

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Introduction

The Book of the Acts of the Apostles is the second part of the gospel of Luke. It is a unique work in the New Testament, of great historical value, even though we find elements typical of the time, like the discourses that are literary creation of the author, though reflecting without doubt what was said. History is also idealized: attention centers in the marvelous work of the Spirit in those communities, more than in concrete life. Nevertheless it does not hide the difficulties, and even the mistakes and wrongdoings of the apostles themselves.

Even if it appears that the main actors are the apostles, and even more, all the members of the first communities, the first part of the book centers on Peter, while the second part has Paul as the main protagonist.

This history therefore narrates the marvelous expansion of the church, not simply in its exterior, geographical dimension, but mainly in its interior dimension: how the Spirit works to make the church understand better the message of Jesus. The most salient thesis of the book has to do with one of the main concerns of the followers of Jesus at that time: if the norms of the Old Testament were still applicable or if, on the contrary, what Jesus brought was “new wine”, through which the old molds were no longer applicable. The historical circumstance that provoked this controversy was the conversion of many pagans. Paul will be the champion of the independence of Christians in relationship with the Old Law.

Promise of the Holy Spirit

1⁴Once when he had been eating with them, he told them:

—Do not leave Jerusalem but wait for the fulfillment of the Father’s promise about which I have spoken to you: ⁵John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit within a few days.

Ascension

⁹After Jesus said this, he was taken up before their eyes and a cloud hid him from their sight. ¹⁰While they were still looking up to heaven where he went, suddenly, two men dressed in white stood beside them ¹¹and said:

—Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking up at the sky? This Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven, will return in the same way as you have seen him go there.

Election of Matthias

¹²Then they returned to Jerusalem from the Mount called Olives, which is a fifteen-minute walk away. ¹³On entering the city they went to the room upstairs where they were staying. Present there were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and

Matthew, James, son of Alpheus; Simon the Zealot and Judas son of James. ¹⁴All of these together gave themselves to constant prayer. With them were some women and also Mary, the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

¹⁵It was during this time that Peter stood up in the midst of the community—about one hundred and twenty in all—¹⁶and he said:

—Brothers, it was necessary that the Scriptures referring to Judas be fulfilled. The Holy Spirit had spoken through David about the one who would lead the crowd coming to arrest Jesus. ¹⁷He was one of our number and had been called to share our common ministry. ²¹Therefore we must choose someone from among those who were with us during all the time that the Lord Jesus moved about with us, ²²beginning with John's baptism until the day when Jesus was taken away from us. One of these has to become, with us, a witness to his resurrection.

²³Then they proposed two: Joseph, called Barsabbas, also known as Justus, and Matthias. ²⁴They prayed:

—You know, Lord, what is in the hearts of all. Show us, therefore, which of the two you have chosen ²⁵to replace Judas in this apostolic ministry which he deserted to go to the place he deserved.

²⁶Then they drew lots between the two and the choice fell on Matthias who was added to the eleven apostles.

Pentecost

2 ¹When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. ²And suddenly out of the sky came a sound like a strong rushing wind and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. There appeared ³tongues as if of fire which parted and came to rest upon each one of them. ⁴All were filled with Holy Spirit and began to speak other languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak.

⁵Staying in Jerusalem were religious Jews from every nation under heaven. ⁶When they heard this sound, a crowd gathered, all excited because each heard them speaking in his own language. ⁷Full of amazement and wonder, they asked:

—Are not all these who are speaking Galileans? ⁸How is it that we hear them in our own native language?

¹²They were amazed and greatly confused, and they kept asking one another:

—What does this mean?

¹³But others laughed and said:

—These people are drunk.

