

# **PATTERN**

## **FOR**

### **CHURCH GROWTH**

#### **AND**

##### **MISSIONS**



*Timothy Tow*



# **PATTERN**

## **FOR**

### **CHURCH GROWTH**

#### **AND**

##### **MISSIONS**



*Timothy Tow*

**Pattern For Church Growth And Missions**

© 1996 Rev (Dr) Timothy Tow

9A Gilstead Road, Singapore 309063.

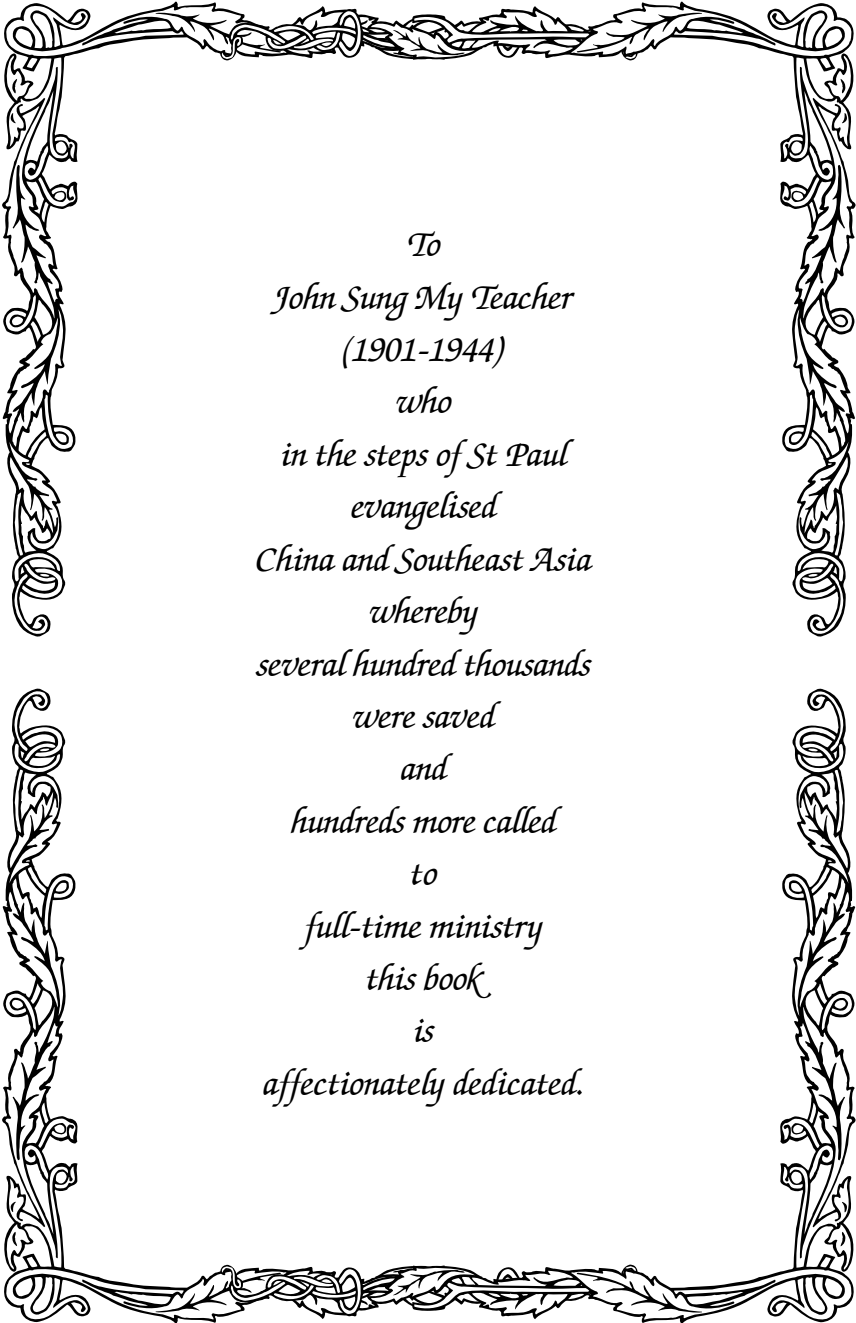
Published by

**Far Eastern Bible College Press**

9A Gilstead Road, Singapore 309063

Republic of Singapore

ISBN 981-00-7539-1



*To  
John Sung My Teacher  
(1901-1944)  
who  
in the steps of St Paul  
evangelised  
China and Southeast Asia  
whereby  
several hundred thousands  
were saved  
and  
hundreds more called  
to  
full-time ministry  
this book  
is  
affectionately dedicated.*



*“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel  
to every creature.” (Mark 16:15)*

# CONTENTS

FOREWORD .....	8
PREFACE .....	9
INTRODUCTION .....	11
CHAPTER I .....	15
Wait for the Father’s Promise — The Way to Spiritual Power .....	15
How Peter Filled the Apostolic Office Vacated by Judas Iscariot .....	17
CHAPTER II .....	20
Pentecost — The Manifestation of the Holy Spirit in Power .....	20
Joel’s Prophecy and Pentecost .....	22
Pattern of Pentecostal Preaching .....	23
Pattern of the First Christian Community .....	26
CHAPTER III .....	28
Lessons from Peter’s First Miracle .....	28
Pattern of Peter’s Second Sermon .....	30
CHAPTER IV .....	32
“When God Works, Satan Also Works” .....	32
Persecution Can But Embolden the Spirit of Martyrdom .....	35
Persecution Brought Greater Cohesion and Sharing to the Apostolic Church .....	36

CHAPTER V .....	37
The Deadly Sin of Vainglory .....	37
The Power of Holiness Restores Lives .....	38
Does God Open Prison Doors Today? .....	38
Gamaliel a Wiser Politician .....	39
Gloriously Beaten .....	40
CHAPTER VI .....	42
The First Seven Elected .....	42
Stephen, First of the Seven .....	44
CHAPTER VII .....	46
Stephen’s Apologetics .....	46
CHAPTER VIII .....	49
“The Blood of Martyrs is the Seed of the Church” .....	49
The Holy Spirit the Director of Missions .....	51
CHAPTER IX .....	55
Predestined to Serve .....	55
Times of Testing .....	57
Peter on the Move .....	58
CHAPTER X .....	61
Peter’s Key Opens Gospel Door to the Gentiles .....	61
Significance of Peter’s Vision .....	62
The Gospel on the Go .....	63
Apostolic Credentials and Apostolic Message .....	63
Timely Baptism .....	64
CHAPTER XI .....	65
Peter Opens Once-for-all Door to Gentile Evangelisation .....	65
CHAPTER XII .....	68
“The Way of the Cross Leads Home” .....	68
CHAPTER XIII AND XIV .....	73
The First Missionary Journey .....	73



CHAPTER XV .....	80
The Council of Jerusalem .....	80
After Jerusalem Four General Councils .....	84
CHAPTER XVI TO XVIII:22 .....	86
The Second Missionary Journey .....	86
Troas .....	87
Philippi .....	89
Thessalonica .....	92
Berea .....	92
Athens .....	92
Corinth .....	94
Ephesus — Caesarea — Jerusalem — Antioch .....	96
CHAPTER XVIII:23 TO XXI:20 .....	98
The Third Missionary Journey .....	98
CHAPTER XXI:20 TO XXIII .....	107
Storm Over Jerusalem .....	107
CHAPTER XXIV TO XXVI .....	112
Calm in Caesarea .....	112
CHAPTER XXVII TO XXVIII .....	116
By Royal Sail to Rome .....	116
PAUL'S LAST YEARS IN ROME	
(According to W Graham Scroggie, in Synopsis) .....	124
Paul's Final Breach with Judaism .....	126
Two Years of Prison Life (Acts 28:30,31) .....	126
Oral Ministry .....	127
Writing Ministry .....	127
Onesimus .....	128
Companions in Rome .....	129
What Happened after the 'Two Whole Years' .....	129
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	136

## FOREWORD

Dr Timothy Tow has written an important book. Bible Presbyterians, and especially those in the USA, should put this book on their “MUST READ” list. In a sense this book is an autobiography. Here we are able to see into the soul of the author, and find out how he has responded to and implemented the Book of Acts into his own ministry. What has Dr Tow done to be so successful in God’s service? We find many valuable pointers in these pages.

Many US pastors have fallen into the trap of relying upon “modern techniques” and gimmicks rather than the working of the Holy Spirit. Many of the larger churches depend upon a non-biblical view of the Holy Spirit, with sensational signs and claims to increase their growth. Others of us organize our churches so carefully that we think we can get along quite well without the working of the Holy Spirit, and we might not even recognize His work if He did anything major in our churches. Dr Tow’s emphasis is on better men, not better methods and programs. He stresses a close relationship to God, and serving Him diligently according to the Scriptural truths with a great sense of urgency. He points out that relying on “modern techniques” leads to the increase of the destructive inclusivism, while relying upon the Holy Spirit leads to a forgotten purity. There is much here that we pastors need as we face the year 2000.

*Dr Howard Carlson*

## PREFACE

One of the signs of Jesus' Coming, insofar as the Church is concerned, is the acceleration of missions (Matthew 24:14) vis-a-vis the triple proliferation of false Christs and false prophets (5, 13, 24).

That we who are of the mission field and our fathers were evangelised by missionaries of the West, are now vigorously pursuing missions in reverse order is something undreamed of before WWII. That the Third World Churches are sending missionaries in increasing numbers is a 'sign' of the coming of the end.

To train missionaries for their task, there are the usual channels run by established missionary societies. Special courses like preparing candidates for cross-cultural interaction, even such niceties as how to hold chop-sticks, are given. Special books on Church planting and Church growth are their assignments.

In a certain Theological College in Singapore, I'm told by one of her students, tomes and tomes of the latest books by specialists and experts must be read, not the Bible!

But it is the Bible that theological students and would be missionaries must study. And the Text Book for those who are giving their lives to the mission field is none other than the *Acts of the Apostles*. So often we miss the green woods for the stunted trees before our eyes.

The *Acts of the Apostles* especially is God's Pattern for Church Growth and Missions. Not only are the Apostles infallible and inerrant in their writings (II Peter 3:16), in their preachings (I Thessalonians 2:13), but also in their pattern of work (I Corinthians 11:1; II Thessalonians 3:6,7; Philippians 3:17; etc). This is our thesis, that every missionary candidate must thoroughly study it, if at all they are to become life-long missionaries. For the casualty rate in missions is too great — how many can say with Paul, "I have finished my course."

This book, an applied commentary on the *Acts of the Apostles*, was a three-hour course taught at the Evening Class of Far Eastern Bible College. It is offered respectfully to anyone interested in Church Growth and Missions for their perusal. If it can shed some light on churches and mission policies, the efforts put into its publication will not have been made in vain.

*Timothy Tow*

## INTRODUCTION

In introducing this subject, *Pattern for Church Growth and Missions*, from a study of Acts of the Apostles, let us refer to the “Introduction” to our former publication, *Forty Years on the Road to Church Growth*.

Are the Churches that are now growing by leaps and bounds a result of following the “scientific” methods as discovered by missiologists and church growth “experts”? Is Cho Yonggi’s biggest Church in the world the Mecca for all church growth enthusiasts? Where is the pattern for church growth to be found?

The pattern for church growth is right before our eyes, but we have missed the woods for the trees. The pattern for church growth is given by none other than Jesus Christ the Head of the Church before His ascension in what is known as the Great Commission. “And Jesus came and spake unto them saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen” (Matthew 28:18-20).

This Great Commission is further expounded, insofar as its geographical progression is concerned, by what is known as the Olivet Commission, “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all

Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

This pattern is carried out by none other than the Apostles, Peter to the Jews and Paul to the Gentiles. How they have worked out “their salvation” is commanded to be followed by us, in any period of Church history, ancient or modern (Philippians 2:12). Not only are the writings and preachings of the Apostles infallible and inerrant (II Peter 3:16, I Thessalonians 2:13) but also their pattern of work. Paul says to the Corinthians, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (I Corinthians 11:1). Paul reiterates this several times, and he stresses it ever more strongly in his writing to the Romans against pretenders, “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. But your **obedience** is come abroad to all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf . . .” (Romans 16:17-19). To the Philippians, he commands, “Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly [Calvin adds by way of commentary, whose religion is their kitchen], and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things) (Philippians 3:17-19).

Further to the authority asserted above by the Apostle Paul, let us round up this discovery of the Apostles being God’s Pattern for Church Growth and Missions in an extended injunction of the Apostle to the Thessalonians. Notice the words emphasised in black.

And we have confidence in the Lord leading you, that ye both do and will do things which we **command** you.

Now we **command** you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the **tradition** which he received of us. For yourselves know how ye ought to **follow** us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you: . . . Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an **ensample** unto you to **follow** us. For even when we were with you, this we **commanded** you that if any would not work, neither should he eat . . . Now then that are such we **command** and **exhort** by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread . . . And if **any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him that he may be ashamed.**

Yes, the Apostle Paul has set us the infallible, inerrant pattern of church growth and missions as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles. It is from him particularly we shall draw lessons for our day, and our attainments cannot be assessed but in the light of the Apostles' Acts.

Now, if it be asked, "What about Peter whose ambivalent behaviour in eating and not eating with the Gentiles is challenged by Paul as recorded in Galatians?"

But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews? (Galatians 2:11-14).

In this instance it is admitted that Peter is not infallible, for the Apostles to attain unto full maturity of infallibility was not in a day, but by stages. Thus said our Lord to the disciples:

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you. (John 16:12-15)

Paul had not attained infallibility until he had spent three years in the Arabian desert, being personally instructed by God (Galatians 1:15-17). So it was necessary for Peter to go through a period of trials until he was shown all the truth by the Holy Spirit, yea, even through a fellow apostle. "Iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend" (Proverbs 27:17). After this Peter could exhort those who were elders to be examples to the flock, obviously after the pattern he had set for them (I Peter 5:1-6). Though he did not speak forcefully like Paul, anyone reading his two epistles is constrained to follow his example, not only in speech and conduct, but also as God's Pattern for Church Growth and Missions.



# CHAPTER I

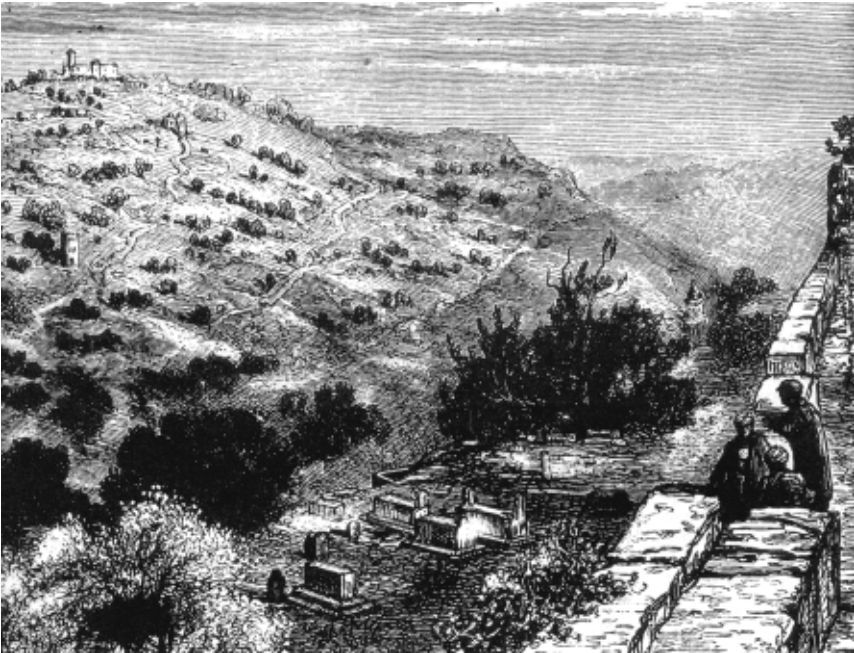
## Wait for the Father's Promise — The Way to Spiritual Power

The promise is of God. Our duty is to wait patiently until He comes, like a child for his father to come home when told to do so. “But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31).

This corporate waiting is by united and earnest prayer (supplication). A prayer meeting at which members are inwardly at odds **with one another**, is powerless. It is electricity short circuited. When it is earnestly pursued with one accord, with one mind and heart, “it availeth much” (James 5:16). “Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 15:5-6). Women play a vital role in prayer as seen in verse 14.

What is baptism of the Holy Spirit (verse 5)? It is spiritual power from God (verse 8) to enable us to witness both near (Jerusalem) and far (unto the uttermost part of the earth). This is “the promise of the Father” (verse 4).

The consummation of our witness is the “restoration again the kingdom to Israel”, when Christ will return, standing on the Mount



*Mount of Olives, from the Wall of Jerusalem*

of Olives as He went up (Zechariah 14:4; Acts 1:11). Take note that as Israel is mentioned to be restored to its former glory (as in the days of David and Solomon), and as Israel is now become a nation and a super-power in the Middle East, are we not living in the very last days before Christ returns? Nevertheless no one can know the exact time of His Second Coming, not even the Son, but the Father (Mark 13:32; Acts 1:7). Our duty is to “occupy till He comes” (Luke 19:13).

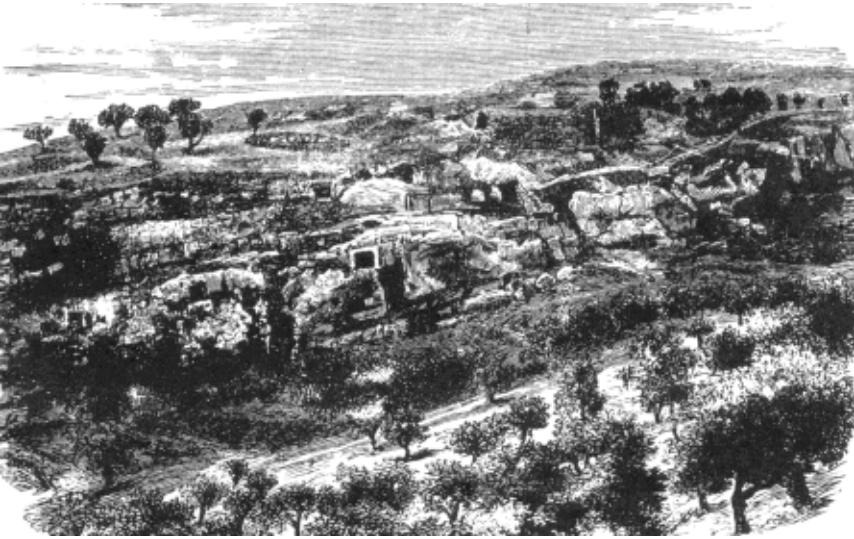
## **How Peter Filled the Apostolic Office Vacated by Judas Iscariot**

Our Lord had chosen Twelve Disciples which was a divine institution to be consummated by their sitting on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Luke 22:29). The treachery of Judas Iscariot seemed to have shattered that institution, for now the twelve-member apostolic college had dwindled by one. The vacancy must be filled to make the College complete, and its authority intact.

With the commissioning of Peter anew by the Sea of Galilee after the Resurrection, he becomes indeed Chief of the Apostles by the way he handles the situation. Quoting Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8 and applying them to Judas' awful judgment, particularly the deprivation of his "bishoprick", he declares the logical necessity of filling the same by the ordination of another.

What were the terrible consequences of the deprivation of Judas' apostleship? The guilt of His treachery drove him to suicide. He hanged himself, "and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst and all his bowels gushed out" (verse 18). Matthew records,

Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the



*Aceldama, the Field of Blood*

thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me. (Matthew 27:3-10)

What are the qualifications to the apostolic office? The candidate to the office must be one who had been with the apostles from the days of John the Baptist (when Christ was baptised) right up to the Ascension and be a witness of the Resurrection.

Now the hundred and twenty disciples were instructed to nominate two names. The first one was Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus and the other Matthias. By the peoples' nomination of two whom they deemed nearest to the choice, they would now cast lots that would be the surest as if delivered by God's voice. The casting of lots was a sacred practice to find God's will in any matter of choice or decision, since Moses' time (Leviticus 16:8). Solomon says, "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (Proverbs 16:33). The

apostles and the people, before the lots, **earnestly prayed** for God's higher decision.

In 1 Samuel 14:24-45 is the awful oath Saul had taken against any Israelite going to war with the Philistines eating anything during that day of battle. As Jonathan his son did not know about this rash act of his father he ate some honey during the period of the oath. In casting lots, Jonathan was discovered to be the culprit. The lot gave the right answer in relation to Saul's oath, and Saul would not spare executing his own son. Since Jonathan had won great victory against the Philistines and was not aware of the father's oath, he was saved by the whole congregation. This story illustrates the effectiveness of the lot in determining an important matter.

Today lots are also used to ascertain absolute impartiality such as the balloting of HDB flats. An episode in the Bethel Worldwide Evangelistic Campaign in Manchuria at which Andrew Gih and John Sung the two leaders were invited to several places to speak, in order to resolve who was to go to which, they resorted to lot casting. God is in lot casting for good. Lots cast in gambling, which is evil, is under Satan's domain. In the choosing of the seven Deacons in Acts 6, however, no lot casting is practised. It seems lot casting is resorted to in making a crucial decision between two equals.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **Pentecost — The Manifestation of the Holy Spirit in Power**

Although the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, has been active in the world since creation, it is after the Son has ascended on high that He is manifested to the disciples in power. This is according to our Lord's promise, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you . . . (John 14:16-17) . . . "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you . . . Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:7-14).

