

Our Lady's Catechists

THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Part 4

Number 1

TWENTIETH CHAPTER

Verses 1 - 38

READ verses 1-6: Here we are given a rapid sketch of St. Paul's movements after he left Ephesus. This journey took twelve months. Use your map to see the cities he visited. You will notice that St. Luke rejoined St. Paul at Troas. "The time of unleavened bread" is the Passover.

READ verses 7 - 12: Saturday night was the usual time for Christians to meet for worship and religious instruction. "The breaking of bread" was, an early name for the Mass. Christmas and Easter are now the usual times when Mass is celebrated during the night. The long sermon was interrupted by an accident with a happy outcome.

READ Verses 13-17: Another rapid sketch, which helps us to realise that St. Paul and his friends were travelling in haste. As Pentecost is the fiftieth day after the Passover, there was no time to spare. The purpose of the journey to Jerusalem was to take the alms that had been collected for the Christians there.

READ verses 18-38: In these verses we read an earnest and moving farewell speech to the bishops from Ephesus, and a reminder of their duty to rule the Church. It is a reminder to us, also, that we must obey our bishops who, as St. Paul says, are set over us by the Holy Spirit. Lastly, notice how greatly St. Paul was loved, so that tears were shed at the parting.

QUESTIONS

1. Why did St. Paul travel again through Macedonia?

2. How long did this journey take?

3. Where did St. Luke rejoin him?

4. What was "the time of unleavened bread"?

5. Why had the Christians met on Saturday night?

6. What caused Eutychus to fall?

7. What happened when St. Paul went down to him?

8. Why did St. Paul not go to Ephesus?

9. Why was he in haste?

10. What did he know was to happen to him in Jerusalem?

11. Copy out the command given in verse 28

12. What words of Our Lord were quoted by St. Paul?

13. In which Gospel are they found?

14. Are we bound to obey the Church? (Catechism 2041)

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Part 4

Number 2

TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER

Verses 1 - 25

READ verses 1-9: Another rapid outline of a sea journey which lasted several days. Phoenice or Phoenicia was not the port in Crete, but the country north of Palestine, corresponding roughly to the modern Lebanon.

At Caesarea the party stayed with the deacon Philip, of whom you have already read, in Chapter 6, as chosen with six others, and in Chapter 8 as preaching and working miracles.

READ verses 10 - 14: These tell us of renewed prophecies of the imprisonment St. Paul was to suffer. We read how he and his friends accepted the will of God.

READ verses 15-25: We have in these verses an account of St. Paul's meeting with St. James (called "the Less") Bishop of Jerusalem, and the other priests. They welcomed him, and advised him how to act to silence the Jewish Christians, who mistakenly believed that he had taught the foreign Jews to set the Law aside. The truth was that he had, with all the Apostles, taught that the **Gentiles** were not to be subject to the Law of Moses.

(Council of Jerusalem.Ch. 15

QUESTIONS

1. At what port did Paul and his companions land after sailing from Miletus ?
2. How long did they stay there ?
3. With whom did the party lodge at Caesarea?
4. Where had Philip preached in former days?
5. Why did all his friends warn Paul not to go to Jerusalem?
6. What was his reply ?
7. Why was Paul's first visit in Jerusalem to James?

8. Was it true that Paul had taught the foreign Jews not to keep the Law of Moses?

9. Who were **not** obliged to observe **it** ?

Cross out what is incorrect.

10. To do the will of God is :—

- a) natural.
- b) sometimes hard.
- c) impossible.

11. Doing the will of God is :—

- a) pleasing ourselves.
- b) keeping the commandments.
- c) following the crowd

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Part 4

Number 3

TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER

Verses 26 – 40

READ verses 26-40: We now come to another exciting event in St. Paul's life.

As it was approaching Pentecost, there were in Jerusalem thousands of Jews from distant countries. (If you need a reminder of this, turn back to Chapter 2, page 5, and read again, with the map, the names of the places from which they came.) This accounts for the presence of the Jews from Asia who raised the riot which led to Paul's arrest.