¹⁴Then Peter stood up with the Eleven and, with a loud voice, addressed them:

—Fellow Jews and all foreigners now staying in Jerusalem, listen to what I have to say. ¹⁵These people are not drunk as you suppose, for it is only nine o'clock in the morning. ¹⁶Indeed what the prophet Joel spoke about has happened: ¹⁷*In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on every mortal. Your sons and daughters will speak through the Holy Spirit; your young men will see visions and your old men will have dreams.*

¹⁸*In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on my servants, both men and women, and they will be prophets.*

²²Fellow Israelites, listen to what I am going to tell you about Jesus of Nazareth. God accredited him and through him did powerful deeds and wonders and signs in your midst, as you well know. ²³You delivered him to sinners to be crucified and killed, and in this way the purpose of God from all times was fulfilled. ²⁴But God raised him to life and released him from the pain

of death, because it was impossible for him to be held in the power of death. ³²This Messiah is Jesus and we are all witnesses that God raised him to life. ³³He has been exalted at God's right side and the Father has entrusted the Holy Spirit to him; this Spirit he has just poured upon us as you now see and hear. ³⁶Let Israel then know for sure that God has made Lord and Christ this Jesus whom you crucified.

⁴¹So those who accepted his word were baptized; some three thousand persons were added to their number that day. ⁴²They were faithful to the teaching of the apostles, the common life of sharing, the breaking of bread and the prayers.

⁴³A holy fear came upon all the people, for many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. ⁴⁴Now all the believers lived together and shared all their belongings. ⁴⁵They would sell their property and all they had and distribute the proceeds to others according to their need. ⁴⁶Each day they met together in the Temple area; they broke bread in their homes; they shared their food with great joy and simplicity of heart; ⁴⁷they praised God and won the people's favor. And every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.

The seven deacons

6 ¹In those days, as the number of disciples grew, the so-called *Hellenists* complained against the so-called *Hebrews*, because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. ²So the Twelve summoned the whole body of disciples together and said:

—It is not right that we should neglect the word of God to serve at tables. ³So, friends, choose from among yourselves seven respected men full of Spirit and wisdom, that we may appoint them to this task. ⁴As for us, we shall give ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word.

⁵The whole community agreed and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and Holy Spirit; Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenus and Nicolaus of Antioch who was a proselyte. ⁶They presented these men to the apostles who first prayed over them and then laid hands upon them.

Stephen, detained

⁸Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. ¹¹As they were unable to face the truth, they bribed some men to say:

—We heard him speak against Moses and against God.

¹²So they stirred up the people, the elders and the teachers of the Law; they took him by surprise, seized him and brought him before the Council. ¹³Then they produced false witnesses who said:

—This man never stops speaking against our Holy Place and the Law. ¹⁴We even heard him say that Jesus the Nazarean will destroy our Holy Place and change the customs which Moses handed down to us

Stephen discourse

7 ¹So the High Priest asked him:

—Is it true?

He answered:

⁵¹—You are a stubborn people, you hardened your hearts and closed your ears. You have always resisted the Holy Spirit just as your fathers did. ⁵²Was there a prophet whom your ancestors did not persecute? They killed those who announced the coming of the Just One whom you have now betrayed and murdered, ⁵³you who received the Law through the angels but did not fulfill it.

Stephen death

⁵⁴When they heard this reproach, they were enraged and they gnashed their teeth against Stephen. ⁵⁵But he, full of the Holy Spirit, fixed his eyes on heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus at God's right hand, ⁵⁶so he declared:

—I see the heavens open and the Son of Man at the right hand of God.

⁵⁷But they shouted and covered their ears with their hands and rushed together upon him. ⁵⁸They brought him out of the city and stoned him, and the witnesses laid down their cloaks at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹As they were stoning him, Stephen prayed saying:

—Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

⁶⁰Then he knelt down and said in a loud voice:

—Lord, do not hold this sin against them.

And when he had said this, he died

8 ¹Saul was there, approving his murder.

Conversion of Paul

9 ¹Meanwhile Saul considered nothing but violence and death for the disciples of the Lord. ²He went to the High Priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues of Damascus that would authorize him to arrest and bring to Jerusalem anyone he might find, man or woman, belonging to the Way.

³As he traveled along and was approaching Damascus, a light from the sky suddenly flashed around him. ⁴He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him:

—Saul, Saul! Why do you persecute me?

⁵And he asked:

—Who are you, Lord?

