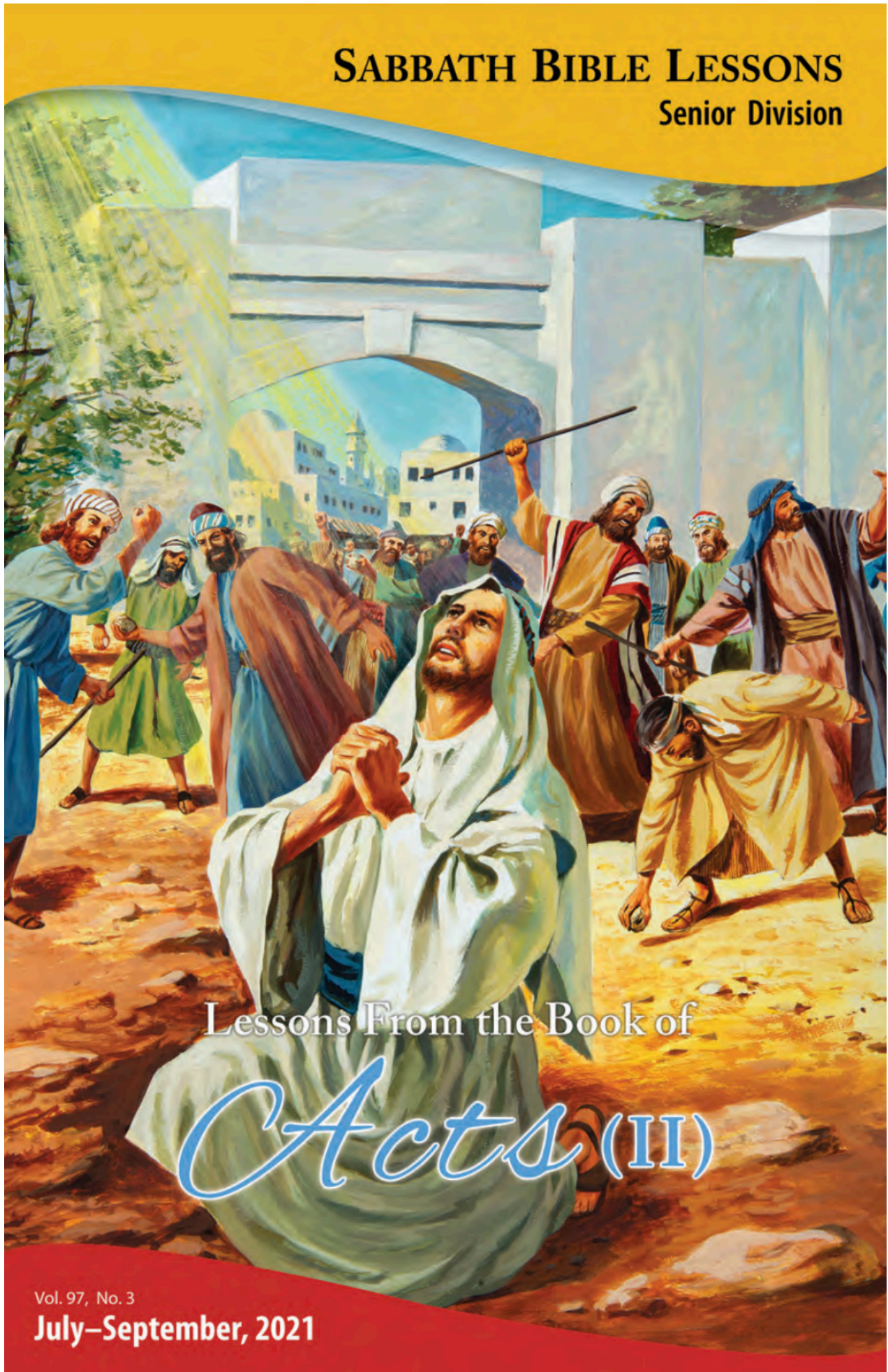


SABBATH BIBLE LESSONS

Senior Division



Lessons From the Book of

Acts (II)

Vol. 97, No. 3

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Foreword

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

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

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

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

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

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

The General Conference Sabbath School Department

JULY - First Sabbath Offering

For a chapel and church school in Dibrugarh, Assam, India

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

Dibrugarh lies within the state of Assam, which is just south of the eastern Himalayas along the Brahmaputra and Barak River valleys. The state covers an area of 78,438 km² (30,285 sq. mi.) and is bordered by Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh to the north; Nagaland and Manipur to the east; Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram and Bangladesh to the south; and West Bengal to the west via the Siliguri Corridor, a 22-kilometer (14 mi.) strip of land connecting it to the rest of India.

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

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

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

Your brethren and sisters from Dibrugarh

Lesson 1 - Sabbath, July 3, 2021

Troubles and Hope

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

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

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

Sunday, June 27

1. THE RESULT OF FAITH

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

Acts 14:8: *8 And there sat a certain man at Lystra, impotent in his feet, being a cripple from his mothers womb, who never had walked:*

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

PRQ1. Why was the man impotent in his feet enabled to walk?

Sunday, June 27

1. THE RESULT OF FAITH

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

Acts 14:9: 9 The same heard Paul speak: who stedfastly beholding him, and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, 10 Said with a loud voice, Stand upright on thy feet. And he leaped and walked.

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

PRQ1. Why was the man impotent in his feet enabled to walk?

Monday, June 28

2. ALL GLORY TO GOD

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

Acts 14:11–13: *11 And when the people saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. 12 And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. 13 Then the priest of Jupiter, which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands unto the gates, and would have done sacrifice with the people.*

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

PRQ2. *How did the disciples respond when the Lystrians wanted to honor them?*

Monday, June 28

2. ALL GLORY TO GOD

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

Acts 14:14–18: *14 Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, 15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: 16 Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. 17 Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness. 18 And with these sayings scarce restrained they the people, that they had not done sacrifice unto them.*

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

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

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

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

PRQ2. How did the disciples respond when the Lystrians wanted to honor them?

Tuesday, June 29

3. SWEPT AWAY BY MALICIOUS RUMORS

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

Acts 14:19: *19 And there came thither certain Jews from Antioch and Iconium, who persuaded the people, and, having stoned Paul, drew him out of the city, supposing he had been dead.*

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

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

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

Continued...

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

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

PRQ3. Describe the tactic the enemy used to try to stop God’s work in Lystra.

Wednesday, June 30

4. MIRACULOUSLY STRENGTHENED

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

John 16:1–4: *1 These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. 2 They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. 3 And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. 4 But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you.*

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

PRQ4. Why can I be encouraged by how Paul handled his trials at Lystra?

Wednesday, June 30

4. MIRACULOUSLY STRENGTHENED

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

Acts 14:20-21: 20 Howbeit, as the disciples stood round about him, he rose up, and came into the city: and the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe. 21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch,

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

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

PRQ4. Why can I be encouraged by how Paul handled his trials at Lystra?

Thursday, July 1

5. CARING FOR THE BELIEVERS

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

Acts 14:21-22: 21 And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, 22 Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.

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

PRQ5. Explain the value of small churches in the sight of God.

Thursday, July 1

5. CARING FOR THE BELIEVERS

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

Acts 14:23–28: *23 And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed. 24 And after they had passed throughout Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. 25 And when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down into Attalia: 26 And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. 27 And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. 28 And there they abode long time with the disciples.*

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

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

PRQ5. Explain the value of small churches in the sight of God.

Friday, July 2

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

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

Lesson 2 - Sabbath, July 10, 2021

Clarifying the Doctrines

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

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

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

Sunday, July 4

1. DIFFERENT IDEAS

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

Acts 15:1: *1 And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.*

Titus 1:10-11: *10 For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: 11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.*

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

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

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

PRQ1. What unnecessary yoke did some early Christians try to require of all?

Monday, July 5

2. A NEED TO EXPAND THE UNDERSTANDING

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

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

Acts 15:2: *2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.*

PRQ2. *In what ways might I be in danger of fostering a Pharisaical attitude?*

Monday, July 5

2. A NEED TO EXPAND THE UNDERSTANDING

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

Acts 15:3-4: *3 And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. 4 And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.*

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

PRQ2. *In what ways might I be in danger of fostering a Pharisaical attitude?*

Monday, July 5

2. A NEED TO EXPAND THE UNDERSTANDING

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

Acts 15:5: 5 But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.

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

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

PRQ2. In what ways might I be in danger of fostering a Pharisaical attitude?

Tuesday, July 6

3. THE STRUGGLE FOR UNITY

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

Romans 15:5-6: *5 Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: 6 That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Acts 15:6: *6 And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.*

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

PRQ3. *Why was it helpful for the apostles and elders to come together to talk?*

Tuesday, July 6

3. THE STRUGGLE FOR UNITY

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

Acts 15:7–12: *7 And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. 8 And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; 9 And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. 10 Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? 11 But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they. 12 Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.*

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

PRQ3. Why was it helpful for the apostles and elders to come together to talk?

Tuesday, July 6

3. THE STRUGGLE FOR UNITY

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

Romans 14:19–21: *19 Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another. 20 For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. 21 It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.*

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

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

PRQ3. Why was it helpful for the apostles and elders to come together to talk?

Wednesday, July 7

4. COMING TO AN AGREEMENT

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

1 Corinthians 8:9–13: *9 But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak. 10 For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idols temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; 11 And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? 12 But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. 13 Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.*

1 Corinthians 6:18: *18 Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.*

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

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

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

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

PRQ4. Fornication is prevalent today, but what must the church say about it?

Wednesday, July 7

4. COMING TO AN AGREEMENT

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

Acts 15:13: *13 And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me:*

Acts 15:19-20: *19 Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: 20 But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.*

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

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

PRQ4. Fornication is prevalent today, but what must the church say about it?

Thursday, July 8

5. UNITED IN THE PRESENT TRUTH

a. What resolution was approved by the delegation of Christian believers?

Acts 15:22, 23, 28–31.