There was only one part of the vast Temple area which Gentiles were allowed to enter. This was an outer enclosure called the Court of the Gentiles. A wall divided it from the rest of the Temple, and a notice forbade any Gentile to go further, on pain of death.

Even in their anger, the Jews would not dream of profaning the Temple by bloodshed, so Paul was dragged outside.

The Roman soldiers were on the alert during all great gatherings at the Temple. They were very likely also confined to barracks. There was therefore no delay in both rescuing Paul from the fury of the mob, and in taking him towards the citadel under arrest.

QUESTIONS

1. Why were multitudes of foreign Jews in Jerusalem?

2. How many days did St. Paul attend the ceremonies in the Temple?

3. Who raised an uproar on seeing him?

4. What accusation made the people especially angry?

5. Why did they drag Paul out of the Temple?

6. Who stopped the attempt to kill him?

7. Why had the prisoner to be carried?

8. What did he ask the centurion?

9. What surprised the officer?

10. What words show that St. Paul was proud of his birthplace?

11. What was St. Paul's request?

12. What silenced the crowd?

10. Why was the Captain alarmed?

11. How did he decide to discover what charge there was against his prisoner.'

12. Should we love the land of our birth and try to be good citizens?

13. Which commandment lays this duty upon us?

14. Does it mean we should hate or despise those of other nations?

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Part 4

Number 4

TWENTY-SECOND CHAPTER

Verses 1 – 30

READ verses 1-21: Note that these verses give St. Paul's own account of his life as a Jew, and of his conversion. He says "I was trained under Gamaliel ". The earlier translation expresses it differently: "brought up in this city, at the feet of Gamaliel". This was the exact description of his schooling, for pupils used to sit on the floor, round their master. In some schools they still do so. Gamaliel was one of the most learned members of the Jewish Council, and was listened to with great respect, as you have already read in Chapter 5.

The expression "this way," in verse 4, means the acceptance of Jesus as the promised Messiah, with all its consequences.

Verse 18 speaks of a vision in the Temple probably during the visit made at the time of the famine. (Chapter 11, verses 27-30).

READ verses 22 – 30: The silence was broken at the mention of the hated Gentiles, and, at the renewed tumult, the prisoner was taken into the barracks. St. Paul must have been tied to the very pillar at which Our Lord had been scourged.

Notice that St. Paul spoke up to save himself from torture without trial or sentence. He was ready to suffer all that he was obliged to

endure, but not this particular injustice, unless he was certain that it was God's will. The Roman scourging was terrible, and its victims often died. It was forbidden to inflict it upon Roman citizens so it is no wonder the captain was alarmed.

His second thoughts led him to take measures to discover the cause of the trouble.

QUESTIONS

1. Why did the people listen attentively to St. Paul?

2. Who had been his teacher?

3. How had Gamaliel advised the Council when the Apostles were arrested? (Chapter 5, v. 38)

4. Why did the tumult break out again?

5. Why did the Captain order that St. Paul should be scourged?

6. To what pillar was he bound?

7. What were his words to the Centurion?

8. How had the Captain become a Roman citizen?

9. How was St. Paul's citizenship superior?

13. Where did the foot-soldiers leave the party?

14 What did the Governor decide?

CATECHISM

Are we bound to obey our parents only? (CCC 2097)

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Part 4

Number 5

TWENTY-THIRD CHAPTER

Verses 1 - 35

READ verses 1-10: In these verses we read of St. Paul's appearance before the priests and councillors.

Ananias, the high priest, was the son of Annas, to whose house Our Lord had been taken from the Garden of Olives. Perhaps St. Paul did not recognise him as it was not a regular Council meeting, but one called by the Roman authority. Notice that St. Paul was struck in the same way as Our Lord had been.

St. Paul apologised for his words to the high priest, not out of respect for **the man**, who had treated him unjustly, but for his great and honourable office or position. We must imitate this respect for those in authority, even if, perhaps, as private persons, they may not appear worthy of reverence. All lawful authority comes from God, who is Sovereign Lord of all things.

