

A SEVEN-WEEK CHALLENGE FOR THE BOOK OF ACTS WEEK SEVEN

Chapter Twenty-five of the Book of Acts – Contrasts

Section One: Vocabulary Activities (including a little tale and an analogy game) for these words: principal, custody, grievous, tribunal, transgressor, appeal, sentence (verb), controversy, pomp, determine, petition, deserve, preliminary, and indicate

Section Two: Questions to Investigate in Chapter Twenty-five—

Why did Paul have to appeal to Caesar?

What contrasts were there between the rulers and Paul?

Why was Governor Festus so confused about Paul he had to ask for help?

How could Paul be a spectacle and at the same time victorious?



Chapter Twenty-six of the Book of Acts – Light in the Darkness

Section One: Vocabulary Activities (including a little tale and an analogy game) for these words: familiar, attain, incredible, convince, hostile, endeavor, undertake, commission, goad, consistent, soundness, and set at liberty.

Section Two: Questions to Investigate in Chapter Twenty-six—

How was Paul able to give the gospel to the rulers and prominent people?

What did Governor Festus shout about Paul?

What hard question did Paul ask King Agrippa directly?

How can Christians be the light of the world?

Chapter Twenty-seven of the Book of Acts – The Terrible Tempest

Section One: Vocabulary Activities (including a crossword puzzle and a little tale) for these words: cargo, weigh anchor, hoist, provision, undergird, overboard, tempest, crew, run aground, surmise, pretense, come to, vessel, bow, plank

Section Two: Questions to Investigate in Chapter Twenty-seven.

Why did the crew lose all hope when the ship was caught in a storm?

What did God promise Paul?

What did Paul say and do to encourage the crew?

What happened when the ship ran aground?



Chapter Twenty-eight of the Book of Acts – God's Provisions

Section One: Vocabulary Activities (including a little tale and the Odd Man Out Game) for these words: local, kindle, bundle, viper, venomous, courteously, dysentery, bestow, figurehead, forum, constrain, insensitive, lodging, interference

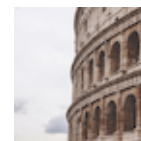
Section Two: Questions to Investigate in Chapter Twenty-eight—

How did God provide for Paul and his companions after the shipwreck?

How did the Christians in Rome encourage Paul?

What kind of response did the Jews in Rome give to Paul's message?

What happened during Paul's two-year imprisonment in Rome?



Copyright © 2021 by Elizabeth Ann Boyles

Permission is given to download this work from <https://elizabethannboyles.com> without charge and to copy and distribute it as needed. However, excepting the quotations of Scripture already in the public domain, this work is copyrighted and may not be sold or used in any way for financial profit.

Scripture passages are from the American Standard Version (public domain), with the English updated to equivalent modern usage.

To confirm or adopt apt words or phrases in the Scripture passages, the NET Bible® <http://netbible.com> copyright ©1996, 2019 was used from time to time with permission from Biblical Studies Press, L.L.C. All rights reserved. To see the full NET Bible text, see <https://netbible.org>.

Graphics: Crafted at <https://bookbrush.com> under the 2021 terms of service.

1. **Hidden Treasure: Mark the fourteen vocabulary words listed in #2.** Also note: *entreat, authority, prove, defense, deliver up, case, confer, affirm, perplexed, and prominent.*

Acts 25:1-12, ¹ Three days after Festus came into the province, he went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea. ² The chief priests and the principal men of the Jews informed him of their charges against Paul. They entreated him as a favor ³ to have Paul brought to Jerusalem, plotting to kill him on the way. ⁴ However, Festus answered that Paul was kept in custody at Caesarea, and that he himself was about to leave for Caesarea shortly. ⁵ Therefore, he said, “Let those who have authority among you go down with me, and if the man has done anything wrong, let them accuse him there.”

⁶ After staying not more than eight or ten days among them, Festus returned to Caesarea. The next day, he took his place on the judgment seat and commanded that Paul be brought in. ⁷ When he had come, the Jews from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many grievous charges against him which they could not prove.

⁸ Paul said in his defense, “I have not committed a wrong act in any way against the law of the Jews, or against the temple, or against Caesar.”

⁹ Festus, desiring to gain favor with the Jews, replied, “Will you go up to Jerusalem and be judged about these things before me there?”

¹⁰ But Paul said, “I am standing before Caesar’s tribunal, where I ought to be tried. I have done no wrong to the Jews, as you also know very well. ¹¹ If I am a transgressor and have done anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die. But if none of the accusations against me is true, no one can deliver me up to them. I appeal to Caesar.”

¹² Then Festus, after he had conferred with his council, answered, “You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you shall go.”

Acts 25:13-22, ¹³ Now when some time had passed, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea and greeted Festus. ¹⁴ Since they stayed there many days, Festus laid Paul’s case before the king, saying, “There is a certain man whom Felix left a prisoner. ¹⁵ When I was in Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews told me about him and asked for a sentence against him. ¹⁶ I answered them that it is not the custom of the Romans to hand over any man before the accused meets the accusers face to face and has had an opportunity to make his defense concerning the matter brought against him. ¹⁷ Therefore, when they came together here, I did not delay, but took my place on the judgment seat the next day, and commanded that the man be brought before me. ¹⁸ When the accusers stood up, they did not bring any charge against him of such serious crimes as I had supposed, ¹⁹ but had their own religious controversies against him, and an issue about one Jesus, who was dead, but whom Paul affirmed to be alive. ²⁰ Being perplexed about how to investigate these things, I asked whether he would go to Jerusalem and be judged there about these matters. ²¹ But when Paul appealed to be held for the decision of the Emperor, I commanded that he be held until I send him to Caesar.”

²² Then Agrippa said to Festus, “I also wish to hear the man myself.”
“Tomorrow,” he answered, “you will hear him.”

Acts 25:23-27, ²³ So the following day, Agrippa and Bernice arrived with great pomp and entered into the hall for the hearing, accompanied by the chief military officers and the

prominent men of the city. At Festus' command, Paul was brought in. ²⁴ Then Festus said, "King Agrippa and all who are present with us, look at this man about whom a great number of Jews petitioned me, both at Jerusalem and here, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. ²⁵ But I found that he had committed nothing deserving of death, and as he himself appealed to the Emperor, I have determined to send him. ²⁶ Because I have no specific thing to write about him to my lord, I have brought him before you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that I may have something to write after this preliminary hearing. ²⁷ For it seems unreasonable to me to send a prisoner without indicating the charges against him."

2. **Read Acts 25 in your own language. Then play this quick matching game.** Time yourself. Can you do it in less than three minutes?

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| _____ 1. principal | A. To make a formal request, often by a group of people |
| _____ 2. custody | B. To make a plea to a higher authority |
| _____ 3. grievous | C. A grand display of importance and/or riches |
| _____ 4. tribunal | D. Taking place before something more important or decisive |
| _____ 5. transgressor | E. To decide firmly; to resolve |
| _____ 6. appeal | F. A disagreement with the sides offering reasons for their stand |
| _____ 7. sentence (verb) | G. Being kept under guard; being under the care of someone |
| _____ 8. controversy | H. To earn good or bad results |
| _____ 9. pomp | I. To declare the punishment being given for a crime |
| _____ 10. determine | J. Most important; leading; chief |
| _____ 11. petition | K. To point out; to identify or specify |
| _____ 12. deserve | L. A court of law |
| _____ 13. preliminary | M. A person who breaks the law or violates a moral standard |
| _____ 14. indicate | N. Dreadful; very bad; serious |

(Answers are at the end.)

3. **Try to use the new words to fill in the blanks without looking at #2 above.**

- When Festus succeeded Felix as governor, the _____ men of the Jews renewed their charges against Paul.
- These Jewish men urged Festus to pronounce a _____ against Paul.
- Festus refused to send Paul to Jerusalem, keeping him in _____ in Caesarea.
- The Roman officials were perplexed about the _____ charges made against Paul.
- Festus had not expected the charges to revolve around religious _____.
- Paul said he would be willing to die if he were truly a _____ of the law.
- Paul declared that the Roman _____ was the correct place for his trial.
- As a Roman citizen, Paul finally claimed his right to _____ to Caesar.
- Because of Paul's appeal to Caesar, Festus _____ to send him to Rome.
- King Agrippa and Bernice entered the hall with great _____.
- Festus told the king how the Jews had _____ him for a guilty verdict for Paul.
- Festus had concluded that Paul had done nothing _____ death.
- He wanted to get the king's opinion during the _____ hearing.
- Festus hoped the king would help him discover what he should _____ to Caesar about Paul's crimes.

(Answers are at the end.)