Acts 15:22-23: *22 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: 23 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:*

Acts 15:28–31: *28 For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; 29 That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well. 30 So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle: 31 Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation.*

PRQ5. *Why should I not be surprised at dissenters existing today?*

Thursday, July 8

5. UNITED IN THE PRESENT TRUTH

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

Galatians 6:12–15: *12 As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. 13 For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. 14 But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. 15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.*

Galatians 5:6: *6 For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.*

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

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

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

PRQ5. Why should I not be surprised at dissenters existing today?

Friday, July 9

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

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

Lesson 3 - Sabbath, July 17, 2021

Guided by the Holy Ghost

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

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

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

Sunday, July 11

1. COMPASSION THAT FORTIFIES

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

Acts 15:35–39: *35 Paul also and Barnabas continued in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also. 36 And some days after Paul said unto Barnabas, Let us go again and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, and see how they do. 37 And Barnabas determined to take with them John, whose surname was Mark. 38 But Paul thought not good to take him with them, who departed from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work. 39 And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other: and so Barnabas took Mark, and sailed unto Cyprus;*

2 Timothy 4:11: *11 Only Luke is with me. Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry.*

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

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

PRQ1. Of whom might I be supportive as Barnabas was to Mark?

Monday, July 12

2. PAUL AND TIMOTHY

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

Acts 15:40-41: *40 And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God. 41 And he went through Syria and Cilicia, confirming the churches.*

Acts 16:1-2: *1 Then came he to Derbe and Lystra: and, behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timotheus, the son of a certain woman, which was a Jewess, and believed; but his father was a Greek: 2 Which was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium.*

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

PRQ2. Whom could I be preparing to bear burdens as was done for Timothy?

Monday, July 12

2. PAUL AND TIMOTHY

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

Acts 16:3–5: *3 Him would Paul have to go forth with him; and took and circumcised him because of the Jews which were in those quarters: for they knew all that his father was a Greek. 4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered them the decrees for to keep, that were ordained of the apostles and elders which were at Jerusalem. 5 And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily.*

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

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

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

PRQ2. *Whom could I be preparing to bear burdens as was done for Timothy?*

Tuesday, July 13

3. HEEDING THE CRY

a. Seeing how the Holy Spirit continually guided the apostles, what should every believer soberly, prayerfully consider? Acts 16:6–10.

Acts 16:6–10: 6 Now when they had gone throughout Phrygia and the region of Galatia, and were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia, 7 After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. 8 And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. 9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. 10 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 gospel unto them.

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

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

Continued...

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

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

PRQ3. How can I take action in response to the Macedonian cries of today?

Wednesday, July 14

4. SOUL-WINNING IN MACEDONIA

a. Where was the apostles' main focus in Macedonia? Acts 16:11, 12.

Acts 16:11-12: *11 Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis; 12 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.*

PRQ4. Where might I find meek souls open to truth as Lydia was?

Wednesday, July 14

4. SOUL-WINNING IN MACEDONIA

b. Describe how the first conversions came to that area—and what we can learn from this. Acts 16:13–15; Psalm 25:9.

Acts 16:13–15: *13 And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted thither. 14 And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. 15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.*

Psalm 25:9: *9 The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.*

“True meekness softens and subdues the heart and gives the mind a fitness for the engrafted word. It brings the thoughts into obedience to Jesus Christ. It opens the heart to the word of God, as Lydia’s was opened.”—The Sanctified Life, p. 14.

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

PRQ4. *Where might I find meek souls open to truth as Lydia was?*

Wednesday, July 14

4. SOUL-WINNING IN MACEDONIA

c. Explain a situation whereby someone was making a true statement but was injuring the influence of the Author of all truth. Acts 16:16, 17.

Acts 16:16-17: *16 And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: 17 The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation.*

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

PRQ4. *Where might I find meek souls open to truth as Lydia was?*

Wednesday, July 14

4. SOUL-WINNING IN MACEDONIA

d. What was Paul constrained to do in her behalf? Acts 16:18.

Acts 16:18: *18 And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her. And he came out the same hour.*

“Dispossessed of the evil spirit and restored to her right mind, the woman chose to become a follower of Christ.” —Ibid., p.213.

PRQ4. Where might I find meek souls open to truth as Lydia was?

Thursday, July 15

5. SUFFERING WITH CHRIST

a. When the soothsayer was miraculously delivered from Satan, how did the enemy direct his wrath against Paul and Silas? Acts 16:19–22.

Acts 16:19–22: *19 And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers, 20 And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, 21 And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. 22 And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them.*

“[The woman’s masters] saw that all hope of receiving money from her divinations and soothsayings was at an end, and perceived that, if the apostles were allowed to continue their work, their own source of income would soon be entirely cut off.” —Sketches From the Life of Paul, p. 74.

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

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

PRQ5. Why is the trying experience of Paul and Silas helpful for me to study?

Thursday, July 15

5. SUFFERING WITH CHRIST

b. Describe the incredible cruelty forced on the apostles—and their response. Acts 16:23–25.

Acts 16:23–25: *23 And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely: 24 Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. 25 And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them.*

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

PRQ5. Why is the trying experience of Paul and Silas helpful for me to study?

Friday, July 16

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

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

Lesson 4 - Sabbath, July 24, 2021

Glory Inside a Dungeon

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

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

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

Sunday, July 18

1. RAVISHED BY LOVE

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

Micah 7:8: *8 Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me.*

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

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

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

PRQ1. *If I am imprisoned for the truth's sake, what should be my priority?*

Monday, July 19

2. A LESSON FOR US

a. As we consider the attitude of Paul and Silas in the Philippian dungeon, what should we ever keep in mind? Philippians 2:14, 15.

Philippians 2:14-15: *14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings: 15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;*

“In the utter darkness and desolation of the dungeon, [Paul and Silas] encouraged each other by words of prayer and sang praises to God because they were found worthy to suffer shame for His sake. Their hearts were cheered by a deep and earnest love for the cause of their Redeemer. Paul thought of the persecution he had been instrumental in bringing upon the disciples of Christ, and he rejoiced that his eyes had been opened to see, and his heart to feel, the power of the glorious truths which once he despised.

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

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

Continued...

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

PRQ2. How should the suffering of Christ and His apostles motivate me?

Tuesday, July 20

3. THE ALMIGHTY INTERVENES

a. As the Omnipotent One heard the prayers and praises soaring from the dungeon at midnight, what did He do—and how can this uplift faithful souls in earth’s final days? Acts 16:26; Psalm 103:13, 17–22.

Acts 16:26: *26 And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every ones bands were loosed.*

Psalm 103:13: *13 Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.*

Psalms 103:17–22: *17 But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto childrens children; 18 To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them. 19 The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all. 20 Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. 21 Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure. 22 Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.*

“Paul and Silas prayed and sang praise to God; and angels were sent from heaven to deliver them. The earth shook under the tread of these heavenly messengers, and the prison doors flew open, setting the prisoners free.”—My Life Today, p. 20.

Continued...

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

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

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

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

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

PRQ3. What does the earthquake in Philippi teach me about the God I serve?

Wednesday, July 21

4. TOUCHED BY GOD'S MIRACLE

a. How did the jailer react when he saw the earthquake had made it possible for the prisoners to escape—and what powerful witness for Christ did Paul demonstrate? Acts 16:27–30.

Acts 16:27–30: 27 And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. 28 But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. 29 Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, 30 And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?

“[The jailer] felt sure that death would be the penalty of his apparent unfaithfulness. He cried out in the bitterness of his spirit that it was better for him to die by his own hand than to submit to a disgraceful execution. He was about to kill himself, when Paul cried out with a loud voice, ‘Do thyself no harm; for we are all here.’

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

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

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

PRQ4. Describe how the brutal jailer was transformed.

Wednesday, July 21

4. TOUCHED BY GOD'S MIRACLE

b. Describe how the Holy Spirit moved in this crisis. Acts 16:31–36.

Acts 16:31–36: *31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. 32 And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. 34 And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house. 35 And when it was day, the magistrates sent the serjeants, saying, Let those men go. 36 And the keeper of the prison told this saying to Paul, The magistrates have sent to let you go: now therefore depart, and go in peace.*

“A sanctifying influence diffused itself among the inmates of the prison, and the minds of all were opened to listen to the truths spoken by the apostles. They were convinced that the God whom these men served had miraculously released them from bondage.” — The Acts of the Apostles, p. 217.

PRQ4. Describe how the brutal jailer was transformed.

Thursday, July 22

5. WORTHWHILE SUFFERING

a. When the magistrates learned that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, what did they do, and how did the apostles comply? Acts 16:37–39.

Acts 16:37–39: 37 But Paul said unto them, They have beaten us openly uncondemned, being Romans, and have cast us into prison; and now do they thrust us out privily? nay verily; but let them come themselves and fetch us out. 38 And the serjeants told these words unto the magistrates: and they feared, when they heard that they were Romans. 39 And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city.

“The magistrates feared the apostles’ influence over the people, and they also feared the Power that had interposed in behalf of these innocent men. Acting upon the instruction given by Christ, the apostles would not urge their presence where it was not desired.” — The Acts of the Apostles, p. 218.

PRQ5. What fruits resulted from God’s call for Paul to go to Macedonia?

Thursday, July 22

5. WORTHWHILE SUFFERING

b. After the cruel ordeal Paul and Silas had faced—interestingly enough—before departing, who comforted whom? Acts 16:40. What did the apostles conclude about their time in Philippi? Philippians 1:29.

Acts 16:40: *40 And they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed.*

Philippians 1:29: *29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;*

“The apostles did not regard as in vain their labors in Philippi. They had met much opposition and persecution; but the intervention of Providence in their behalf, and the conversion of the jailer and his household, more than atoned for the disgrace and suffering they had endured. The news of their unjust imprisonment and miraculous deliverance became known through all that region, and this brought the work of the apostles to the notice of a large number who otherwise would not have been reached.

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

PRQ5. What fruits resulted from God’s call for Paul to go to Macedonia?

Friday, July 23

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

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

Lesson 5 - Sabbath, July 31, 2021

Appealing to Minds and Hearts

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

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

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

Sunday, July 25

1. REASONING FOR THREE SABBATHS

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

Acts 17:1–3: *1 Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews: 2 And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, 3 Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.*

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

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

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

PRQ1. What can I learn from the apostles’ zeal after their pain in Philippi?