The voice replied:

—I am Jesus whom you persecute. ⁶Now get up and go into the city; there you will be told what you are to do.

⁷The men who were traveling with him stood there speechless: they had heard the sound, but could see no one. ⁸Saul got up from the ground and, opening his eyes, he could not see. They took him by the hand and brought him to Damascus. ⁹He was blind and he did not eat or drink for three days.

¹⁰There was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias, to whom the Lord called in a vision:

—Ananias!

He answered:

—Here I am, Lord!

¹¹Then the Lord said to him:

—Go at once to Straight Street and ask, at the house of Judas, for a man of Tarsus named Saul. You will find him praying, ¹²for he has just seen in a vision that a man named Ananias has come in and placed his hands upon him, to restore his sight.

¹³Ananias answered:

—Lord, I have heard from many sources about this man and all the harm he has done to your saints in Jerusalem, ¹⁴and now he is here with authority from the High Priest to arrest all who call upon your name.

¹⁵But the Lord said to him:

—Go! This man is my chosen instrument to bring my name to the pagan nations and their kings, and the people of Israel as well. ¹⁶I myself will show him how much he will have to suffer for my name.

¹⁷So Ananias left and went to the house. He laid his hands upon Saul and said:

—Saul, my brother, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me to you so that you may receive your sight and be filled with Holy Spirit. ¹⁸Immediately something like scales fell from his eyes and he could see; he got up and was baptized. ¹⁹Then he took food and was strengthened.

For several days Saul stayed with the disciples at Damascus, ²⁰and he soon began to proclaim in the synagogues that Jesus was the Son of God. ²¹All who heard were astonished and said:

—Is this not the one who cast out in Jerusalem all those calling upon this Name? Did he not come here to bring them bound before the chief priests?

²²But Saul grew more and more powerful, and he confounded the Jews living in Damascus when he proved that Jesus was the Messiah.

²³After a fairly long time, the Jews conspired together to kill him. ²⁴But Saul became aware of their plan: Day and night they kept watch at the city gate in order to kill him. ²⁵So his disciples took him one night and let him down from the top of the wall, lowering him in a basket.

Paul in Jerusalem

²⁶When Saul came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples there, but they were afraid of him because they could not believe that he was a disciple. ²⁷But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He recounted to them how Saul had seen the Lord on his way and the words the Lord had spoken to him. He told them also how Saul had preached boldly in the name of Jesus.

³¹Meanwhile, the Church had peace. It was building up throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria with eyes turned to the Lord and filled with comfort from the Holy Spirit.

Healing and resurrection

³²As Peter traveled around, he went to visit the saints who lived in Lydda. ³³There he found a man named Aeneas who was paralyzed, and had been bedridden for eight years. ³⁴Peter said to him:

—Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you, get up and make your bed!

And the man got up at once.

⁴²This became known throughout all of Joppa and many people believed in the Lord because of it.

Peter and Cornelius

10¹There was in Caesarea a man named Cornelius, captain of what was called the Italian Battalion. ²He was a religious and God-fearing man together with his whole household. He gave generously to the people and constantly prayed to God.

³One afternoon at about three he had a vision in which he clearly saw an angel of God coming towards him and calling him:

—Cornelius!

⁴He stared at the vision with awe and said:

—What is it, sir?

And the angel answered:

—Your prayers and your alms have just been recalled before God. ⁵Now send some men to Joppa and summon a certain Simon also known as Peter; ⁶he is the guest of Simon, a tanner, who lives beside the sea.

⁷As soon as the angel who spoke to him departed, Cornelius called two of his servants and a devout soldier from among those attached to his service, ⁸and after having explained everything to them, he sent them to Joppa.

⁹The next day, while they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up to the roof at about noon to pray. ¹⁰He became hungry and wished to eat, but while they were preparing food, he fell into a trance. ¹¹The heavens were opened to him and he saw an object that looked like a large sheet coming down, until it rested on the ground by its four corners. ¹²In it were all kinds of four-legged animals of the earth, reptiles and birds.

¹³Then a voice said to him:

—Get up, Peter, kill and eat!