St. Paul's words concerning the resurrection of the dead were not a trick to cause a dispute in the Council. The resurrection of Our Lord, and therefore our own hope of resurrection, is the very root of Christianity.

READ verses 11 - 21: Verse 11 tells of yet another vision by which St. Paul was encouraged and strengthened. The following verses tell of a plot, and how it was discovered and foiled.

The young man, Paul's nephew, was probably not a Christian, or he would not have heard of the plot; but, plainly, he loved his uncle.

READ verses 22 – 30: We read now of the immediate steps taken by the commanding officer to remove Paul out of harm's way. Notice the large number of men thought necessary to ensure the safety of one prisoner. The journey would have begun at about 9pm.

Notice how, in his letter, the captain glosses over his own actions at the beginning of the trouble — a very human and excusable failing!

READ verses 31-35: These tell of the journey, and of the Governor's decision regarding Paul.

QUESTIONS

1. Why did the Roman captain call the Council together?

2. Who ordered Paul to be struck on the mouth?

3. Who had struck Our Lord?

4. Why did Paul beg pardon for his words?

5. On what subject did the Pharisees and the Sadducees disagree?

6. Why did the captain send the soldiers down?

7. What were Our Lord's words to St. Paul?

8. What plot was made against Paul?

9. How was it to be carried out?

10 Who brought word of it to Paul?

11 What did the captain do to remove Paul from danger?

12. How many soldiers formed the escort?

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Number 6

TWENTY-FOURTH CHAPTER

Verses 1 – 27

READ verses 1-9: These verses tell of the arrival of the high priest and some of St. Paul's accusers, and of their charge against him. Tertullus was a Roman lawyer, employed, no doubt, because the Jews wished to prove that Paul was a danger to Rome.

READ verses 10-21: Here we have Paul's clear and dignified reply.

READ verses 22 – 27: Verse 22 makes it plain that Felix was well-informed about both Jews and Christians. Drusilla, his wife, was Jewish.

During the two years of this imprisonment St. Luke, who had accompanied St. Paul to Jerusalem, was probably gathering the information for his Gospel, and for the Acts. Porcius Festus was Governor from A.D. 60 - 62.

QUESTIONS

1. Of what did the Jews accuse St. Paul?

2. How long had St. Paul been in Jerusalem?

3. How was it that Felix knew about Jewish laws?

4. What did Felix decide?

5. How long was St. Paul kept in custody?

6. What did St. Luke do during this time?

7. Why did Felix often send for Paul?

8. Why did he leave him in prison?

9. Which commandment did the Jews break by making untrue accusations?

10. Fill in the spaces, choosing from the words given below.

The injustice done by _____ to St. Paul was a sin against

The _____ commandment, because it _____

him of _____ though he had not _____ any

committed robbed Felix seventh crime freedom

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Number 7

TWENTY-FIFTH CHAPTER Verses 1 – 27

READ verses 1-6: The journey of the new Governor, Festus, to Jerusalem. Here the Jews, in their unforgetting hatred, tried to get Paul brought to the City, but were unsuccessful.

READ verses 7 - 12: Festus, like Felix, wanted to be on good terms with the Jewish leaders, so as to make his own task easier. Paul realised that he was not to be relied on, so exercised his right as a Roman and appealed to the Caesar or Roman Emperor. This was NERO, an evil man who reigned from A.D. 54 - 68. The appeal was probably made in the hope of getting a speedy decision.

READ verses 13-22: These give an account of an official visit by King Agrippa and his sister Bernice to the new Governor. Agrippa, though his mother was Jewish, had been brought up in Rome, and was Roman in outlook. He was on the Roman side in the war with the Jews which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem in the year A.D. 70.

READ verses 23 – 27: These describe the ceremonious gathering of the King, the Governor and the personages of Caesarea, and the appearance of St. Paul before them. The explanatory speech by Festus closes the chapter.