Monday, July 26

2. AGITATION

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

Acts 17:4: *4 And some of them believed, and consorted with Paul and Silas; and of the devout Greeks a great multitude, and of the chief women not a few.*

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

PRQ2. *How will Paul's general experience in Thessalonica soon be repeated?*

Monday, July 26

2. AGITATION

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

Acts 17:5–8: 5 But the Jews which believed not, moved with envy, took unto them certain lewd fellows of the baser sort, and gathered a company, and set all the city on an uproar, and assaulted the house of Jason, and sought to bring them out to the people. 6 And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; 7 Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus. 8 And they troubled the people and the rulers of the city, when they heard these things.

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

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

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

Continued...

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

PRQ2. How will Paul's general experience in Thessalonica soon be repeated?

Tuesday, July 27

3. DEALING WITH DIFFERENT MINDS

a. What blessings were found at Berea—and how is this a lesson for us? Acts 17:10–12.

Acts 17:10–12: 10 And the brethren immediately sent away Paul and Silas by night unto Berea: who coming thither went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. 12 Therefore many of them believed; also of honourable women which were Greeks, and of men, not a few.

“Apostasies have occurred and the Lord has permitted matters of this nature to develop in the past in order to show how easily His people will be misled when they depend upon the words of men instead of searching the Scriptures for themselves, as did the noble Bereans, to see if these things are so.”—Selected Messages, bk. 2, p. 394.

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

PRQ3. What attitude found in Berea is vital for us today?

Tuesday, July 27

3. DEALING WITH DIFFERENT MINDS

b. To what kind of place was Paul hurried away, and why? Acts 17:13–15.

Acts 17:13–15: *13 But when the Jews of Thessalonica had knowledge that the word of God was preached of Paul at Berea, they came thither also, and stirred up the people. 14 And then immediately the brethren sent away Paul to go as it were to the sea: but Silas and Timotheus abode there still. 15 And they that conducted Paul brought him unto Athens: and receiving a commandment unto Silas and Timotheus for to come to him with all speed, they departed.*

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

PRQ3. *What attitude found in Berea is vital for us today?*

Wednesday, July 28

4. INTELLIGENT . . . YET DECEIVED

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

Acts 17:16–21: *16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. 17 Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. 18 Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babbler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection. 19 And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? 20 For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. 21 (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)*

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

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

Continued...

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

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

PRQ4. In what ways is society today similar to what existed in Athens?

Wednesday, July 28

4. INTELLIGENT . . . YET DECEIVED

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

Acts 17:22–28: *22 Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. 23 For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. 24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; 25 Neither is worshipped with mens hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; 26 And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; 27 That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: 28 For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.*

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

PRQ4. In what ways is society today similar to what existed in Athens?

Thursday, July 29

5. REALITY AND FOCUS

a. What appeal made to the Athenians is a sobering reminder to us who are entrusted with much greater light than they—and living as we are in the time of investigative judgment? Acts 17:29–31.

Acts 17:29–31: *29 Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and mans device. 30 And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: 31 Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.*

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

PRQ5. What lesson learned by Paul in Athens do I need to learn as well?

Thursday, July 29

5. REALITY AND FOCUS

b. How did Paul's work in Athens conclude? Acts 17:32–34.

Acts 17:32–34: *32 And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, We will hear thee again of this matter. 33 So Paul departed from among them. 34 Howbeit certain men clave unto him, and believed: among the which was Dionysius the Areopagite, and a woman named Damaris, and others with them.*

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

PRQ5. *What lesson learned by Paul in Athens do I need to learn as well?*

Friday, July 30

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

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

AUGUST - First Sabbath Offering

For the GC Education Department

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

“True education is missionary training. Every son and daughter of God is called to be a missionary; we are called to the service of God and our fellow men; and to fit us for this service should be the object of our education.” —The Ministry of Healing, p. 395. For many years the church has hoped for an easily accessible curriculum for educating our children. Now the GC Council is making this a priority. By partnering with our educators and units worldwide, the work of preparing this curriculum is well underway.

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

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

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

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

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

General Conference Education Department

Lesson 6 - Sabbath, August 7, 2021

Self-Supporting Outreach

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

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

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

Sunday, August 1

1. CAUTIOUS AS AN EXAMPLE

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

Acts 18:1–3: 1 After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; 2 And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. 3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers.

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

...

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

PRQ1. Regarding material possessions, what example is given to Christians?

Monday, August 2

2. IN CORINTH

a. What was Paul’s first step in reaching out in Corinth? Acts 18:4. How can we be inspired by his example? Luke 14:23.

Acts 18:4: *4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks.*

Luke 14:23: *23 And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.*

“As a laborer in the gospel, [Paul] might claim his support, instead of sustaining himself; but this right he was willing to forego, fearing that the acceptance of means for his support might possibly stand in the way of his usefulness. Although feeble in health, he labored during the day in serving the cause of Christ, and then toiled a large share of the night, and frequently all night, that he might make provision for his own and others’ necessities.” — Testimonies for the Church, vol. 4, pp. 409, 410.

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

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

Continued...

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

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

PRQ2. What steps can I take to resemble Paul’s outreach in Corinth?

Tuesday, August 3

3. DIVINE PROTECTION

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

Acts 18:5–8: *5 And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ. 6 And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles. 7 And he departed thence, and entered into a certain mans house, named Justus, one that worshipped God, whose house joined hard to the synagogue. 8 And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.*

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

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

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

PRQ3. *Why can I be encouraged by the dream Christ gave to Paul there?*

Tuesday, August 3

3. DIVINE PROTECTION

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

Acts 18:9–11: *9 Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: 10 For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city. 11 And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.*

1 Corinthians 2:2: *2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*

1 Corinthians 2:5: *5 That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.*

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

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

PRQ3. *Why can I be encouraged by the dream Christ gave to Paul there?*

Wednesday, August 4

4. GOD'S CARE FOR HIS LABORERS

a. In harmony with His promise to Paul, how did God use Gallio to cause the next plot against the apostle to backfire? Acts 18:12–17.

Acts 18:12–17: 12 And when Gallio was the deputy of Achaia, the Jews made insurrection with one accord against Paul, and brought him to the judgment seat, 13 Saying, This fellow persuadeth men to worship God contrary to the law. 14 And when Paul was now about to open his mouth, Gallio said unto the Jews, If it were a matter of wrong or wicked lewdness, O ye Jews, reason would that I should bear with you: 15 But if it be a question of words and names, and of your law, look ye to it; for I will be no judge of such matters. 16 And he drave them from the judgment seat. 17 Then all the Greeks took Sosthenes, the chief ruler of the synagogue, and beat him before the judgment seat. And Gallio cared for none of those things.

“For the first time during Paul’s labors in Europe, the mob turned to his side; under the very eye of the proconsul, and without interference from him, they violently beset the most prominent accusers of the apostle.” — The Acts of the Apostles, p. 253.

Wednesday, August 4

4. GOD'S CARE FOR HIS LABORERS

b. What ministry did Paul continue—and whom did God use to raise up Apollos to become another asset to the gospel? Acts 18:22–28.

Acts 18:22–28: 22 And when he had landed at Caesarea, and gone up, and saluted the church, he went down to Antioch. 23 And after he had spent some time there, he departed, and went over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples. 24 And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. 25 This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. 26 And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly. 27 And when he was disposed to pass into Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him: who, when he was come, helped them much which had believed through grace: 28 For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.

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

Continued...

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

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

PRQ4. Whom that I know may become an “Apollos” I can lead to Jesus?

Thursday, August 5

5. INSPIRATION FOR LAYPEOPLE

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

Acts 20:33-34: *33 I have coveted no mans silver, or gold, or apparel. 34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.*

Psalm 126:6: *6 He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.*

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

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

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

PRQ5. Name some promises for all who sow the seeds of God's word.

Friday, August 6

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

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

Lesson 7 - Sabbath, August 14, 2021

Deliverance From Darkness

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

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

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

Sunday, August 8

1. COMING INTO GREATER LIGHT

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

Acts 19:1–7: 1 And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, 2 He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. 3 And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto Johns baptism. 4 Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. 5 When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. 6 And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. 7 And all the men were about twelve.

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

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

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

PRQ1. Why was rebaptism appropriate for the twelve disciples in Ephesus?

Monday, August 9

2. TRUE VS. FALSE MIRACLES

a. Describe Paul's work during his two years in Ephesus. Acts 19:8–12.

Acts 19:8–12: *8 And he went into the synagogue, and spake boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. 9 But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. 10 And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks. 11 And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: 12 So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them.*

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

PRQ2. *Why weren't the vagabond Jews blessed by using the name of Jesus?*

Monday, August 9

2. TRUE VS. FALSE MIRACLES

b. How was the sacredness of Christ's name vindicated, causing many to re-examine some wrong practices in their lives? Acts 19:13–18.

Acts 19:13–18: *13 Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth. 14 And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. 15 And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are ye? 16 And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded. 17 And this was known to all the Jews and Greeks also dwelling at Ephesus; and fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified. 18 And many that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds.*

“The discomfiture and humiliation of those who had profaned the name of Jesus, soon became known throughout Ephesus, by Jews and Gentiles. Unmistakable proof had been given of the sacredness of that name, and the peril which they incurred who should invoke it while they had no faith in Christ's divine mission. Terror seized the minds of many, and the work of the gospel was regarded by all with awe and reverence.

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

PRQ2. Why weren't the vagabond Jews blessed by using the name of Jesus?

Tuesday, August 10

3. SURRENDERING ALL

a. What type of steps reveal true conversion in the life? Acts 19:19, 20.

Acts 19:19-20: *19 Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. 20 So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.*

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

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

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

PRQ3. What are some “magical books” that I should get rid of?

Tuesday, August 10

3. SURRENDERING ALL

b. Name some ancient Heaven-sent warnings against magic and sorcery.

Isaiah 47:9–14; Malachi 3:5.

