Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven.

18 And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next *day* they lightened the ship;

19 And the third *day* we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship.

20 And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on *us*, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.

21 But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss.

22 And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of *any man’s* ^alife among you, but of the ship.

23 For there stood by me this night the ^aangel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve,

24 Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.

25 Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.
 26 Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.
 27 But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in ^aAdria (the Adriatic Sea), about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country;
 28 And sounded, and found *it* twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found *it* fifteen fathoms.
 29 Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day.
 30 And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship,
 31 Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.
 32 Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off.
 33 And while the day was coming on, Paul besought *them* all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day ~~that~~ ye have tarried and continued ^afasting, having taken nothing.
 34 Wherefore I pray you to take *some* meat: for this is for your ^ahealth: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you.
 35 And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken *it*, he began to eat.
 36 Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took *some* meat.
 37 And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls. (276)
 38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.
 39 And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain ^acreek (bay) with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship.
 40 And when they had ^ataken up the anchors (cut off anchors (they left them in the sea)), they committed *themselves* unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoised up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore.
 41 And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves.
 42 And the soldiers' counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape.
 43 But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from *their* purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast *themselves* first *into the sea*, and get to land:
 44 And the rest, some on boards, and some on *broken pieces* of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all ^asafe to land. (In turbulent times, follow the prophets and you will be saved temporally.)

CHAPTER 28

Paul is unharmed by a viper's bite—He heals the sick in Melita—He preaches in Rome, first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles.

1 AND when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. (Modern day Malta.)
 2 And the ^abarbarous people (non Greek or Latin speakers) shewed us no little ^bkindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold.
 3 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid *them* on the fire, there came a ^aviper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand.
 4 And when the barbarians saw the *venomous* beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live.
 5 And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no ^aharm.
 6 Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a

^agod. (Orson Pratt said: “They shall take up serpents, or if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them.’ This promise of our Great Redeemer was also made to every creature in all the world who should believe the gospel. The use of this miraculous gift was to preserve life, in case any believer should accidentally be bitten by a poisonous serpent as Paul was (see Acts 28); or should unintentionally swallow a deadly poison, as the sons of the prophets did (see II Kings 4). Jesus promised that it should not hurt them. When the Israelites were bitten by poisonous serpents, they were healed by simply looking at a brazen serpent which the Lord commanded Moses to raise up in the wilderness; so the believers in Christ can prevail against deadly poisons by simply looking to Him in faith; for Jesus cannot fail to fulfill His promise to the believer.” (*Orson Pratt's Works* [Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1945], 85.))

7 In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days ^acourteously.

8 And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay ^asick of a fever and of a ^bbloody flux (dysentery): to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his ^chands on him, and healed him.

9 So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed:

10 Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded *us* with such things as were necessary.

11 And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux.

12 And landing at Syracuse, we tarried *there* three days.

13 And from thence we ^afetch'd a compass (went around, took a circuitous course), and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli:

14 Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome.

15 And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he ^athanked God, and took ^bcourage.

16 And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.

17 And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men *and* brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.

18 Who, when they had examined me, would have let *me* go, because there was no cause of death in me.

19 But when the Jews spake against *it*, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of.

20 For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see *you*, and to speak with *you*: because that for the ^ahope of Israel I am bound with this chain.

21 And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee.

22 But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against. (Satan follows a set plan; always his pattern is the same. Paul's Christianity and Joseph Smith's Mormonism – the two being the same identical system of salvation – are everywhere spoken against. And this very fact is one of the great evidences of their truth and divinity. There is no occasion for all false churches to unite against any “sect,” as they are pleased to designate the true religion, unless the object of their distaste is in fact the religion of heaven, unless it is that “sect,” which bringeth salvation to men. Joseph Smith – History 1:20-23. DNTC 2:209)

23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into *his* lodging; to whom he ^aexpounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and *out of* the ^bprophets, from morning till evening. (Teach then testify)

24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some ^abelieved not.
25 And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word,
Well ^aspake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers,
26 Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye
shall see, and not ^aperceive:
27 For the ^aheart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their ^beyes have
they closed; lest they should see with *their* eyes, and hear with *their* ears, and understand with *their*
heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.
28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the ^aGentiles, and *that* they will
hear it. (Though Paul was the Apostle to the Gentiles, in each city he went first to the Jews and
thereafter to the Gentiles. DNTC, 2:210)
29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.
30 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him,
31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with
all confidence, no man forbidding him.