4. **Use each new word except *tribunal* to complete this little tale.**

- a. One morning Susan discovered that some animal had gotten into an outdoor garbage can and had made a _____ mess all over the neighborhood. Then she saw a forlorn-looking dog trotting toward her. Although there might have been some other culprits too, her _____ suspicion was that this young dog had been the _____ one. It didn't have a collar, so she coaxed it into her car and drove it to an animal shelter. When she reached the shelter, she suddenly felt as though she were _____ the dog to die. She didn't think it _____ to die for getting into the garbage, so she _____ to save its life if necessary. She asked the shelter's director if she could have _____ of the pup if its owner didn't claim it. The director said she could have it if no one claimed it within four days.
- b. When Susan returned home, her decision resulted in a heated _____ with her husband. Then their two children _____ to their dad's sympathy by saying that the poor, abandoned pup wasn't really bad (or much of a _____ in our list) since it hadn't bitten anyone. For three days, the kids _____ their dad to change his mind. Finally, Susan's husband _____ they had won when he rolled his eyes and nodded.
- c. After Susan picked up the dog, the family named him Res, short for rescue. They bought him a soft doggie bed, a fancy feeding bowl, and several squeaky toys – a lot of “_____” for a stray. With so much attention, Res learned to leave the garbage can alone—most of the time.
(Answers are at the end.)

5. **An Analogy Game:** Think about how the first pair of words are related, and then fill in the blank with the best vocabulary word to relate the last pair in the same way.

- a. A farmer is to reap as a judge is to _____.
- b. Careless driving is to danger as an unproved theory is to _____.
- c. Winners are to awards as _____ are to punishments.
- d. Birth is to joyous as death is to _____.
- e. A minor issue is to fairly unimportant as a _____ issue is to very important.
- f. Performers are to fame as kings are to _____.
- g. A custodian is to maintenance as a guard is to _____.
- h. Longshoremen are to seaports as lawyers are to _____.
- i. A pen is to write as a gesture is to _____.
- j. Final is to certain as _____ is to uncertain.

(Answers are at the end.)

Answers for the Matching Game: 1-J, 2-G, 3-N, 4-L, 5-M, 6-B, 7-I, 8-F, 9-C, 10-E, 11-A, 12-H, 13-D, 14-K (Matching the words within three minutes indicates you know these words well.)

Answers for the fill-in-the-blank exercise: a.) principal b.) sentence c.) custody d.) grievous e.) controversy or controversies f.) transgressor g.) tribunal h.) appeal i.) determined j.) pomp k.) petitioned l. deserving m. preliminary n.) indicate

Answers for the little tale: a.) grievous, preliminary, principal, sentencing, deserved, determined, custody. b.) controversy, appealed, transgressor, petitioned, indicated. c.) pomp.

Answers for the Analogy Game: a.) sentence b.) controversy c.) transgressors d.) grievous e.) principal f.) pomp g.) custody h.) tribunals i.) indicate j.) preliminary

Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version, with the English updated to modern usage. The NET Bible® was consulted from time to time to confirm or adopt apt words or phrases.

Background: While Paul was imprisoned, Festus succeeded Felix as the Roman governor of Judea.

I. Political Self-Interest versus Standing for Truth

Acts 25:1-12, ¹ Three days after Festus came into the province, he went up to Jerusalem from Caesarea. ² The chief priests and the principal men of the Jews informed him of their charges against Paul. They entreated him as a favor ³ to have Paul brought to Jerusalem, plotting to kill him on the way. ⁴ However, Festus answered that Paul was kept in custody at Caesarea, and that he himself was about to leave for Caesarea shortly. ⁵ Therefore, he said, “Let those who have authority among you go down with me, and if the man has done anything wrong, let them accuse him there.”

⁶ After staying not more than eight or ten days among them, Festus returned to Caesarea. The next day, he took his place on the judgment seat and commanded that Paul be brought in. ⁷ When he had come, the Jews from Jerusalem stood around him, bringing many grievous charges against him which they could not prove.

⁸ Paul said in his defense, “I have not committed a wrong act in any way against the law of the Jews, or against the temple, or against Caesar.”

⁹ Festus, desiring to gain favor with the Jews, replied, “Will you go up to Jerusalem and be judged about these things before me there?”

¹⁰ But Paul said, “I am standing before Caesar’s tribunal, where I ought to be tried. I have done no wrong to the Jews, as you also know very well. ¹¹ If I am a transgressor and have done anything worthy of death, I do not refuse to die. But if none of the accusations against me is true, no one can deliver me up to them. I appeal to Caesar.”

¹² Then Festus, after he had conferred with his council, answered, “You have appealed to Caesar. To Caesar you shall go.”

A. Felix left Paul in prison to please the Jews (Acts 24:27). Notice how earlier authorities had acted with Jesus:

1. **John 11:47-48,** ⁴⁷ Therefore, the chief priests and the Pharisees called the council together and said, “What shall we do? For this man [Jesus] is performing many signs. ⁴⁸ If we let him alone, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation.” Besides an attack on the nation, what else did the Jewish council fear?
2. **Luke 23:20-23,** ²⁰ Pilate spoke to the crowd again, desiring to release Jesus, ²¹ but they shouted, “Crucify, crucify him.” ²² He said to them the third time, “Why? What crime has this man done? I have found no cause in him for death. Therefore, I will punish him and release him.” ²³ But they were urgent with loud voices, asking that he be crucified. And their voices prevailed. What was at the root of Pilate’s failure?

B. What pressures today make it difficult for a politician to be honest and humble?

Important decisions may come our way too, and we may not have time to think about the results. We too face pressure to agree with others and to protect ourselves. To make the right decision quickly, what is needed? (See Romans 12:1-2.) A daily morning prayer might be: “Here I am,

Lord. I trust your Spirit to work in me. Use me today for your purposes.” Scripture and prayer can prepare our mind for what is coming.

C. Let’s look at some contrasts of standing for truth and doing the right thing:

1. Which of Paul’s statements in the section above especially stand for justice? What did Paul say that rebuked Festus for his injustice?
2. When Peter and John were arrested, the chief priest rebuked them for disobeying the order to stop speaking about Jesus and His resurrection. We saw their reply in **Acts 4:19-20: “Whether it is right in the sight of God to heed you rather than God, you should judge,²⁰ for we must speak the things which we saw and heard.”**
3. **John 12:1-7,¹ Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus raised from the dead. . . ³ Mary, taking a pound of ointment of pure nard, which was very valuable, anointed Jesus’ feet and wiped them with her hair. . . ⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of Jesus’ disciples, who would betray him, said, ⁵ “Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred silver coins and given to the poor?” . . . ⁷ Jesus replied, “Leave her alone. She has kept it for the day of my burial.”** What type of opposition did Mary receive? Why would that type cause pain? Why was her gift not a waste?

D. In the conversation between Festus and King Agrippa, see if you can spot Festus’ cover-up.

Acts 25:13-22,¹³ Now when some time had passed, King Agrippa and Bernice arrived at Caesarea and greeted Festus. ¹⁴ Since they stayed there many days, Festus laid Paul’s case before the king, saying, “There is a certain man whom Felix left a prisoner. ¹⁵ When I was in Jerusalem, the chief priests and the elders of the Jews told me about him and asked for a sentence against him. ¹⁶ I answered them that it is not the custom of the Romans to hand over any man before the accused meets the accusers face to face and has had an opportunity to make his defense concerning the matter brought against him. ¹⁷ Therefore, when they came together here, I did not delay, but took my place on the judgment seat the next day, and commanded that the man be brought before me. ¹⁸ When the accusers stood up, they did not bring any charge against him of such serious crimes as I had supposed, ¹⁹ but had their own religious controversies against him, and an issue about one Jesus, who was dead, but whom Paul affirmed to be alive. ²⁰ Being perplexed about how to investigate these things, I asked whether he would go to Jerusalem and be judged there about these matters. ²¹ But when Paul appealed to be held for the decision of the Emperor, I commanded that he be held until I send him to Caesar.”

²² Then Agrippa said to Festus, “I also wish to hear the man myself.”

“Tomorrow,” he answered, “you will hear him.”

Compare Acts 25:9 and 20. What did Festus cover up in verse 20?

II. Great Pomp versus “This Man”

Acts 25:23-27,²³ So the following day, Agrippa and Bernice arrived with great pomp and entered into the hall for the hearing, accompanied by the chief military officers and the prominent men of the city. At Festus’ command, Paul was brought in. ²⁴ Then Festus said, “King Agrippa and all who are present with us, look at this man about whom a great number of Jews petitioned me, both at Jerusalem and here, shouting that he ought not to live any longer. ²⁵ But I found that he had committed nothing deserving of death, and as he

himself appealed to the Emperor, I have determined to send him. ²⁶ Because I have no specific thing to write about him to my lord, I have brought him before you, and especially before you, King Agrippa, so that I may have something to write after this preliminary hearing. ²⁷ For it seems unreasonable to me to send a prisoner without indicating the charges against him.”

A. In contrast to the “great pomp” that accompanied Agrippa and Bernice and the phrase “my lord” for the emperor, how did Festus refer to Paul in verse 24?
(Yet, the reason these Roman officials are remembered now is their connection to “this man.”)

B. Paul’s testimony

While still free in Ephesus, Paul wrote in **I Corinthians 4:9, I think God has set us apostles in last place [as in a procession], like captives sentenced to die, for we are made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and men.** In what way was Paul a “spectacle” (something unusual or strange to look at) to Festus, Agrippa, and the other prominent people?