Isaiah 47:9–14: *9 But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments. 10 For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge, it hath perverted thee; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me. 11 Therefore shall evil come upon thee; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth: and mischief shall fall upon thee; thou shalt not be able to put it off: and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know. 12 Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy sorceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail. 13 Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. 14 Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it.*

Malachi 3:5: *5 And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts.*

“Through spiritualism many of the sick, the bereaved, the curious, are communicating with evil spirits. All who venture to do this are on dangerous ground. . . .

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

PRQ3. What are some “magical books” that I should get rid of?

Wednesday, August 11

4. “NO NEW THING UNDER THE SUN”

a. What warnings against magic (spiritualism) and sorcery are re-emphasized for our day? Ephesians 5:11; Revelation 22:14, 15.

Ephesians 5:11: *11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.*

Revelation 22:14-15: *14 Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. 15 For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.*

“There are many who shrink with horror from the thought of consulting spirit mediums, but who are attracted by more pleasing forms of spiritism. Others are led astray by the teachings of Christian Science, and by the mysticism of Theosophy and other Oriental religions.” — Prophets and Kings, p. 210.

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

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

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

PRQ4. Which traps of modern spiritualism could endanger me personally?

Wednesday, August 11

4. “NO NEW THING UNDER THE SUN”

b. What was Paul’s next goal after Ephesus—yet what complication arose in the meantime? Acts 19:21–29.

Acts 19:21–29: 21 After these things were ended, Paul purposed in the spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome. 22 So he sent into Macedonia two of them that ministered unto him, Timotheus and Erastus; but he himself stayed in Asia for a season. 23 And the same time there arose no small stir about that way. 24 For a certain man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; 25 Whom he called together with the workmen of like occupation, and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. 26 Moreover ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands: 27 So that not only this our craft is in danger to be set at nought; but also that the temple of the great goddess Diana should be despised, and her magnificence should be destroyed, whom all Asia and the world worshippeth. 28 And when they heard these sayings, they were full of wrath, and cried out, saying, Great is Diana of the Ephesians. 29 And the whole city was filled with confusion: and having caught Gaius and Aristarchus, men of Macedonia, Pauls companions in travel, they rushed with one accord into the theatre.

“An extensive and profitable business had grown up at Ephesus from the manufacture and sale of small shrines and images, modeled after the temple and the image of Diana. Those interested in this industry found their gains diminishing, and all united in attributing the unwelcome change to Paul’s labors.”
—The Acts of the Apostles, p. 292.

PRQ4. Which traps of modern spiritualism could endanger me personally?

Thursday, August 12

5. GOD'S INTERVENTION

a. Describe the danger posed by the mob of craftsmen. Acts 19:30–34.

Acts 19:30–34: *30 And when Paul would have entered in unto the people, the disciples suffered him not. 31 And certain of the chief of Asia, which were his friends, sent unto him, desiring him that he would not adventure himself into the theatre. 32 Some therefore cried one thing, and some another: for the assembly was confused; and the more part knew not wherefore they were come together. 33 And they drew Alexander out of the multitude, the Jews putting him forward. And Alexander beckoned with the hand, and would have made his defence unto the people. 34 But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, Great is Diana of the Ephesians.*

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

Thursday, August 12

5. GOD'S INTERVENTION

b. How did God use the town clerk to stop the uproar? Acts 19:35–41.

Acts 19:35–41: *35 And when the townclerk had appeased the people, he said, Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter? 36 Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet, and to do nothing rashly. 37 For ye have brought hither these men, which are neither robbers of churches, nor yet blasphemers of your goddess. 38 Wherefore if Demetrius, and the craftsmen which are with him, have a matter against any man, the law is open, and there are deputies: let them implead one another. 39 But if ye enquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly. 40 For we are in danger to be called in question for this days uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this concourse. 41 And when he had thus spoken, he dismissed the assembly.*

“In his speech Demetrius had said, ‘This our craft is in danger.’ These words reveal the real cause of the tumult at Ephesus, and also the cause of much of the persecution which followed the apostles in their work. Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen saw that by the teaching and spread of the gospel the business of image making was endangered. The income of pagan priests and artisans was at stake, and for this reason they aroused against Paul the most bitter opposition.

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

PRQ5. *How does God sometimes use unexpected ways to deliver His people?*

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

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

Lesson 8 - Sabbath, August 21, 2021

Selfless Missionary Work

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

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

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

Sunday, August 15

1. A MIRACLE FROM GOD

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

Acts 20:1–5: *1 And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia. 2 And when he had gone over those parts, and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece, 3 And there abode three months. And when the Jews laid wait for him, as he was about to sail into Syria, he purposed to return through Macedonia. 4 And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus. 5 These going before tarried for us at Troas.*

PRQ1. *When was the meeting on the first day of the week—and how do we know?*

Sunday, August 15

1. A MIRACLE FROM GOD

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

Acts 20:6–12: 6 And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days. 7 And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. 8 And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. 9 And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. 10 And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. 11 When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. 12 And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.

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

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

PRQ1. When was the meeting on the first day of the week—and how do we know?

Monday, August 16

2. ON A MISSION FOR CHRIST

a. Why did Paul briefly separate from his fellow travelers? Acts 20:13.

Acts 20:13: *13 And we went before to ship, and sailed unto Assos, there intending to take in Paul: for so had he appointed, minding himself to go afoot.*

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

PRQ2. *What does the apostle Paul teach me about guiding souls in the faith?*

Monday, August 16

2. ON A MISSION FOR CHRIST

b. Where was Paul headed—and what did he do on the way? Acts 20:14–17.

Acts 20:14–17: *14 And when he met with us at Assos, we took him in, and came to Mitylene. 15 And we sailed thence, and came the next day over against Chios; and the next day we arrived at Samos, and tarried at Trogyllium; and the next day we came to Miletus. 16 For Paul had determined to sail by Ephesus, because he would not spend the time in Asia: for he hasted, if it were possible for him, to be at Jerusalem the day of Pentecost. 17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church.*

PRQ2. *What does the apostle Paul teach me about guiding souls in the faith?*

Monday, August 16

2. ON A MISSION FOR CHRIST

c. What solemn message did Paul have for the Ephesians? Acts 20:18–27.

Acts 20:18–27: *18 And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, 19 Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: 20 And how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, 21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. 22 And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: 23 Save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. 24 But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. 25 And now, behold, I know that ye all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, shall see my face no more. 26 Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. 27 For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*

“Paul had not designed to bear this testimony; but, while he was speaking, the Spirit of Inspiration came upon him, confirming his fears that this would be his last meeting with his Ephesian brethren.” —Ibid., p.393.

PRQ2. *What does the apostle Paul teach me about guiding souls in the faith?*

Monday, August 16

2. ON A MISSION FOR CHRIST

d. What do pastoral leaders ever need to keep foremost in mind? Acts 20:28.

Acts 20:28: *28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.*

“He who holds the truth in unrighteousness, who declares his belief in it, and yet wounds it every day by his inconsistent life, is surrendering himself to the service of Satan and leading souls to ruin.”—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 142.

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

PRQ2. *What does the apostle Paul teach me about guiding souls in the faith?*

Tuesday, August 17

3. THE POWER OF THE TRUTH

a. Of what grave danger is the church to beware? Acts 20:29, 30.

Acts 20:29-30: *29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.*

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

PRQ3. *Explain the contrast between Paul and many professed preachers today.*

Tuesday, August 17

3. THE POWER OF THE TRUTH

**b. How did Paul's example and words reflect the teachings of Christ Himself?
Acts 20:31–35.**

Acts 20:31–35: 31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. 32 And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified. 33 I have coveted no mans silver, or gold, or apparel. 34 Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. 35 I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

“[Paul’s] toil-worn hands, as he presented them before the people, bore testimony that he was not chargeable to any man for his support. They detracted nothing, he deemed, from the force of his pathetic appeals, sensible, intelligent, and eloquent beyond those of any other man who had acted a part in the Christian ministry. . . . “We do not think it is obligatory on all ministers to do in all respects as Paul did. Yet we say to all that Paul was a Christian gentleman of the highest type. His example shows that mechanical toil does not necessarily lessen the influence of anyone, that working with the hands in any honorable employment should not make a man coarse and rough and discourteous.” —Ibid.

PRQ3. Explain the contrast between Paul and many professed preachers today.

Tuesday, August 17

3. THE POWER OF THE TRUTH

c. What reveals how deeply the people were touched by Paul's heartfelt appeals? Acts 20:36–38.

Acts 20:36–38: 36 And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all. 37 And they all wept sore, and fell on Pauls neck, and kissed him, 38 Sorrowing most of all for the words which he spake, that they should see his face no more. And they accompanied him unto the ship.

PRQ3. Explain the contrast between Paul and many professed preachers today.

Wednesday, August 18

4. FEARLESS AND DETERMINED

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

Acts 21:1–5: 1 And it came to pass, that after we were gotten from them, and had launched, we came with a straight course unto Coos, and the day following unto Rhodes, and from thence unto Patara: 2 And finding a ship sailing over unto Phenicia, we went aboard, and set forth. 3 Now when we had discovered Cyprus, we left it on the left hand, and sailed into Syria, and landed at Tyre: for there the ship was to unlade her burden. 4 And finding disciples, we tarried there seven days: who said to Paul through the Spirit, that he should not go up to Jerusalem. 5 And when we had accomplished those days, we departed and went our way; and they all brought us on our way, with wives and children, till we were out of the city: and we kneeled down on the shore, and prayed.

Wednesday, August 18

4. FEARLESS AND DETERMINED

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

Acts 21:6–9: *6 And when we had taken our leave one of another, we took ship; and they returned home again. 7 And when we had finished our course from Tyre, we came to Ptolemais, and saluted the brethren, and abode with them one day. 8 And the next day we that were of Pauls company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him. 9 And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy.*

Wednesday, August 18

4. FEARLESS AND DETERMINED

c. Describe how another warning came to Paul—and the way he responded.

Acts 21:10–14. How can his dedication inspire us?

Acts 21:10–14: *10 And as we tarried there many days, there came down from Judaea a certain prophet, named Agabus. 11 And when he was come unto us, he took Pauls girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. 12 And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus. 14 And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The will of the Lord be done.*

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

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

PRQ4. Why was Paul such a devoted missionary and how can I be more like him?