Still waiting in one accord, ie. in the unity of spirit, for the promise of the Father (1:4) which is "power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you" (1:8), the disciples were "baptised" in the sudden descent of a rushing mighty wind filling the house, and there "appeared cloven tongues of fire that sat upon each one of them." The word "baptise" in Acts 1:5 can refer to the miracle of the new birth in John 3:5, as well as a special manifestation of

power over a group of people who may or may not be born again. This we experienced at the John Sung Revival in Singapore 1935. The Church as a whole as well as individuals became suddenly vibrant with power, prayer, singing and joy after they were born again through “repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (20:21).

Thus, “they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance” (Acts 2:4). The word “tongue” (*glossa* in Greek) means language and the word in his own “**language**” is the Greek word “dialect.” Yes, the crowd who came to hear the apostles heard them speak each one in his own language = dialect. This was the miracle of hearing, even as the apostles speaking in languages other than their own were also miraculous. This is what is meant by speaking in tongues. If you count the countries represented by the international gathering there were 16 of them, not including the speech of Galilee, spoken by Peter and his fellow apostles.

Pentecost is the direct opposite of Babel (Genesis 11:1-9). At Babel the people gathered together speaking one language. They were there with the purpose of building a city and tower, the first skyscraper, to “make a name” for themselves. This magnified egoism displeased the Lord. To thwart them from their megalomania, God “confounded their language that they might not understand one another’s speech.” “So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.” Thus Babel which meant “Gate of God” originally has come to mean rather “Confusion.” The curse of Babel is in the tightness of the tongue when it tries to speak another language. And it takes years to learn just one other language proficiently.

At Pentecost this curse of Babel was immediately dispelled when the Holy Spirit gave the apostles utterance. Why? Since the Holy Spirit was come to testify the saving work of the Son and the

Great Commission is that the Gospel be preached to all nations, the speaking and hearing of the Gospel message in 16 languages was for the reason, particularly, of expediting the Gospel.

Now, while no one spoke in tongues at the Singapore Pentecost, we who came to the meetings from various dialect backgrounds — Hokkien, Cantonese, Teochew, Hakka, Mandarin, etc became proficient in Hokkien and Mandarin, the two languages used, in a matter of two weeks, the duration of the Revival Campaign. (Forty sermons of two hours length, including singing, were preached to an audience lifted to heavenly heights). This language dexterity, I believe, was a gift of the Holy Spirit.

### **Joel's Prophecy and Pentecost**

To show mockers the gift of speaking and hearing different languages was not due to wine, Peter quoted the Prophecy of Joel that in the last days [the eschatological complex covers the New Testament period with the first coming of the Son (Hebrews 1:1,2) to His Second Coming] at which He will “pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved (2:17-21). It will be a time of accelerated saving of souls by the mighty preaching of the Word. Why accelerated? Because the times are evil, ominous events take place, war on earth and signs in the sky, portents of the coming of God to judge the world.



Pentecost was the inauguration of this powerful conversion of the hearers. From Peter to this day, the Church has experienced seasons of such blessing, from time to time, in every nation, so that souls are reaped as in a great harvest. John Sung was not the only Revivalist of China. There was Ting Li Mei who preceded him by one generation. He was equally powerful, so they called him Moody of China and “Evangelist with 1,000 souls a month”.

Nor is the gift of prophecy (preaching) limited to men. It is given also to women (verses 17,18). Philip the evangelist had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy (21:8,9). We do not ordain women pastors but we are open to women evangelists. Hence women students at Far Eastern Bible College are admitted to the Homiletics Class where they are trained to speak effectively — to women and children, particularly.

### **Pattern of Pentecostal Preaching**

Today’s so-called Pentecostal ministry is overloaded with so-called speaking in tongues and healings, but there is little substance in preaching. Many times we also miss the centrality of the Cross. When we mention the Cross, we mean not only our Saviour’s death for our sins, but also His resurrection for our justification (Romans 4:25). Nor was the Cross left out when Paul spoke on the resurrection on Mars Hill.

The Roman Catholic Cross, the Crucifix, shows a dead Christ, permanently fastened. It represents a dead religion. The Protestant Cross is an empty Cross showing Christ is no more dead but risen from the dead, and is alive forever more. Ours is a lively religion.

In application, Peter accused the Jews who rejected Jesus to “have taken (Him), and by wicked hands have crucified and slain” (verse 22). Nevertheless, the evil they had perpetrated in ignorance (Luke 23:34), God turned it into good! For it was predetermined that Christ should die in order to bring us into life. By way of



*Jesus carrying cross*

personal testimony, it was the preaching of the Cross at the Singapore Pentecost and the singing of a chorus of the Cross that many of us young people found forgiveness of sins:

*In the Cross, in the Cross,  
Be my glory ever.  
All my sins are washed away  
In the Blood of Jesus.*

Since the death of Christ was predetermined by God for our salvation, Peter found corroboration in David's prophecy in Psalm 16. From Christ's death and resurrection David went on to exult in his Greater Son (Christ came from the line of David) that He should sit on His throne — Jesus now is in heaven, but He will return to earth to reign a thousand years, as it was so understood at the Ascension: "When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (1:6). Therefore the preaching of the Cross

includes not only the Resurrection but also the Ascension and Second Advent, and for the present dispensation the Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Peter said moreover, “This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear” (2:32-33).

Unless we preach Christ crucified for our sins, risen from the dead for our justification and His exaltation to heaven and Coming again in power to rule on earth a thousand years, we have little power. The preaching after Peter is like the release of a spiritual atom bomb.

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. (2:37-41)

Oftentimes, when we are asked to preach, we crack our head to ransack for a theme. Here’s a little anecdote from my teacher Dr Allan MacRae: “Once there was a young man who saw a vision in the sky, the formation of cloud that looked like “P.C.” He interpreted it to mean, “Preach Christ.” How wonderful! That is the theme — Christ! Preach Christ if you have nothing else. But, when the same fellow got discouraged, he saw in “P.C.” another meaning, “Plant Corn.” Let us follow the apostolic pattern in preaching, even after St Paul who wrote to the Corinthians, “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of

speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:1-2).

Epilogue: Jesus says, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit . . . And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me” (John 12:24-32). The apostolic pattern is the Jesus pattern!

## **Pattern of the First Christian Community**

Thus was the Christian Church born by the saving and baptism of three thousand. The local Church cannot be formed without carrying out the third injunction of the Great Commission, “baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 28:19).

By way of comparison, the Bible-Presbyterian Church of Singapore is a Church of good standing because we carry out the four points of the Great Commission — Missions (go), evangelism (make disciples), baptism, and indoctrination (teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you). The Salvation Army, though holding services, is a para-church organisation, and not a church, because it does not baptise nor serve the Lord’s Supper.

Now because the apostolic church was under great pressure from the Jews the newly converted automatically came together as a cohesive community. (Richard Wurmbrand told of an Underground Church that stuck together under Nazi and Communist rule during WWII). Those early disciples came together to be taught the apostles’ doctrine (to hear systematic preaching), to fellowship, to take the Lord’s Supper, to pray. Their faith was further strengthened by the miracles done by the apostles such as is described in Chapter III.

The love for the brethren was so great that the rich willingly sold their possessions to share with the poor. This was a voluntary act, the result of the Holy Spirit working in their hearts. Such sharing of goods was not only practised locally, but far beyond the local scene — the sending of relief by the brethren of Antioch to the poor in Judea (Jerusalem). So do Churches today that have daughter or other related churches in distant lands send help to meet their needs, eg, Burma and lately Vietnam.

When the Holy Spirit holds full sway over the community of saints then is the sharing of goods cheerfully practised, eg, the apportionment of Christmas offerings at Life Church to the needy, at home and abroad, “From each according to his ability. To each according to his need.” Nevertheless, this slogan is misquoted by the Marxists and Communists who enforce it on their people, as it were with their hammer. In Christ, however, it is practised voluntarily, by love as exemplified in the cross, not by fear.

## CHAPTER III

### Lessons from Peter's First Miracle

There was a saying among Christians in Peking (Beijing) according to Dr John Sung:

*If you have small sickness, look up the Taifu (doctor)  
If you have big sickness, look up the Yesu.*

Peter's healing of the man lame from birth so that he could jump and walk was a "notable miracle" (Acts 4:16), manifestly and undeniably generated by the power of God. It brought great glory to God and praise from all the people. It shut the mouths of his enemies, the same Jews who opposed our Lord in His working of miracles. This gift was specially given to the apostles (5:12) in order to confirm the Word which they preached (Mark 16:20). The Infant Church needed signs and wonders to establish its growth. Today there are those who try to heal in the Name of Jesus and it is claimed for them that "the lame can walk and the blind can see." What is our position? Do miracles come to the Church today?

The answer is yes and no. Yes, if the sign and wonder is from the Lord, especially in times of great tension, is also for the purpose of confirming the Word. Notable miracles were done in John Sung's ministry. God's Name was greatly magnified. John Sung's credentials were several hundred thousand souls saved, campaign after campaign. Miracles can occur if God grants and that to His glory.

The answer is no to those who rashly take upon themselves the power of healing. Beware! Instead of improving on the situation they make it worse. In the charismatic movement hands are easily laid on the sick with many make-believe results and self-imagined successes. These wittingly or unwittingly heap honours upon themselves or their leaders only to add to their own shame. Only to the apostles were miracles given and that for the confirmation of the Word and the strengthening of the Church.

A second lesson learned from Peter's miracle is that spiritual power from the Lord is far greater than material power. The church today should not seek the material at the expense of the spiritual. Peter and John were effective servants of God because they were given to prayer. Without prayer we are helpless.

Genuine miracles raise up the sick. False miracles cause healthy people to be "slain" and fall. Yes, there is also power in the latter. And that power comes from other than the Holy Spirit. Just as Satan uses fire-walking to beguile heathens, so he uses "slaying in the Spirit", never found in the Bible, to seduce credulous Christians.

The marks of a work whether it is of the Holy Spirit or not is given by our Lord, "And when he is come, he will **reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment**" (John 16:8) . . . "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for **he shall not speak of himself**; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. **He shall glorify me**: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you" (John 16:13-14). Do "big boys" like Benny Hinn and Rodney Howard-Browne glorify Jesus or themselves?

We should not pray to the Holy Spirit as charismatics do. We should rather pray to the Father through the Son or to the Son directly. It pleases the Father to ordain that the Son be exalted by

the Holy Spirit. When the Son is glorified, the Holy Spirit is outpoured on His people.

## **Pattern of Peter's Second Sermon**

As this second sermon is precipitated by the miracle of raising the lame man lying at the Gate Beautiful of the Temple, Peter was careful to give all glory to God: “Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? Or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?” Once I heard a successful evangelist who took pride in the hand he upheld, “This hand has healed many who are sick.” This was quite the contrary to the John Sung spirit. When patients healed of their sickness rose up to sing his praises he was quick to point the audience to Christ, the only Saviour. This is none other than the Petrine and Pauline spirit. Paul says to the Corinthians, “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake” (II Corinthians 4:5). “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (verse 6). Both the apostle to the Jews and the apostle to the Gentiles have set us the example. In Peter’s First Epistle he adds, “And be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time” (1 Peter 5:5-6).

As to the theme of his sermon, it is like the first showing how Jesus was God’s Son whom the Jews had killed in preference of a murderer, but God raised Him from the dead whereof they were witnesses. In so doing the prophecies of Christ’s sufferings were fulfilled. To add to the argument that Jesus was the Christ, Peter quoted Moses naming of the prophet who should come after him whose Word must be obeyed (Deuteronomy 18:15, 18, 19). This fact was also borne out by Samuel and the prophets following



after him. That Jesus was the Seed named of Abraham who should bless all the kindreds of the earth.

As it is said that every sermon is not a sermon until application is made, Peter said, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out . . .” (3:19). Again Peter, apart from mentioning Jesus’ death and resurrection added His Second Coming as part of the work of His saving plan, “Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (3:21).

## CHAPTER IV

### **“When God Works, Satan Also Works”**

As in physics they say, force is met by counter-force, so in metaphysics there is a saying in the Chinese Church, “When God works, Satan also works.” The miracle of healing the man born lame wrought by the apostle Peter, bringing great glory to God, was immediately countered by the Jewish Church, “Being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them, and put them in hold unto the next day: for it was now eventide” (4:2,3). In after years, Peter might have this incident in mind when he wrote his first Epistle, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world” (1 Peter 5:8-9). That wicked spiritual forces are at work against God’s people is pointed out also by Paul to the Ephesians, “For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12). Mind you, whether it be political power, economic power, ecclesiastical power, Satan can manipulate these against the Church which faithfully endeavours to serve her Lord.

Are we to surrender to evil? Are we afraid? Peter says, “Whom resist steadfast in the faith.” How did Peter himself

handle such a situation? In himself, he declared he was weak and helpless, as he did in the miraculous raising of the lame man. In the strength of the Lord, the Holy Spirit palpitating in his heart, he was bolder than a lion. He fearlessly confessed Christ whom the Jews hated. Peter said, “If we this day be examined of the good deed done to the impotent man, by what means he is made whole; Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you . . . Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:9-12).

Such polemics in the power of the Holy Spirit is what we need in today’s preaching! As force produces counterforce, it is in such trying times that Christian heroism is generated. Thus, after a hard time in Athens, St Paul declared to the Corinthians in the next city he invaded with God’s Word, “And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom . . . for I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified . . . And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Corinthians 2:1-4). While Confucian rhetoric concentrates on “virtue and chivalry” and modernism on “social service,” let the Christian disciple preach the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit. Let us not be ashamed to proclaim Christ and His doctrine that cuts across all that oppose Him by the two-edged Sword of the Word. Yes, neither is there salvation in another, and if another will claim Saviourhood, male or female, let it come to a test.

The testing must result in the words of Peter and John, “But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and

heard” (4:19-20). The Word of God must prevail over the human word. The higher law of God must override the lower law of man. While it is mandatory to obey every ordinance of man, how is it that house churches in China refuse to join the so-called Three-self Churches? Because restrictions are placed over the latter in their preaching. As we are told by China watchers, “They forbid, eg., preaching from the Book of Revelation.” “But the word of God is not bound” (II Timothy 2:9). Why did Bunyan suffer 12 years in His British Majesty’s prison? For refusing to worship in the State Church. Here is an earlier case of the peril of joining a house church.

“Resist the devil and he will flee from you” chimes in also the apostle James at this point. So, when nothing worthy of condemnation was the verdict of the Holy Spirit speaking against the conscience of the Jewish authorities, they had to let the apostles go! It pays to take a stand for the Lord. And the Lord often fights the devil on his own ground. Remember that by the miracle of the healing of the lame man, 5,000 were saved in one day. When Christianity grows in number, the law of democracy will dictate a careful watching brief. In a certain country where Christian votes were needful, the government that hitherto had been unresponsive to their requests suddenly became amenable. Why? Thus, it is recorded, “But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.” Not only the multitude plays a balance in power, but more so God’s servant’s integrity. It is said that one with God is majority, provided that one can say God is truly on his side. If he sins, if he regards iniquity in his heart, the Lord will not hear him (Psalm 66:18).

## **Persecution Can But Embolden the Spirit of Martyrdom**

The arrest and overnight detention of the apostles for the miracle they had done completely backfired. “For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth” (II Corinthians 13:8). That a “notable miracle” had been done by the disciples of Jesus of Nazareth cannot be denied. When threatened not to speak any further about the matter, the apostles became the bolder in their witness to the Lord God Almighty (*martyr* in Greek basically means *witness*). “For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20). The Jewish Council, “finding nothing how they might punish them,” and being overwhelmed by the people who glorified God in the miracle, they were obliged to let them go.

“And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them” (verse 23). In response to the detention and the threatenings heaped on them by the Jewish authorities, they prayed as one man to the Lord, quoting Psalm 2. They resolved to speak the Word with utmost boldness, assured of the power by Divine healings in the Name of Jesus. The prayer meeting that came into being spontaneously ended with the whole Church being filled with the Holy Spirit, whereby the meeting hall was shaken with power. Indeed, persecution can but embolden the Spirit of Martyrdom. The disciples’ boldness would bolster them well in the face of coming martyrdom. Let the end-time Church learn this lesson to face all eventualities. “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble . . . The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge” (Psalm 46:1,7).

## **Persecution Brought Greater Cohesion and Sharing to the Apostolic Church**

Persecution not only emboldened the Spirit of Martyrdom to the Apostles and disciples, but engendered greater cohesion and sharing. As the congregation increased in numbers, so must the supply to their daily needs, remembering that the poor outnumbered the rich. Flamed by a common love by the Holy Spirit in the Name of the Risen Saviour, “as many as were possessors of lands and houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold” and gave over to the Apostles for distribution. As stated earlier of the economy of the Apostolic Church (2:42-47), it was run by love divine:

*From each according to his ability,  
To each according to his need.*

One outstanding example of a rich man who gave up his possessions to add to the Cause of Jesus Christ was Joses, called Barnabas by the apostles, a Levite from the country of Cyprus. Barnabas means “son of consolation.” He was always willing to assist in any difficult situation, a fellow helper to the Truth (III John 8). Cyprus is an island off the mainland in the Mediterranean. That shows how far the Gospel had spread in a short time.

**Corollary:** Persecution can only bring Christians, of whatever denomination, to rally together, because we are baptised into the same body, be we Presbyterians or Baptists, Methodists or Anglicans. Yes, this was seen in the Underground Church by Richard Wurmbrand during the days of Nazi and Communist persecution in WWII.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **The Deadly Sin of Vainglory**

Many rich members of the Apostolic Church sold their properties, and having offered them wholly to the Lord were surely blessed. Why were Ananias and Sapphira his wife struck dead when they brought theirs? The sin of vainglory. While keeping back part of the proceeds of sale of their assets, they made it as though they were giving all. This was vainglory and one sin leads to another. This was pious cheating and worst of all lying to God the Holy Spirit. The sin of the spirit, as my teacher Dr Chia Yu Ming in China has said, is ten times worse than the sin of the flesh.

Lying is the sin originating from Satan that brought our first parents' downfall. "Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savour: so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honour" (Ecclesiastes 10:1). Public funds must be accounted for to the last cent. As administrators of God's money, let us be sure to have clean hands and a pure heart (Psalm 24:4). To abuse our office we are not only liable to Government prosecution for Criminal Breach of Trust, we are committing a deadly sin in the sight of God!

By corollary, we should not squander God's money by the lavish and careless expenditure of utilities provided to a community such as a residential Bible College. How do inmates use power, light and water? To leave the fans and light or air-conditioner running when one is out of the room for hours, is to

waste God's bounties. God is a God of Economy, and Economy is the Mother of Prosperity. Why did Jesus tell the disciples to pick up the crumbs after the miraculous feeding of the Five Thousand? John, who was observant of God's funds pilfered by Judas' hands, also recorded "that nothing be lost" (John 6:12). It is a sin to waste.

## **The Power of Holiness Restores Lives**

While it is true that to the Apostles were given power to perform miracles in order to confirm the Word they preached (Mark 16:20), it is also true they had this power through holy living. They were like unleavened bread cast out of every grain of leaven. Hence the church which was purified, could not tolerate Ananias and Sapphira. Being thoroughly cleansed, it multiplied by leaps and bounds. The very shadow of Peter could heal the sick. The very presence of the apostles would subdue men to Christ.

This holiness is what every church needs today. Can the Church today say, "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (Acts 3:6)? Or are we like Laodicea increased with goods but spiritually wretched and miserable, poor, blind and naked?

## **Does God Open Prison Doors Today?**

Or may we ask, "Is Daniel's God still working today?" The answer is yes. No sooner were the apostles put in the common prison than angel hands came by night to open the prison doors. Being thus delivered, the apostles waxed the braver to declare the Word to the whole of Jerusalem. Arrested a second time and once again admonished not to preach, Peter and his colleagues replied, "We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to



give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him” (5:29-32).

While Christians are to obey kings and governors and submit to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake (I Peter 2:13), we must rise to the occasion when suppressed for preaching God’s Word. We should speak God’s Word fearlessly despite being banned. God is there to deliver those who stand for Him. Not only does God deliver Daniel and his three friends, God delivers the apostles, and God will deliver us. The story of Sadhu Sundar Singh how when he was thrown into a dry well and locked up to perish found deliverance by angelic hands is reenacted in Ken Anderson’s film *Journey to the Skies*. The Governor of a town in Tibet who held the keys to the well was perplexed beyond measure. He opened the well’s locked cover, but found no one there. He found the Sadhu preaching again in the market square! This story I heard even when a child from the lips of my pastor grandfather.

For speaking God’s Word fearlessly, God is pleased to surround us with an awe that discourages the powers that be intent on subduing us. Let us continue to obey human authorities, but be careful to give God His dues. “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21).

## **Gamaliel a Wiser Politician**

Politicians realising that religion is a very sensitive issue tread softly. Gamaliel is a wiser politician who sees a greater issue, touching Christianity — because he sees the power of the living and true God energising it. The martyrs of the Church have proven this. “The blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church.”

A wiser politician in Gamaliel would leave true Christianity alone. If it is not of God, if it is the work of a cultic leader like Theudas and Judas of Galilee, it will die a natural death.