But Paul also wrote in **I Corinthians 15:57-58** in the same letter: ⁵⁷ **But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.** ⁵⁸ **Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.** Have you ever been looked down on for doing what is right and living as a Christian? Paul says that was *not in vain!*

C. Jesus’ statement

Matthew 19:29-30, ²⁹ **“Everyone who has left houses, or brothers or sisters, or father or mother, or children, or lands for my name’s sake will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.** ³⁰ **But many shall be last who are first, and first who are last.”**

Princess Diana and Mother Teresa died within five days of each other. Although each death made the news, think how the world focused on every detail of Diana’s death and funeral. She was first in the eyes of the world. Diana did share some of her great riches with poor people. Yet the princess and Mother Teresa will find a different standard before the Lord.

In summary, how can Acts 25 help us keep the correct viewpoints?

III. Making Memories

What is a key truth from Acts 25 that you want to remember?

Underline or highlight one important verse in Acts 25 that will help you remember what took place in this chapter.

Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version, with the English updated to modern usage. The NET Bible® was consulted from time to time to confirm or adopt apt words or phrases.

Vocabulary Activities for Acts 26
Light in the Darkness

1. **Hidden Treasure: Mark the twelve vocabulary words listed in #2.** Notice these previous words: *defense, controversy, entreat, affirm, forefather, earnestly, saint, condemn, blaspheme, enraged, persecute, inheritance, sanctify, repent, obtain, lost one's mind, and deserve.*

Acts 26:1-18, ¹ Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for yourself." Then Paul gestured with his hand and began his defense.

² "I think myself fortunate, King Agrippa, to be able to make my defense before you this day concerning all the things I am accused of by the Jews, ³ because you are especially familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews. Therefore, I entreat you to hear me patiently.

⁴ "All the Jews know the way I lived from my youth, which began among my own people and then continued at Jerusalem. ⁵ If they were willing to testify, they could affirm since they have known me from past times, that I lived as a Pharisee according to the strictest party of our religion. ⁶ Now I am standing here to be judged for the hope of the promise given by God to our forefathers. ⁷ This is the promise our twelve tribes, who earnestly serve God night and day, hope to attain. It is about this hope that the Jews have accused me, O king! ⁸ Why is it considered incredible among you people that God raises the dead? ⁹ It is true that I too was convinced that I should do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰ This is what I did in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but I also gave my vote against them when they were condemned to die. ¹¹ And while often punishing them in all the synagogues, I endeavored to make them blaspheme. Being enraged against them, I persecuted them even in foreign cities.

¹² "For this purpose, I undertook a journey to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. ¹³ While on the way, O king, at midday I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those traveling with me. ¹⁴ When we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is painful for you to kick against the goads.' ¹⁵ I said, 'Who are you, Lord?'

"The Lord replied, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. ¹⁶ But get up and stand on your feet. For this reason, I have appeared to you, to designate you in advance to be a servant and a witness of the things which you have seen of me, and of the things in which I will appear to you. ¹⁷ I will deliver you from your people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you ¹⁸ to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'"

Acts 26:19-23, ¹⁹ "Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision, ²⁰ but first to those at Damascus, then at Jerusalem and throughout all the country of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, I declared that they should repent and turn to God, doing deeds consistent with repentance. ²¹ This is the reason the Jews seized me in the temple courts and were trying to kill me. ²² Having obtained the help that is from God, I can stand this day, testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come. ²³ They told how the Christ had to suffer and how he would be the first to rise from the dead, to proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles."

Acts 26:24-32, ²⁴ As Paul was making this defense, Festus cried with a loud voice, “Paul, you have lost your mind; your great learning is driving you insane.”

²⁵ But Paul replied, “I am not insane, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking words of truth and soundness. ²⁶ The king knows about these things. I can speak freely to him because I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for all this has not been done in a corner. ²⁷ King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you believe.”

²⁸ Agrippa said to Paul, “In such a short period do you attempt to make me a Christian?”

²⁹ Paul answered, “I pray to God, that whether in a short or a long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am, except for these chains.”

³⁰ Then the king stood up, as did the governor, Bernice, and those with them. ³¹ As they withdrew, they spoke to one another, saying, “This man has done nothing deserving death or imprisonment.” ³² Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been set at liberty if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

2. **Read Acts 26 in your own language. Then play this quick matching game.** Time yourself.

Can you do it in two minutes?

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| _____ 1. familiar | A. To try hard to do something |
| _____ 2. attain | B. An order or duty given to a person or persons |
| _____ 3. incredible | C. Continuing in the same way, especially to match a standard |
| _____ 4. convince | D. A stick having sharp spikes to guide an animal |
| _____ 5. hostile | E. Known because of previous contact |
| _____ 6. endeavor | F. To reach a desired goal; to achieve something worked for |
| _____ 7. undertake | G. To cause someone to accept something as true; to persuade |
| _____ 8. commission | H. Unbelievable; extraordinary (informally) |
| _____ 9. goad | I. Being strongly against; acting as an enemy |
| _____ 10. consistent | J. To accept responsibility for something and act on it |
| _____ 11. soundness | K. Freed from imprisonment or restraint |
| _____ 12. set at liberty | L. Having a good condition or a foundation of correct thinking |

(Answers are at the end.)

3. **Try to use the new words to fill in the blanks without looking at #2 above.**

- King Agrippa was _____ with the customs and controversies of the Jews.
- Paul reminded King Agrippa that the Jews hoped to _____ the promised resurrection.
- Since God is the Creator, no one should find the resurrection _____.
- Before encountering Jesus, Paul was _____ he should persecute Christians.
- He thought he was serving God by being _____ to the Christian church.
- During his persecution of Christians, Paul _____ to make them blaspheme God.
- Paul _____ a journey to Damascus in order to arrest the Christians there.
- A chief priest had given Paul a _____ to arrest any Christians he found.
- Jesus said the persecution hurt Paul himself, like an ox that kicked against the _____.
- Paul said that believers would show their faith by deeds _____ with repentance.
- Paul told Festus that his message was based on _____ and truth.
- King Agrippa said Paul could have been _____ were it not for his appeal.

(Answers are at the end.)

4. **Use the new words to complete this little tale.** One word will be used twice, and one blank can be filled by either *endeavor* or *undertaking*.

- John had wanted to explore the Alaskan wilderness ever since a television program had

helped him become _____ with the state. He had a good job working as a surveyor in Oregon, but he was not contented. His boss told him he'd better stop kicking against the _____, like a farm animal, but John didn't agree. He was _____ he could find a way to _____ his dream if only he could be _____ from his boring job by paying off his student loans and credit cards.

- b. One day John saw a government posting about a job for a surveyor to work out of Fairbanks, Alaska. The salary and benefits would take care of his debts. The government would give him a _____ to survey the backwoods so that future explorers could be sure of the resulting map's _____. The opportunity was so great that John found it almost _____. John's friends told him he was crazy to want to live so far north, but he explained how the move would be _____ with his lifelong dream.
- c. After John arrived in Alaska, he could hardly wait to start work. He felt he would be paid for an _____ that couldn't be better. But at the end of two years, John hightailed it back to Oregon. Slogging through ice and snow, running from a _____ bear, getting lost for a week, and dark, lonely winters were not _____ with what he had imagined. Still, John had remarkable memories and a new contentment with his old job—one that gave him weekends to explore the beautiful countryside that lay all around him.

(Answers are at the end.)

5. **An Analogy Game:** Think about how the first pair of words are related, and then fill in the blank with the best new vocabulary word to relate the last pair in the same way.

- Fear is to danger as trust is to _____.
- Win is to contest as _____ is to goal.
- Find is to lost as _____ is to kidnapped.
- Unfaithful is to disloyal as unbelievable is to _____.
- Threat is to people as _____ is to oxen.
- Run is to a race as _____ is to a task. (Two answers are possible.)
- Varying is to different as _____ is to same.
- King is to command as council is to _____.
- Friendly is to friend as _____ is to enemy.
- Stranger is to unknown as acquaintance is to _____.

(Answers are at the end.)

Answers for the Matching Game: 1-E, 2-F, 3-H, 4-G, 5-I, 6-A, 7-J, 8-B, 9-D, 10-C, 11-L, 12-K (If you matched the words within two minutes, you have attained more fluency already!)

Answers for the fill-in-the-blank exercise: a.) familiar b.) attain c.) incredible d.) convinced e.) hostile f.) endeavored g.) undertook h.) commission i.) goad j.) consistent k.) soundness l.) set at liberty

Answers for the little tale: a.) familiar, goad, convinced, attain, set at liberty. b.) commission, soundness, incredible, consistent. c.) endeavor or undertaking, hostile, consistent.

Answers for the Analogy Game: a.) soundness b.) attain c.) set at liberty d.) incredible e.) goad f.) undertake or endeavor to do g.) consistent h.) commission i.) hostile j.) familiar

Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version, with the English updated to modern usage. The NET Bible® was consulted from time to time to confirm or adopt apt words or phrases.