¹⁴But Peter replied:

—Certainly not, Lord! I have never eaten any defiled or unclean creature.

¹⁵And again a second time the voice spoke:

—What God has made clean, you must not call unclean. ¹⁶This happened three times and then the sheet was taken up again into the sky.

¹⁷While Peter was still puzzling over the meaning of the vision he had seen, the messengers of Cornelius arrived at the gate asking for the house of Simon. ¹⁸They called out to inquire whether Simon, also known as Peter, was staying there. ¹⁹At that moment, as Peter continued pondering on the vision, the Spirit spoke to him:

—There are men looking for you; ²⁰get up and go downstairs and follow them without hesitation, for I have sent them.

²¹So Peter went and said to the men:

—I am the one you are looking for. What brings you here?

They answered:

²²—He who sent us is Captain Cornelius. He is an upright and God-fearing man, well respected by all the Jewish people. He has been instructed by a holy angel to summon you to his house, so that he may listen to what you have to say.

²³So Peter invited them in and put them up for the night. The next day he went off with them and some of the believers from Joppa accompanied him. ²⁴The following day, he arrived in Caesarea where Cornelius was expecting them; he had called together his relatives and close friends. ²⁵As Peter was about to enter, Cornelius went to him, fell on his knees and bowed low. ²⁶But Peter lifted him up saying:

—Stand up, for I too am a human being.

Peter's discourse

³⁴Peter then spoke to them:

—Truly, I realize that God does not show partiality, ³⁵but in all nations he listens to everyone who fears God and does good. ³⁶And this is the message he has sent to the children of Israel, the good news of peace he has proclaimed through Jesus Christ, who is the Lord of all. ³⁷No doubt you have heard of the event that occurred throughout the whole country of the Jews, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism John preached. ³⁸You know how God anointed Jesus the Nazarean with Holy Spirit and power. He went about doing good and healing all who were under the devil's power, because God was with him; ³⁹we are witnesses of all that he did throughout the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem itself. Yet they put him to death by hanging him on a wooden cross.

⁴⁰But God raised him to life on the third day and let him manifest himself, ⁴¹not to all the people, but to the witnesses that were chosen beforehand by God—to us who ate and drank with him after his resurrection from death. ⁴²And he commanded us to preach to the people and to bear witness that he is the one appointed by God to judge the living and the dead.

⁴⁴Peter was still speaking when the Holy Spirit came upon all who listened to the Word. ⁴⁵And the believers of Jewish origin who had come with Peter were amazed:

—Why! God gives and pours the Holy Spirit on foreigners also!

⁴⁶For indeed this happened: they heard them speaking in tongues and praising God.

⁴⁷Then Peter declared:

—Can we refuse to baptize with water these people who have received the Holy Spirit, just as we have?

⁴⁸So he had them baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. After that they asked him to remain with them for some days.

The Church of Antioch

11 ¹⁹Those who had been scattered because of the persecution over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, telling the message, but only to the Jews. ²⁰But there were some natives of Cyprus and Cyrene among them who, on coming into Antioch, spoke also to the Greeks, giving them the good news of the Lord Jesus. ²¹The hand of the Lord was with them so that a great number believed and turned to the Lord.

²²News of this reached the ears of the Church in Jerusalem, so they sent Barnabas to Antioch. ²³When he arrived and saw the manifest signs of God's favor, he rejoiced and urged them all to remain firmly faithful to the Lord; ²⁴for he himself was a good man filled with Holy Spirit and faith. Thus large crowds came to know the Lord.

²⁵Then Barnabas went off to Tarsus to look for Saul ²⁶and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they had meetings with the Church and instructed many people. It was in Antioch that the disciples were first called *Christians*.

Martyrdom of James. Peter imprisoned

12 ¹About that time King Herod decided to persecute some members of the Church. ²He had James, the brother of John, killed with the sword, ³and when he saw how it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also.

This happened during the festival of the Unleavened Bread. ⁴Herod had him seized and thrown into prison with four squads, each of four soldiers, to guard him. He wanted to bring him to trial before the people after the Passover feast, ⁵but while Peter was kept in prison, the whole Church prayed earnestly for him.