(Luke concludes his record with Paul under Roman guard in the greatest Gentile city. This was an important time for letter writing. It is thought that the books of Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians, and Hebrews were written during this two year period. Imprisoned from about AD 61-63, Paul was released and later wrote his epistles to Titus and Timothy (*Understanding Paul*, 396-7). So his ministry is far from over as the narrative ends. What we really want to know is what happened to Paul in the closing moments of his life. Tradition states that he was beheaded in Rome by the order of Nero. But we wish we knew more.

“Paul’s arrival in Rome brings the reader to the end of the book of Acts, but not necessarily to the end of the life of the apostle. Luke concludes: ‘And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him.’ (Acts 28:30.)

“Why doesn’t the account continue? If Paul had lost his case—and his life—before the emperor, an account of his martyrdom would have been a most appropriate seal for his testimony and ministry. However, he [must] not have died at this time. Neither Felix, nor Festus, nor Agrippa deemed Paul guilty of crime, let alone worthy of death. Furthermore, Paul is rather optimistic about his own future in the so-called ‘prison epistles’ written during this time from Rome. (See Philip. 1:21-26; Philip. 2:23-24; Philem. 1:22.)

“A number of other evidences hint that Paul was acquitted and traveled for some time before another imprisonment and death. Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus do not fit into the chronology of Acts, and therefore must have been written later. From these epistles one notes that Paul visited Ephesus (see 1 Tim. 1:3; 1 Tim. 3:14-15), Miletus (see 2 Tim. 4:20), Troas (see 2 Tim. 4:13), Corinth (see 2 Tim. 4:20), Nicopolis (see Titus 3:12), and Crete (see Titus 1:5). The prison epistles show that Paul also intended to travel to Philippi (see Philip. 1:26; Philip. 2:24) and Colossae (see Philem. 1:22) if he was acquitted. In Romans 15:24, 28, Paul writes of a planned trip to Spain; and Clement, bishop of Rome at the end of the first century A.D., spoke of Paul traveling ‘to the limits of the west,’ which would certainly refer to Spain. [Rom. 15:24, 28] (See 1 Clement 5:7.) Tradition is substantially uniform, however, in stating that some time in the later part of Nero’s reign Paul was executed in Rome. Behind him he left the rich treasures of his epistles and the record of his faithful friend Luke, which portrays an example of devoted service and missionary zeal that 20 centuries of time have only burnished brighter.” (C. Wilfred Griggs, “Paul: The Long Road from Damascus,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1975, 57)

Acts 28 A tribute to the great Apostle of the Gentiles

As the narrative of Paul's ministry comes to an end, we are struck by his unparalleled diligence. Perhaps the best epilogue to the book of Acts was written by Paul himself:

'Of the Jews five times received I forty *stripes* save one.

Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep;

In journeyings often, *in* perils of waters, *in* perils of robbers, *in* perils by *mine own* countrymen, *in* perils by the heathen, *in* perils in the city, *in* perils in the wilderness, *in* perils in the sea, *in* perils among false brethren;

In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.' (2 Cor 11:24-27)

'For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.

I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith:

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day' (2 Tim 4:6-8).

May those of us who have been asked to endure so much less, be inspired by Paul to do more—so that in our final moments, we may also confidently declare, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.'

Spencer W. Kimball said: "I have a great admiration and affection for our brother Paul, our fellow apostle. He was so dedicated, so humble, so straightforward. He was so eager, so interested, so consecrated. He must have been personable in spite of his problems, for the people hung onto him with great affection when he was about to leave them. I love Paul, for he spoke the truth. He leveled with people. He was interested in them. I love Paul for his steadfastness, even unto death and martyrdom. I am always fascinated with his recounting of the perils through which he passed to teach the gospel to member and nonmember." (*Conference Report, April 1969, Afternoon Meeting 29 - 30.*)