Investigating Acts 26 Light in the Darkness

Background: During Paul's trial before Governor Festus, Paul appealed to Caesar for a trial in Rome. When King Herod Agrippa II and Bernice visited Festus, the king asked to hear Paul.

King Agrippa was the ruler of northern and eastern sections of the Roman province of Palestine (Israel). Because the Herod family was part Jewish, the Roman emperor had also given Agrippa charge of the temple in Jerusalem and the power to appoint the high priest. Agrippa's great-uncle was the Herod who had killed John the Baptist and questioned Jesus during Jesus' trial. His father had killed James, one of the Twelve Disciples. Bernice was Agrippa's sister and mistress.

I. Paul's Transformation and the Gospel

Acts 26:1-18, ¹ Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for yourself." Then Paul gestured with his hand and began his defense.

² "I think myself fortunate, King Agrippa, to be able to make my defense before you this day concerning all the things I am accused of by the Jews, ³ because you are especially familiar with all the customs and controversies of the Jews. Therefore, I entreat you to hear me patiently.

⁴ "All the Jews know the way I lived from my youth, which began among my own people and then continued at Jerusalem. ⁵ If they were willing to testify, they could affirm since they have known me from past times, that I lived as a Pharisee according to the strictest party of our religion. ⁶ Now I am standing here to be judged for the hope of the promise given by God to our forefathers. ⁷ This is the promise our twelve tribes, who earnestly serve God night and day, hope to attain. It is about this hope that the Jews have accused me, O king! ⁸ Why is it considered incredible among you people that God raises the dead? ⁹ "It is true that I too was convinced that I should do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. ¹⁰ This is what I did in Jerusalem. I not only locked up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but I also gave my vote against them when they were condemned to die. ¹¹ And while often punishing them in all the synagogues, I endeavored to make them blaspheme. Being enraged against them, I persecuted them even in foreign cities.

¹² "For this purpose, I undertook a journey to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests. ¹³ While on the way, O king, at midday I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining around me and those traveling with me. ¹⁴ When we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in Aramaic, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is painful for you to kick against the goads.' ¹⁵ I said, 'Who are you, Lord?'

"The Lord replied, 'I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. ¹⁶ But get up and stand on your feet. For this reason, I have appeared to you, to designate you in advance to be a servant and a witness of the things which you have seen of me, and of the things in which I will appear to you. ¹⁷ I will deliver you from your people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you ¹⁸ to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'"

A. In addition to God's promise of the Messiah/Savior, what was the *promise* Paul was speaking about in verse 6? (Hint: See verse 8)

B. *Goads* are sticks having sharp spikes, which are used to get animals to go in the right direction. If the animal kicks against the goad, it injures itself. What do Jesus' words, "It is hard for you to kick against the goads," tell us about Paul and his persecution of Christians?

C. Paul summarized three revelations he had: the one with Jesus on the road, the message Ananias gave Paul from Jesus, and the message he received from Jesus later while in Jerusalem.

1. Let's look at how Jesus described people who are not believers: They are spiritually _____. They live in spiritual _____. They are influenced by _____.
2. Now let's look at Jesus' description of believers. Their eyes have been _____ spiritually. They are living in _____. They have turned from the power of Satan to _____. Their sins are _____. They have an _____ in God's kingdom because faith in Jesus has sanctified them (set them apart for God).

What parts of Paul's statements might have been the most shocking to his listeners?

D. Paul's message included the gospel for all those "important" people listening to him. What did he say about people's need? God's answer? The resurrection (and prophecy)?

E. Jesus had reminded Paul of Isaiah's prophecies, and Paul repeats parts of them: **Isaiah 43:10**,¹⁰ **"You are my witnesses," says the Lord, "and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me there was no God formed, neither will there be after me."** What two words were quoted in Acts 26:16?

Isaiah 42:6-7,⁶ **"I, the Lord, have called you [the Messiah] in righteousness, and I take hold of your hand and will protect you and give you for a covenant [agreement] for people and a light to the Gentiles,⁷ to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from dungeons, and those who live in darkness out of the prisons."** What words were repeated in Acts 26:18? Why would prophecies have been important to King Agrippa? (Acts 26:3)

II. Continuing the Core of the Gospel

Acts 26:19-23,¹⁹ **"Therefore, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,²⁰ but first to those at Damascus, then at Jerusalem and throughout all the country of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, I declared that they should repent and turn to God, doing deeds consistent with repentance.²¹ This is the reason the Jews seized me in the temple courts and were trying to kill me.²² Having obtained the help that is from God, I can stand this day, testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come.²³ They told how the Christ had to suffer and how he would be the first to rise from the dead, to proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles."**

A. In Acts 26:19, what did Paul say was the authority for his preaching?

B. In verse 20, what message was again meant to show his listeners the need for a Savior?

C. In verse 23, Paul spoke of **Isaiah 53**. Here are two verses to illustrate the prophecy.

6 . . . Each of us has turned to his own way, and the Lord has laid on him the sin of us all . . .

¹¹ He will be satisfied when he thinks back on the suffering of his soul.

III. The Responses

Acts 26:24-32,²⁴ **As Paul was making this defense, Festus cried with a loud voice, "Paul, you have lost your mind; your great learning is driving you insane."**

²⁵ But Paul replied, “I am not insane, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking words of truth and soundness. ²⁶ The king knows about these things. I can speak freely to him because I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for all this has not been done in a corner. ²⁷ King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you believe.” ²⁸ Agrippa said to Paul, “In such a short period do you attempt to make me a Christian?” ²⁹ Paul answered, “I pray to God, that whether in a short or a long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am, except for these chains.” ³⁰ Then the king stood up, as did the governor, Bernice, and those with them. ³¹ As they withdrew, they spoke to one another, saying, “This man has done nothing deserving death or imprisonment.” ³² Agrippa said to Festus, “This man could have been set at liberty if he had not appealed to Caesar.”

A. Think about King Agrippa’s evil family line, his display of pomp, and his immorality. Jesus said in **Matthew. 5:44** “**But I say to you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.**” Paul cared enough about Agrippa to risk the man’s ridicule and anger.

B. If Agrippa had said he didn’t believe the prophets, the Jews would have been angry. If he had said he did believe the prophets, he might have seemed to agree with Paul. How did he avoid the question? Despite his opportunity, his lifestyle may have stopped him from pursuing the truth.

C. King Agrippa did not accept Paul’s message. Festus could not understand it at all. However, others in the audience may have been touched. Paul made the most of the opportunity.

IV. The Light of the World

A. In what ways do you think spiritual *light* is like the physical *light*?

B. What truths can we find about *light* for Christians in these two passages?

John 8:12, Therefore, Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “**I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life.**”

II Corinthians 4:6-7, ⁶ Seeing it is God . . . who shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. ⁷ But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the greatness of the power may be of God, and not from ourselves.

C. We are living in a beautiful, yet deeply broken world. **Ephesians 5:8-9** tells how we can help display the light of the gospel: ⁸ **You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light,** ⁹ **for the fruit of the light is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.**

Ephesians 5:15-16 gives more instruction about our “walk.” ¹⁵ **Therefore, be careful how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise;** ¹⁶ **redeeming the time, because the days are evil.** *Redeem* means to take back something that someone else has gotten. The Net Bible translates *redeeming the time* as *taking advantage of every opportunity*. What are some examples of how to do this?

V. Making Memories

What is a key truth from Acts 26 that you want to remember?

Mark one verse in Acts 26 to help you remember what took place in this chapter.

Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version, with the English updated to modern usage. The NET Bible® was consulted from time to time to confirm or adopt apt words or phrases.

1. **In Acts 27 mark the fifteen vocabulary words or phrases listed in #2.** Notice also these previous words: *accompany, perceive, convince, grant, fast, perish, and release.*

Acts 27:1-2, ¹ When it was decided that we would sail to Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were handed over to a centurion named Julius of the Augustan Cohort. ² Boarding a ship from Adramyttium, which was about to sail to locations on the coast of the province of Asia, we put out to sea, accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica.

Acts 27:9-26, ⁹ When much time had gone by and the voyage was now dangerous because the Fast was already over, Paul cautioned them, ¹⁰ saying, “Men, I perceive that the voyage will be with damage and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives.” ¹¹ But the centurion was more convinced by the captain and the owner of the ship than by what Paul had said. ¹² Because the harbor was not good to winter in, the majority advised sailing from there, hoping that by any means they could reach Phoenix on Crete, whose harbor faced northeast and southeast, and spend the winter there. ¹³ When a south wind blew gently, supposing they could carry out their plan, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete, close to the shore. ¹⁴ But in a short time, a violent wind called Euraquilo [a northeaster] blew down from the island. ¹⁵ When the ship was caught and could not head into the wind, we gave way and were driven by it. ¹⁶ Running under the lee of a small island called Cauda, we were able, with difficulty, to secure the ship’s small boat. ¹⁷ After they had hoisted it up, the men used provisions [probably cables or ropes] to undergird the ship itself. Fearing they would wreck on the Syrtis [dangerous waters off Africa], they lowered the sea anchor and were driven along by the wind. ¹⁸ As we struggled with the storm the next day, they began throwing the cargo overboard. ¹⁹ On the third day, they threw the ship’s tackle [equipment] overboard with their own hands. ²⁰ When neither sun nor stars shone on us for many days and the violent tempest continued, all hope that we would be saved was lost.