⁶On the very night before Herod was to bring him to trial, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound by a double chain, while guards kept watch at the gate of the prison.

⁷Suddenly an angel of the Lord stood there and a light shone in the prison cell. The angel tapped Peter on the side and woke him saying:

—Get up quickly!

At once the chains fell from Peter's wrists. The angel said:

—Put on your belt and your sandals.

Peter did so, ⁸and the angel added:

—Now, put on your cloak and follow me.

⁹Peter followed him out; yet he did not realize that what was happening with the angel was real; he thought he was seeing a vision. ¹⁰They passed the first guard and then the second and they came to the iron door leading out to the city, which opened of itself for them. They went out and made their way down a narrow alley, when suddenly the angel left him.

¹¹Then Peter recovered his senses and said:

—Now I know that the Lord has sent his angel and has rescued me from Herod's clutches and from all that the Jews had in store for me.

¹²Peter then found his bearings and came to the house of Mary, the mother of John also known as Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. ¹³When he knocked at the outside door, a maid named Rhoda came to answer it. ¹⁴On recognizing the voice of Peter she was so overcome with joy that, instead of opening the door, she ran in to announce that Peter was at the door. ¹⁵They said to her:

—You are crazy!

And as she insisted, they said:

—It must be his angel.

¹⁶Meanwhile, Peter continued knocking and, when they finally opened the door, they were amazed to see him. ¹⁷He motioned to them with his hand to be quiet and told them how the Lord had brought him out of prison. And he said to them:

—Report this to James and to the brothers.

Then he left and went to another place.

¹⁸At daybreak there was a great commotion among the soldiers over what had become of Peter. ¹⁹Herod began a search for him and, not finding him, had the guards questioned and executed. After that, he came down from Judea to Caesarea and stayed there.

Mission of Paul and Barnabas

13¹There were at Antioch—in the Church which was there—prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Symeon known as Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod, and Saul. ²On one occasion while they were celebrating the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said to them:

—Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul to do the work for which I have called them.

³So, after fasting and praying, they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

⁴These then, sent by the Holy Spirit, went down to the port of Seleucia and from there sailed to Cyprus. ⁵Upon their arrival in Salamis they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogue; John was with them as an assistant.

⁶They traveled over the whole island as far as Paphos where they met a certain magician named Bar-Jesus, a Jewish false prophet.

¹¹At once a misty darkness came upon him, and he groped about for someone to lead him by the hand. ¹²The governor saw what had happened; he believed, and was deeply impressed by the teaching about the Lord.

Antioch in Pisidia

¹³From Paphos, Paul and his companions set sail and came to Perga in Pamphylia. There John left them and returned to Jerusalem ¹⁴while they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. On the Sabbath day they entered the synagogue and sat down.

Paul's vision

16⁹There one night Paul had a vision. A Macedonian stood before him and begged him:

—Come over to Macedonia and help us!

¹⁰When he awoke, he told us of this vision and we understood that the Lord was calling us to give the Good News to the Macedonian people.

¹¹So we put out to sea from Troas and sailed straight across to Samothrace Island, and the next day to Neapolis. ¹²From there we went inland to Philippi, the leading city of the district of Macedonia, and a Roman colony. We spent some days in that city.

¹³On the sabbath we went outside the city gate to the bank of the river where we thought the Jews would gather to pray. We sat down and began speaking to the women who were gathering there. ¹⁴One of them was a God-fearing woman named Lydia from Thyatira City, a dealer in purple cloth.

As she listened, the Lord opened her heart to respond to what Paul was saying. ¹⁵After she had been baptized together with her household, she invited us to her house, “If you think I am faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my house.” And she persuaded us to accept her invitation.

17¹⁵Paul was taken as far as Athens by his escort, who then returned to Beroea with instructions for Silas and Timothy to come to him as soon as possible.

In Athens

¹⁶While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he felt very uneasy at the sight of a city full of idols. ¹⁷He held discussions in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing people, as well as daily debates in the public square with ordinary passersby.