Verdict on the apostles: “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” (5:38-39).

When we were in Vietnam of late, we were told of the house-church movement. Many leaders of house-churches were arrested and imprisoned. The more the Vietcongs suppressed these house-churches the faster they grew. Now there are 330 such Christian groups in the whole country. Many can be found among the Montagnards, ie mountain dwellers. Too numerous to tackle, the Viet Police gave up! Can man’s energy transcend God’s power? “But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God” (5:39).

## **Gloriously Beaten**

To save face, the Jewish authorities beat the apostles before releasing them. But they were helpless to persecute them further at this juncture as the Chinese Communists at one time also found the house-churches too numerous to control. The strength of the Lord overpowers theirs, even the jubilant power of those who are persecuted for Jesus’ sake. When arrested, they sing as they go to prison.

Peter speaks from his own experience as recorded in Acts, “And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon’s porch. And of the rest durst no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women)” (verses 12-14). Peter says, “But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief,

or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf . . . Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" (I Peter 4:15-19).

*Stone walls do not a prison make,  
Nor iron bars a cage;*

*Minds innocent and quiet take  
That for a hermitage;*

*If I have freedom in my love,  
And in my soul am free, —*

*Angels alone, that soar above,  
Enjoy such liberty.*

*Richard Lovelace (1618-58)*

## CHAPTER VI

### The First Seven Elected

“And in those days when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring . . .” When a family increases so are its problems. And the problem in this case is a complaint of the Greek-speaking Jews against the Hebrew-speaking Jews. Like the English-speaking Chinese of Singapore against the Chinese or dialect-speaking Chinese. It is said that the Greek-speaking Jews were in the majority. The cause was that these widows were not properly looked after. (How widows in the Church are to be taken care of is more specifically given in Paul’s First Letter to Timothy, Chapter 5:4-6.)

The “serve tables” in verse 2 is not that the apostles were giving out food at the dinner tables, but the Greek word for “table” here is the same as the “table” mentioned in John 2:15 used by money changers. The apostles were rather the dispensers of funds to the needy, including the widows.

The work of dealing with the needy who increased with the size of the congregation was too taxing on the apostles, just as cases of dispute among the Israelites were too numerous for Moses to handle. The solution was to elect seven men to oversee this day-to-day situation. This would release the apostles to give all their time to prayer, study of God’s Word and preaching. Similarly, the pastor is to concentrate full-time on the spiritual

things of the Church and leave the treasury and physical administration to the Deacons and secretarial staff, etc.

The qualifications of the Seven were: (1) They must be men of honest report, of good reputation (which according to a Chinese proverb is a man's second life). (2) They must be men full of the Holy Spirit, ie spiritually minded men. (3) They must be men of wisdom, ie holy intellect, men of discernment and understanding.

“And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch.” There is a saying by Francis Bacon, “The voice of the people has about it something divine: for how otherwise can so many heads agree together as one?” This was the Lord's choice by the votes of the people. A Latin proverb, *Vox populi, vox dei*. (The voice of the people, the voice of God.) Or we can word it for the church, “theocracy through democracy”.

Apart from Stephen, we can recognise another prominent name, Philip. He must be distinguished from Philip the apostle. This Philip is called the evangelist who preached in Samaria (8:5) and to the Ethiopian eunuch. In Acts 21:8-9, Philip, now residing at Caesarea, is seen giving hospitality to Paul and his party who arrived by boat. Philip now had four daughters “which did prophesy”.

The other name commented upon in Church history is Nicolas, but not in a good light. Though one of the Seven, Nicolas, according to ancient tradition gave rise to a sect after his name — the Nicolaitans whose deeds Jesus hated (Revelation 2:6). Whatever his practices and doctrine these countered the tradition of the Apostles (II Thessalonians 3:6), so they were condemned. Watch out for Nicolaitans that would infiltrate your church. “Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them” (20:30).

Ellicot's commentary says, "But the fall of one of the Seven into the error . . . is not in itself inconceivable." Was there not a Judas even in the Apostolic College?

The Seven were called "the Seven" but not called deacons. It seems these were a class which we might call Archdeacons, who personally assisted the Apostles. And the laying on of hands ceremony bespeaks the blessings of the Apostles, and the conferment of the holy office upon them. These hands are called the hands of the presbytery (the elders) [I Timothy 4:14].

It is interesting to note that "a great company of priests were obedient to the faith." The old order must give way to the new. These priests who continued to kill animals for sacrifice must have seen how illogical it was to practise them when Christ the true Lamb of God had already died and risen. Hence they joined the ranks of the Christians.

### **Stephen, First of the Seven**

Stephen was another of the Grecians or Greek-speaking Hebrews according to his name. Indeed all the Seven had Greek names to show there was perfect democracy in the election. Stephen stood a powerful witness by his preaching and miracles to a group who began to challenge him. "When God works, Satan works."

Here came Jews from a Synagogue which is called Synagogue of the Libertines. From the structure of the sentence it seems probable that the Libertines, the Cyrenians and Alexandrians attended one synagogue, and those of Cilicia and Asia another. Who were these Jews?

The Libertines were freed Jews from Rome. From this class it is thought Stephen had sprung.

Cyrenians came from the north coast of Africa between Egypt and Carthage.

Alexandrians were Jews who settled in Alexandria. From Alexandria came the Greek version of the Old Testament called the Septuagint (LXX).

Cilicia is where Tarsus was, Paul's home town.

Asia is a province in the western sector of present day Turkey, having Ephesus as its capital.

When all these Jews, ganged together against Stephen, could not gainsay him they suborned, ie bribed, perjurers to accuse what Stephen never did, charging him with the most serious crime of blasphemy against God. This was the same tactic employed in the accusation of our Lord. What our Lord said and what Stephen said were twisted out of context. Against all these accusations that were hurled against Stephen the result was a holy reaction from the martyr soon-to-be — that his face shone like an angel. “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Matthew 5:10-12). Amen.

## CHAPTER VII

### Stephen's Apologetics

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said to His disciples, "But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matthew 5:39). This passivity commanded by our Lord refers to injury done to a Christian as a private individual. A Christian when treated shabbily by the world can absorb its injury without retaliation. But a Christian should not turn the other cheek when it concerns his faith, his Lord and his God. Conversely he must stand up squarely to his accuser.

Thus, when our Lord was slapped by an officer of the high priest because he stood for the Truth, He hesitated not to challenge the high priest, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?" (John 18:23). Similarly when Paul was called upon to state his case before the Sanhedrin, and was commanded to be struck on the mouth, he indignantly retorted, "God shall smite thee, thou whited wall: for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?" (23:3).

When Stephen was falsely accused for blasphemy, in witness to the truth, he did not turn the other cheek. Bold as a lion, he made his defence before the Jews who accused him before the Jewish court. When asked by the high priest if he had said that Jesus of Nazareth would destroy the Jews' holy place and change the law of



Moses, Stephen showed from the sacred history of God's people from Abraham and Moses, that far from being antithetical to the Old Testament, it was the root from which the Messiah would arise. Jesus Christ was not come to destroy the law and the prophets but to fulfil (Matthew 5:17).

There was no conflict at all between Jesus and Moses in that our Lord was the Prophet Moses predicted would come after him, whom they should obey. "This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear" (7:37).

Sad to say the Lord who spoke to Moses was the One the Israelites rejected, but they would rather make that gold cow to worship as their God. What a condemnation to the Israelite nation, even to the Jews Stephen was addressing this message. It is they who reject God (not those whom they were falsely accusing).

In verse 45 **Jesus** is the Greek word for Joshua. Both words mean Saviour. Joshua is also given the Greek form **Jesus** in the KJV's translation at Hebrews 4:8. "The Greek form of Joshua, which is translated "Jesus" (AV) in Hebrew 4:8, may be a purposeful allusion to the fact that the one who led Israel into the land of inheritance bears the same name as the One who can lead Israel into the land of eternal life" (The KJV Parallel Bible Commentary).

Next, reference is made to the days of David and to the fact that it was his desire to build the house of the God of Jacob. This his son Solomon was permitted to do. "Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands." Stephen quickly draws his apologetics to the person of Jesus Christ. At His trial the Lord said, "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands" (Mark 14:58). This reference is obviously to clarify the charge which the false witnesses brought against Him (cf 6:14). Stephen has shown that

the Temple, as well as the tabernacle which preceded it, were never intended to be the permanent dwelling place of God. Jesus of Nazareth gave a correct perspective to the Temple of Jerusalem and its relationship to the God who dwells in the hearts of believers” (The KJV Parallel Bible Commentary).

Having made his defence, which we title “Stephen’s Apologetics,” Stephen applied it to his hearers. This made it a sermon, a message directed to the hearts of the audience. Moreover he called them “stiffnecked” and “uncircumcised” in heart and ears. The message now found its target, hitting the bull’s eye. They were condemned even as their forefathers were guilty in persecuting the prophets. And these prophets all pointed to the coming of the Just One, whom they had finally slain. It is not Christ who was at odds with the Temple and Moses’ Law. It is these false accusers who are working contrary to God’s eternal plan of salvation.

The result of Stephen’s Apologetics which became a powerful sermon convicting his accusers was his being stoned to death, Stephen the first martyr of the Christian Church. So great was this testimony that heaven opened to salute him, Jesus standing on the right hand of God. If there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, joy in the presence of the angels of God (Luke 15:7,10), how much more rejoicing it will be in all heaven when a believer is willing to give his life for the sake of the Lord Jesus Christ!

The account of Stephen’s martyrdom introduces us to Saul, a young man who kept the clothes of the murderous crowd. Chapter 8:1 comments, “And Saul was consenting unto his death.” This deed of an accessory to a foul crime soon becomes full blown into “a great persecution against the church at Jerusalem and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles” (9:1).

## CHAPTER VIII

### **“The Blood of Martyrs is the Seed of the Church”**

These words from the Church father Tertullian (circa 150 - 230 AD) illustrate the first great persecution of the Church. And Saul who sat with the clothes of the murderers of Stephen is mentioned as a chief mischief maker: “As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison” (8:3). This was Rome’s enlightened way of government — to allow the Jews juridical powers over their people in regard to their religious practices.

The result was the disciples were scattered abroad throughout the region of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. But out of the weak came forth the strong. They who were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the Word. Some commentators say this is how God sent them out with the Gospel. If the Church today sits comfortably at home with no zeal to spread the Word, might not God use persecution as a means of evangelisation? The Chinese Church was only one million strong (Protestants) in 1949 when the Communists took over China. Under Communist iron rule the Christian population is now risen to 80 million!

One outstanding example of those scattered abroad is Philip, one of the Seven (not Philip the Apostle). It seems the spirit of Stephen the first martyr was now fallen on the next on the line (6:5). When Philip went down to Samaria and preached Christ to them, the people heard him most attentively. They were totally

subdued to the Lord when Philip was given power to cast out many demons who shrieked in the exorcisms. And many paralytics and lame ones were also healed. The genuine results brought great joy in the city. How different from citywide campaigns of the charismatics today who boast of their healing powers. When their campaigns come to a close they fade away without a whisper. The report is made of a certain charismatic healer from USA to Cambodia how he could heal not a single soul, and had to run for his life from an angry mob.

An outstanding example of the fruits of Philip's ministry is one Simon a powerful sorcerer. When he also believed in Philip and was baptised alongside his previous clients, the news of this convert must have influenced the apostles at Jerusalem to send Peter and John to the scene of God's mighty works. By way of illustration, there was a temple chief of Tanjung Uban who came to Singapore for healing of his cancer. He found shelter at Beulah House, the hospitality ministry of Life B-P Church. When the Gospel was preached to him, the stricken man, having been given only six months to live, readily received Christ. He returned home soon thereafter without hope of earthly life but with plenty in the heavenlies. So, when the pastor of Life Church went to Tanjung Uban to baptise him, a goodly number of his temple worshippers came to the baptismal service. A deep impression was made on the heathens when the temple chief kneeled reverently as the water of baptism was applied.

When Peter and John came to Samaria their prayers brought forth the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, most probably the speaking in tongues from the converts prayed for. (The case of Cornelius illustrates.) Seeing this marvellous phenomenon, Simon tried to bribe Peter with money to possess such a gift. Such an act today is known as simony. Peter said, "Thy money perish with thee . . . repent therefore of this thy wickedness . . . for I perceive you are in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity"

(8:20-23). Simon did request for the Lord's forgiveness, but we wonder if he was saved after all. (Matthew 7:21-23 is to be carefully considered in the light of Simon's case.)

## **The Holy Spirit the Director of Missions**

After the conclusion of the Samaritan campaign, apparently Peter and John left to return to Jerusalem, "preaching the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans" (8:25). As for Philip "an angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert" (verse 26). This angel who spoke to Philip could have done so in a vision or in a dream in the night, but soon we are to see the Holy Spirit taking over as Director of Missions.

To go toward the south via Jerusalem is clearly stated, and from Jerusalem to Gaza which is desert. Why Gaza (which is much in the news today coming out of Israel and Palestine). Because, Gaza though a desert, was a thoroughfare between Jerusalem and Egypt and the south, even to this day. (There is regular bus service from Cairo to Israel via Gaza today.)

When Philip came to the highway in Gaza, there appeared from the direction of Jerusalem an eunuch of Ethiopia, an influential officer of the Queen, "Chancellor of the Exchequer" or "Minister of Finance" in modern terms. He had gone to Jerusalem to worship the Lord, like Cornelius, centurion of the Italian Band, Gentile proselytes of the Jewish faith. On his way back to Ethiopia he was reading the Scroll of Isaiah the prophet. As Philip looked on this spectacle of a foreign dignitary travelling in style, the Spirit of God prompted him to approach "this chariot."

We should not seek to see visions or dream dreams like the charismatics, but the more mature way is to live so close to the Lord through prayer and meditation in His Word, on God's

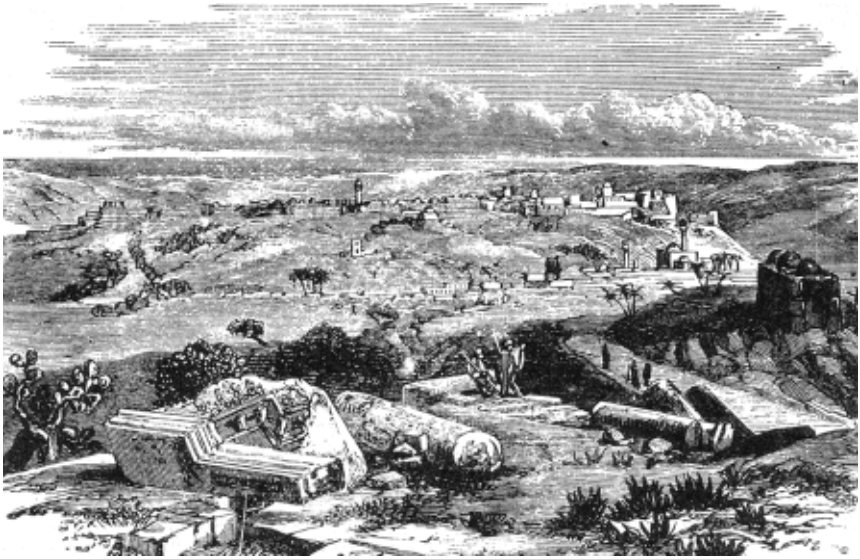
wavelength, that we can sense Him prompting our spirit. This leading of the Holy Spirit in missions is first time described here.

Now when Philip saw and heard the Ethiopian eunuch reading aloud the prophet Isaiah, he opportunely chimed in, “Understandest thou what thou readest?” A contrite and seeking heart, the Eunuch replied, “How can I except some man should guide me?” The Lord turned his heart to be favourably inclined so Philip was invited to ascend the chariot and be his counsellor. The Scripture the Ethiopian eunuch was reading was Isaiah 53:7 and 8, and he had a holy inquisitiveness to know who was this person so meek, so humiliated. “How can I (understand) except some man should guide me?”

While it is the same Holy Spirit who puts a holy desire in an inquirer of the truth, it is also his complementary work to send some gospel messenger to teach the same, to lead him into the truth. We see it plainly in Acts 10 where Peter was sent to Cornelius.

It is interesting to note that the believing Eunuch asked to be baptised. This he must have seen and heard while in Jerusalem. Many inquirers into the faith today also know about baptism. Even outsiders, non-Christians, know that baptism is a holy rite confirming a believer in the Christian faith.

Philip said, “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” This verse is an example of how the baptiser should make certain of a “beginner’s” knowledge and faith. So-called “best authorities omit verse 37” is simply arbitrary opinion. We contend, if a verse of Scripture detracts from the Holy Word, either the written or the Living Word, that is spurious. If it is in tune with God’s revelation and glorifies Him, then it is not to be tampered with. I’m glad The KJV Parallel Bible Commentary takes this view.



*Gaza*

As the Eunuch has given a good answer for his faith, he is baptised at the Gaza springs which some commentators say is the Wadi el-Hesi, northeast of Gaza. What mode of baptism, whether by immersion or sprinkling, the Acts never describes in detail. “Into the water” does not mean submersion. To stand ankle-deep in a shallow stream, especially in a desert country, can also be described as going “into the water”.

Now, as soon as Philip had accomplished his assigned job, the Spirit of the Lord took him away (like in a Rapture) all of a sudden. The astounded Eunuch must have wondered greatly, “Truly this was God’s messenger!” Here is a lesson we must learn — no pious loafing, no taking things easy in the Lord’s service, but immediate obedience at every prompting of the Spirit of Missions. By way of testimony, I used to go regularly to minister in Tanjung Pinang. I would go by boat from Singapore on a Saturday morning. The boat would reach Tanjung Pinang early afternoon. On Saturday night, the same night, there would be a Youth Meeting that I would

minister to. The next morning, the Sunday Service, starting at 10 am, would finish by just before noon. Since there was a boat returning to Singapore at 1 pm I would hasten to leave, no dilly-dallying until Monday, so as to be entertained by the local Church. Our mission accomplished, it is of the Lord's leading and of His will that we return to our base of work without delay!

Philip was found at Azotus or Ashdod 20 miles north of Gaza, and from there he preached in all the cities till he came to Caesarea. A true missionary will not miss a chance to tell those who have not heard the Gospel the good news that Jesus is the Saviour. The story is told of Dr A B Dodd, missionary of the Independent Board for Presbyterian Foreign Missions and my teacher in China, how he would not leave a restaurant or a railway station he came in contact with without leaving behind a Gospel tract for someone to read. Give out a tract along one's way, out or in, is the least one can do.

Philip finally came to Caesarea. Matthew Henry comments, "At Caesarea we find him in a house of his own, (21:8). He that had been faithful in working for Christ as an itinerant at length gains a settlement." But as for the two Apostles, Peter to the Jews and Paul to the Gentiles, both ended their lives in the prison cells. William Chalmers Burns, the modern St Paul ended his life in the cold wintry country of Manchuria. He was never married. He died alone with only a Chinese attendant, after catching a severe cold. But, his works remain after him, of which the Bible-Presbyterians of Singapore have claimed him as their spiritual ancestor. Let us obey the Holy Spirit, the Director Missions, howsoever He wills. Amen.



## **CHAPTER IX**

### **Predestined to Serve**

The key verse to this chapter is found in verse 15 where Saul is described as “a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings and the children of Israel.” In theological language, he is one “predestined to serve”.

Though Saul is seen in Chapter IX to step up his persecution of the Church over his making “havock” in Chapter VIII, in that he now extends his mischief to faraway Damascus, when his appointed hour came, he was overturned on the Damascus Road. He was struck down by a light from heaven that shone above the sun.

Then he heard a Voice, “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” (Those who persecute the chosen, the body of Christ, are persecuting the Lord Himself.) When Saul asked, “Who are you?” the Voice answered, “I am Jesus whom you persecute. It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.” (Beware of the consequences, you enemies of God who take Him lightly.)

When Saul now came to his senses and asked for direction, the Voice concluded, “Arise and go into the city, and it shall be told you what you must do.” This sudden encounter between Saul and his Lord was witnessed by Saul’s companions who also heard a Voice, but saw no man. These men now led Saul to the city for he was blinded by that light.

For three days Saul ate nothing in his blinded condition. But God was at work. He directed a certain disciple, Ananias by name, to go to the house of Judas at the Street called Straight. Meanwhile, Saul was praying and saw in a vision Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him that he might recover his sight. Now when Ananias told the Lord about Saul's ruthlessness, the Lord replied, "Go your way, for he is a chosen vessel unto me . . .".

So went Ananias, and putting his hands on Saul he declared, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus who appeared to you on the way has sent me that you may recover your sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost." Immediately, scales fell from his eyes and he saw again and got up, and was baptised. (Note that his repentance was sealed with baptism without delay.) He also found quick company with the believers in Damascus.

The opening of Saul's blinded eyes was truly symbolic of the opening of his spiritual eyes hitherto veiled to the truth that Jesus whom he persecuted was the Son of God. Saul was well taught in the Old Testament Scriptures, in the Jewish law under Gamaliel, but he was blind to their true meaning and application. Once his spiritual eyes were opened he forthrightly confessed Jesus was their Messiah. "And straightway, he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God" (verse 20). When his hearers were astonished that the antagonist to Christianity was now turned protagonist, Saul waxed the more eloquent to confound the Jews of Damascus. In course of time this became so unbearable to the Jews that they set about to kill him. While his enemies watched the city gates that he should not escape, the disciples outwitted them by airlifting Saul over the city wall in a basket. "But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another . . ." (Matthew 10:23).