²¹ When the crew had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up among them and said, “Men, you should have listened to me and not have sailed from Crete, bringing about this damage and loss. ²² Now, I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only the loss of the ship. ²³ For last night, an angel of the God, whom I belong to and serve, ²⁴ stood by me, saying, ‘Fear not, Paul; you must stand before Caesar, and God has granted you the lives of all those sailing with you.’ ²⁵ Therefore, men, take heart, for I believe God that what has been told me is exactly what will take place. ²⁶ But we must run aground on a certain island.”

Acts 27:27-38, ²⁷ About midnight on the fourteenth night, while we were being driven along in the Adriatic Sea, the sailors surmised that they were approaching land. ²⁸ The soundings they took showed a depth of twenty fathoms [120 feet]; and a little farther along, the sounding showed fifteen fathoms [ninety feet]. ²⁹ Fearing that we would wreck on a rocky shoreline, they dropped four anchors from the stern [back of the ship] and waited for the day. ³⁰ Then some sailors lowered the ship’s boat into the sea, seeking to escape from the ship using the pretense of putting down anchors from the bow. ³¹ Paul said to the centurion

and the soldiers, “Unless these men stay with the ship, you cannot be saved.”³² Then the soldiers cut the ropes of the boat and let it go.

³³ When the day was dawning, Paul urged everyone to eat some food, saying, “This is the fourteenth day that you have been waiting the outcome and fasting, eating nothing.

³⁴ Therefore, I urge you to take some food for your wellbeing. Not one hair will perish from the head of any of you.”³⁵ After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of everyone. Then he broke off a piece and began to eat.³⁶ They were all encouraged, and they also took some food.³⁷ All of us on the ship together came to 276 persons.³⁸ When they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship by throwing the wheat into the sea.

Acts 27:39-44,³⁹ When day came, they did not recognize the land, but they spotted a bay with a beach. They decided to try to drive the ship up onto the beach.⁴⁰ Releasing the anchors, they left them in the sea. At the same time, they loosened the bands binding the rudders. Hoisting up the foresail to the wind, they made for the beach.⁴¹ But meeting with crosscurrents, the vessel ran aground. The bow stuck fast and remained unmovable, and the powerful waves began to break up the stern.⁴² The soldiers’ plan was to kill the prisoners so that none could swim away and escape.⁴³ But the centurion, desiring to save Paul, stopped them from carrying out their plan. He commanded those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to the land.⁴⁴ The rest were to make use of planks and other wreckage from the ship. And so it came about that all safely made it to land.

2. **Read Acts 27 in your own language. Then play this quick matching game.** Time yourself.

Can you do it within three minutes?

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| _____ 1. cargo | A. A ship (in this context); a container |
| _____ 2. weigh anchor | B. The group who work on a ship, plane, or certain other jobs |
| _____ 3. hoist | C. Goods carried on a ship, truck, or plane |
| _____ 4. provision | D. Acting like something is true when it is not |
| _____ 5. undergird | E. The front end of the ship |
| _____ 6. overboard | F. To raise the ship’s anchor in order to set sail |
| _____ 7. tempest | G. To bring a ship into places or onto objects where it cannot float |
| _____ 8. crew | H. To strengthen by passing a rope or chain under the object; to supply a strong foundation of facts |
| _____ 9. run aground | I. A very strong storm |
| _____ 10. surmise | J. Adds up to; totals |
| _____ 11. pretense | K. A supply of needed materials |
| _____ 12. comes to | L. To think something is true without complete proof |
| _____ 13. vessel | M. Going from a ship into the water |
| _____ 14. bow | N. A long, flat board |
| _____ 15. plank | O. To raise up using ropes and pulleys |

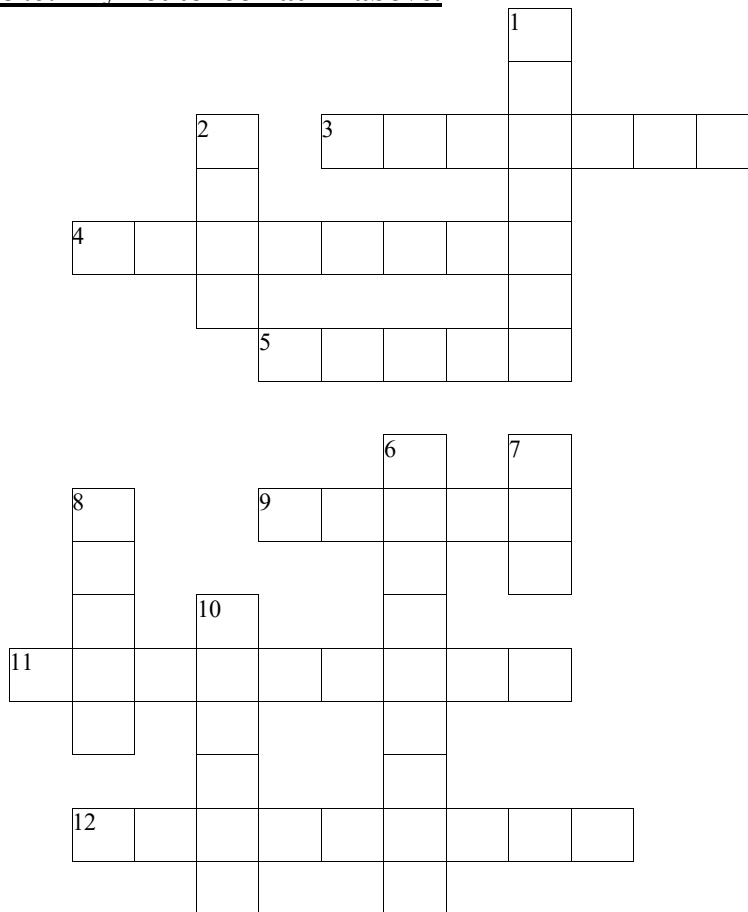
(Answers are at the end.)

3. **Try to use the new words to fill in the blanks without looking at #2 above.**

- Paul said that leaving Fair Havens would endanger the _____ and even their lives.
- The centurion did not take Paul’s advice, so the ship _____ and set sail.
- Because of the storm, the crew _____ the ship’s small boat out of the water.
- The men used the ship’s _____ of ropes or cables to help hold the ship together.
- This use of ropes or cables to _____ the ship shows how much danger they were in.

- f. Then they began to throw the cargo _____ to keep the ship afloat.
 - g. The ship was caught in the terrible _____ for two weeks.
 - h. The _____ and passengers gave up all hope of being saved.
 - i. God revealed that the ship would _____, but no lives would be lost.
 - j. On the last night, the sailors _____ they were approaching land.
 - k. Some sailors planned to abandon the ship by using the _____ of putting down anchors.
 - l. The number of persons on the ship _____ 276.
 - m. When the crew tried to drive the ship onto a beach, the _____ ran aground.
 - n. The _____ of the ship became stuck and couldn't be moved.
 - o. All the people either swam or used _____ and other wreckage to reach the shore.
- (Answers are at the end.)*

4. Use all of the new vocabulary words in this crossword puzzle except *weigh anchor, run aground, and come to*. Try not to look at #2 above.



Across

- 3. To think something is true
- 4. Acting like something is true when it's not
- 5. To raise up using ropes and pulleys
- 9. Goods carried on a ship, truck, or plane
- 11. To strengthen by passing a rope underneath
- 12. Going from a ship into the water

Down

- 1. A very strong storm
- 2. The group of people who work on a ship, etc.
- 6. A supply of needed materials
- 7. The front end of a ship
- 8. A long, flat board
- 10. A ship or a container

5. Use each of the new words one time to complete this little story.

a. In parts of the Mediterranean Sea, pirates occasionally try to take over a ship to steal its _____ or demand a ransom. After Captain Francisco Moreno's ship _____ and left a Libyan port's harbor, he kept an eye out for trouble. He warned the guards on lookout duty to alert him immediately if any suspicious rowboats were heading toward the ship with the _____ of fishing.

b. Modern pirates operate differently than the ones several hundred years ago. Then the pirates would _____ their own flag, chase a merchant ship, and fire cannon to start the attack. If the pirates won the battle, the captain who fought the pirates might be made to walk off the end of a _____ that stretched over the deep waters. Nowadays, pirates armed with machine guns may try to board a ship. Any guard they meet is likely to be killed and perhaps thrown _____. If pirates who are too confident get control of the _____ by overpowering the captain and crew, their inexperience with the ship can cause more trouble, such as _____ the ship _____ on a sandbar or damaging the _____ on a hidden reef. In addition to the possible loss of life, financial losses due to piracy can _____ millions of dollars. Owners of ships demand that their investment be _____ by good insurance policies and highly trained _____.

c. Captain Moreno's ship wasn't attacked by pirates, but he did have to steer the ship through the wind and high waves of a _____ while in the middle of the sea. Fortunately, the vessel had up-to-date equipment and also enough _____, so the slower progress due to the storm didn't hurt. However, we can _____ that the captain was thankful when he arrived safely at his home port on the coast of Spain.