¹⁸Epicureans and Stoic philosophers debated with him, some of them asking:

—What is this babbler trying to say?

Others commented:

—He sounds like a promoter of foreign gods.

Because he was heard to speak of Jesus and ‘the Resurrection.’ ¹⁹So they took Paul and led him off to the Areopagus hall, and said:

—We would like to know what this new teaching is that you are talking about. ²⁰Some of the things we hear you say sound strange to us, and we would like to know what they mean.

²¹Indeed, all Athenian citizens, as well as the foreigners who live there, have as their favorite occupation talking about or listening to the latest news.

²²Then Paul stood up in the Areopagus hall and said:

—Athenian citizens, I note that in every way you are very religious. ²³As I walked around looking at your shrines, I even discovered an altar with this inscription: *To an unknown God*. Now, what you worship as unknown, I intend to make known to you.

²⁴—God, who made the world and all that is in it, does not dwell in sanctuaries made by human hands, being as he is Lord of heaven and earth. ²⁵Nor does his worship depend on anything made by human hands, as if he were in need. Rather it is he who gives life and breath and everything else to everyone.

³⁰—But now God prefers to overlook this time of ignorance and he calls on all people to change their ways. ³¹He has already set a day on which he will judge the world with justice through a man he has appointed. And, so that all may believe it, he has just given a sign by raising this man from the dead.

³²When they heard Paul speak of a resurrection from death, some made fun of him, while others said:

—We must hear you on this topic some other time.

³³At that point Paul left. ³⁴But a few did join him, and believed. Among them were Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus court, a woman named Damaris, and some others.

Trip to Jerusalem

21 ¹⁵After this we got ready and went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁶With us were some of the disciples of Caesarea who brought us to the house of a Cypriot where we were to stay. He was called Mnason and was one of the early disciples.

In Jerusalem

¹⁷When we arrived in Jerusalem the brothers welcomed us warmly. ¹⁸The next day Paul went with us to James’ house where all the elders had gathered. ¹⁹After greeting them, Paul began telling them in detail everything God had done among the non-Jews through his ministry.

Arrested in the Temple

²⁷When the seven days were almost over, some Jews from Asia, who saw Paul in the Temple, began to stir up the whole crowd. They seized him ²⁸shouting:

—Fellow Israelites, help! This is the man who is spreading his teaching everywhere against our people, our law and this Sanctuary. And now he has even brought non-Jews into the Temple area, defiling this Holy Place.

³⁰Then turmoil spread through the whole city. People came running from all sides. They seized Paul and dragged him outside the Temple. At once the gates were shut.

³¹They would have killed him, had not a report reached the commander of the Roman troops that all of Jerusalem was rioting. ³²At once the commander took some officers and soldiers and rushed down to the crowd.

On seeing him with the soldiers, the crowd stopped beating Paul. ³³The commander went over to Paul, arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains; then he inquired who he was and what he had done. ³⁴But some in the crowd shouted one thing and others another. As the commander was unable to find out the facts because of the uproar, he ordered Paul to be brought to the fortress. ³⁵When Paul reached the steps, he actually had to be carried up by the soldiers because of the violence of the mob, ³⁶for a multitude of people followed shouting:

—Kill him!

³⁷Just as he was about to be taken inside, Paul said to the commander:

—May I say something to you?

He replied:

—So you speak Greek! ³⁸Are you not the Egyptian, then, who caused a riot some time ago and let a band of four thousand terrorists out into the desert?

Paul answered:

³⁹—I am a Jew, a citizen of Tarsus, a well-known city in Cilicia. I beg you, let me address these people.

The commander agreed. ⁴⁰So Paul standing on the steps, motioned to the people with his hand and, when they were silent, he began to speak to them in Hebrew.

Paul's discourse

22 ¹—Brothers and fathers,—listen to what I have to say to you in my defense.

²When they heard him speaking to them in Hebrew, they became more quiet. So he went on.