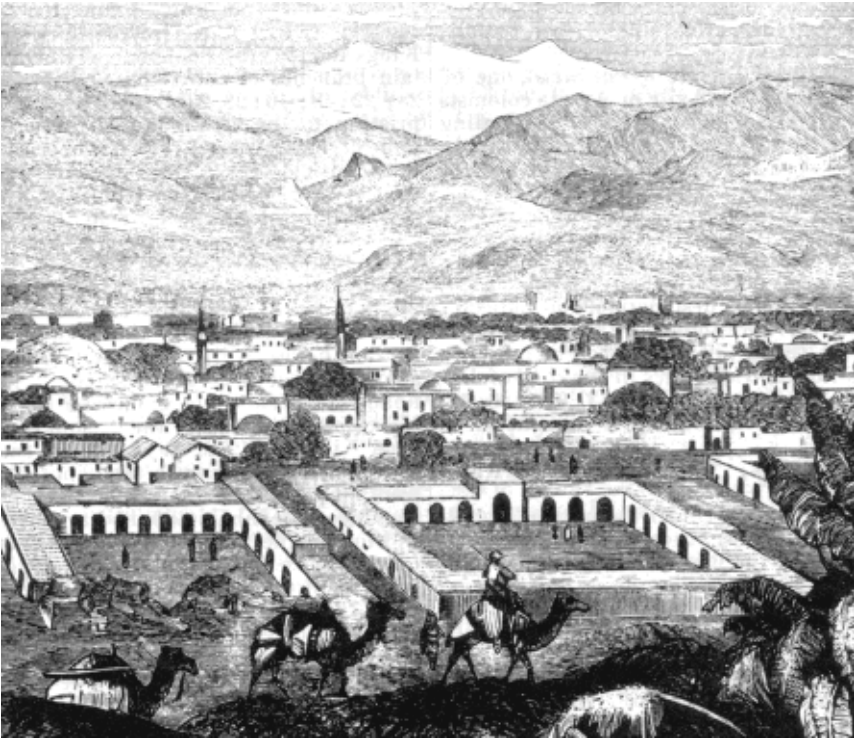


*Wall of Damascus*

## **Times of Testing**

It was natural for Saul to move up to Jerusalem where the mother church was, and it was natural for the disciples there to keep him at arm's length for what he had done before to them. Here enters Barnabas the son of consolation who introduces him to the Apostolic College, testifying of his conversion and bold witness to the Jews in their synagogues. So he was accepted by the apostles while he spoke boldly for his Lord. This resulted in the Greek-speaking Jews' plot to kill him.

Again we see Saul on the run. The brethren had no way out but via Caesarea where he sailed for Tarsus his hometown. This removal of Saul from the spotlight that is Jerusalem gave the churches rest throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria and the



*Tarsus , Birthplace of Paul (Mount Tarsus in the background)*

number of believers increased “in the comfort of the Holy Ghost” (verse 31).

### **Peter on the Move**

According to Church Growth “experts” today Peter should have built a cathedral in Jerusalem to seat his three thousand converts at Pentecost, yea, five thousand, and more thousands. According to God’s pattern he should rather be on the move, “to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.” So we see him passing “through all quarters” and coming down to Lydda where there was a “colony” of disciples.



*Jaffa (Joppa)*

At Lydda (Lod) he found Aeneas, a paralytic, who was bedridden for eight years. To this paralytic Peter said, “Arise, and make your bed.” Immediately the bedridden man got up! This miracle reminds of the first Peter had wrought at the Temple Gate Beautiful in Jerusalem whereby a man born lame leapt and walked, walked and leapt. Surely God had given this miracle to establish the Joppa Christian Community and to further extend the Gospel to Saron beyond. The power of Pentecost moved unabated.

A second miracle God favoured Peter with was the resurrection of Tabitha or Dorcas (meaning gazelle). Now Dorcas’ death occurred at the juncture when Peter had come to Lydda, just outside Joppa (today Jaffa). Peter quickly answered Joppa’s request, and when he came upon the scene he found the widows, her friends, weeping and showing the clothes Dorcas had made in

her lifetime. To quieten the situation Peter had the crowd leave the upper room where Dorcas was laid. He knelt down and prayed (he humbled himself). Then, turning to the corpse Peter said, "Tabitha, arise!" The corpse opened her eyes and sat up as she beheld Peter. Peter stretched forth his hand and helped her get up. Then he called the believers, the widows who were weeping before into the room and handed Dorcas to them alive! As a result of this miracle which was announced throughout Joppa many were converted. As for Peter he was pleased to stay for a good while with one Simon a tanner in Joppa. He became automatically a short-term pastor to the flock. But God had a greater job for him as Chapter X tells us.

## CHAPTER X

### **Peter's Key Opens Gospel Door to the Gentiles**

Hitherto Peter's ministry was beamed on the Jews his own countrymen and extended at most to the Samaritans. The time has now come that he should use his apostolic key to open the Gospel Door to the Gentiles. For, God is no Respector of persons (Romans 2:11, Acts 10:34). "Who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honour and immortality, eternal life" (Romans 2:6-7).

As we enter Acts X we have such a man in Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian band, "a devout man and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway" (1-2). There is another centurion mentioned in Matthew 8 and Luke 7 who loved the Jews and built for them a synagogue, whose dying servant Jesus healed. Such devout Gentiles were attracted to the living and true God (I Thessalonians 1:9) whom the Jews worshipped. These were very near to God's Kingdom. There are such devout persons in every nation inasmuch as our Lord declares, "That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 8:11). In contrast the children of the Kingdom, the Jews with whom familiarity breeds contempt, will be cast out into outer darkness (verse 12).

One who seeks God is also one who gives charity to men, who remembers the poor (Galatians 2:10), whose alms giving "are

come up for a memorial before God” (verse 4). This is a Christian virtue often neglected by Protestants. [Paul in his epistle to Titus three times stresses Christians are “to maintain good works” (Titus 1:14; 2:8; 3:14)].

In an age when communications were clumsy and slow, and as “the King’s business requireth haste” (I Samuel 21:8), the ministry of angels comes to the fore: In this age of speedy communications — telephone, fax, computer and what not — angels are not needed. Nor direct voices from God, visions and dreams. The more mature way is through the Scriptures and the prompting of the Holy Spirit, living in close communion with the Lord.

### **Significance of Peter’s Vision**

In order to keep the Israelites separate from the unclean ways of the Gentiles, God imposed Dietary Laws in Deuteronomy 14. Now that the Gospel is to be extended to all nations, these Dietary Laws are lifted inasmuch as a Christian Jew will now fellowship with a converted Gentile. Hence the Vision of all kinds of animals, clean and unclean, which Peter is commanded to kill and eat. To confirm this new revelation the vision was repeated three times. “At the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established” (Deuteronomy 19:15). Now if the food Gentiles eat can be eaten by Christian Jews, so could their homes hitherto deemed unclean be entered. The Jewish prejudice against Gentiles was once for all abolished when Peter entered the Cornelius house with this declaration, “And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto one of another nation; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?” (28-29).



## **The Gospel on the Go**

We also see here the importance of going out personally with the Gospel to help those seeking to find the Saviour. In an earlier chapter we saw how Philip the evangelist was sent to the Gaza desert to speak to the Ethiopian eunuch, and now Peter is sent to Cornelius in Caesarea. There are many missionary stories to illustrate this pattern of mobile evangelisation. The Karens of Burma had a traditional belief that some day someone from abroad would come and tell them about God from a White Book. When Adoniram Judson, the first Baptist missionary from America, came to the Karens 1830, he was gladly received. Jason Linn, author of *Pioneering in Dyak Borneo* (1929-45), had a similar experience. When he came to a certain tribe in the jungles of East Borneo, the chieftain was shown the poster of Christ knocking on the door. Immediately cried the chieftain, “This man in white robe I had seen before — in a dream.” He and his whole clan received the Lord and were baptised.

The Gospel message given by the apostle is the same as before, culminating in the Resurrection which Peter and other witnesses saw with their own eyes. Those who preach Christ must experience Christ in His sufferings and in His Resurrection as confirmed by Paul, “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death” (Philippians 3:10). The death of Christ for our sins is the prelude to the Resurrection. No cross, no crown.

### **Apostolic Credentials and Apostolic Message**

One qualification for an apostle is to personally see Christ: “Not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead” (10:41). This shatters the theory of modernists and liberals

who fancy no more than some sort of spiritual existence, a phantom at most. But when Peter declared that the apostles had dined with the Lord, it cannot be otherwise than a physical resurrection, rising from the dead — the body which was crucified and buried. Not only the apostles saw the Risen Saviour. He was prophesied also by the Old Testament prophets: “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins” (10:43).

At the climax of Peter’s preaching, the Holy Spirit came upon the believing Cornelius household, who began to speak in foreign languages, perhaps in Hebrew to overwhelm the Jews who accompanied Peter. This was a confirming miracle necessary to the first Gentile house (1 Cor 14:22). They were now all saved, made children of God, more than the Jews who clung only to Moses.

### **Timely Baptism**

With this confirming sign, the believing Gentiles were all baptised. Children are not mentioned here, but household baptism would include them. In Acts 16:33 the Philippian jailor was baptised “he and all his, straightway”. While baptism itself does not save, it is a means of grace whereby a Christian is confirmed in the faith, and a hostile non-Christian is kept from working mischief against him. The Western Church has yet to discover the power of baptism, shielding the new convert against the forces of heathen darkness; a truth I have learned in forty-five years of pastoral experience.

## CHAPTER XI

### **Peter Opens Once-for-all Door to Gentile Evangelisation**

With the baptism of the Cornelius household in Chapter X, Peter was assured by the Holy Spirit that the door to Gentile evangelisation was opened. This was a great breakthrough in his concept of God's Saving Plan, hitherto limited to the Israelites. It was something yet to be accepted by the rest of the apostles and the infant Jewish Christian Church.

Thus, when Peter returned to Jerusalem to report this newest development in the Church's mission "they that were of the circumcision", the hardliners of the Mosaic law "contended with him" (verse 2). They challenged him on the strict rule of segregation between Jews and Gentiles: it was forbidden for a Jew to enter a Gentile house and eat in a Gentile home.

So was Peter steeped in this Jewish lore until the Lord revealed to him how this Jewish practice was now abrogated for the advancement of the Gospel. "For God so loved the **world**, that he gave his only begotten Son, that **whosoever** believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). And did He not command them before the Ascension to "go into the **world** and preach the Gospel **to every creature**"? (Mark 16:15). The full revelation to the opening of the door to Gentile evangelisation came in the form of a vision from heaven repeated three times (double confirmation) whereby Peter was commanded to kill and

eat unclean animals now cleansed by God. The door to Gentile evangelisation which includes fellowship in their social contacts was now once and for all opened, and no man could shut it. This was witnessed by the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the Cornelius household in the speaking in tongues and their immediate baptism. The six who accompanied Peter to Caesarea were witnesses. Peter concluded, “Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?” (11:17)

Totally convinced that a new day of Gentile evangelisation had dawned by the testimony of the Chief Apostle with the support of the six, “When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (verse 18).

Prior to Cornelius, the disciples that were scattered abroad at the martyrdom of Stephen “went everywhere preaching the word” (8:4). Some came as far as Phenice, Cyprus and Antioch, “to none but the Jews only”. And those from Cyprus and Cyrene who came to Antioch witnessed to the Grecians, that is, Greek-speaking Jews. The mother Church in Jerusalem hearing this sent Barnabas to exhort the new believers. Being “a good man and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith” Barnabas took the initiative to go to Tarsus, not too far from Antioch, to search for Saul, whom he found and brought to Antioch. There the two men taught the Church for a year, and the disciples were called for the first time Christians. It is not recorded, however, whether Peter opening the door to Gentile evangelisation was made known to Antioch or not. Nevertheless, if we turn further to Acts 15:3 and 12, we have the conversion of Gentiles in Antioch mentioned and the miracles that attended their conversion. No doubt the Chief Apostle’s word was relayed to the church there.

The Church at Antioch is a progressive church that sets the pace for the church today. Churches that are struggling in these days

of Laodicean lethargy should find succour and revival by studying all that happened in Antioch.

We see how the contacts made between Jerusalem and Antioch through the leaders, not only Barnabas and Saul but also certain prophets, stirred the life of the early Churches. This communion of saints of the same apostolic faith, not hamstrung by denominational barriers today, should bring likeminded churches closer together. “United we stand, divided we fall.”

Agabus, a prophet, predicted how a great depression, yea, a famine was coming to the world which was fulfilled in the days of Claudius Caesar. This moved the Christians in Antioch to send relief to Jerusalem, “from each according to his ability”. This was the first undertaking of Christian relief. When Cambodia became a killing field whereby a million souls had perished, and refugee camps were set up in Thailand across the border, the B-P Churches in Singapore sent relief several times to the Cambodians in Thailand. This is in the tradition of the Antioch Church although the relief sent went beyond “the brethren” to every suffering soul.

Notice that relief was sent through Barnabas and Saul, men of integrity and good reputation. The handling of Church funds must be put in trusted hands and not in the hands of novices.

## CHAPTER XII

### “The Way of the Cross Leads Home”

Except for Judas Iscariot, every one of the Twelve Disciples was trained even to suffer martyrdom for Christ. “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it” (Matthew 16:24-25). Having seen the Risen Saviour and being empowered by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, they became bold like lions (4:13, 31). This power in the apostles ready to die for their Master is God’s secret weapon to defeat the Destroyer. “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. . . . Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death” (Revelation 1:8-18).

He who is afraid to die has died a hundred times, and who is not afraid to die shall live forever. According to tradition, everyone of the Twelve died a martyr’s death. Through the blood of the apostles which was the seed of the Church, Christianity conquered the whole world in 300 years. What the disciples of Jesus Christ need today is this spirit of martyrdom. Thank God, the Church in China is not lacking in this spirit, as attested by Wang Ming Tao and Lin Xian Gao. Both of them have served prison sentences amounting to over 20 years.



*Street in Jerusalem*

Now the mother of Zebedee's children, James and John, was ambitious for her two sons. She requested they might sit one on the right hand and the other on the left in His Kingdom. Jesus gave them no assurance of His Kingdom's glory, but asked in return if they would drink His cup (of suffering) and be baptised with His baptism (death). Not knowing full well the meaning of the Cross they replied yes. According to Dr Chia Yu Ming, my teacher in China, their requests were answered. The first to be martyred of the Apostolic College was James, on His right, and the last, on the left was John who was imprisoned on the Isle of Patmos and the last to die.

Now, it was Peter's turn to be killed under the reign of Herod (Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great), so plotted the wicked

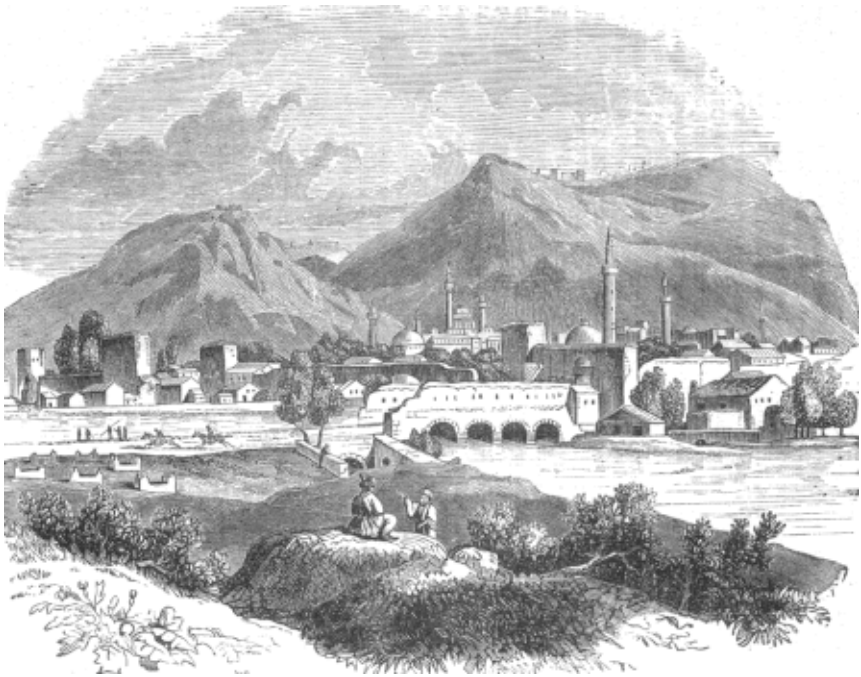
king. Every precaution was taken to see that Peter would not escape. In the innermost prison cell, while he slept, he was chained to two guarding soldiers. Against stone walls and iron bars there went up an incessant volume of the Church's prayer to God for his release. The Lord heard their cries and sent an angel to deliver Peter. A light shone in the prison cell and a touch woke Peter up as the chains fell off his hands while the soldiers slumbered. As if in a trance the apostle followed the angel's directions, going through every shut door now flung open, until he came one street away from the prison when the angel left him. Out of the mouth of the lion was he delivered (II Timothy 4:17).

Naturally he returned to the house of John Mark's mother where the whole church was still praying. As Peter knocked on the door of the gate, Rhoda a young girl answered. But for joy of recognising Peter's voice she ran back to announce his release. A comedy of errors, Peter knocked the harder while the brethren and sisters argued it was Peter's guardian angel. The praying saints could not believe God would answer so speedily. So, do we not become prayerless because of our unbelief? And when the Lord mercifully answers our prayer, neither are we quick to give thanks!

Our lives are all predestined. "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; . . . A time to kill, and a time to heal; . . ." (Ecclesiastes 3:1-3). While it was God's will to permit James the brother of John and beloved son of the Zebedees to be killed by Herod's sword, the time of Peter's death was not yet come, but in the distant future. Therefore he was specially delivered, God breaking through by the providential turn of events. God worked a miracle, in other words. Many a time are we not delivered by His hand when all human efforts have failed?

God does work miracles today when He wills it to His glory. Whether God delivers us by a miracle or by providential means, let us fully trust in his loving fatherly care. If it is His will that the





*Antioch in Syria*

Church in the last days should suffer martyrdom, so let it be. Let us be prepared for every eventuality. “Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake” (Matthew 24:9).

For Peter, whose death day was yet to come, he obeyed Christ’s injunction to flee to the next city (Matthew 10:23). Prudently, he spoke a brief word to the praying congregation in a hush, and having committed to them his miraculous deliverance to be relayed to James the moderator of the Church and the brethren, he left hurriedly to another place. He did not appear again until the convening of the Council of Jerusalem a few years later (Acts 15). He must lie low for a little season.

Herod's evil plot against God's servant was smashed. Judgment on his wickedness was swift. When the people of Tyre and Sidon who were dependents on his royal succour flattered him that he spoke like a god and he did not return glory to the Almighty, God sent an angel to slay him by having his body attacked by worms.

Meanwhile, Barnabas and Saul had discharged their trust of bringing relief to Jerusalem. On their return journey to Antioch they took John Mark with them. There is always an opening in the work of the Lord, and young people are needed.

## **CHAPTER XIII AND XIV**

### **The First Missionary Journey**

Antioch spells a vibrant church palpitating with new blood in the veins of her leadership both Jews and Gentiles, not only in apostolic men like Barnabas but also in a rising fraternity of prophets and teachers with Saul, also called Paul (Chapter 13:9), a hidden apostle now coming into prominence.

A vibrant church cannot be contained within its four walls. Sooner or later it is bound to burst into the regions beyond in obedience to the Great Commission. As the church prayed and fasted the Holy Spirit indicated clearly that it was time to send forth Barnabas and Saul as missionaries. The route they should take was Cyprus, since earlier disciples had set foot on this Island and a beachhead for the Gospel was established. John Mark, the young man whom Barnabas and Paul had brought from Jerusalem, joined the Gospel team. There is no better way of becoming a missionary than learning from more experienced hands.

The apostles followed the Lord's injunction to take the Gospel to the Jews first, as the saying goes, "Charity begins at home." Being Jews themselves they should find welcome to speak at every synagogue. In our recent effort to bring the Gospel to Vietnam, the natural procedure was to contact the established church. "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:5-6).



*Cyprus*

Having preached the gospel at Salamis, the port of entry to the Island, the apostles finally came to Paphos at the other end. There Sergius Paulus the proconsul (deputy of the Island) gave audience to the apostles for he was interested in their preaching. But Bar-Jesus also called Elymas, a Jewish sorcerer and false prophet, stood in the way. Whereat, Paul in holy indignation rebuked him sharply, calling him a “child of the devil and enemy of all righteousness”. He struck him with blindness for a season. Immediately, his eyes became blurred and had to be led about. At this first miracle performed by the apostle, Sergius Paulus the proconsul believed, “astonished at the doctrine of the Lord”. Does not Paul’s challenge to the false prophet remind us of Elijah on Mount Carmel? And Jeremiah versus the false prophets in his time?