(Answers are at the end.)

Answers for the Matching Game: 1-C, 2-F, 3-O, 4-K, 5-H, 6-M, 7-I, 8-B, 9-G, 10-L, 11-D, 12-J, 13-A, 14-E, 15-N (If you matched the words within three minutes, one can surmise that you know these words well.)

Answers for the fill-in-the-blank exercise: a.) cargo b.) weighed anchor c.) hoisted d.) provision(s) e.) undergird f.) overboard g.) tempest h.) crew i.) run aground j.) surmised k.) pretense l.) came to m.) vessel n.) bow o.) planks

Answers for the little tale: a.) cargo, weighed anchor, pretense. b.) hoist, plank, overboard, vessel, running . . . aground, bow, come to, undergirded, crews. c.) tempest, provisions, surmise.

Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version, with the English updated to modern usage. The NET Bible® was consulted from time to time to confirm or adopt apt words or phrases.

I. The Journey to Rome Begins

Acts 27:1-2, ¹ When it was decided that we would sail to Italy, Paul and some other prisoners were handed over to a centurion named Julius of the Augustan Cohort.

² Boarding a ship from Adramyttium, which was about to sail to locations on the coast of the province of Asia, we put out to sea, accompanied by Aristarchus, a Macedonian from Thessalonica.

A. Luke and Aristarchus, who had traveled and suffered hardship with Paul (Acts 19:29 and 20:4), took the same ship. Luke and Aristarchus could have left Paul when he was arrested, but they stayed with him. What does that say about their relationship with Paul and the Lord?

B. Acts 27:3-8 describes the slow progress of the journey, Julius' kindness in allowing Paul to visit friends while at Sidon, and the transfer to a larger ship. Finally, this ship arrived at Fair Havens on the island of Crete, and a decision had to be made whether or not to stay at Fair Havens.

II. The Storm

Acts 27:9-26, ⁹ When much time had gone by and the voyage was now dangerous because the Fast [the Day of Atonement] was already over, Paul cautioned them, ¹⁰ saying, "Men, I perceive that the voyage will be with damage and much loss, not only of the cargo and the ship, but also of our lives." ¹¹ But the centurion was more convinced by the captain and the owner of the ship than by what Paul had said. ¹² Because the harbor was not good to winter in, the majority advised sailing from there, hoping that by any means they could reach Phoenix on Crete, whose harbor faced northeast and southeast, and spend the winter there. ¹³ When a south wind blew gently, supposing they could carry out their plan, they weighed anchor and sailed along Crete, close to the shore. ¹⁴ But in a short time, a violent wind called Euraquilo [a northeaster] blew down from the island. ¹⁵ When the ship was caught and could not head into the wind, we gave way and were driven by it.

¹⁶ Running under the lee of a small island called Cauda, we were able, with difficulty, to secure the ship's small boat. ¹⁷ After they had hoisted it up, the men used provisions [probably cables or ropes] to undergird the ship itself. Fearing they would wreck on the Syrtis [dangerous waters off Africa], they lowered the sea anchor and were driven along by the wind. ¹⁸ As we struggled with the storm the next day, they began throwing the cargo overboard. ¹⁹ On the third day, they threw the ship's tackle [equipment] overboard with their own hands. ²⁰ When neither sun nor stars shone on us for many days and the violent tempest continued, all hope that we would be saved was lost.

²¹ When the crew had gone a long time without food, Paul stood up among them and said, "Men, you should have listened to me and not have sailed from Crete, bringing about this damage and loss. ²² Now, I urge you to take heart, for there will be no loss of life among you, but only the loss of the ship. ²³ For last night, an angel of the God, whom I belong to and serve, ²⁴ stood by me, saying, 'Fear not, Paul; you must stand before Caesar, and God has granted you the lives of all those sailing with you.' ²⁵ Therefore, men, take heart, for I believe God that what has been told me is exactly what will take place. ²⁶ But we must run aground on a certain island."

A. The Day of Atonement in 59 A.D. was in early October. Ships avoided sailing on the Mediterranean in much of the winter, and October was already entering a risky period. Paul had been in three shipwrecks (II Corinthians 11:25) and had much experience on ships. He was able to give advice, possibly because of being a Roman citizen, but his advice wasn't taken.

B. Let's think about the bad conditions for those on the ship in the storm:

The clouds covered the sun and stars, so they had nothing to guide them. They didn't know where they were. They had no outside help from people or seemingly from God or their gods. The struggle just to survive day after day removed their interest in food or anything else. They had to throw everything of value overboard to lighten the ship. Finally, they lost all hope.

C. God encouraged Paul by sending an angel. These messengers of God may have spoken to early Christians more often because they did not have the full New Testament. How does God usually encourage people who are having a hard time today? Can you give an example? Also, was there a time when you sensed an angel's help?

D. Paul described his relationship with God as "the God whom I belong to and serve." Why would this have surprised the crew who would have been familiar with the Roman/Greek gods?

E. What blessings (plural) did the ship's passengers and crew receive because of Paul?

III. Struggle and Further Encouragement

Acts 27:27-38, ²⁷ About midnight on the fourteenth night, while we were being driven along in the Adriatic Sea, the sailors surmised that they were approaching land. ²⁸ The soundings they took showed a depth of twenty fathoms [120 feet]; and a little farther along, the sounding showed fifteen fathoms [ninety feet]. ²⁹ Fearing that we would wreck on a rocky shoreline, they dropped four anchors from the stern [back of the ship] and waited for the day. ³⁰ Then some sailors lowered the ship's boat into the sea, seeking to escape from the ship using the pretense of putting down anchors from the bow. ³¹ Paul said to the centurion and the soldiers, "Unless these men stay with the ship, you cannot be saved." ³² Then the soldiers cut the ropes of the boat and let it go.

³³ When the day was dawning, Paul urged everyone to eat some food, saying, "This is the fourteenth day that you have been waiting the outcome and fasting, eating nothing.

³⁴ Therefore, I urge you to take some food for your wellbeing. Not one hair will perish from the head of any of you." ³⁵ After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of everyone. Then he broke off a piece and began to eat. ³⁶ They were all encouraged, and they also took some food. ³⁷ All of us on the ship together came to 276 persons. ³⁸ When they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship by throwing the wheat into the sea.

A. In what ways were Paul's actions very unusual for a prisoner?

If you had been part of the crew, what about Paul do you think might have amazed you the most?

B. Besides Paul (and no doubt Luke and Aristarchus), how did other people demonstrate faith?

C. Why might Luke have especially remembered the detail of 276 persons?

(What would the loss of even one person have meant concerning Paul's prediction?)

IV. The Shipwreck

Acts 27:39-44, ³⁹ When day came, they did not recognize the land, but they spotted a bay with a beach. They decided to try to drive the ship up onto the beach. ⁴⁰ Releasing the

anchors, they left them in the sea. At the same time, they loosened the bands binding the rudders. Hoisting up the foresail to the wind, they made for the beach. ⁴¹ But meeting with crosscurrents, the vessel ran aground. The bow stuck fast and remained unmovable, and the powerful waves began to break up the stern. ⁴² The soldiers' plan was to kill the prisoners so that none could swim away and escape. ⁴³ But the centurion, desiring to save Paul, stopped them from carrying out their plan. He commanded those who could swim to jump overboard first and get to the land. ⁴⁴ The rest were to make use of planks and other wreckage from the ship. And so it came about that all safely made it to land.

A. Was the solution to the problem easy and comfortable? Was the solution good enough? God often works through natural causes to support Christians. Sometimes we may not recognize God's "providential" help. However, in this shipwreck it was obvious!

B. Do you think Luke and Aristarchus received any blessing by being in this shipwreck?

C. Let's look at the parable Jesus gave about the storms in life.

Matthew 7:24-27, ²⁴ Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and does them is like a wise man who built his house on the rock: ²⁵ The rain fell, the flood came, and the wind blew and beat against that house, yet it did not fall, for its foundation was on the rock. ²⁶ Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them is like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷ The rain fell, the flood came, and the wind blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall.

The houses represent our lives. What do these other items stand for in the parable?

The rock = following Jesus' words. This is building on God's truth.

The sand = following _____

The storms = _____ What are some examples? Notice that storms come to both.

The ability of the house on the rock to stand during the storm = _____

Nobody likes the storms of life, but God can take problems and use them for a good result. He can enable us to overcome life's storms when we put our trust in Jesus!