Wednesday, August 18

4. FEARLESS AND DETERMINED

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

Acts 21:15–21: *15 And after those days we took up our carriages, and went up to Jerusalem. 16 There went with us also certain of the disciples of Caesarea, and brought with them one Mnason of Cyprus, an old disciple, with whom we should lodge. 17 And when we were come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. 18 And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. 19 And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. 20 And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord, and said unto him, Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: 21 And they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children, neither to walk after the customs.*

PRQ4. Why was Paul such a devoted missionary and how can I be more like him?

Thursday, August 19

5. PLACED IN SERIOUS DANGER

a. Explain the advice given to Paul and how he submitted. Acts 21:22–26.

Acts 21:22–26: *22 What is it therefore? the multitude must needs come together: for they will hear that thou art come. 23 Do therefore this that we say to thee: We have four men which have a vow on them; 24 Them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads: and all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing; but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law. 25 As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication. 26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day purifying himself with them entered into the temple, to signify the accomplishment of the days of purification, until that an offering should be offered for every one of them.*

“This concession was not in harmony with [Paul’s] teachings nor with the firm integrity of his character. His advisers were not infallible. Though some of these men wrote under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, yet when not under its direct influence they sometimes erred.” —The SDA Bible Commentary [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1065.

PRQ5. How and why will the persecution like that against Paul soon be repeated?

Thursday, August 19

5. PLACED IN SERIOUS DANGER

b. Describe the disastrous result of this act—and how only Paul’s life was spared. Acts 21:27–32. How does history repeat itself?

Acts 21:27–32: *27 And when the seven days were almost ended, the Jews which were of Asia, when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, 28 Crying out, Men of Israel, help: This is the man, that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place: and further brought Greeks also into the temple, and hath polluted this holy place. 29 (For they had seen before with him in the city Trophimus an Ephesian, whom they supposed that Paul had brought into the temple.) 30 And all the city was moved, and the people ran together: and they took Paul, and drew him out of the temple: and forthwith the doors were shut. 31 And as they went about to kill him, tidings came unto the chief captain of the band, that all Jerusalem was in an uproar. 32 Who immediately took soldiers and centurions, and ran down unto them: and when they saw the chief captain and the soldiers, they left beating of Paul.*

“Elijah was declared to be a troubler in Israel, Jeremiah a traitor, Paul a polluter of the temple. From that day to this, those who would be loyal to truth have been denounced as seditious, heretical, or schismatic. Multitudes who are too unbelieving to accept the sure word of prophecy will receive with unquestioning credulity an accusation against those who dare to reprove fashionable sins. This spirit will increase more and more. And the Bible plainly teaches that a time is approaching when the laws of the state will so conflict with the law of God that whosoever would obey all the divine precepts must brave reproach and punishment as an evildoer.” —The Great Controversy, p. 458.

PRQ5. How and why will the persecution like that against Paul soon be repeated?

Friday, August 20

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

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

Lesson 9 - Sabbath, August 28, 2021

The Apostle Under Siege

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

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

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

Sunday, August 22

1. REVEALING CHRIST

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

Acts 21:33–36: *33 Then the chief captain came near, and took him, and commanded him to be bound with two chains; and demanded who he was, and what he had done. 34 And some cried one thing, some another, among the multitude: and when he could not know the certainty for the tumult, he commanded him to be carried into the castle. 35 And when he came upon the stairs, so it was, that he was borne of the soldiers for the violence of the people. 36 For the multitude of the people followed after, crying, Away with him.*

Luke 23:18: *18 And they cried out all at once, saying, Away with this man, and release unto us Barabbas:*

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

PRQ1. *How did Paul’s behavior contrast with that of his countrymen?*

Sunday, August 22

1. REVEALING CHRIST

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

Acts 21:37–39: *37 And as Paul was to be led into the castle, he said unto the chief captain, May I speak unto thee? Who said, Canst thou speak Greek? 38 Art not thou that Egyptian, which before these days madest an uproar, and leddest out into the wilderness four thousand men that were murderers? 39 But Paul said, I am a man which am a Jew of Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city: and, I beseech thee, suffer me to speak unto the people.*

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

PRQ1. *How did Paul's behavior contrast with that of his countrymen?*

Monday, August 23

2. A NOBLE DEFENSE

a. Name some highlights of Paul's defense. Acts 21:40; 22:1–11.

Acts 21:40: *40 And when he had given him licence, Paul stood on the stairs, and beckoned with the hand unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying,*

Acts 22:1–11: *1 Men, brethren, and fathers, hear ye my defence which I make now unto you. 2 (And when they heard that he spake in the Hebrew tongue to them, they kept the more silence: and he saith,) 3 I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day. 4 And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. 5 As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished. 6 And it came to pass, that, as I made my journey, and was come nigh unto Damascus about noon, suddenly there shone from heaven a great light round about me. 7 And I fell unto the ground, and heard a voice saying unto me, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 8 And I answered, Who art thou, Lord? And he said unto me, I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest. 9 And they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me. 10 And I said, What shall I do, Lord? And the Lord said unto me, Arise, and go into Damascus; and there it shall be told thee of all things which are appointed for thee to do. 11 And when I could not see for the glory of that light, being led by the hand of them that were with me, I came into Damascus.*

Continued...

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

PRQ2. What made it possible for Paul to endure the suffering heaped on him?

Monday, August 23

2. A NOBLE DEFENSE

b. Why was Paul quite certain of his calling from God to minister to the Gentile world? Acts 22:12–21.

Acts 22:12–21: *12 And one Ananias, a devout man according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews which dwelt there, 13 Came unto me, and stood, and said unto me, Brother Saul, receive thy sight. And the same hour I looked up upon him. 14 And he said, The God of our fathers hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. 15 For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard. 16 And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. 17 And it came to pass, that, when I was come again to Jerusalem, even while I prayed in the temple, I was in a trance; 18 And saw him saying unto me, Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for they will not receive thy testimony concerning me. 19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee: 20 And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him. 21 And he said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.*

“The Lord had given Paul his commission to enter the broad missionary field of the Gentile world. To prepare him for this extensive and difficult work, God had brought him into close connection with Himself and had opened before his enraptured vision views of the beauty and glory of heaven.”—The Acts of the Apostles, p. 159.

PRQ2. What made it possible for Paul to endure the suffering heaped on him?

Monday, August 23

2. A NOBLE DEFENSE

c. How did the crowd react to Paul—and with what result? Acts 22:22–24.

Acts 22:22–24: *22 And they gave him audience unto this word, and then lifted up their voices, and said, Away with such a fellow from the earth: for it is not fit that he should live. 23 And as they cried out, and cast off their clothes, and threw dust into the air, 24 The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him.*

“[The Roman captain] had not understood Paul’s Hebrew address, and concluded from the general excitement that his prisoner must be guilty of some great crime. . .

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

PRQ2. *What made it possible for Paul to endure the suffering heaped on him?*

Monday, August 23

2. A NOBLE DEFENSE

d. Why was Paul spared from suffering an even worse ordeal? Acts 22:25–29.

Acts 22:25–29: *25 And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned? 26 When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman. 27 Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea. 28 And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born. 29 Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him.*

PRQ2. *What made it possible for Paul to endure the suffering heaped on him?*

Tuesday, August 24

3. BEFORE THE COUNCIL

a. How did Paul’s hearing before the council begin—and what did he prophesy? Acts 22:30; 23:1–5.

Acts 22:30: *30 On the morrow, because he would have known the certainty wherefore he was accused of the Jews, he loosed him from his bands, and commanded the chief priests and all their council to appear, and brought Paul down, and set him before them.*

Acts 23:1–5: *1 And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day. 2 And the high priest Ananias commanded them that stood by him to smite him on the mouth. 3 Then said Paul unto him, 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? 4 And they that stood by said, Revilest thou Gods high priest? 5 Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people.*

“Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, Paul uttered a prophetic denunciation similar to that which Christ had uttered in rebuking the hypocrisy of the Jews. The judgment pronounced by the apostle was terribly fulfilled when the iniquitous and hypocritical high priest was murdered by assassins in the Jewish war.”—The SDA Bible Commentary [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1065.

PRQ3. Who treated Paul the worst—the heathen, Pharisees, or Sadducees?

Tuesday, August 24

3. BEFORE THE COUNCIL

b. How did Paul wisely redirect the focus of the hearing? Acts 23:6–9.

Acts 23:6–9: *6 But when Paul perceived that the one part were Sadducees, and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question. 7 And when he had so said, there arose a dissension between the Pharisees and the Sadducees: and the multitude was divided. 8 For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit: but the Pharisees confess both. 9 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.*

“The Pharisees were very strict in regard to the outward observance of forms and customs, and were filled with haughty, worldly, hypocritical self-righteousness. The Sadducees denied the resurrection of the dead and the existence of angels, and were skeptical in regard to God. This sect was largely composed of unworthy characters, many of whom were licentious in their habits.” — Ibid., vol.5, p. 1077.

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

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

PRQ3. Who treated Paul the worst—the heathen, Pharisees, or Sadducees?

Tuesday, August 24

3. BEFORE THE COUNCIL

c. How was Paul protected—and what does this make us recall? Acts 23:10.

Acts 23:10: *10 And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down, and to take him by force from among them, and to bring him into the castle.*

“Our standing before God depends, not upon the amount of light we have received, but upon the use we make of what we have. Thus even the heathen who choose the right as far as they can distinguish it are in a more favorable condition than are those who have had great light, and profess to serve God, but who disregard the light, and by their daily life contradict their profession.” — The Desire of Ages, p. 239.

PRQ3. *Who treated Paul the worst—the heathen, Pharisees, or Sadducees?*

Wednesday, August 25

4. WHEN ALONE IN THE DARK

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

Acts 23:11: 11 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.

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

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

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

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

PRQ4. Why can we be comforted by God's care for Paul in the castle prison?

Wednesday, August 25

4. WHEN ALONE IN THE DARK

b. What reveals God’s willingness to comfort us in the darkness, just as He did for Paul—and for David alone in the wilderness? Psalm 63:5, 6.