³—I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up here in this city where I was educated in the school of Gamaliel, according to the strict observance of our Law. And I was dedicated to God's service, as are all of you today. ⁴As for this way, I persecuted it to the point of death and arrested its followers, both men and women, throwing them into prison.

⁵—The High Priest and the whole Council of elders can bear witness to this. From them I received letters for the Jewish brothers in Damascus and I set out to arrest those who were there and bring them back to Jerusalem for punishment. ⁶But as I was traveling along, nearing Damascus, at about noon a great light from the sky suddenly flashed about me. ⁷I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me: 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?' ⁸I answered: 'Who are you, Lord?' And he said to me: 'I am Jesus the Nazarean whom you persecute.' ⁹The men who were with me saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of the one who was speaking to me. ¹⁰I asked: 'What shall I do, Lord?' And the Lord replied: 'Get up and go to

Damascus; there you will be told all that you are destined to do.’ ¹¹Yet the brightness of that light had blinded me and so I was led by the hand into Damascus by my companions.

¹²—There a certain Ananias came to me. He was a devout observer of the Law and well spoken of by all the Jews who were living there. ¹³As he stood by me, he said: ‘Brother Saul, recover your sight.’ At that moment I could see and I looked at him. ¹⁴He then said, ‘The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will, to see the Just One and to hear the words from his mouth. ¹⁵From now on you shall be his witness before all the pagan peoples and tell them all that you have seen and heard. ¹⁶And now, why delay? Get up and be baptized and have your sins washed away by calling upon his Name.’

¹⁷—On my return to Jerusalem I was praying in the Temple, when I fell into a trance ¹⁸and saw him. He spoke to me: ‘Get ready to leave Jerusalem without delay, because they will not accept your testimony about me.’ ¹⁹I answered: ‘Lord, they know well that I imprisoned those who believed in you and had them beaten in every synagogue, ²⁰and while the blood of your witness Stephen was being poured out, I stood by and approved it and even guarded the cloaks of his murderers.’ ²¹Then he said to me: ‘Go, for I am sending you far away to the pagan nations.’

²²Up to this point the crowd listened to Paul, but on hearing the last words, they began to shout:

—Kill him! He does not deserve to live!

²³They were screaming and waving their cloaks and throwing dust into the air. ²⁴So the commander ordered Paul to be brought inside the fortress and questioned after flogging, to find out why they made such an outcry against him.

²⁵But when the soldiers had strapped him down, Paul said to the officer standing there:

—Is it legal to flog a Roman citizen without a trial?

²⁶On hearing this the officer went to the commander and said:

—What are you doing? That man is a Roman citizen.

²⁷So the commander came and asked him:

—Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?

Paul answered:

—Yes.

²⁸The commander then said:

—It cost me a large sum of money to become a Roman citizen.

Paul answered:

—I am one by birth.

²⁹Then those who were about to question him backed away, and the commander himself was alarmed when he realized that he had put a Roman citizen in chains.

Appeal to Caesar

25 ¹Three days after Festus arrived in the province, he went up from Caesarea to Jerusalem. ²There the chief priests and the elders accused Paul again. ³In a very hypocritical way, they asked as a favor from Festus that Paul be brought to Jerusalem; but they were planning to kill him on the way. ⁹Then Festus, who wanted to please the Jews, asked Paul:

—Do you wish to go up to Jerusalem to be tried before me?

¹⁰Paul answered:

—I am on trial before Caesar’s tribunal; here I have to be tried. I have done no wrong to the Jews: you yourself know this very well. ¹¹If I have committed any crime which deserves death, I accept death. But if I have not done anything of which they accuse me, no one can give me up to them. I appeal to Caesar.

¹²So Festus, after conferring with his council, answered:

—You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you shall go.

Sailing for Rome

27 ¹When it was decided that we should sail for Italy, they handed over Paul and the other prisoners into the care of an officer of the Augustan battalion, named Julius. ²We boarded a ship of Adramyttium bound for the Asian coasts, and we left accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian from the city of Thessalonica. ⁷We sailed slowly for several days, and arrived with great difficulty at Cnidus. As the wind did not allow us to enter that port, we sailed for the shelter of Crete with the Cape of Salmone within sight. ⁸We turned with difficulty and arrived at a place called Good Ports, near the city of Lasea.