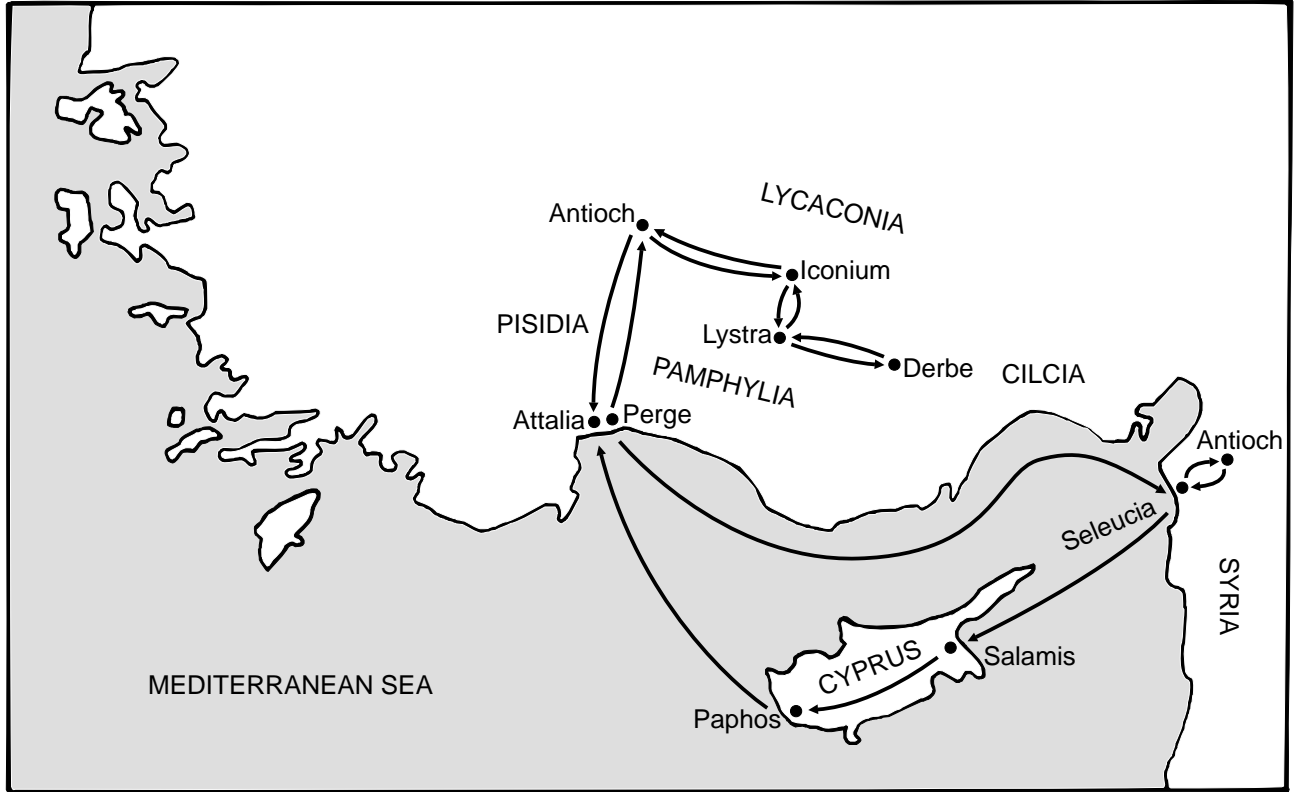
From Cyprus, Paul and his team sailed for the mainland, to Perga in Pamphylia. Here, Mark left them and returned to Jerusalem. He is an example of what a “short-term” missionary is.

From Perga, Paul and Barnabas forged on to Antioch in Pisidia. When the Sabbath Day came, they went to the synagogue service. The reading of the Old Testament Scriptures being completed, the leaders of the synagogue invited them to speak.

Paul, evidently now the leader, stood up and gave the congregation a historical survey of Israel from the Exodus to David. From David through whom the Saviour was promised came Jesus. This Jesus, being attested the Saviour also by John the Baptist, was put to death by the Jewish rulers in Jerusalem not knowing the voices of the prophets. In so doing, they fulfilled God’s saving plan inasmuch as the crucified Christ after being buried rose from the dead.

The climax of this first sermon preached to the Jews in the first missionary journey sets the pattern for future messages. Paul said:

And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the Second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, [now] no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore he saith also in another Psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption: But he, whom God raised again, saw no corruption. Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is



*The First Missionary Journey*

preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. (13:31-39)

This message made a great impact on the hearers so that both Jews and proselytes sought after Paul and Barnabas after the service was over.

The next Sabbath day “almost the whole city gathered together to hear the word of God”. “When God works, Satan also works” is an idiom with the Chinese Church. So, when the Jews saw the crowds they were filled with envy. They criticised Paul’s message, “contradicting and blaspheming”. The apostles answered back stoutly, “. . . It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles” (13:46).

God is no Respector of persons! Whosoever will may come. The Gentiles who humbled themselves like the Syro-phoenician woman glad to pick up the crumbs that falleth from the children’s table were saved in their stead, “as many as were ordained to eternal life” (13:48). As the Jews put on heat against Paul and Barnabas, stirring the honourable women and chief men of the city against them, they “shook off the dust of their feet against them” and went on to Iconium, the next city. “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you” (Matthew 7:6).

The synagogue in Iconium gave the two a warm reception. A great multitude of both Jews and Gentiles believed. This aroused opposition from the unbelieving Jews who stirred up the Gentiles against their brethren. Holding their ground the two pioneers preached on, accompanied with signs and wonders. The city became divided and the contest was so sharp that the apostles were in danger of being stoned. Following the Lord’s injunction

(Matthew 10:23), they fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia and there they “preached the gospel”.

At Lystra, a born cripple who had never walked, heard Paul’s message. As he drank in the Word of God, the apostle was drawn towards him when suddenly there rang out from his mouth a loud command, “Stand upright on your feet”. Hearing this the cripple jumped up and began to walk. How different is such spontaneous response to the apostle’s word from today’s quack doctors and charismatic charlatans, to cause men and women to fall backward they can do, to raise them up to walk they cannot do. This is the test of godly power.

The people were so taken aback that they shouted, “The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men”. They called Barnabas, Jupiter, and Paul, Mercurius, while the priest of Jupiter brought oxen and garlands to the city gates ready to make sacrifice which the apostles had a hard time to restrain. True servants of God, they preached not themselves but Christ (II Corinthians 4:5). They turned their attention away from their vain idolatries to the living and true God, the Creator of the universe. It is God, not the fictitious ones they worship, who gave them rain and the fruitful seasons, who gave them food to eat. (Preaching to idol-worshippers, we should show them the marvels of creation and the Creator.)

In the midst of praises and thanksgivings, a bomb is thrown into the crowd, the hand of persecution from the Jews of Antioch and Iconium. Paul was stoned and “drawn” out of the city supposing he had been dead. As the disciples gathered about him, he stood up and came into the city. A holy awe must have seized all who had heard him and seen the miracle of the cripple healed. No one dared touch him.

Resting for a night, the two gospellers advanced to Derbe. This was the uttermost part that the First Missionary Journey took



them. From Derbe the apostles traced the same route back to follow up on their labours. At each tour they revisited they confirmed the souls of the disciples that they must go through much tribulation to enter God's Kingdom. They also ordained elders in every church with prayer and fasting. Follow-up work is another pattern of the apostolic ministry.

When they returned safely to Antioch they gathered the Church and rehearsed all that God had done through them and that the door of the Gospel was opened to the Gentiles. They stayed with the home Church for a long time. The home Church which is the power house needs to be nurtured the more. Without the home Church foreign missions will be like a ship without an anchorage.

## **CHAPTER XV**

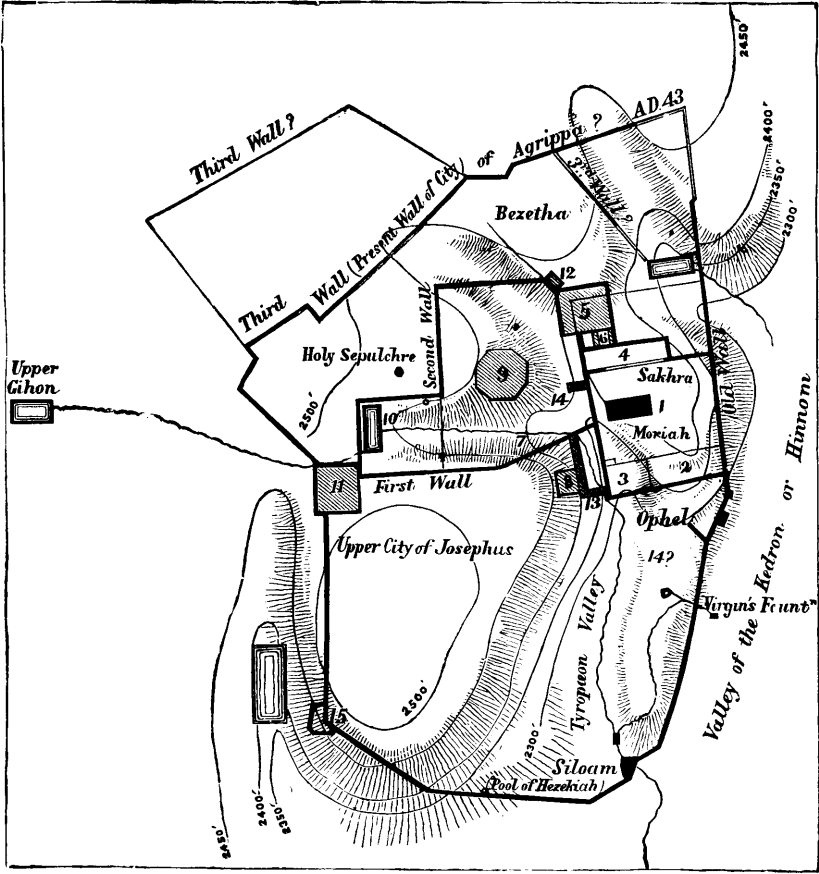
### **The Council of Jerusalem**

Among the early believers there arose a sect of the Pharisees who taught that Gentiles who joined the Church must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses in order to be saved. These teachers who originated in Jerusalem invaded Antioch which sparked a debate with Paul and Barnabas. This was a serious matter which resulted in Paul and Barnabas and others being sent to Jerusalem for a conference with the whole Church. Not only the apostles but the elders would meet in council with the whole church in attendance.

The unity and interdependence of the churches is manifested in the joyful reception of Paul and Barnabas as they passed through the churches in Phenice and Samaria. Hence the setting up of presbyteries where churches of a certain locality group for fellowship and mutual encouragement in the Lord's business. This is the Presbyterian form of Church government.

The testimony of Peter on the conversion of Gentiles with the receiving of the Holy Ghost putting no difference between Jews and them, purifying their heart by faith silenced the "circumcision" party. When Barnabas and Paul lent their weight to Peter's testimony with miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them there was not another voice heard.

And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath

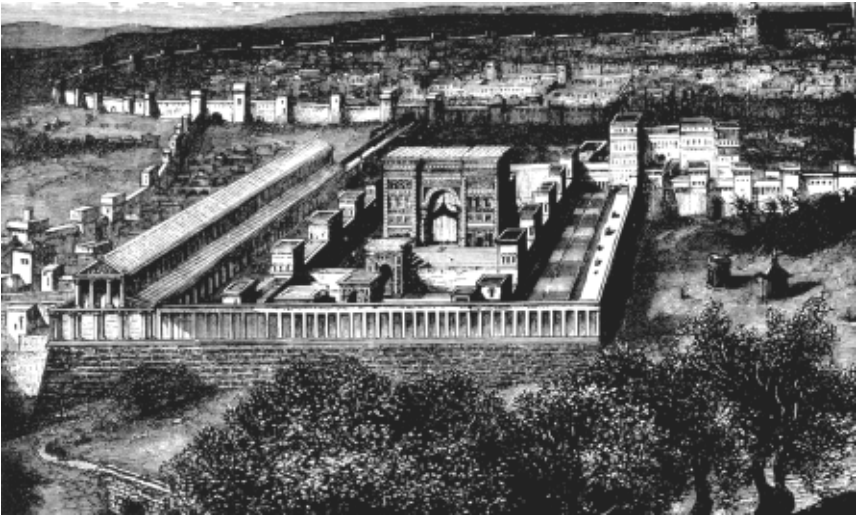


*Plan of Jerusalem at the time of King Herod*

- |  |                  |                           |
|--|------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Temple of Solomon                   | } Herod's Temple | 8. Agrippa's Palace       |
| 2. Palace of Solomon                   |                  | 9. Zion                   |
| 3. Added by Herod                      |                  | 10. Lower Pool of Gihon   |
| 4. Exhedra                             |                  | 11. Herod's Palace        |
| 5. Antonia                             |                  | 12. Bethesda              |
| 6. Cloisters joining Antonia to Temple |                  | 13. Bridge built by Herod |
| 7. Xystus                              |                  | 14. The Lower City        |

declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day. Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment: It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. (13-27)

The sending of leaders from Jerusalem, Judas and Silas, being prophets, is like the sending of “commissioners” in the Presbyterian system. It surely strengthens the case. The reading of the epistle from the Council of Jerusalem settled once and for all the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith and not by works of



*The Temple of Herod*

any kind. This doctrine was expounded fully to the Romans by Paul in his Epistle which we have called, “The All-Complete Plan of Salvation” or the “Magna Carta of God’s Saving Plan”. The four-point Prohibition by the Jerusalem Council, viz., Abstention: (1) from meats offered to idols, (2) blood, (3) things strangled, and (4) fornication, are certainly forbidden by the Ten Commandments, but they are particularly singled out because these are practised profusely by the Gentiles as a matter of course, a great offence to the Jews.

The Council of Jerusalem sets the pattern for all controversies, particularly of doctrine, to be settled by the convention of the whole church. When the Bible- Presbyterian Church of Singapore began to drift from its separatist position, the compromise of certain leaders and the matter of tongues was also involved, the Synod met on Cameron Highlands. Through the debates where elders played not a little part, much light emanated from the hammering processes, and heat, but all for the interests

of the whole Church. The apostolic council generated heat too as such words are used by Luke: “dissension, disputation, disputing”.

Now that Paul and Barnabas had discharged their duties at the Jerusalem Council they were ready to go out to revisit the mission fields and to inquire after their welfare. When Barnabas would take Mark again who left them soon after setting out, Paul disagreed. The contention over Mark became so sharp that Paul and Barnabas parted company. Barnabas took Mark and sailed for Cyprus. Paul chose Silas and went overland through Syria and Cilicia to confirm the churches founded in the First Missionary Journey. This is a case where Romans 8:28 comes in, and decentralisation of personalities works doubly good if they cannot work together. To bind two strong leaders together is like binding them to a three-legged race.

It is interesting to note that while Barnabas took Mark to Cyprus, Paul and Silas were “recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God”. The Church seemed to think Paul’s decision was better. Nevertheless, the last Word must be found in God.

### **After Jerusalem Four General Councils**

1. **Nicaea (AD 325)**. Called by Constantine to determine the Arian controversy and attended by 318 bishops. It drew up the Nicene Creed. This Council declared that the Son was begotten of the Father from all eternity and is of one substance with the Father.
2. **Constantinople (AD 381)**. In his zeal against Arius Apollinaris had denied that our Lord had a real human soul, asserting that the Divinity supplied its place. And Macedonius had carried Arianism on to a denial of the personality of the Holy Ghost.
3. **Ephesus (AD 431)**. Called to settle the Nestorian controversy. About 200 bishops were present. The decision

on the word *Theotokos* was an affirmation of the truth that our Lord, being God and man is “not two, but one Christ,” that he is indivisible, and his two natures, from his conception in the womb inseparable.

4. **Chalcedon (AD 451)**. Subject, the Eutychian controversy. The Council affirmed that Christ being one Person, is yet of two distinct natures, inseparable, but unmixed.

## **CHAPTER XVI TO XVIII:22**

### **The Second Missionary Journey**

If you look at the map, you will notice that Paul took a short cut to Derbe and Lystra by the overland route, so that the last cities to be evangelised in the first missionary journey became the first. Perhaps the reason was Timothy who was converted when Paul visited the first occasion, so that Paul could address him as “my own son in the faith” (I Timothy 1:2). But the ground work of his conversion is not forgotten when Paul reminds Timothy, “When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also” (I Timothy 1:5). Christian upbringing paves the way to entrance into life everlasting, and “the son of a praying mother cannot be lost.” Being “well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium” Paul would have him enlisted in the Lord’s Army. He would bring him along so as to increase the fire power of the Gospel squad to three. As he was the son of a Jewess but his father was a Greek, Paul had him circumcised to fulfil all righteousness for the sake of the Jewish community there. “And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; . . . that I might by all means save some” (I Corinthians 9:20-22).

From Paul’s treatment of Timothy we have learned to accommodate ourselves to the Dan Ebert work in the Philippines. This is a Baptist work and their Bible students are also Baptists.



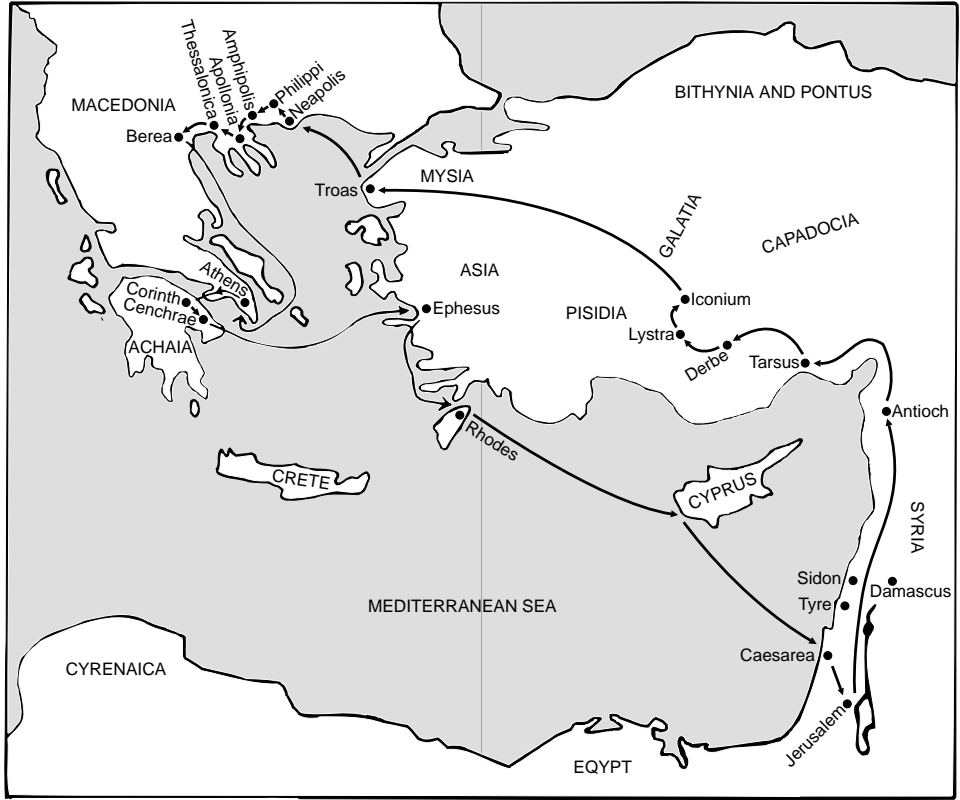
Yet we have helped them build three churches, and our missionary—Charles Seet—sent to help them is advised to accommodate to their immersion practice, that we might “by all means save some.” In heaven there will be no more denominational lines that separate Churches of Christ as they do on earth. To Bible-Presbyterians the mode of baptism is secondary doctrine.

Now, as they went through the cities they delivered the decrees of the Council of Jerusalem for the churches to keep. With right doctrine the churches were “established in the faith and increased in number daily” (16:5). “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Galatians 6:9).

After this, the enlarged Gospel Team extended their mission to Phrygia and Galatia, but when they headed for Asia they were turned away by the Holy Spirit to Mysia. From Mysia they thought of going northeastwards to Bithynia but again “the Spirit suffered them not.” In life’s journeyings we are often redirected in our schedule, so that it fits exactly into God’s plan. Thank God for His infallible Guide through the promptings and illumination of the Holy Spirit. This is subjective guidance, but oftentimes it may be circumstantial guidance.

## **Troas**

Since the Lord forbade them to go either southwest or northeast (refer to the map) their only course was to proceed to Troas. That night Paul saw in a vision a man of Macedonia from across the sea in Europe praying him, “Come over into Macedonia and help us”. At this point another person chimes in. Luke is also joined to their company, so he recorded, “And after he had seen the vision, immediately **we** endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the



*The Second Missionary Journey*

gospel unto them. Therefore loosing from Troas, we came (“*trus*,” Malay word for “straight”) with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days” (10-12). This is what we mean by circumstantial guidance.

## **Philippi**

Being new to Philippi the first European City they must have lodged at an inn for some days. When the Sabbath Day came, the Gospel Team found an audience from women praying by a riverside. To these they proclaimed the Word not without result. A seller of purple (verse 14), Lydia believed, “whose heart the Lord opened”. She was baptised with her whole household and offered the hospitality of her home to the evangelists. “And she constrained us.” Lydia’s house apparently became the first house church in Europe (verse 40).

In the course of their stay in Philippi, on an occasion when they went to prayer, a young girl possessed with a spirit of divination and bringing much profit to her masters followed Paul and his team, “These men are servants of the most high God who show us the way of salvation.” This she repeated day after day. Being grieved by her dual behaviour, Paul commanded the spirit in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. The spirit left her at his word. Here is a case most illustrative of Satan coming as an angel of light. Here is a case answering to Jesus’ Word on false prophets in Matthew 7:21-23.