Psalm 63:5-6: *5 My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: 6 When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches.*

“At all times and in all places, in all sorrows and in all afflictions, when the outlook seems dark and the future perplexing, and we feel helpless and alone, the Comforter will be sent in answer to the prayer of faith.”—Christian Service, p. 251.

PRQ4. Why can we be comforted by God’s care for Paul in the castle prison?

Thursday, August 26

5. FROM HIS OWN NATION

a. The next day, what plan did the enemy of souls devise? Acts 23:12–15.

Acts 23:12–15: *12 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. 13 And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy. 14 And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul. 15 Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you to morrow, as though ye would enquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him.*

“While the Lord encouraged His servant, Paul’s enemies were eagerly plotting his destruction.” —The Acts of the Apostles, p. 413.

PRQ5. *Explain the contrasting attitude between the Roman captain and the Jews.*

Thursday, August 26

5. FROM HIS OWN NATION

b. Whom did the Lord use to expose the evil plot? Acts 23:16–21.

Acts 23:16–21: *16 And when Pauls sisters son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul. 17 Then Paul called one of the centurions unto him, and said, Bring this young man unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him. 18 So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto him, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee. 19 Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went with him aside privately, and asked him, What is that thou hast to tell me? 20 And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to morrow into the council, as though they would enquire somewhat of him more perfectly. 21 But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee.*

PRQ5. *Explain the contrasting attitude between the Roman captain and the Jews.*

Thursday, August 26

5. FROM HIS OWN NATION

c. How only could the chief captain overrule the plan—and what should the persecution against Paul make us realize? Acts 23:22–33.

Acts 23:22–33: *22 So the chief captain then let the young man depart, and charged him, See thou tell no man that thou hast shewed these things to me. 23 And he called unto him two centurions, saying, Make ready two hundred soldiers to go to Caesarea, and horsemen threescore and ten, and spearmen two hundred, at the third hour of the night; 24 And provide them beasts, that they may set Paul on, and bring him safe unto Felix the governor. 25 And he wrote a letter after this manner: 26 Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth greeting. 27 This man was taken of the Jews, and should have been killed of them: then came I with an army, and rescued him, having understood that he was a Roman. 28 And when I would have known the cause wherefore they accused him, I brought him forth into their council: 29 Whom I perceived to be accused of questions of their law, but to have nothing laid to his charge worthy of death or of bonds. 30 And when it was told me how that the Jews laid wait for the man, I sent straightway to thee, and gave commandment to his accusers also to say before thee what they had against him. Farewell. 31 Then the soldiers, as it was commanded them, took Paul, and brought him by night to Antipatris. 32 On the morrow they left the horsemen to go with him, and returned to the castle: 33 Who, when they came to Caesarea, and delivered the epistle to the governor, presented Paul also before him.*

“The case of Paul was not the first in which a servant of God had found among the heathen an asylum from the malice of the professed people of Jehovah. . . .

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

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

PRQ5. Explain the contrasting attitude between the Roman captain and the Jews.

Friday, August 27

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

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

SEPTEMBER - First Sabbath Offering

For Chapels in the Dominican Republic

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

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

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

With this growth, the need has naturally arisen for chapels in which to worship the Lord. By God's grace, we have land for this purpose in La Salvia, Bonao in the northern part of the island. Construction has already begun here, and we are planning also to dedicate to the Lord a house of worship in the Los Mina sector of the city and province of Santo Domingo. The brethren have donated freely of their means, but in order for these goals to come to fruition, we need your help. When the First Sabbath Offering is gathered, please give generously, that monuments may shine to the glory of God in this island nation. It is our prayer that the Lord may richly bless the gifts and the givers!

Your brethren and sisters from the Dominican Republic

Lesson 10 - Sabbath, September 4, 2021

Testifying With a Clean Conscience

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

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

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

Sunday, August 29

1. TERTULLUS, THE ORATOR

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

Acts 23:34-35: *34 And when the governor had read the letter, he asked of what province he was. And when he understood that he was of Cilicia; 35 I will hear thee, said he, when thine accusers are also come. And he commanded him to be kept in Herods judgment hall.*

Acts 24:1–9: *1 And after five days Ananias the high priest descended with the elders, and with a certain orator named Tertullus, who informed the governor against Paul. 2 And when he was called forth, Tertullus began to accuse him, saying, Seeing that by thee we enjoy great quietness, and that very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence, 3 We accept it always, and in all places, most noble Felix, with all thankfulness. 4 Notwithstanding, that I be not further tedious unto thee, I pray thee that thou wouldest hear us of thy clemency a few words. 5 For we have found this man a pestilent fellow, and a mover of sedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes: 6 Who also hath gone about to profane the temple: whom we took, and would have judged according to our law. 7 But the chief captain Lysias came upon us, and with great violence took him away out of our hands, 8 Commanding his accusers to come unto thee: by examining of whom thyself mayest take knowledge of all these things, whereof we accuse him. 9 And the Jews also assented, saying that these things were so.*

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

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

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

PRQ1. Why did Ananias, the high priest, bring Tertullus to Paul's hearing?

Monday, August 30

2. IN PERFECT PEACE

a. How did Paul candidly begin his defense before Felix? Acts 24:10–13.

Acts 24:10–13: *10 Then Paul, after that the governor had beckoned unto him to speak, answered, Forasmuch as I know that thou hast been of many years a judge unto this nation, I do the more cheerfully answer for myself: 11 Because that thou mayest understand, that there are yet but twelve days since I went up to Jerusalem for to worship. 12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with any man, neither raising up the people, neither in the synagogues, nor in the city: 13 Neither can they prove the things whereof they now accuse me.*

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

Monday, August 30

2. IN PERFECT PEACE

b. What concept did Paul present to the governor? Acts 24:14, 15.

Acts 24:14-15: *14 But this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets: 15 And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.*

“In consequence of Adam’s sin, death passed upon the whole human race. All alike go down into the grave. And through the provisions of the plan of salvation, all are to be brought forth from their graves.” — The Great Controversy, p. 544.

PRQ2. Why is it vital to keep a clean conscience by confession and repentance?

Monday, August 30

2. IN PERFECT PEACE

c. Why is the aim of Paul's life beneficial to all? Acts 24:16; Isaiah 26:3, 4.

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

Isaiah 26:3-4: *3 Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. 4 Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength:*

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

PRQ2. Why is it vital to keep a clean conscience by confession and repentance?

Tuesday, August 31

3. ETERNITY VS. CONVENIENCE

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

Acts 24:17–21: *17 Now after many years I came to bring alms to my nation, and offerings. 18 Whereupon certain Jews from Asia found me purified in the temple, neither with multitude, nor with tumult. 19 Who ought to have been here before thee, and object, if they had ought against me. 20 Or else let these same here say, if they have found any evil doing in me, while I stood before the council, 21 Except it be for this one voice, that I cried standing among them, Touching the resurrection of the dead I am called in question by you this day.*

PRQ3. *How might I be procrastinating in some areas of life as Felix did?*

Tuesday, August 31

3. ETERNITY VS. CONVENIENCE

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

Acts 24:22-23: *22 And when Felix heard these things, having more perfect knowledge of that way, he deferred them, and said, When Lysias the chief captain shall come down, I will know the uttermost of your matter. 23 And he commanded a centurion to keep Paul, and to let him have liberty, and that he should forbid none of his acquaintance to minister or come unto him.*

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

PRQ3. How might I be procrastinating in some areas of life as Felix did?

Tuesday, August 31

3. ETERNITY VS. CONVENIENCE

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

Acts 24:24-25: *24 And after certain days, when Felix came with his wife Drusilla, which was a Jewess, he sent for Paul, and heard him concerning the faith in Christ. 25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.*

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

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

PRQ3. *How might I be procrastinating in some areas of life as Felix did?*

Wednesday, September 1

4. EXCUSES, EXCUSES . . .

a. Name some common excuses for not committing fully to Christ—and the outcome of all of them. Luke 14:15–20, 24.

Luke 14:15–20: *15 And when one of them that sat at meat with him heard these things, he said unto him, Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. 16 Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: 17 And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. 18 And they all with one consent began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. 19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. 20 And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.*

Luke 14:24: *24 For I say unto you, That none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper.*

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

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

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

PRQ4. What lame excuses might I be making that quench the Spirit?

Thursday, September 2

5. POURED OUT WITHOUT MEASURE

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

Acts 3:19: *19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;*

Isaiah 44:22-23: *22 I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee. 23 Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.*

Psalm 110:3: *3 Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.*

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

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

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

PRQ5. How can I partake of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in fullness?

Friday, September 4

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

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

Lesson 11 - Sabbath, September 11, 2021

Witnessing to a King

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

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

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

Sunday, September 5

1. THE RESULT OF REJECTING LIGHT

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

Acts 24:26-27: 26 He hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him: wherefore he sent for him the oftener, and communed with him. 27 But after two years Porcius Festus came into Felix room: and Felix, willing to shew the Jews a pleasure, left Paul bound.

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

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

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

PRQ1. How does the close of Felix' life remind us that earthly glory fades?

Monday, September 6

2. SAFETY IN UNEXPECTED WAYS

a. Explain the policy of Festus, who replaced Felix. Acts 25:1–6.

Acts 25:1–6: *1 Now when Festus was come into the province, after three days he ascended from Caesarea to Jerusalem. 2 Then the high priest and the chief of the Jews informed him against Paul, and besought him, 3 And desired favour against him, that he would send for him to Jerusalem, laying wait in the way to kill him. 4 But Festus answered, that Paul should be kept at Caesarea, and that he himself would depart shortly thither. 5 Let them therefore, said he, which among you are able, go down with me, and accuse this man, if there be any wickedness in him. 6 And when he had tarried among them more than ten days, he went down unto Caesarea; and the next day sitting on the judgment seat commanded Paul to be brought.*

“Festus held firmly to his purpose of giving Paul a fair trial at Caesarea. God in His providence controlled the decision of Festus, that the life of the apostle might be lengthened.” — The Acts of the Apostles, p. 429.