D. Consider Paul's words in **II Corinthians 4:16-18**, which we looked at when we discussed Acts 5: ¹⁶ **Therefore, we do not faint. Though our outward man is decaying, our inward man is renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light affliction, which lasts for the moment, is bringing about an eternal weight of glory for us that far exceeds the trouble. ¹⁸ . . . For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.**

V. Making Memories

What is a key truth from Acts 27 that you want to remember?

Choose one verse in Acts 27 to help you remember what took place in this chapter.

Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version, with the English updated to modern usage. The NET Bible® was consulted from time to time to confirm or adopt apt words or phrases.

1. **Hidden Treasure: Mark the fourteen vocabulary words listed in #2.** Also note *inhabitant, expect, provision, forefather, set at liberty, appeal, sect, convince, perceive, salvation, and bold.*

Acts 28:1-10, ¹ After we escaped [from the wrecked ship], we learned that the island was called Malta. ² The local inhabitants showed us unusual kindness. Because of the rain and cold, they kindled a fire and welcomed all of us. ³ But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened itself on his hand. ⁴ When the local people saw the venomous creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "No doubt this man is a murderer. Although he has escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live."

⁵ However, he shook the creature off into the fire and experienced no harm. ⁶ They had expected him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead, but when they had watched for a long time and saw nothing bad happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god. ⁷ Now there was nearby property belonging to the island's chief official, named Publius, who welcomed us and courteously entertained us for three days. ⁸ His father lay sick in bed with fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him, and after praying, he laid his hands on him and healed him. ⁹ After this happened, many of the islanders who also were sick came and were cured. ¹⁰ These people also bestowed many honors on us, and when we prepared to sail, they put the provisions that we needed on board.

Acts 28:11-16, ¹¹ After three months, we set sail in an Alexandrian ship which had wintered at the island, whose figurehead was The Twin Gods. ¹² Reaching Syracuse, we stayed there three days. ¹³ From there we sailed around to Rhegium. After one day, a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli, ¹⁴ where we found fellow Christians. They asked us to stay with them for seven days, and in this way, we went on toward Rome. ¹⁵ The brothers there, hearing about us, came as far as The Forum of Appius and The Three Taverns to meet us. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage. ¹⁶ After we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself with the soldier who was guarding him.

Acts 28:17-21, ¹⁷ After three days, Paul called together the Jewish leaders. When they had gathered, he said to them, "Brothers, although I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our forefathers, from Jerusalem I was handed over as a prisoner to the Romans. ¹⁸ After the Romans had examined me, they wanted to set me at liberty because they found no basis for a death sentence. ¹⁹ But when the Jews spoke against it, I was constrained to appeal to Caesar, but not with any intention of bringing a charge against my own people. ²⁰ Therefore, this is the reason I urged you to see and speak with me, for I am bound with this chain because of the hope of Israel."

²¹ They replied, "We have not received any letters from Judea about you, nor have any of the brothers come here and reported anything bad about you. ²² But we want to hear from you what you think, for we know that this sect is spoken against everywhere."

Acts 28:23-28, ²³ When they had set a day to meet, a large number came to see him where he was staying. From morning to evening, he explained the matter to them, testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus, both from the law of Moses and from the prophets. ²⁴ Some believed his message, and some disbelieved. ²⁵ They disagreed among themselves and left after Paul had spoken one final word: "The Holy

Spirit spoke correctly through Isaiah the prophet to your forefathers, ²⁶ when he said, ‘Go to this people and say, “You will hear, but will not understand at all, and you will see, but will not perceive at all. ²⁷ For this people’s heart is insensitive; their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes have closed. Otherwise, they would perceive with their eyes, hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and they would turn again, and I would heal them.’

²⁸ Therefore, I tell you this salvation of God is being sent to the Gentiles. They will hear.”

Acts 28:30-31, ³⁰ Paul lived two whole years in his own rented lodgings and welcomed all who came to him. ³¹ With all boldness and without interference, he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. **Read Acts 28 in your own language. Then play this quick matching game.** Time yourself.

Can you do it within three minutes?

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| _____ 1. local | A. To present a gift or honor; to confer; to grant |
| _____ 2. kindle | B. To force someone to act in a particular way; compel |
| _____ 3. bundle | C. A condition causing bloody, watery discharge from the bowels |
| _____ 4. viper | D. The activity of slowing down or preventing an action |
| _____ 5. venomous | E. A group of things fastened together; a bunch tied together |
| _____ 6. courteously | F. A place someone lives temporarily, accommodation, housing |
| _____ 7. dysentery | G. A place or an arrangement for exchanging ideas |
| _____ 8. bestow | H. Poisonous and able to give a poisonous bite or sting |
| _____ 9. figurehead | I. To build or light a fire |
| _____ 10. forum | J. A very poisonous snake with large fangs |
| _____ 11. constrain | K. Unresponsive; hard hearted; not being aware of others’ desires |
| _____ 12. insensitive | L. A carved statue put at the very front of a sailing ship |
| _____ 13. lodging(s) | M. Politely, considerately, kindly, with good manners |
| _____ 14. interference | N. Belonging to a particular city, community, or area |

(Answers are at the end.)

3. **Try to use the new words to fill in the blanks without looking at #2 above.**

- The _____ inhabitants of the island were very kind and welcomed all from the ship.
- Paul helped gather sticks to _____ a fire.
- His _____ of sticks held a poisonous snake.
- The _____ attached itself to Paul’s hand.
- The people were amazed when Paul didn’t swell up and die from the _____ bite.
- The island’s chief official _____ entertained Paul and his companions in his home.
- God used Paul to heal the official’s father from his fever and _____.
- The islanders _____ many honors on Paul and the others at the end of their stay.
- The centurion transferred the group to a ship with a _____ of The Twin Gods.
- Christians from Rome came all the way to the The _____ of Appius to welcome Paul.
- Paul explained to the Jews how he was _____ to appeal to Caesar.
- Some of the Jews believed the Gospel, but others had _____ hearts.
- Paul was allowed to live with guards in his rented _____ and have visitors.
- During his two years as a prisoner, he taught about Jesus without any _____.

(Answers are at the end.)

4. **Use the new words to complete this little tale.** Two words will be used twice.

- a. Susan Jones liked to be alone. She didn't watch much television because she didn't like the sitcoms and she felt the news talked too much about officials who were just _____, like statues with no real leadership. Sometimes, she did tune in to a TV _____, on which experts exchanged opinions. Reading novels without any _____ was what she liked to do best. Although she tried to answer her frequent phone calls _____, the _____ advertisers bothered her.
- b. One weekend she rented _____ to be alone in the countryside. She packed her car with four novels, a quilt the company had _____ on her when she retired, and a _____ of recent _____ newspapers. She was eager to read, but the room was chilly. She felt _____ to _____ a fire in the fireplace.
- c. When Susan went outside to gather some sticks, she stepped on a copperhead, which is a pit _____. It sank its _____ fangs into her ankle. She drove quickly to a nearby clinic. Although it seemed that the snake hadn't put any venom into her, the doctor used an antidote and told her to come back if she had fever or _____.
- d. Once home, she decided _____ from people was much better than _____!
(Answers are at the end.)

5. **Odd Man Out Game** Three words in each set have almost the same meaning or relationship to each other. The Odd Man Out does not belong to the set.

- a. Kindle, blaze, light, ignite
- b. Bundle, bunch, batch, crowd
- c. Viper, alligator, frog, rat
- d. Venomous, cobra, poisonous, toxic
- e. Courteously, politely, lovingly, considerately
- f. Dysentery, fever, lungs, rash
- g. Figurehead, leader, statue, carving
- h. Forum, council, panel, gallery
- i. Constrain, force, compel, restrain
- j. Lodging, accommodation, housing, storehouse
- k. Interference, collision, hindrance, disruption
- l. Bestow, confer, grant, grasp

(Answers are at the end.)

Answers for the Matching Game: 1-N, 2-I, 3-E, 4-J, 5-H, 6-M, 7-C, 8-A, 9-L, 10-G, 11-B, 12-K, 13-F, 14-D (If you did it within three minutes, I'm constrained to say that you did very well!) ☺

Answers for the fill-in-the-blank exercise: a.) local b. kindle c.) bundle d.) viper
e.) venomous f.) courteously g.) dysentery h.) bestowed i.) figurehead j.) Forum
k.) constrained l.) insensitive m.) lodging or lodgings n.) interference

Answers for the little tale: a.) figureheads, forum, interference, courteously, insensitive.
b.) lodgings, bestowed, bundle, local, constrained, kindle. c.) viper, venomous, dysentery.
d.) interference, viper.

Answers for the Odd Man Out Game: a.) blaze (words for starting a fire) b.) crowd (things)
c.) rat (cold-blooded creatures) d.) cobra e.) lovingly f.) lungs g.) leader h.) gallery (suited to exchanging ideas) i.) restrain j.) storehouse k.) collision l.) grasp

Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version, with the English updated to modern usage. The NET Bible® was consulted from time to time to confirm or adopt apt words or phrases.

Investigating Acts 28 God's Provisions

Background: After the ship on which Paul had been a prisoner was wrecked, all the passengers made it safely to shore. Aristarchus and Luke, who wrote *Luke* and *Acts*, were with Paul.