When the girl’s masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas and drew them to the market square to the magistrates, accusing them of disturbing the peace with their teachings contrary to the Romans. This excited a mob uprising which obliged the magistrates to take action. After

beating the apostles with many stripes they put them into the innermost prison fastening their feet to the stocks. What an abuse of power!

Are we able to go through such humiliation and suffering for the sake of the Gospel? Peter says, “If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf” (1 Peter 4:14-16).

In true Christian spirit Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises which sounded across the prison. Suddenly the Almighty who heard their prayers and praises responded with an earthquake that shook the prison to its foundations and the doors were flung open, the chains became loose. The prison superintendent seeing that the prison doors were open, and supposing the prisoners had fled, was so desperate that he wanted to commit suicide. At which Paul cried with a loud voice assuring him all the prisoners were with him. Realising that the singing prisoners were men of God he came trembling and prostrated before them. “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” The famous reply, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” has become a golden text displayed today in many a Christian home. When God saves a man He would save his family too!

In the middle of the night the jailor’s house became an instant preaching station. After the apostles were washed of their stripes the prison superintendent and his whole house were washed in turn, being baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Inasmuch as Lydia was the first to be baptised with her household. Paul has set us the pattern of “household baptism”. Then came the feasting session as both baptisers and baptised ate with gladness. There

was this second family converted, to make up the numbers for a first Church in Europe.

The next day when junior officers were sent by the magistrates to release Paul and Silas they were astounded to learn the unjustly treated were Romans. They got scared. So the magistrates personally came to apologise for their oversight. Here is a case of not turning the other cheek for the Gospel's sake. Christians should stand for their rights when the name of Christ is involved. Christians should not be manhandled by an oppressive government.

Now that the house of Lydia which gave hospitality to the evangelists had become the headquarters of the infant Church, the apostles naturally resorted here again to meet with all the believers before they went on their mission. Here was established, indeed, the first house church.



*Thessalonica*

## **Thessalonica**

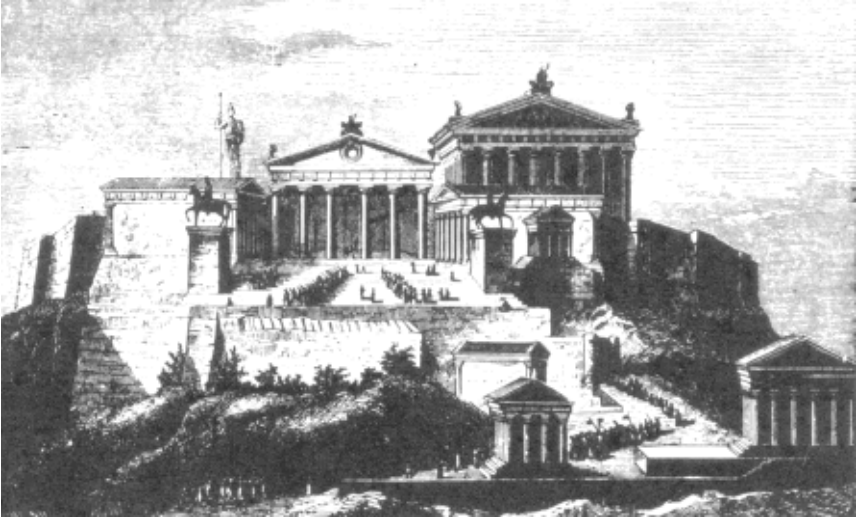
Their next destination was Thessalonica where there was a synagogue. For three sabbath days Paul preached Jesus the crucified and risen Saviour. Some of the Jews and a great number of Greeks believed and of the chief women not a few. “When God works, Satan also works.” The unbelieving Jews, envious of the good results, brought thugs along to create a commotion and not finding Paul and Silas they “assaulted” the house of Jason. They brought Jason and certain brethren before the rulers of the city and charged that they had received those who were turning the world upside down.

## **Berea**

Meanwhile night came on and the brethren who had hidden Paul and Silas brought them safely to Berea the next town. More noble than those of Thessalonica the Jews searched the Scriptures and many believed, together with not a few of the Greeks, honourable men and women. But when the Jews of Thessalonica heard of the apostles’ presence there, they caught up to repeat their mischief. Immediately the disciples sent Paul as it were to sea, but by a detour he was conducted to Athens. Persecution cannot retard the Gospel but rather accelerate it. Nevertheless, it was expedient for Silas and Timothy to remain in Berea, until they received further word from Paul.

## **Athens**

Athens, the centre of learning and culture was filled with statues and idols. It was an open forum for the philosophers, such as the Epicureans and the Stoics. Epicurus (342-271 B.C.) who abandoned as hopeless the search by reason for pure truth, sought instead pure pleasure through experience. The Stoics were disciples of Zeno (280 B.C.) and Chrisippus (240 B.C.). This



*The Acropolis at Athens (Restored)*

philosophy was founded on human self-sufficiency and inculcated stern self-repression, the solidarity of the human race, and the unity of Deity. As Paul talked not only to Jews in the synagogues, but also to Gentiles in the market square daily, the inquisitive ones would hear his new doctrine. So they conducted him to Areopagus, that is, Mars' hill, midway to the Acropolis where stood the Parthenon.

Taking the altar of the Unknown God for an introduction he preached to them the irresistible logic of a Creator of all mankind, and that we are the offsprings of God, even so according to one of their Greek poets. He led to the conclusion of a judgment day, and the man whom God had raised from the dead to be the judge. When they heard of the Resurrection they mocked. Nevertheless Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman Damaris and others believed. The hearts of those at Mars' hill were hard as the rock on which they stood.



*View of Mar's Hill or Areopagus*

## **Corinth**

From Athens to Corinth! Here Paul found company with Aquila and Priscilla, tent-makers. Being of the same guild of tentmaking (for every Jew must learn a trade in his youth) Paul found shelter with them. Now that he had come so far from home and his funds were low, he worked to support himself. This was only a temporary measure, for a labourer of the Gospel is worthy of his hire. Into this situation came Silas and Timothy from Macedonia which gave Paul no little encouragement. The warmth of fellowship generates better workmanship.

Paul preached to the Jews with greater fervency, but received great opposition and blasphemy. This obliged him to leave off preaching to the Jews and to concentrate on the Gentiles. If the people of a certain race or religion forbid us to preach to them the



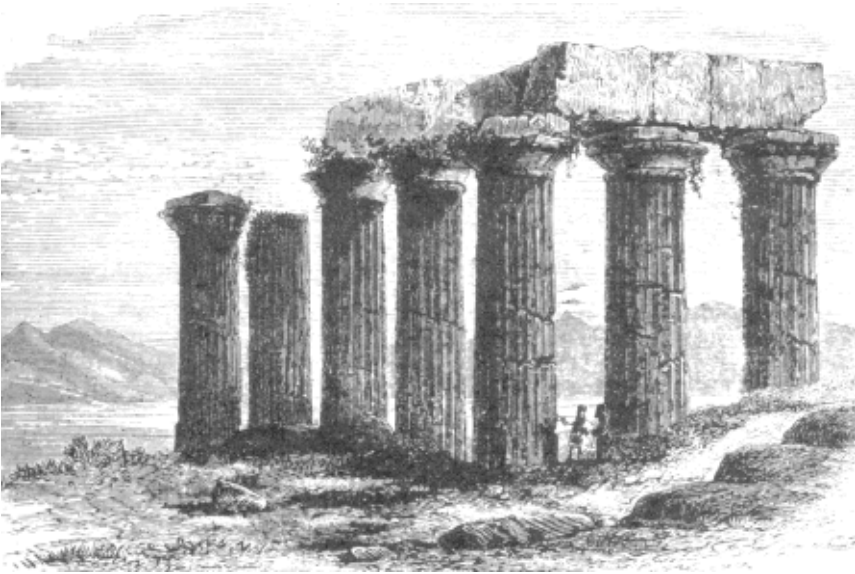


### *Corinth*

Gospel, we have others who are willing to hear. “Whosoever will may come.” Those who reject the Gospel will have to answer on the Day of Judgment.

Almost next door to the synagogue, however, God had prepared Justus and his house, and Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue itself who believed, so that many of the Corinthians heard and believed also. In a night vision the Lord encouraged Paul, “Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace. For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee: for I have much people in this city.” Paul continued on in Corinth for one year and six months.

The climax of Paul’s ministry in Corinth was reached when the Jews could bear up with his preaching no more. So they brought Paul up to the governor Gallio, but Gallio would not



*Remains of Ruined Temple at Corinth*

entertain anything of a religious nature, which he said, was a question of words and names involving the Jewish law. To spite Paul's face the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue and beat him before the judgment seat, but Gallio could not care less — the full freedom of religion under Roman law!

### **Ephesus — Caesarea — Jerusalem — Antioch**

The time came for Paul to leave. He had his head shorn at Cenchrea starting out on his homeward journey from Corinth, for he had a vow. He left by boat with Aquila and Priscilla who had closed shop to serve the Lord, from tentmakers to full-time ministers. We need more of such couples today. When the boat reached Ephesus, Paul left them there for the Gospel's sake. After a short encounter with the Jews, for he had determined to keep the feast in Jerusalem, he sailed from Ephesus to Caesarea. And when



he had landed at Caesarea, “and gone up (to Jerusalem) and saluted the Church, he returned to Antioch. A missionary is responsible to report back to the Church that sends him. That is the pattern of missionaries and their home churches. We do not believe in “independent” missionaries, who are not answerable to any body!

Epilogue: In Paul’s return journey he did not take it easy as ordinary missionaries today would. He kept a tight schedule, like an athlete under training. So did William Burns, the modern St. Paul. After a short meeting with friends or associates, he would abruptly leave them, saying, “I must run.”

“Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. . . . I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; . . . But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor 9:24-27).

## **CHAPTER XVIII:23 TO XXI:20**

### **The Third Missionary Journey**

As Antioch was the Church which sent the apostle Paul, it was logical for him to return there to report back (verse 22). But his heart was on the mission fields, particularly Ephesus his field headquarters. So he took the overland route again through Galatia and Phrygia to Ephesus in the province of Asia.

Now Paul had sent Aquila and Priscilla ahead to Ephesus near the end of the Second Missionary Journey to “hold the fort.” Their worth was evident when a Jew, Apollos by name from Alexandria, a mighty Bible expositor, came to Ephesus. As he knew the Scriptures up to John the Baptist, he preached not the fullness of Christ. Him the erstwhile tent-making couple took and expounded the way of God more perfectly, particularly the doctrine of grace (18:27).

When Apollos was minded to go on to Achaia (Corinth) the Ephesian Church gave him strong recommendation to the brethren there. And when Apollos came to Achaia his ministry confirmed what Paul had done with the full doctrine of grace and of Christ the appointed Saviour of God. Paul in his first Epistle to the Corinthians mentioned Apollos, and so we should thank God for effective servants of other denominations today.

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul arrived in Ephesus. Here he found Jewish disciples converted under John the Baptist who

though pointing to Christ the Lamb of God did not know fully the rest of the Sacred Story, viz. Christ's Resurrection from the dead. Therefore converts of John were not fully founded on the Gospel. Which is hinted in Jesus' remark, "He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matthew 11:11). When Paul had given them the fullness of the Gospel and baptised them in the name of Jesus Christ, the Holy Ghost came upon them and they spoke with tongues and prophesied. (Compare with the conversion of Cornelius.) This Holy Ghost manifestation in tongues, that is, foreign languages, is mentioned as a confirming sign (Mark 16:20) because the Church was still young, inasmuch as signs and wonders were wrought by the hands of the apostles (Acts 5:12) for that "kindergarten" age. Charismatics who would perform miracles today and induce converts to speak in tongues have put the church backwards. Their extremism has led their movement farther and farther from the truth. From crying in repentance under the conviction of the Holy Spirit who comes to reprove of sin and of righteousness and of judgment (John 16:8), they now swing to laughing and giggling spasms, and muted animal voices as they are "slain in the spirit," falling backwards to the shame of the women especially. If they say the tongues of Pentecost have ceased but not those practised in Corinth, let them note that the Corinthian tongues were confusing, were rebuked and not approved at all by the apostle Paul. Who says they are "meaningful ecstatic utterances"?

When again the synagogues rejected Paul, he found the school of Tyrannus to conduct a two-year Bible course, so that all in Asia heard the Word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. In the introduction to the Revelation, seven churches of Asia were mentioned of which five were not known before. Apparently these were the fruits of Paul's Bible teaching, churches founded by pupils of Paul graduated from the Theological Academy he had conducted at Tyrannus' School.



*The Third Missionary Journey*

To Paul was poured such spiritual power for the confirmation of the Gospel that evil spirits were cast out by handkerchiefs and aprons used by the apostle, even as Peter's shadow should heal the sick (Acts 5:15). Today we find faith healers in America who sell blessed handkerchiefs and aprons, but is this not rather a form of simony? Can God's grace be bought?

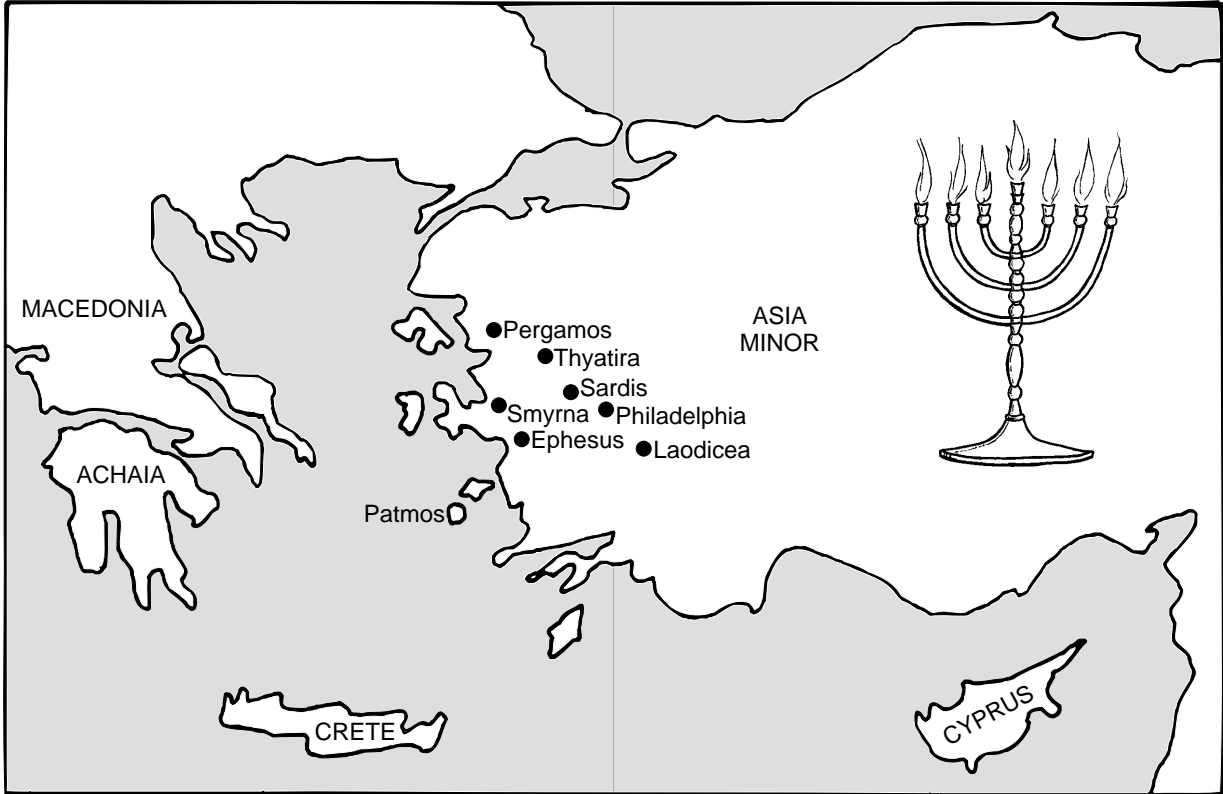
Nor can they cast out devils though they try to ape Paul. They land rather into embarrassing situations as experienced by the seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish exorcist. When ministers of the Gospel veer into practising exorcism which is never taught in the Bible they are playing with the power of death.



*Diana of the  
Ephesians*

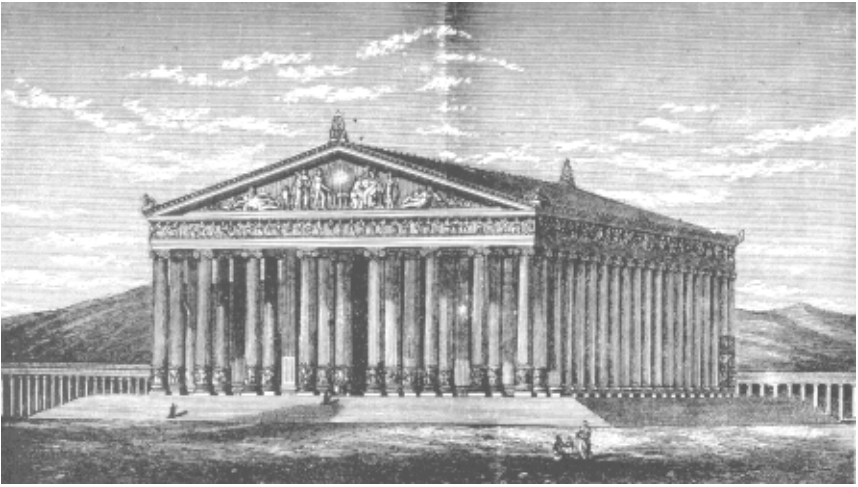
The influence of the apostle while at Ephesus reached its zenith when occultists surrendered their magic arts and books, worth \$50,000, to be set on fire. The turning away from idols to worship the living and true God movement became so powerful that Demetrius a silversmith who made idols started a demonstration that lasted two hours to reassert the supremacy of their goddess Diana, but to no avail. The Roman government had been tolerant of the Jews, and when Christianity was coming in, neither would it take sides. Is this enlightenment and wisdom with present day governments? Is freedom of religion being accorded today?

As if the Ephesian uproar was a rousing send-off to Paul, the time had come for him to revisit the more distant fields of Macedonia and Greece (Achaia). After staying three months in



*The Seven Churches of Asia*





*The Ephesian Temple of Diana (Restored)*

Greece he purposed to retrace his steps by boat. His team was now increased to include Sopater of Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus of Thessalonica, Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. Do we have an increasing number of new names to our Church roll? And in our Missions outreach?

The gathering of this enlarged company with Paul was that he was carrying a large sum of money for the churches of Judea. With the help of these men to carry the cash, the accounts were open so that its administration would be above suspicion. (Read II Corinthians 8:20,21.) By strength of numbers they were enabled to ward off would be robbers and thieves.

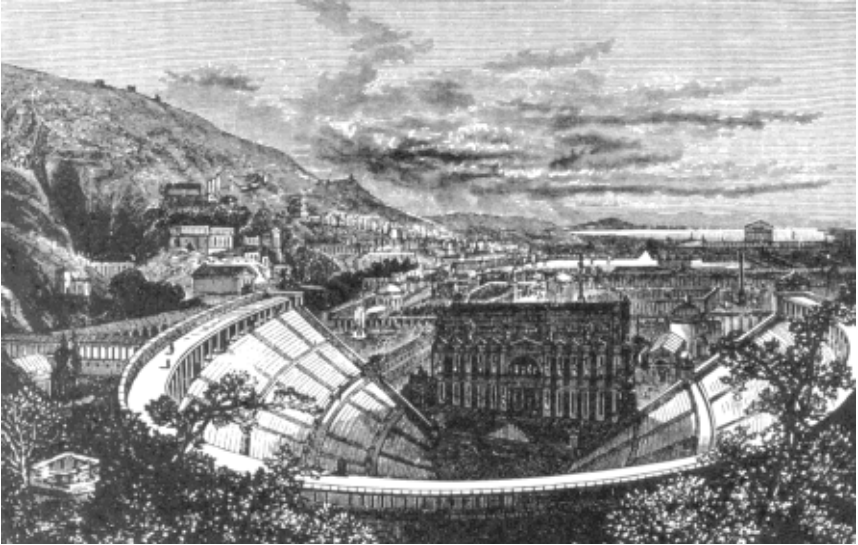
From Philippi they landed again at Troas. After seven days, when the Lord's Day, the first day of the week, came, Paul held the Lord's Supper with them. Sunday as the day of Christian worship had come to stay as Paul's ministry with the Jews receded. The preaching at Troas became a marathon session almost until dawn. A young man Eutychus, sitting in the window because the hall

was packed, dozed off and fell from the third storey. He was taken for dead. But God worked out to His greater glory by restoring him to life through the embrace of His servant. John Sung used to preach three sermons a day in his revival campaigns, but in Manchuria where he saw the overwhelming needs, he increased to four sessions. This was the special working of the Holy Spirit. So, do not criticise Paul for being a long-winded preacher!

From Troas the company of evangelists set sail, but Paul chose to go on foot to Assos where he joined up with the ship. Why? We believe it was to meet with believers in that coastal region. He traded his spiritual talent to the last dollar. Others think he needed time to be alone that he might have undisturbed communion with God.