PRQ2. *What qualities do we need to possess when faced with betrayal?*

Monday, September 6

2. SAFETY IN UNEXPECTED WAYS

b. How did the hearing proceed—and with what result? Acts 25:7–12. Why was it safer for Paul to go to Caesar than Jerusalem? 2 Timothy 3:12.

Acts 25:7–12: 7 And when he was come, the Jews which came down from Jerusalem stood round about, and laid many and grievous complaints against Paul, which they could not prove. 8 While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all. 9 But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? 10 Then said Paul, I stand at Caesars judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. 11 For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar. 12 Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? unto Caesar shalt thou go.

2 Timothy 3:12: 12 Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

“Festus knew nothing of the conspiracies of the Jews to murder Paul, and he was surprised at this appeal to Caesar. However, the words of the apostle put a stop to the proceedings of the court. . . .

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

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

PRQ2. What qualities do we need to possess when faced with betrayal?

Tuesday, September 7

3. A DIVINE APPOINTMENT

a. In God's providence, who else was to meet Paul? Acts 25:13–22.

Acts 25:13–22: *13 And after certain days king Agrippa and Bernice came unto Caesarea to salute Festus. 14 And when they had been there many days, Festus declared Pauls cause unto the king, saying, There is a certain man left in bonds by Felix: 15 About whom, when I was at Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews informed me, desiring to have judgment against him. 16 To whom I answered, It is not the manner of the Romans to deliver any man to die, before that he which is accused have the accusers face to face, and have licence to answer for himself concerning the crime laid against him. 17 Therefore, when they were come hither, without any delay on the morrow I sat on the judgment seat, and commanded the man to be brought forth. 18 Against whom when the accusers stood up, they brought none accusation of such things as I supposed: 19 But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive. 20 And because I doubted of such manner of questions, I asked him whether he would go to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these matters. 21 But when Paul had appealed to be reserved unto the hearing of Augustus, I commanded him to be kept till I might send him to Caesar. 22 Then Agrippa said unto Festus, I would also hear the man myself. To morrow, said he, thou shalt hear him.*

“Paul had appealed to Caesar, and Festus could not do otherwise than send him to Rome. But some time passed before a suitable ship could be found. . . . This gave Paul opportunity to present the reasons of his faith before the principal men of Caesarea, and also before King Agrippa II, the last of the Herods.” — The Acts of the Apostles, p. 433.

PRQ3. *As in Paul's case, why does the Lord sometimes delay a voyage?*

Tuesday, September 7

3. A DIVINE APPOINTMENT

b. Describe the scene and introductory encounter between Paul and Agrippa in the court—and how Heaven viewed it. Acts 25:23–27.

Acts 25:23–27: 23 And on the morrow, when Agrippa was come, and Bernice, with great pomp, and was entered into the place of hearing, with the chief captains, and principal men of the city, at Festus commandment Paul was brought forth. 24 And Festus said, King Agrippa, and all men which are here present with us, ye see this man, about whom all the multitude of the Jews have dealt with me, both at Jerusalem, and also here, crying that he ought not to live any longer. 25 But when I found that he had committed nothing worthy of death, and that he himself hath appealed to Augustus, I have determined to send him. 26 Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my lord. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write. 27 For it seemeth to me unreasonable to send a prisoner, and not withal to signify the crimes laid against him.

“In honor of his visitors, Festus had sought to make this an occasion of imposing display. The rich robes of the procurator and his guests, the swords of the soldiers, and the gleaming armor of their commanders, lent brilliancy to the scene.

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

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

Continued...

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

PRQ3. As in Paul's case, why does the Lord sometimes delay a voyage?

Wednesday, September 8

4. REPENTANT SINNERS TO SPEAK UP

a. What can we learn from how Paul opened his testimony? Acts 26:1–8.

Acts 26:1–8: *1 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself: 2 I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews: 3 Especially because I know thee to be expert in all customs and questions which are among the Jews: wherefore I beseech thee to hear me patiently. 4 My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; 5 Which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee. 6 And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: 7 Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hopes sake, king Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. 8 Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?*

“Christianity will make a man a gentleman. Christ was courteous, even to His persecutors; and His true followers will manifest the same spirit. Look at Paul when brought before rulers. His speech before Agrippa is an illustration of true courtesy as well as persuasive eloquence. The gospel does not encourage the formal politeness current with the world, but the courtesy that springs from real kindness of heart.” —Gospel Workers, p. 123.

PRQ4. *In praying, “Thy kingdom come” (Matt. 6:10), what must I realize?*

Wednesday, September 8

4. REPENTANT SINNERS TO SPEAK UP

b. How did humility of heart radiate from the apostle? Acts 26:9–11.

Acts 26:9–11: *9 I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. 10 Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. 11 And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.*

“The examples in God’s word of genuine repentance and humiliation reveal a spirit of confession in which there is no excuse for sin or attempt at self-justification.

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

PRQ4. In praying, “Thy kingdom come” (Matt. 6:10), what must I realize?

Wednesday, September 8

4. REPENTANT SINNERS TO SPEAK UP

c. How did Paul relate his experience—and what duty entrusted to him is also given to us now, just before Jesus’ return? Acts 26:12–18.

Acts 26:12–18: *12 Whereupon as I went to Damascus with authority and commission from the chief priests, 13 At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me. 14 And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. 15 And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. 16 But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; 17 Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, 18 To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*

“[Christ’s] kingdom will not come until the good tidings of His grace have been carried to all the earth. Hence, as we give ourselves to God, and win other souls to Him, we hasten the coming of His kingdom. Only those who devote themselves to His service, saying, ‘Here am I; send me’ (Isaiah 6:8), to open blind eyes, to turn men ‘from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance among them which are sanctified’ (Acts 26:18)—they alone pray in sincerity, ‘Thy kingdom come.’” —Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, pp. 108, 109.

PRQ4. In praying, “Thy kingdom come” (Matt. 6:10), what must I realize?

Thursday, September 9

5. A PRICELESS OPPORTUNITY GRANTED

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

Acts 26:19–23: *19 Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: 20 But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. 21 For these causes the Jews caught me in the temple, and went about to kill me. 22 Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: 23 That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.*

PRQ5. *How might I be in danger of being distracted by the world's glitter?*

Thursday, September 9

5. A PRICELESS OPPORTUNITY GRANTED

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

Acts 26:24–26: *24 And as he thus spake for himself, Festus said with a loud voice, Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad. 25 But he said, I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness. 26 For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner.*

PRQ5. *How might I be in danger of being distracted by the world's glitter?*

Thursday, September 9

5. A PRICELESS OPPORTUNITY GRANTED

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

Acts 26:27–32: 27 King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. 28 Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. 29 And Paul said, I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost, and altogether such as I am, except these bonds. 30 And when he had thus spoken, the king rose up, and the governor, and Bernice, and they that sat with them: 31 And when they were gone aside, they talked between themselves, saying, This man doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds. 32 Then said Agrippa unto Festus, This man might have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed unto Caesar.

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

PRQ5. How might I be in danger of being distracted by the world’s glitter?

Friday, September 10

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How does the close of Felix' life remind us that earthly glory fades?

2. What qualities do we need to possess when faced with betrayal?

3. As in Paul's case, why does the Lord sometimes delay a voyage?

4. In praying, "Thy kingdom come" (Matt. 6:10), what must I realize?

5. How might I be in danger of being distracted by the world's glitter?

Lesson 12 - Sabbath, September 18, 2021

Trust Amid a Tempest

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

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

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

Sunday, September 12

1. CHAINED ABOARD SHIP

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

Acts 27:1-2: 1 And when it was determined that we should sail into Italy, they delivered Paul and certain other prisoners unto one named Julius, a centurion of Augustus band. 2 And entering into a ship of Adramyttium, we launched, meaning to sail by the coasts of Asia; one Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica, being with us.

Colossians 4:10: 10 Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sisters son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;)

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

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

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

PRQ1. How has God lightened my burdens as He did for Paul in chains?

Monday, September 13

2. A TREACHEROUS VOYAGE

a. What reveals the well-deserved confidence Paul soon earned from Julius, who held him in custody on the voyage to Rome? Acts 27:3.

Acts 27:3: 3 And the next day we touched at Sidon. And Julius courteously entreated Paul, and gave him liberty to go unto his friends to refresh himself.

“This permission [to go to his friends] was greatly appreciated by the apostle, who was in feeble health.” — The Acts of the Apostles, p. 440.

PRQ2. How might I be in danger of rejecting an inconvenient warning?

Monday, September 13

2. A TREACHEROUS VOYAGE

b. How did the voyage go—and what did Paul warn? Acts 27:4–10.

Acts 27:4–10: *4 And when we had launched from thence, we sailed under Cyprus, because the winds were contrary. 5 And when we had sailed over the sea of Cilicia and Pamphylia, we came to Myra, a city of Lycia. 6 And there the centurion found a ship of Alexandria sailing into Italy; and he put us therein. 7 And when we had sailed slowly many days, and scarce were come over against Cnidus, the wind not suffering us, we sailed under Crete, over against Salmone; 8 And, hardly passing it, came unto a place which is called The fair havens; nigh whereunto was the city of Lasea. 9 Now when much time was spent, and when sailing was now dangerous, because the fast was now already past, Paul admonished them, 10 And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship, but also of our lives.*

“The winds were still contrary, and the ship’s progress was difficult. . . .

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

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

PRQ2. How might I be in danger of rejecting an inconvenient warning?

Monday, September 13

2. A TREACHEROUS VOYAGE

c. What was finally decided—but with what results? Acts 27:11–17.

Acts 27:11–17: 11 Nevertheless the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul. 12 And because the haven was not commodious to winter in, the more part advised to depart thence also, if by any means they might attain to Phenice, and there to winter; which is an haven of Crete, and lieth toward the south west and north west. 13 And when the south wind blew softly, supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete. 14 But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called Euroclydon. 15 And when the ship was caught, and could not bear up into the wind, we let her drive. 16 And running under a certain island which is called Clauda, we had much work to come by the boat: 17 Which when they had taken up, they used helps, undergirding the ship; and, fearing lest they should fall into the quicksands, strake sail, and so were driven.