I. Provision at the Island of Malta

Acts 28:1-10, ¹ After we escaped [from the wrecked ship], we learned that the island was called Malta. ² The local inhabitants showed us unusual kindness. Because of the rain and cold, they kindled a fire and welcomed all of us. ³ But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened itself on his hand. ⁴ When the local people saw the venomous creature hanging from his hand, they said to one another, "No doubt this man is a murderer. Although he has escaped from the sea, Justice has not allowed him to live."

⁵ However, he shook the creature off into the fire and experienced no harm. ⁶ They had expected him to swell up or suddenly fall down dead, but when they had watched for a long time and saw nothing bad happen to him, they changed their minds and said he was a god. ⁷ Now there was nearby property belonging to the island's chief official, named Publius, who welcomed us and courteously entertained us for three days. ⁸ His father lay sick in bed with fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him, and after praying, he laid his hands on him and healed him. ⁹ After this happened, many of the islanders who also were sick came and were cured. ¹⁰ These people also bestowed many honors on us, and when we prepared to sail, they put the provisions that we needed on board.

A. People are not okay after being bitten by a very poisonous snake. Why do you think God protected Paul from harm in this situation?

B. God used Paul to heal the chief official's father and many others on the island. These days there are many accounts of people being healed miraculously in India, but there are not so many accounts of miraculous healing in the Western countries. Do you agree that the need for proof for the gospel is needed more in certain places? If so, why?

C. The shipwreck looked like a terrible disaster, but problems can be God's opportunities:

1. The ship was blown close to Italy and came to a tiny island which is a dot on a map.
2. Paul was protected from the snake bite's harm.
3. God enabled Paul to heal the islanders. As a result, Paul and his companions were treated well for three months.
4. In addition to the healings, how do you think this disaster actually brought spiritual blessings to all involved?

D. People's problems may be stress from their job or school work, poor relationships, loneliness, lack of money, illness, physical danger, etc. Let's look at how our problems can become God's opportunities. While Paul was in prison in Rome, he wrote a letter to the Christians at Philippi, where he had been beaten and then imprisoned:

1. **Philippians 4:4, Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say rejoice!** What kind of things can we rejoice about when we have problems? How might this affect others?
2. **Philippians 4:6-7, ⁶ Be anxious about nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. ⁷ And the peace**

of God, which passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus. What does this verse promise when we pray? How do you explain this?

3. **Philippians 4:11-13**, ¹¹ . . . For I have learned to be content in whatever situation I am in. ¹² . . . In all things I have learned the secret [of contentment], both when satisfied and when hungry, while having plenty or little. ¹³ I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Paul's secret was _____ on the Lord.

II. Paul's Reception by the Christians Living in Rome

Acts 28:11-16, ¹¹ After three months, we set sail in an Alexandrian ship which had wintered at the island, whose figurehead was The Twin Gods. ¹² Reaching Syracuse, we stayed there three days. ¹³ From there we sailed around to Rhegium. After one day, a south wind sprang up, and on the second day we came to Puteoli, ¹⁴ where we found fellow Christians. They asked us to stay with them for seven days, and in this way, we went on toward Rome. ¹⁵ The brothers there, hearing about us, came as far as The Forum of Appius and The Three Taverns to meet us. When Paul saw them, he thanked God and took courage. ¹⁶ After we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to live by himself with the soldier who was guarding him.

A. The Christians from Rome traveled 43 miles to the Forum of Appius to meet Paul. Why might they have been so eager to see Paul? What shows that Paul needed encouragement?

All of us need to give and receive encouragement. We need relationships with people of faith. **Hebrews 10:24-25**, ²⁴ Let us think about how to stir one another to love and do good works, ²⁵ not forsaking our own gathering together, as some have the custom, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

B. What risks or difficulties were the Christians facing by spending time with Paul? What risks or difficulties might we need to face sometimes to encourage others or to tell others about Jesus?

III. The Response of the Jews in Rome

A. **Acts 28:17-21**, ¹⁷ After three days, Paul called together the Jewish leaders. When they had gathered, he said to them, "Brothers, although I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our forefathers, from Jerusalem I was handed over as a prisoner to the Romans. ¹⁸ After the Romans had examined me, they wanted to set me at liberty because they found no basis for a death sentence. ¹⁹ But when the Jews spoke against it, I was constrained to appeal to Caesar, but not with any intention of bringing a charge against my own people. ²⁰ Therefore, this is the reason I urged you to see and speak with me, for I am bound with this chain because of the hope of Israel."

²¹ They replied, "We have not received any letters from Judea about you, nor have any of the brothers come here and reported anything bad about you. ²² But we want to hear from you what you think, for we know that this sect is spoken against everywhere."

In just 29 years after Jesus died, the Christian faith was already being widely debated. The Good News spread because of the eyewitness accounts and the Christians' strong desire to tell others.

B. **Acts 28:23-28**, ²³ When they had set a day to meet, a large number came to see him where he was staying. From morning to evening, he explained the matter to them, testifying about the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus, both from the law of Moses and from the prophets. ²⁴ Some believed his message, and some disbelieved. ²⁵ They

disagreed among themselves and left after Paul had spoken one final word: “The Holy Spirit spoke correctly through Isaiah the prophet to your forefathers ²⁶ when he said,

‘Go to this people and say, “You will hear, but will not understand at all, and you will see, but will not perceive at all. ²⁷ For this people’s heart is insensitive; their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes have closed. Otherwise, they would perceive with their eyes, hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and they would turn again, and I would heal them.’

²⁸ Therefore, I tell you this salvation of God is being sent to the Gentiles. They will hear.”

1. Some of the Jews didn’t believe despite hearing the prophecies in the Scripture that they already accepted as true. What do you think could have caused them to have hard hearts?
2. Do you think Christians today can also have insensitive hearts, leading to blind spots? How might we see, but not understand? The Bible can open our eyes if we’re willing. **Psalm 119:105, Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.**

IV. Paul’s Golden Opportunity Despite Imprisonment

Acts 28:30-31, ³⁰ Paul lived two whole years in his own rented lodgings and welcomed all who came to him. ³¹ With all boldness and without interference, he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote the letters called Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon during this time. He said in **Philippians 1:12-14, ¹² Now I want you to know, brothers, that the things which have happened to me have actually resulted in the progress of the gospel, ¹³ so that it has been shown throughout the whole imperial guard and to everyone else that I am in prison for the sake of Christ. ¹⁴ Most of the brothers in the Lord, gaining confidence because of my imprisonment, have much more boldness to speak the word of God without fear.**

From these verses, what are good ways that Paul’s imprisonment was used by God?

V. A Glimpse Beyond

While in prison, Paul was not sure whether he would be released or killed. He talks about his feelings in his letter to the Christians in Philippi. **Philippians 1:22-24, ²² If I continue to live in this body and my work is effective, I do not know what to choose. ²³ For I feel torn between the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. ²⁴ Yet for me to continue living in this body is more necessary for you.**

Church tradition says that Paul was released from prison in 62 A.D. and traveled to Spain to give the gospel there. He was arrested again in 67 A.D. and beheaded under Nero’s persecution. Because no mention is made in Acts of Paul’s release, death, and the complete destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D., Bible scholars agree that Luke finished Acts well before 70 A.D.—most likely within just 35 years of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

VI. Making Memories

What is a key truth from Acts 28 that you want to remember?

Choose one verse in Acts 28 to help you remember what took place in this chapter.

Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version, with the English updated to modern usage. The NET Bible® was consulted from time to time to confirm or adopt apt words or phrases.

**CONGRATULATIONS! YOU HAVE COMPLETED
THE SEVEN-WEEK CHALLENGE!**



**NOW HERE IS THE MOST IMPORTANT, LIFE-CHANGING
CHALLENGE OF ALL**

The Book of Acts gives a wonderful view of people having a close, personal relationship with God! If you want this relationship and have never called on Jesus Christ to be your Savior, you can do so with a prayer like the following one, which is based on Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, Romans 5:8, John 3:16, John 1:12, and Revelation 3:20.

Jesus, I know I have sinned and fallen short of what I should think and do. I need you and your forgiveness. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins. I ask you to come into my life now as my Savior and Lord.

If you opened the door of your life to Jesus, you are forgiven and have eternal life! God's Holy Spirit lives in you! Someday you will join the heroes of the faith in heaven and hear and relate more examples of God's love and work on earth!

After receiving Jesus into your life, you need the spiritual food that the Bible provides. If you haven't read much in the Bible, you can start getting a good foundation by continuing to read in the New Testament. The accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John will give you wonderful views of Jesus and wisdom for living. But don't stop there. Finish the New Testament and then tackle the Old Testament to see God's work from the very beginning.

Also seek out other Christians for encouragement, guidance, and the opportunity to worship together. You can find these in a church that believes the Bible is God's Word.

You are a child of God! Don't hesitate to pray to your Heavenly Father about anything and everything! He loves you and will answer! Like Saul/Paul in Acts 9, you have a new life!