As Paul was earnestly heading to Jerusalem by Pentecost, he decided to call the elders to meet with him at Miletus so that he would not be detained in Asia. The church of Ephesus was uppermost in his mind inasmuch as he had put his whole heart and strength in the training of this pivotal church. We may call Ephesus the Antioch of the West. His instructions to the Ephesian elders may be summed up as follows:

1. He had taught them by example and expense against much opposition.
2. He had emphasised the Gospel in their repentance to God and faith toward Jesus Christ.
3. He was prepared to face the persecutions that were awaiting his return.
4. He had not shunned to declare to them all the counsel of God.
5. He desired them to be good pastors to feed the flock and guard against wolves, after his departure.
6. He desired them to be the more watchful against traitors that would arise from within the Church.



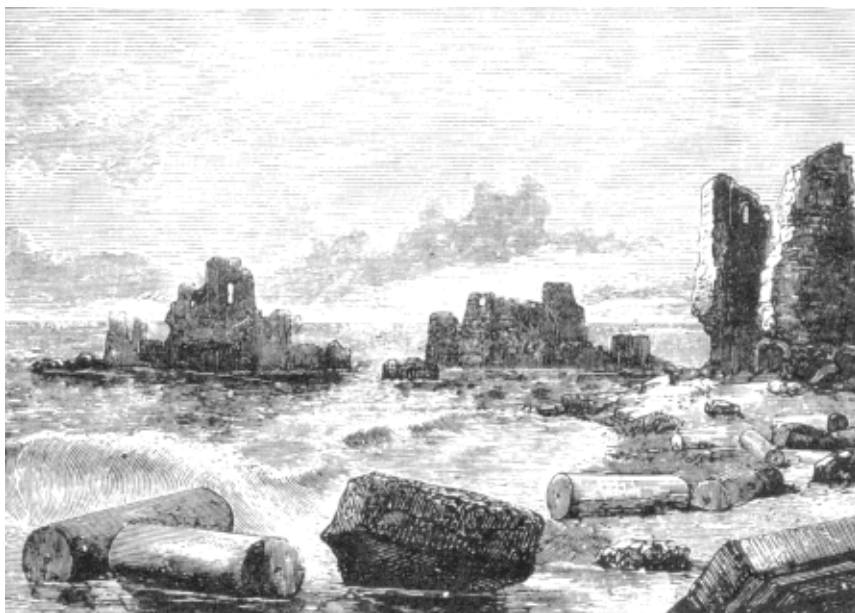
*Ancient Ephesus (Theatre in the foreground)*

7. He desired they would follow him in self-support, not be lured by covetousness, and to give than to receive, as taught by Jesus.

These principles are for our learning and pattern in training others.

Nearing the end of their journeying they stopped at Tyre, and finding disciples they stayed there seven days. From Tyre to Ptolemais (Accho) and finally they landed at Caesarea. Here was residing Philip the Evangelist, one of the Seven, whose four unmarried daughters were preachers of the Gospel (prophetesses) like their father.

During their prolonged stay at Caesarea, Agabus the prophet took hold of Paul's girdle and bound his own hands and feet and prophesied, "So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles." Though the brethren bade Paul not to go to Jerusalem he



*Ruins of Caesarea*

persisted in God's higher will that he should face the music. The higher law of consummating God's will overrides the lower law of personal safety.

So the whole Gospel Team took leave of Caesarea to go up to Jerusalem. As usual Paul called on James the moderator and the elders and reported what God had done during his Third Missionary Journey. All praised the Lord for its successful conclusion. Paul's humble submission to the fathers and brethren is a pattern for us, for humility engenders unity, and unity prosperity. They who pray together stay together and persecution promotes union. Amen.

## **CHAPTER XXI:20 TO XXIII**

### **Storm Over Jerusalem**

After Paul's report on the Third Missionary Journey was favourably received, the leaders of the Church then revealed to the returned missionary what distorted reports about him had been sown by the enemy. It was said that he taught all the Jews in the Gentile countries to give up Moses and not to circumcise their children. To disband Paul's anti-Jew image they asked Paul to join four men who had taken a purification vow and "to be at charges with them." This Paul willingly followed. "Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them, entered the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until an offering should be offered for everyone of them" (21:26). And when the seven days were almost ended, when they saw him in the temple, the Jews from Asia stirred up the people and held on to Paul. Crying against their victim, they charged this was the man who taught against the Mosaic Law and further had brought Greeks into the temple to pollute the holy place (which was not true).

When the whole city was stirred up in great furor and went about to kill Paul, news came to the chief captain, who immediately came upon the scene with centurions and soldiers, and so the commotion was arrested. Rescued by the troops, Paul was nevertheless bound and questioned, and brought into the castle. Paul, revealing himself to be a Jew of Tarsus of Cilicia, declared he was citizen of no mean city. He requested to speak to the

crowds. Standing on the castle stairs, he began in his native Hebrew which when the people heard kept silence. Speech in the people's language touches a common chord of the heart.

Giving the history of his conversion of how from a devout pupil of Gamaliel he persecuted to death the Christians, he was overtaken by a vision of Jesus of Nazareth on the Damascus Road. Blinded by the Divine glory he was totally subdued until one Ananias, a devout Jew of Damascus, baptised him and commissioned him to be a witness to the Gentiles.

At this point the Jews could listen no longer. When the uproar resumed its violence the chief captain commanded him to be brought to the castle and gave orders for his examination by scourging. As they were binding him with thongs Paul questioned the centurion whether it was lawful to whip a man like him, a Roman citizen, uncondemned? Paul appealed to the Roman Law that was famous for justice. This set the wheels of law in motion, for when the chief captain heard this he came personally to inquire of the prisoner. When Paul revealed to his captor he was a free born citizen of Rome, the latter reflected he had to pay a big sum for it. Apparently, the captain was a naturalised citizen.

Feeling uneasy for what he had done unjustly to Paul, the chief captain loosed him from his bonds. He gave Paul the freedom to address the Jews again in order to know the cause of their accusation and summoned the chief priests and all their council to convene the next day (Romans 8:28). This was a sort of compensation for Paul's manhandling, but it worked out for the furtherance of the Gospel (Philippians 1:12).

As Paul now stood before the Sanhedrin, he addressed them as one who lived in all good conscience before God to this day. Without warning there came a smack on his mouth by the hand of one commanded by the high priest Ananias! To this resounded a Pauline reply, "God shall smite thee thou whited wall: for sittest

thou to judge me after the law and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law.” There is no turning the cheek in the process of public justice. The high priest had no defence except for his position of a high priest not to be reviled. Those who use the law must not abuse the law.

Using his high perception of an advantageous psychological situation in that the council was composed of Pharisees who believed in the Resurrection and Sadducees who did not, Paul made the resurrection of the dead the topic in question. Immediately the ranks of the enemy were split.

And there arose a great cry: and the scribes that were of the Pharisees’ part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God. 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. And the night following the Lord stood by him, and said, Be of good cheer, Paul: for as thou hast testified of me in Jerusalem, so must thou bear witness also at Rome. And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul. And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy. 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. 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, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him. And when Paul’s sister’s son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul. 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. 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. 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? 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. 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 oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee. 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. (23:9-22)



*Roman Officers*



Here is a case of unseen divine protection over God's people. In this case He used Paul's sister's son. If it were not the Lord overshadowing His own with His protection oftentimes those who seek God's glory might have fallen easily into wicked hands. With knowledge of the Higher Hand of God we dare take holy risks!

Paul's deliverance from the foul hands of the forty who vowed death was the harnessing of 70 calvary, 200 soldiers plus 200 spear men and a horse for Paul to ride in the midst of this strong phalanx. And the hour of departure from the scene of danger, the third hour of the night, 9 pm. At the expense of the Imperial Roman Government was the apostle Paul transported to safety in Caesarea under Felix the governor.

The story is told of William Chalmers Burns how he was arrested for intruding into prohibited territory to foreigners in the early day of missions. After he was examined by the magistrate he had to be sent to the nearest British consul, but he resided in Canton (Guangzhou) the capital city of the Province. An Imperial boat of the Manchus with attendants and soldiers was chartered to take this British offender to be handed to his consul. Burns who was exhausted with pioneer evangelism thanked the Lord that the boat trip which took almost a month gave him rest and full recuperation from his cold; Romans 8:28 again!

## CHAPTER XXIV TO XXVI

### Calm in Caesarea

Having been safely transferred from the storm centre in Jerusalem to the Calm of Caesarea under Felix the governor, Paul is rested up to further shocks coming from his Jewish accusers. The knowledge that he was delivered from sure death by the quick decision of the chief captain further cooled his nerve.

Five days after this the high priest Ananias accompanied by elders and Tertullus an orator came before Felix to open up the case. The accusations laid against the prisoner was he was a mover of sedition among Jews throughout the world and a ringleader of the sect of Nazarenes. (Today, Christians are still contemptuously called Nazarenes by unbelieving Jews.) He was a profaner of the temple, so his crime came under Jewish jurisdiction, but the chief captain forcefully took him away.

Paul denied all these charges challenging his accusers to bring forth the evidence. He admitted he did dispute with his accusers the matter of the Resurrection of the dead, which was an indirect way of preaching the Gospel. And indeed it was preached to Felix the governor and to his wife, for Paul was sent to explain what was the faith in Christ. As he had commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and not to forbid any acquaintance who should visit him, he expected Paul to give him money. He therefore sent for Paul the more frequently. There is a saying, "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely."

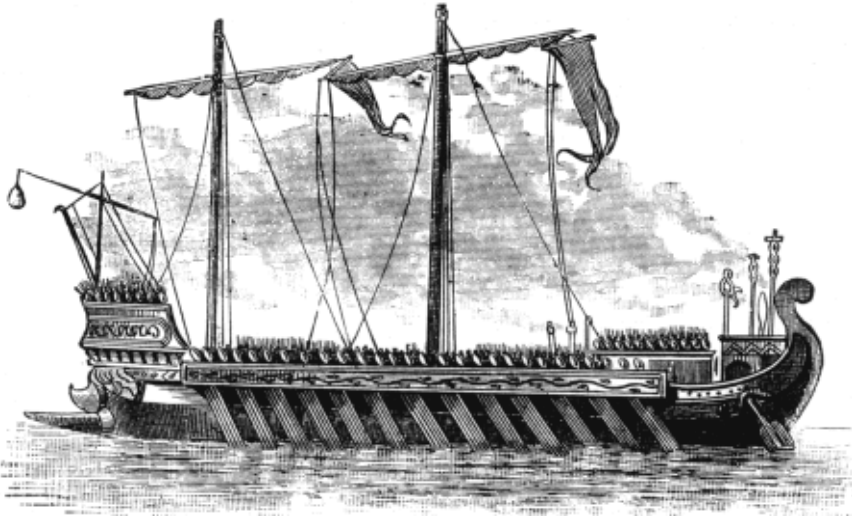
After two years, however, Felix's term of governorship was up. He was succeeded by Porcius Festus. To do the Jews a favour Felix kept Paul in prison still. But there is the higher hand of God who directs all events. "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will" (Proverbs 21:1).

In his tour of duty the new governor Festus went up to Jerusalem. There the high priest and chief of the Jews requested for Paul to be brought to Jerusalem for trial, intending to have Paul slain while on his way. By God's moving, Festus refused but gave Paul's accusers access to the Caesarea Judgment Hall. The same process of accusation was pursued and the same defence by Paul, without legal aid was presented. Caught in the middle, the new governor, willing to do the Jews a favour, asked Paul if he should return to Jerusalem with him as the judge.

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. 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 Caesar. Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go. (25:10-12)

(Again we see the power of Roman Law because its principles are based on truth and justice.)

Meanwhile King Agrippa and Bernice came to Caesarea, where Festus' Governor's Palace was, to pay him a courtesy call. Festus in returning courtesy told him of Paul's case, a long drawn one which resulted in his appeal to Caesar. He therefore asked of the King to examine further the accused to find out a more tangible reason to send him to Caesar.



*Roman Galley*

As Agrippa was a Jew, Paul went into his Jewish upbringing more minutely, but the story of his conversion to Christianity was the same (truth changes not). Not disobedient to the heavenly vision he had preached Christ the Saviour, crucified and risen, a light to both Jews and Gentiles.

To Paul's testimony, Festus could only answer this was madness! When asked of the King, Agrippa said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." God nevertheless has used Paul's lips to witness to royalty and powers in high places and to the whole multitude of listeners. Does not this witness to the court of both Roman governor and Jewish king and to the whole audience fulfil what God had assured Ananias at the beginning of Saul's conversion, ". . . he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel"? (Acts 9:15). "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; . . ." (II Timothy 4:2).

Again the authorities met to discuss the case, and again the same verdict was given that they found no evidence of Paul having committed a crime. Observed the King, “This man might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

Reflecting on his appeal to Caesar to the Philippians when he finally arrived before Caesar’s Judgment Seat, Paul wrote: “But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel” (Philippians 1:12). In the words of Calvin, there works in the life of a man a certain power that cannot be resisted according to God’s decretive will. Paul’s appeal to Caesar, we perceive, is in the flow of that higher power!

Let every servant of God remain faithful unto the work God has called him. Though you meet with trials and oppositions, if you serve Him according to His will and not according to your will, you will bring glory to His Name which is the supreme obligation of your service. Amen.

## **CHAPTER XXVII TO XXVIII**

### **By Royal Sail to Rome**

When the time for Paul's departure to Rome had come a centurion, Julius by name, was assigned to Paul and some other prisoners. Accompanying Paul was Aristarchus from Macedonia and Luke, his doctor friend now become a missionary. God sends us bosom friends in time of loneliness.

In one day the ship that left Caesarea reached Sidon (in present day Lebanon). Julius the centurion treated Paul courteously, permitting him to visit his Christian friends to refresh himself. (See how everywhere you go, you meet with converts to the Christian faith.)

The ship leaving Caesarea did not sail straight to Rome but was a feeder to another from Alexandria lying at anchor at Myra, port of Lycia. (Follow the map on page 118.) Here Julius the centurion transferred Paul and the others to the ship registered in Alexandria.

The sailing by the new ship was slow and laborious. They met with strong headwinds before reaching Cnidus, so they changed course to Crete by way of Salome and found shelter at Fair Havens near to the City Lazea. Here the ship anchored not a little time until the feast, the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:27,29) was past, so that winter was round the corner. Paul admonished 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” (verse 10). Paul, an old traveller, was no novice in the observation of the times and seasons.

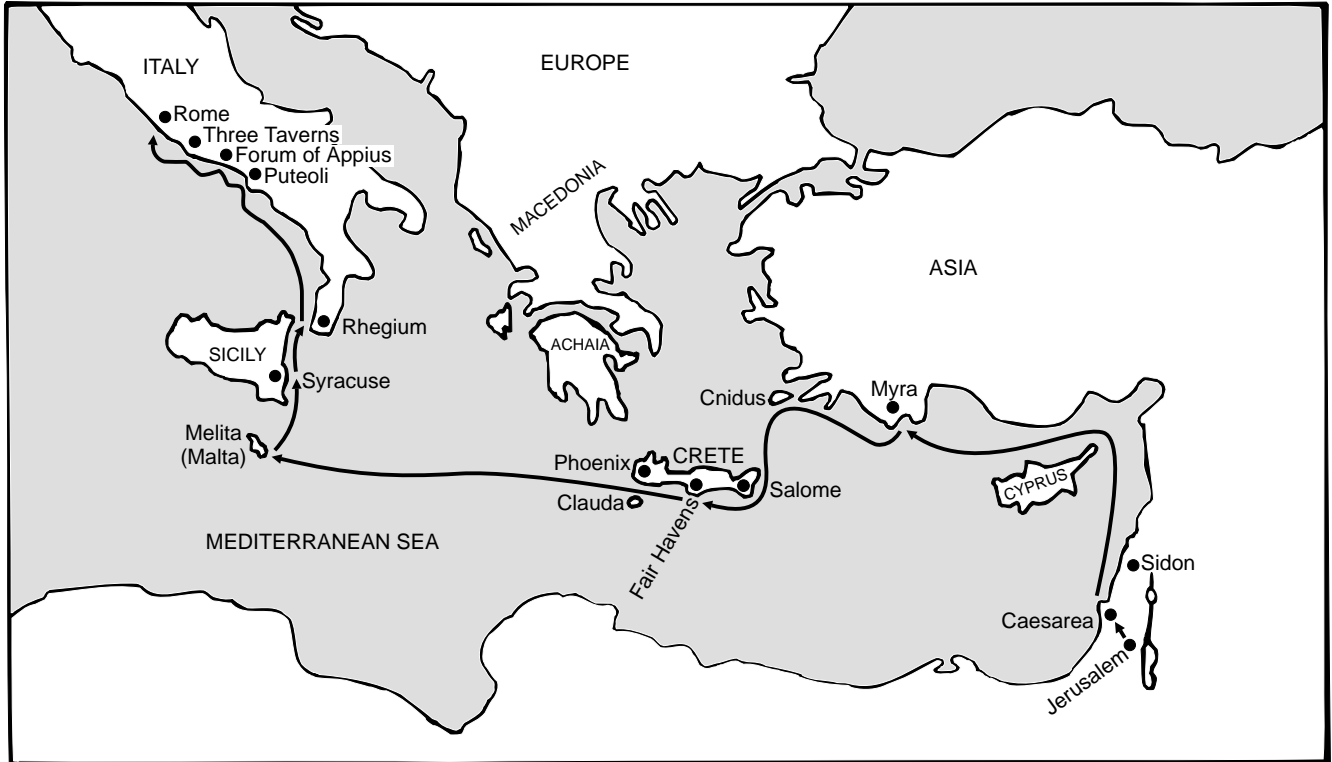
“More haste, less speed,” the shipmaster and owner would rather sail, one reason being the harbour was not “commodious to winter”. The centurion agreeing, and others also said so, the ship lifted anchor, hoping to reach Phenice and winter there. Phenice was a harbour on the Island of Crete.

No sooner had they set sail than a stormy wind called Euroclydon arose and it blew so strong that the ship was let to drift until it came to an island called Clauda. Tossed about for three days, all hands were called to cast out the tackling of the ship. The sky being overcast day and night so that neither sun nor star appeared, they lost all hope of survival.

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. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man’s life among you, but of the ship. For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island. (27:21-26)

On the fourteenth night the ship was adrift in the Adriatic Sea. About midnight the sailors thought the ship was drawing near to land. They took soundings which read 20 fathoms, and then 15. Fearing the ship might be wrecked by uncharted rocks, they let down four anchors and waited for daylight.

A crisis developed when the sailors tried to abandon ship by taking off with the lifeboat. Immediately Paul warned the centurion



*By Royal Sail To Rome*



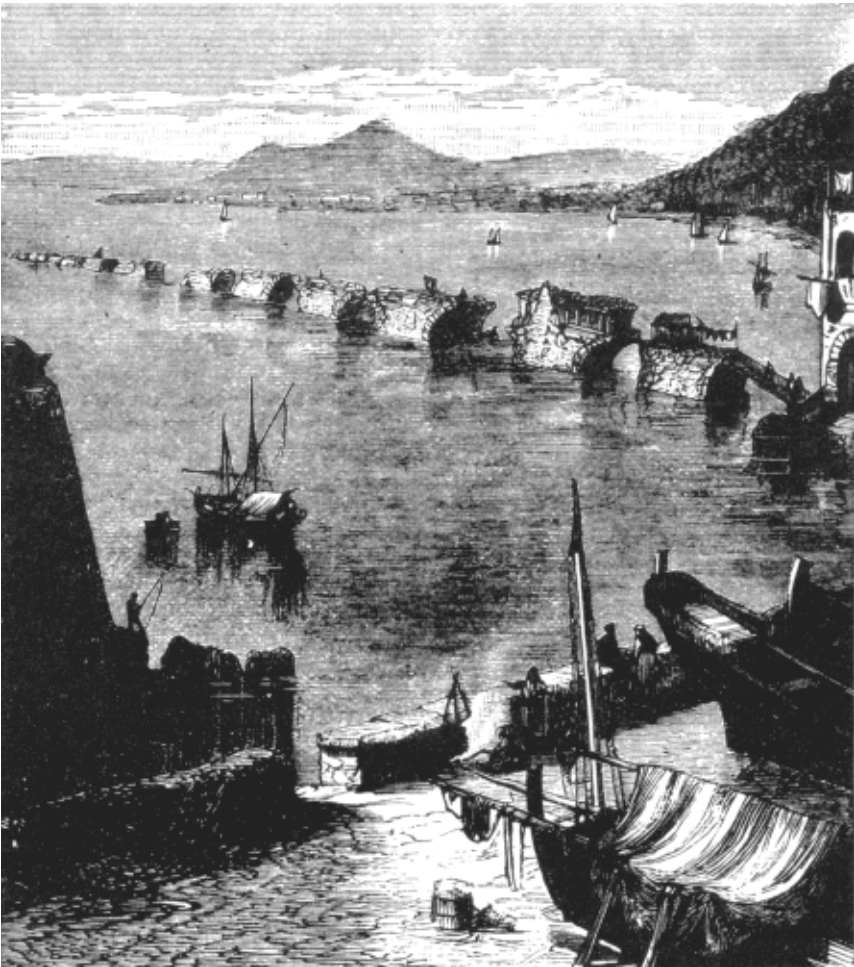


*St Paul's Bay, Malta*

and soldiers with him to prevent their escape, “Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.” Whereupon the soldiers cut off the ropes of the lifeboat and let it fall off.