“The centurion decided to follow the judgment of the majority. . . .

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

PRQ2. How might I be in danger of rejecting an inconvenient warning?

Tuesday, September 14

3. HOPE TO THE DESPAIRING

a. Describe the struggles that occurred at sea. Acts 27:18–20.

Acts 27:18–20: *18 And we being exceedingly tossed with a tempest, the next day they lightened the ship; 19 And the third day we cast out with our own hands the tackling of the ship. 20 And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away.*

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

PRQ3. *What can I learn from Paul’s care for the heathen aboard ship?*

Tuesday, September 14

3. HOPE TO THE DESPAIRING

b. What did Paul do at this moment—and how could he soon bring hope to all on board? Psalms 55:22; 56:3; Acts 27:21–26.

Psalms 55:22: *22 Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.*

Psalms 56:3: *3 What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.*

Acts 27:21–26: *21 But after long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and loss. 22 And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any mans life among you, but of the ship. 23 For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, 24 Saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. 25 Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me. 26 Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island.*

“While all around were looking only for swift destruction, this man of God, in the serenity of a blameless conscience, was pouring forth his earnest supplications in their behalf.” —Ibid., p.266.

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

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

PRQ3. What can I learn from Paul’s care for the heathen aboard ship?

Wednesday, September 15

4. IMMINENT DANGER

a. What deceptive ploy did the selfish sailors begin in an attempt to save only their own lives (and not the others’)? Acts 27:27–30.

Acts 27:27–30: 27 But when the fourteenth night was come, as we were driven up and down in Adria, about midnight the shipmen deemed that they drew near to some country; 28 And sounded, and found it twenty fathoms: and when they had gone a little further, they sounded again, and found it fifteen fathoms. 29 Then fearing lest we should have fallen upon rocks, they cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day. 30 And as the shipmen were about to flee out of the ship, when they had let down the boat into the sea, under colour as though they would have cast anchors out of the foreship,

“[Passengers and crew] were now threatened by a new danger, of having their ship driven upon some rock-bound coast. They immediately cast out four anchors, which was the only thing that could be done. All through the remaining hours of that night they waited, knowing that any moment might be their last. The leak was constantly increasing, and the ship might sink at any time, even if the anchors held.

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

PRQ4. Why would the selfish plot with the lifeboat never have prospered?

Wednesday, September 15

4. IMMINENT DANGER

b. How did Paul disarm their plot that would not have succeeded? Acts 27:31.

Acts 27:31: *31 Paul said to the centurion and to the soldiers, Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved.*

“Had [the selfish heathen sailors] succeeded, they would have been dashed in pieces upon the rocks, while all on board would have perished from their inability to handle the sinking vessel.

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

PRQ4. *Why would the selfish plot with the lifeboat never have prospered?*

Wednesday, September 15

4. IMMINENT DANGER

c. Explain how, even now, the apostle inspired cheer. Acts 27:32–38.

Acts 27:32–38: *32 Then the soldiers cut off the ropes of the boat, and let her fall off. 33 And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing. 34 Wherefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from the head of any of you. 35 And when he had thus spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat. 36 Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat. 37 And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls. 38 And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea.*

PRQ4. *Why would the selfish plot with the lifeboat never have prospered?*

Thursday, September 16

5. EXACTLY AS FORETOLD

a. Describe the final shipwreck. Acts 27:39–41.

Acts 27:39–41: *39 And when it was day, they knew not the land: but they discovered a certain creek with a shore, into the which they were minded, if it were possible, to thrust in the ship. 40 And when they had taken up the anchors, they committed themselves unto the sea, and loosed the rudder bands, and hoised up the mainsail to the wind, and made toward shore. 41 And falling into a place where two seas met, they ran the ship aground; and the forepart stuck fast, and remained unmoveable, but the hinder part was broken with the violence of the waves.*

PRQ5. *What should I learn from how Paul's prophecy was exactly fulfilled?*

Thursday, September 16

5. EXACTLY AS FORETOLD

b. How did God miraculously preserve all on board? Acts 27:42–44.

Acts 27:42–44: *42 And the soldiers counsel was to kill the prisoners, lest any of them should swim out, and escape. 43 But the centurion, willing to save Paul, kept them from their purpose; and commanded that they which could swim should cast themselves first into the sea, and get to land: 44 And the rest, some on boards, and some on broken pieces of the ship. And so it came to pass, that they escaped all safe to land.*

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

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

PRQ5. *What should I learn from how Paul’s prophecy was exactly fulfilled?*

Friday, September 17

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

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

Lesson 13 - Sabbath, September 25, 2021

In Chains of Honor

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

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

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

Sunday, September 19

1. ON THE ISLAND OF MELITA

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

Acts 28:1–6: *1 And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. 2 And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold. 3 And when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. 4 And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. 5 And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. 6 Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god.*

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

PRQ1. How might situations like being stranded provide opportunities?

Sunday, September 19

1. ON THE ISLAND OF MELITA

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

Acts 28:7–10: *7 In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and lodged us three days courteously. 8 And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. 9 So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed: 10 Who also honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.*

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

PRQ1. How might situations like being stranded provide opportunities?

Monday, September 20

2. MEMORABLE MOMENTS

a. As the journey resumed, what blessing was at Puteoli? Acts 28:11–14.

Acts 28:11–14: *11 And after three months we departed in a ship of Alexandria, which had wintered in the isle, whose sign was Castor and Pollux. 12 And landing at Syracuse, we tarried there three days. 13 And from thence we fetched a compass, and came to Rhegium: and after one day the south wind blew, and we came the next day to Puteoli: 14 Where we found brethren, and were desired to tarry with them seven days: and so we went toward Rome.*

“In this place there were a few Christians, and they entreated the apostle to remain with them for seven days, a privilege kindly granted by the centurion.” — The Acts of the Apostles, p. 447.

PRQ2. *What reveals the power that Paul’s epistles had on believers?*

Monday, September 20

2. MEMORABLE MOMENTS

b. Describe the amazing arrival of Paul in Rome. Acts 28:15, 16.

Acts 28:15-16: *15 And from thence, when the brethren heard of us, they came to meet us as far as Appii Forum, and The three taverns: whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage. 16 And when we came to Rome, the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard: but Paul was suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him.*

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

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

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

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

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

PRQ2. What reveals the power that Paul’s epistles had on believers?

Tuesday, September 21

3. STRENGTHENED FOR THE TASK

a. How was Paul later to express how comforted he was by the way he was received at Rome? 2 Timothy 1:16, 17.

2 Timothy 1:16-17: *16 The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: 17 But, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me.*

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

PRQ3. *How does God use events like Paul’s arrival in Rome to uplift us?*

Tuesday, September 21

3. STRENGTHENED FOR THE TASK

b. Although it could have put his life at risk once again, within three days, what did Paul promptly do in Rome? Acts 28:17–20.

Acts 28:17–20: *17 And it came to pass, that after three days Paul called the chief of the Jews together: and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people, or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans. 18 Who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because there was no cause of death in me. 19 But when the Jews spake against it, I was constrained to appeal unto Caesar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of. 20 For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain.*

“At Rome the centurion Julius delivered up his prisoners to the captain of the emperor’s guard. The good account which he gave of Paul, together with the letter from Festus, caused the apostle to be favorably regarded by the chief captain, and, instead of being thrown into prison, he was permitted to live in his own hired house. Although still constantly chained to a soldier, he was at liberty to receive his friends and to labor for the advancement of the cause of Christ.

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

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

PRQ3. How does God use events like Paul’s arrival in Rome to uplift us?

Wednesday, September 22

4. TESTIFYING AGAIN

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

Acts 28:21–23: *21 And they said unto him, We neither received letters out of Judaea concerning thee, neither any of the brethren that came shewed or spake any harm of thee. 22 But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against. 23 And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and out of the prophets, from morning till evening.*

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

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

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

PRQ4. *What experience of Paul reminds us that God’s timing is perfect?*

Wednesday, September 22

4. TESTIFYING AGAIN

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

Acts 28:24–29: *24 And some believed the things which were spoken, and some believed not. 25 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, 26 Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: 27 For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. 28 Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it. 29 And when he had said these words, the Jews departed, and had great reasoning among themselves.*

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

PRQ4. *What experience of Paul reminds us that God’s timing is perfect?*

Thursday, September 23

5. GOD'S TRUTH VINDICATED

a. Before Paul was later martyred, what was he able to do—and what could he declare? Acts 28:30, 31; 2 Timothy 4:6–8.

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

2 Timothy 4:6–8: *6 For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. 7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: 8 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.*

“While apparently cut off from active labor, Paul exerted a wider and more lasting influence than if he had been free to travel among the churches as in former years.” — The Acts of the Apostles, p. 454.

PRQ5. How can God use me to spread the truth in hard circumstances?

Thursday, September 23

5. GOD'S TRUTH VINDICATED

b. What is to fortify us in the days to come? Psalms 76:10; 119:126.

Psalms 76:10: *10 Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.*

Psalms 119:126: *126 It is time for thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law.*

“God has always wrought for His people in their greatest extremity, when there seemed the least hope that ruin could be averted. The designs of wicked men, the enemies of the church, are subject to His power and overruling providence. He can move upon the hearts of statesmen; the wrath of the turbulent and disaffected, the haters of God, His truth, and His people can be turned aside, even as the rivers of water are turned, if He orders it thus. Prayer moves the arm of Omnipotence. He who marshals the stars in order in the heavens, whose word controls the waves of the great deep, the same infinite Creator will work in behalf of His people if they call upon Him in faith. He will restrain the forces of darkness until the warning is given to the world and all who will heed it are prepared for the conflict. “[Psalm 76:10 quoted.] God means that testing truth shall be brought to the front and become a subject of examination and discussion, even if it is through the contempt placed upon it. The minds of the people must be agitated. Every controversy, every reproach, every slander, will be God’s means of provoking inquiry and awakening minds that otherwise would slumber.”—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, pp. 452, 453.

PRQ5. How can God use me to spread the truth in hard circumstances?

Friday, September 24

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

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