⁹Time passed and the crossing began to be dangerous: we had already celebrated the feast of the Fast. ¹⁰Then Paul said to them:

—Friends, I believe that it would not be very wise to proceed with our crossing for we could lose not only the cargo and the ship but also our lives.

¹¹But the Roman officer relied more on the ship’s captain and the owner of the ship than on the words of Paul. ¹²And as the port was not suitable for wintering, the majority agreed to set out from there in the hope of reaching the harbor of Crete called Phoenix, overlooking Africa and Choros.

Storm

¹³Then the south wind began to blow and they thought that they had gained their purpose; they weighed anchor and sailed along the island of Crete. ¹⁴But a little later, a strong wind called ‘the northeaster’ swept down on them, from across the island.

²¹As we had not eaten for days, Paul stood up among them and said: “Friends, if you had followed my advice when I told you not to set sail from Crete, we would not be in such danger now, and we could have avoided this loss. ²²But now I invite you to regain courage for no one among you shall die; only the ship shall be destroyed. ⁴¹But they struck a sandbank and the ship ran aground. The bow stuck and was immovable, while the stern was broken up by the violent waves.

⁴²The soldiers then planned to kill the prisoners for fear that some of them might escape by swimming. ⁴³But the captain, who wished to save Paul, did not allow them to do this. He ordered those who knew how to swim, to be the first to jump into the water and head for the shore, ⁴⁴and the rest to hold on to planks or pieces of the ship. So all of us reached land safe and sound.

Malta and Rome

28 ¹After being saved, we learned that the island was called Malta.

¹¹After three months, we boarded a ship that had spent the winter at the island. It belonged to an Alexandrian company and carried the figurehead of Castor and Pollux as insignia. ¹²We sailed for Syracuse, staying there for three days ¹³and, after circling the coast, we arrived at Rhegium. On the following day, a south wind began to blow, and at the end of two days we arrived at Puteoli, ¹⁴where we found some of our brothers who invited us to stay with them for a week. And that was how we came to Rome.

¹⁶Upon our arrival in Rome, the captain turned the prisoners over to the military governor but permitted Paul to lodge in a private house with the soldier who guarded him.

¹⁷After three days, Paul called together the leaders of the Jews. When they had gathered, he said to them:

—Brothers, though I have not done anything against our people or against the traditions of our fathers, I was arrested in Jerusalem and handed over to the Romans. ¹⁸They examined me and wanted to set me free, for they saw nothing in my case that deserved death. ¹⁹But the Jews objected, so I was forced to appeal to Caesar without the least intention of bringing any case against my own people. ²⁰Therefore, I have asked to see you and speak with you, since it is because of the hope of Israel that I bear these chains.

²¹They answered:

—We have not received any letter about you from Judea, and none of the brothers who have come from there have brought any message or said anything against you. ²²But we wish to hear from you what you think, although we know already that everywhere people speak against this sect that you belong to.

²³They set a day for him and came in great numbers to his lodging. So Paul explained everything he wanted to tell them regarding the kingdom of God and tried to convince them concerning Jesus, taking the Law of Moses and the Prophets as his starting point. This continued from morning till night. ²⁴Some were convinced by his words, others were not. ²⁵Finally the Jews left, still arguing strongly among themselves; and Paul sent them away with this statement:

—What the Holy Spirit said has come true, when he spoke to your ancestors through the prophet Isaiah: ²⁶*Go to this people and say to them: However much you hear, you will not understand; you will see and see again but not perceive.* ²⁷*The heart of this people has grown hard; they have covered their ears and closed their eyes, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest their spirit understand, and I should heal them.* ²⁸Let it be known to you, then, that this salvation of God has been sent to the pagans: they will listen.

³⁰Paul stayed for two whole years in a house he himself rented, where he received without any hindrance all those who came to see him. ³¹He proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught the truth about Jesus Christ, the Lord, quite openly and without any hindrance.