When daylight dawned Paul exhorted all to eat for their health’s sake, for many had fasted perhaps due to seasickness. He gave thanks to God in the presence of all, to witness to the Almighty by whom they were saved. After they had eaten they lightened the ship by throwing overboard the cargo of wheat. Those on board numbered 276.

Finally, they found a creek with a shore, and falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground. The soldiers counselled to kill the prisoners, but Julius the centurion, in order to save Paul, dissented. When the order was given to abandon ship those who could swim went first. The rest who could not cling to boards and broken pieces of the ship, so that no life was lost according to Paul’s earlier prediction. According to II Corinthians 11:25, Paul had actually “suffered shipwreck three times, a night and a day I have been in the deep.” Where were the other



*Puteoli, Bay of Naples*

shipwrecks it is not recorded in Acts. What a contrast to modern missionaries who fly these days from country to country. Do we give thanks to a God of all mercies, who keeps not the best from His own children?

When the refugees from the wrecked ship had landed safely then discovered they that it was Melita, the Island of Malta. The

islanders took pity on them by lighting a fire for it was a wet winter. Paul joined in by gathering a bundle of sticks but out of it shot a snake which bit him on the hand. “Surely this man must have been a murderer,” thought some of the natives, who expected him to drop dead any moment. When nothing at all happened after a long while, the natives marvelled that he was a god. “They shall take up serpents and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them, they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover” (Mark 16:18). A missionary must be prepared for every eventuality, and be assured the Lord whom he serves will save him out of every situation.

After this the island chieftan, Publius by name, lodged Paul and his party for three days with hospitality. It happened that Publius’ father was laid off with a fever and high blood pressure. When Paul laid hands on him and prayed the father was healed. This miracle drew others who were diseased and these were also healed.

There’s an American saying that a guest becomes a stinking fish on the third day of staying with the host. Did Paul know this idiom so as to leave Publius on the third day? We believe rather he had greater things to do. That he was no stinking fish is shown by the gifts lavished on him and his companions, things for their daily needs. A servant of God, if he is a true one, need not worry for his subsistence.

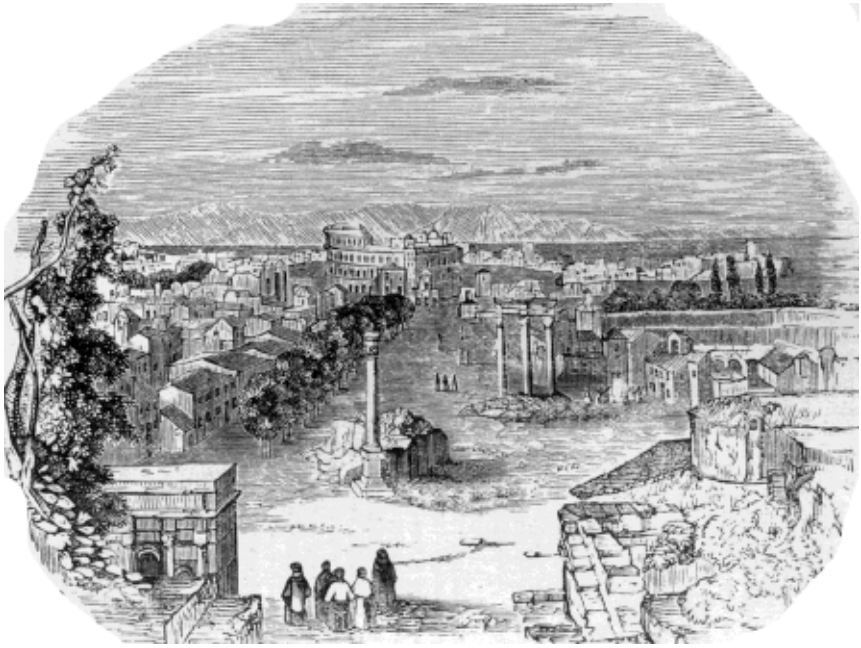
After three months’ sojourn on Melita a ship from Alexandria, Castor and Pollux, after wintering in the Island was ready to sail for Rome. Calling at Syracuse, and Rhegium on the way, the next day they came to Puteoli. There they found the church whose members entertained them seven days before they went on foot to Rome. News was relayed that Paul was on the way, so other Christians gathered to meet them at Appii Forum and The Three Taverns. This lifted up Paul’s spirits.



*Appian Way restored (fifth mile out of Rome)*

In Rome the centurion delivered the prisoners to the Captain of the Guard, but Paul was allowed to stay in a house with a soldier to guard him. Three days after settling down Paul invited the leaders of the Jewish community and related the events that led to his coming under Roman guard to Rome. Again he preached to them that Jesus was the Saviour on an appointed day. Some believed but some believed not which led Paul to quote Isaiah 6:9,10 for the sixth time in the New Testament.

And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear,



*Rome*

and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive. (Acts 28:25,26).

Thus worked Paul for two years in his hired house, “Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him” (verse 31).

## PAUL'S LAST YEARS IN ROME

*(According to W Graham Scroggie, in Synopsis)*

On reaching Rome, Julius the centurion would hand over his prisoners to the Prefect of the Praetorium. The case of Paul was commended by Festus and Agrippa and by Julius himself.

Seeing how eminently different Paul was from the other prisoners the Prefect gave him the comfort of house arrest. He was allowed to stay in his own hired house (Acts 28:30) though under guard of a soldier (verse 16). Paul who had prospered through hard work (eg, in tent-making) was not only self-supporting, but a supporter of them that were with him (Acts 20:34), is well taken care of by his friends (Philippians 4:10-19).

In the house he occupied for two years there must have been several rooms at his disposal. We are not told if Luke and Aristarchus, and later, Timothy and Mark, lodged with him, but they would be his much desired companions. Messengers who came to him from afar would find ready accommodation. *Metaphorically, his house being made of rubber, it could always stretch a little to admit one more guest (mine).* In all likelihood it was in this house that Epaphroditus fell ill (Philippians 2:25-30) and Dr Luke would attend to him.

By the groups of Christians who welcomed Paul on his way to Rome, eg, at the Three Taverns and at Appii Forum, he was surely warmly received by the Christians in Rome. As to the Jews, he did not know their attitude. So he invited the chief among them to his



*Ruins of Forum at Rome*

lodging as soon as he settled down. He wanted them to know the truth of his harassment by their own countrymen. He denied he was guilty of any act of disloyalty to his own people and customs, that his Roman examiners had affirmed his innocence, and would have set him free. But because of the hostility of the Jews in Jerusalem and Caesarea he was compelled to appeal to Caesar.

The reply of the Jewish leaders was courteous and non-committal. They were unprejudiced so far as Paul was concerned, and were willing that he should tell them what exactly his teaching was. However, they were aware that the “sect” of the Nazarenes, of whom Paul was a leader (24:5) was in ill repute among the Jews (24:21,22).

A day was appointed for a further meeting at which Paul could explain his teaching. This time the leaders brought with

them many others, so that the house was filled to capacity, while he addressed them “from morning till evening”.

Paul’s subject was the kingdom of God. The Messiah was the King and Jesus was the Messiah, in fulfilment of the law and the prophets (Luke 24:46,47 etc).

## **Paul’s Final Breach with Judaism**

As so often before, “some believed, and some disbelieved”. Paul’s experience at Antioch, and Corinth, and Ephesus, was repeated at Rome. But this was the last time and a clear-cut severance was made.

The revelation which the Jews now finally rejected, sealed their fate. In less than ten years the nation, as such, was destroyed (AD 70).

The passage from the Jewish Scriptures which Paul quoted — Isaiah 6:9,10 — is quoted by Jesus four times, Matthew 13:14,15; etc. In Romans 9-11 the Apostle had outlined the history of Israel — past, present, future — but the Jews were both blind and deaf and their last chance to acknowledge the Messiah had come and gone.

## **Two Years of Prison Life (Acts 28:30,31)**

Here is a wonderful end to a wonderful record:

And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him. (Acts 28:30-31)

The Apostle had waited two full years for his accusers to come to Rome and present their case in person. But there was no sign of their coming. Meanwhile what was he doing? And



whatever he did would be of greatest importance, since he was running the last lap of his life.

## Oral Ministry

The text says ‘preaching and teaching’, and it says also what he preached and taught — the Kingdom and the Messiah. This summarizes Paul’s message of the Gospel and gives to the Acts record a certain completeness, for as it began so it ends, on the notes of Christ and His Kingdom. What Paul preached would be for all, but what he taught was for those only who were ready for it.

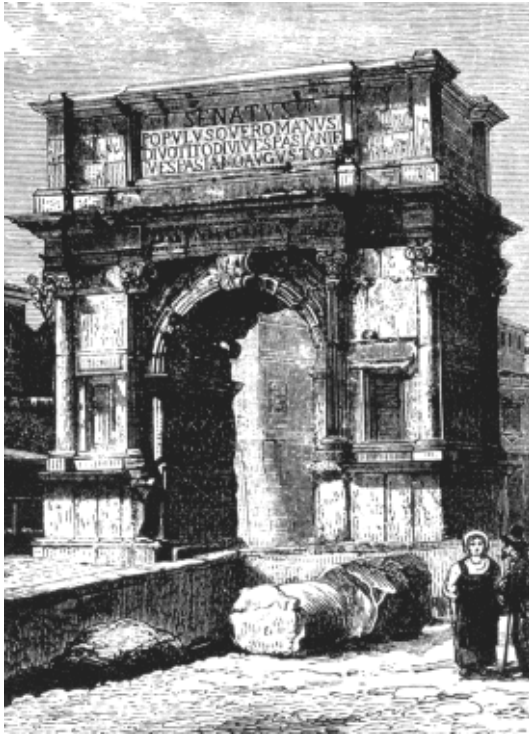
The total of ‘all who came to him’ must have been very great in the course of two years, and, Luke says, they were all made ‘welcome’.

Under the magnanimity of Roman law, the Apostle was allowed perfect liberty of speech. His utterances were ‘with all freedom . . . and without hindrance’. Nothing really can hinder the Christian Church but itself, and nothing can prevent the triumph of the Gospel but a hesitant or faulty presentation of it.

## Writing Ministry

Paul also wrote, and never wrote to greater purpose. We here assume that what are called the Prison Epistles were written at Rome in AD 61-63, and not at Caesarea. Three of the four were sent to Asia — *Ephesians*, *Colossians*, and *Philemon*, and one — *Philippians* — to Macedonia. Excepting *Romans*, they are Paul’s greatest epistolary work.

In the Apostle’s time there was no such postal system as it is today. Paul’s letters could be transmitted only by carefully chosen couriers. We do not know in every case who these were, but it is clear that *Philippians* was carried by Epaphroditus (2:28); *Colossians* and *Philemon* by Tychicus and Onesimus (Colossians



*Arch of Titus at Rome*

4:7-9); and *Ephesians*, which appears to have been a circular letter, sent in the first instance to the Church at Laodicea, was also conveyed by Tychicus (Col 4:7, 8, 16). Paul, therefore, had his own postmen. From his study in Rome immortal messages radiated to far-distant places, which became the precious heritage of the Christian Church to this day.

## **Onesimus**

It is most impressive that the sin of a slave should have been so used by Providence that 'out of the eater has come forth meat, and out of the strong, sweetness'. We are not told how this man

and Paul made contact. The thing that matters, however, is that he met Paul and by him was led to Christ. Out of this event came the letter to Philemon.

## Companions in Rome

Paul had a genius for friendship, and the two years of his first imprisonment in Rome were enriched by many friends. Not fewer than ten are mentioned: Timothy, Epaphras, Luke, Aristarchus, Tychicus, Mark, Epaphroditus, Demas, Justus, Onesimus, and almost certainly Aquila and Priscilla. Nor should we exclude Julius, Paul's centurion friend of the tragic voyage, and other Romans who were reached by the Apostle, yea, them of "Caesar's household" (Philippians 4:22).

The encouragement which these friends brought to Paul cannot be exaggerated, nor could the spiritual influence he had on them be assessed. Demas went back to the world, but Mark made good, and to Timothy two of his thirteen letters were written.

## What Happened after the 'Two Whole Years'

Some think that Luke, having traced the progress of the Gospel from Jerusalem to Rome, had no need to carry the narrative further, and that chapter 28:30,31 makes a natural and a satisfactory conclusion. But others regard the last two verses as abrupt and unfinished, and look for traces, biblical or extra-biblical, of what happened to Paul after the end of the 'two years' referred to.

When was Paul tried, and what was the verdict? Was there but one Roman imprisonment? Do *Philippians* and *Philemon* warrant the view that the verdict was likely to go in Paul's favour? If it be assumed that the Pastoral Epistles — I & II *Timothy* and *Titus* — were written by Paul, can they be placed in the story of the Acts?

Or must they be accounted for beyond the Acts record? Has tradition anything to say on this subject?

These and other questions, naturally arise, and though much is left in obscurity there are data which present a fairly consistent picture of the five years which immediately followed the conclusion of the Acts.

1. When Paul wrote *Philippians*, probably in AD 63, he was anticipating release from his Roman imprisonment. He speaks of things turning out for his deliverance (1.19), and says: 'I know that I shall remain and continue with you all', and he refers to his 'coming to them again' (1:25,26; 2:24).

In Philemon, which was written about the same time, the Apostle says: 'Prepare a guest room for me, for I am hoping through your prayers to be granted to you' (22). This is in startling contrast to what he wrote to Timothy, 'I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come' (2 Tim 4:16). These conflicting sentiments do not belong to the same period, and are presumptive of the view that Paul was twice imprisoned in Rome, and that his first trial ended in his release. *Or, the law of limitation granted him release on parole — the accusing Jews arrived in Rome too late (mine).*

2. Confirmation of the view that there were two trials may be deduced from the fact that the Apostle did not perish in the massacre of Christians which followed the burning of Rome in AD 64. Had he been in the city he certainly would have perished with the rest, but his conjectured release in AD 63 would explain his survival.
3. The Pastoral Epistles cannot be placed anywhere in the story of the Acts. If Paul wrote them he must have done so at a time after his release from the first imprisonment. Both

the historical references and subject matter of these Epistles confirm the view that they were written after AD 63.

4. We have seen that during the Apostle's 'two years' of imprisonment in Rome he had many friends with him, but later, writing to Timothy, he said: 'Only Luke is with me' (2 Tim 4:11).

Again, when the Apostle wrote to Philemon about AD 63, he sent greetings from Demas (24), but when writing to Timothy years later he said: 'Demas forsook me' (2 Tim 4:10).

5. While Paul may have visited Illyricum (Rom 15:19) during his third missionary journey, there is no hint in the Acts that he had visited Spain (Rom 15:24), and it is clear that up to AD 58 he had not done so. Presumably, he paid this projected visit between AD 63-67, that is, between his release from the first Roman imprisonment and his death. That he did so is not without the confirmation of tradition — Clement of Rome, Chrysostom, Jerome, Theodoret, and others, but we are completely without the details of such a visit.
6. In the Pastoral Epistles there are references to Crete, Ephesus, Macedonia, Troas, Corinth, Nicopolis, Miletus, Thessalonica, Galatia, and Dalmatia, which cannot be fitted into the Acts. Presumably these places refer to a period after the close of it, ie between AD 63-67. See: Rom 15:24,28. 1 Tim 1:3; 2 Tim 1:18; 4:12. Phil 2:24. Phile 22. 2 Tim 1:16,17; 4:13, 20; 4(?). Tit 1:5; 3:12.

In these Epistles occur also the names of people, some of whom at least Luke would have mentioned if they had belonged to the period of his Acts record — Phygelus, Hermogenes, Onesiphorus, Crescens, Carpus, Alexander, Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia, Artemas, Hymenaeus, and Zenas.



*The Mamertine Prison, Rome (the subterranean cell in which Paul and Peter are said to have been confined)*

All these details point to a period of freedom which Paul had between two Roman imprisonments.

This, then was the end, an end which was an endless beginning.

II Timothy 4 tells of the final trials before which ended in his martyrdom. Now he was looking forward with mounting eagerness to meet his Lord face to face.

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: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. (II Timothy 4:6-8)



### *Traditional Portraits of Peter and Paul*

*These portraits are copied, same size as the original, from the bottom of a gilded cup found in the catacombs of St Sebastian at Rome. The earliest interments by the Christians in the Roman catacombs included, besides Christian symbols, some objects of pagan regard. This having been the case in the section in which the glass cup bearing the group of the Saviour, Paul and Peter was discovered, it seems conclusive that the age was probably the fourth, if not the third century. The absence of the nimbus (glory or circle) about the heads of Peter and Paul, and its presence around the Saviour's, may indicate the third century or early in the fourth; for the nimbus was generally used around the heads of all saints and divine persons in the latter half of the fourth century. Tertullian speaks of glass cups as used in sacramental services, as also does Eusebius. In this picture the Saviour is represented as presenting a crown of life to the apostles; the inscription is a prayer of the friends of the dead, who was laid in the tomb in the faith of Christ, and may be paraphrased, "Friendship's blessing; may you live forever with thy (Saviour)."*

**PAUL'S LAST FIVE YEARS**

<b>AD</b>	<b>Paul</b>	<b>Contemporary Events</b>
63	Roman trial and acquittal In Macedonia — Philippi (Phil 2:24) At Colossae (Phile 22)	
64	To Spain (Rom 15:24,28)	Great fire at Rome, and the persecution of Roman Christians under Nero
66	At Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3) In Macedonia (1 Tim 1:3) At Ephesus	The Jewish War begins
67	Writes I Timothy At Miletus — Corinth (2 Tim 4:20) Writes to Titus At Nicopolis (Tit 3:12)	
68	Re-arrested and taken to Rome Writes II Timothy Trial and execution at Rome	Death of Nero



<b>WHEN AND WHERE WERE PAUL'S EPISTLES WRITTEN?</b>		
1 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians	AD 51-54	2nd Missionary Journey
1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians Galatians Romans	AD 54-58	3rd Missionary Journey
	AD 58-61	Captivity in Caesarea, and Voyage to Rome
Ephesians Colossians Philemon Philippians	AD 61-63	1st Imprisonment in Rome
1 Timothy Titus	AD 63-67	4th Missionary Journey
2 Timothy	AD 67-68	2nd Imprisonment in Rome

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Band, Edward. *Working His Purpose Out: The History of the English Presbyterian Mission (1847-1947)*. London: Presbyterian Church of England Publishing Office, 1948.
- Conybeare, W J, and J S Howson. *The Life and Epistles of Saint Paul*. New edition. London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1858.
- Ellicott, Charles John. Editor. *Ellicott's Commentary on the Whole Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1954.
- Hindson, Edward E, and Woodrow M Kroll. General Editors. *The KJV Parallel Bible Commentary*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1994.
- Kitto, John. *An Illustrated History of The Holy Bible*. Edited by Alvan Bond. Norwich: Henry Bill, 1868.
- Linn, Jason. *Pioneering in Dyak Borneo*. Translated by Timothy Tow. Singapore: Far Eastern Bible College, n.d.
- Lyall, Leslie T. *John Sung: Flame for God in the Far East*. London: China Inland Mission, 1956.
- Scofield, C I. Editor. *The Scofield Reference Bible*. London: Oxford University Press, 1909.
- Scroggie, W Graham. *The Unfolding Drama of Redemption*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970.
- Smith, William. *A Dictionary of the Bible*. Revised and edited by F N and M A Peloubet. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986.
- Sung, John. *Homilies (in Chinese)*. From the Second All China Bible Study Conference in 1936. Taiwan: Grace Hall, 3rd printing, 1959.
- Tow, Timothy. *Coming World Events Unveiled*. Singapore: Christian Life Publishers, 1995.
- Wurmbrand, Richard. *Christ on the Jewish Road*. California: Diane Books, 1970.



## FROM THE FOREWORD

Dr Timothy Tow has written an important book. Bible Presbyterians, and especially those in the USA, should put this book on their “MUST READ” list. In a sense this book is an autobiography. Here we are able to see into the soul of the author, and find out how he has responded to and implemented the Book of Acts into his own ministry. What has Dr Tow done to be so successful in God’s service? We find many valuable pointers in these pages.

Many US pastors have fallen into the trap of relying upon “modern techniques” and gimmicks rather than the working of the Holy Spirit. Many of the larger churches depend upon a non-biblical view of the Holy Spirit, with sensational signs and claims to increase their growth. Others of us organize our churches so carefully that we think we can get along quite well without the working of the Holy Spirit, and we might not even recognize His work if He did anything major in our churches. Dr Tow’s emphasis is on better men, not better methods and programs. He stresses a close relationship to God, and serving Him diligently according to the Scriptural truths with a great sense of urgency. He points out that relying on “modern techniques” leads to the increase of the destructive inclusivism, while relying upon the Holy Spirit leads to a forgotten purity. There is much here that we pastors need as we face the year 2000.

*Dr Howard Carlson*



### **Far Eastern Bible College Press**

9A Gilstead Road, Singapore 309063

Tel: (65)2569256 Fax: (65)2506955

Email: [febcc@pacific.net.sg](mailto:febcc@pacific.net.sg)

Website: <http://www.lifefebc.com>

ISBN 981-00-7539-1