QUESTIONS

1. Why did the Jews want Paul to be taken to Jerusalem?

2. Why did Festus wish to please the Jews?

3. What did St. Paul answer when accused?

4. What did Festus ask him to do?

5. Why did Paul appeal to Caesar?

6. Why had he the right to appeal?

7. Who was the Roman Emperor at the time?

8. What was the reason for the royal visit to Caesarea?

9. How did Festus explain why Paul had not been condemned?

10. Who came to the judgement hall to hear Paul?

11. What reason did Festus give for the examination?

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**THE ACTS
OF THE APOSTLES**

Part 4

Number 8

**TWENTY-SIXTH CHAPTER
Verses 1 – 32**

READ verses 1 - 23 : In these verses we read St. Paul's account —

- a) of his early life and upbringing;
- b) of his persecution of the Church;
- c) of his conversion ;
- d) of his missionary work.

St. Paul never forgot that he had been a persecutor, and recalled the fact in many of his letters.

You have now read three accounts of St. Paul's conversion, and it is interesting to compare them, and to see that they all differ slightly. This is just what happens when, on different occasions, a person gives an account of the same event.

READ verses 24 – 28: Festus was alarmed at the very idea of resurrection and thought Paul had taken leave of his senses. Paul felt sure that Agrippa had heard of the EMPTY TOMB. The King's answer was half-mocking.

READ verses 29-32: Paul's answer showed how much he longed for the conversion of all who heard him. The King closed the proceedings by rising. The general opinion was that Paul could have been released but for his appeal.

Choose the right word and cross out the wrong ones:

It is the virtue of _____ which enables Christians to be faithful when persecuted.

joy, wisdom, fortitude, justice

Write out the Beatitude. Catechism 1716

QUESTIONS

1. Why did Paul say he was fortunate to be speaking in the presence of King Agrippa?

2. To what sect of the Jews had Paul belonged?

3. Who helped the Christians he had persecuted to be faithful?

4. What did Paul preach after his conversion?

5. How do men behave when they are sorry for their sins?

6. Why did Festus interrupt?

7. What did Paul mean by saying "The King knows about all this"?

8. Did Agrippa mean that he was ready to become a Christian?

9. What did Paul pray for?

10. What was the King's verdict?

11. Who stopped them?

12. What other centurions are praised in the Gospel and the Acts?

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THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Part 4

Number 9

TWENTY-SEVENTH CHAPTER

Verses 1 – 44

READ verses 1-21: This chapter, which should at first be read straight through, gives a vivid description of the voyage to Italy, with its difficulties and dangers ending in shipwreck. Be sure you understand the more unusual expressions used.

It is suggested that Luke and Aristarchus may have pretended to be slaves belonging to St. Paul. As the vessel was carrying prisoners it cannot have been an ordinary passenger-ship. That to which they transferred at Lycia (or Myra) was carrying wheat from Egypt to Rome. At that time Egypt supplied large quantities of wheat to Italy and other countries. You will remember that the sons of Jacob went to Egypt for corn during the famine.

"The fast" was that for the Day of Atonement, still kept by the Jews at the end of September or early October. The stormy winter season was beginning, and normally ships remained in harbour.

READ verses 1 - 11 : These describe the early part of the voyage, including the transfer to a ship bound for Italy.

READ verses 12 - 19 : These describe the beginning of the storm. We can imagine the sufferings of those on board, with little shelter from its fury. Canda is Gozo, a small island near Malta. The Syrtis quicksands are off the north coast of Africa.

READ verses 20 – 32: Things became worse, but Paul gave comfort and encouragement. The sailors tried to abandon the ship, but were prevented by the soldiers.

READ verses 33 – 38: All on board, urged by Paul, took a meal, very necessary after a fortnight of being storm-tossed and sea-sick. The cargo was then thrown overboard.

READ verses 39-44: The dramatic grounding and break-up of the ship, without the loss of a single life.

This was Paul's fourth experience of shipwreck. We read in his 2nd letter to the Corinthians (Chapters 11 & 25) that he had already been shipwrecked three times.

QUESTIONS

1. Who were Paul's companions on this voyage?

2. Why did Paul advise the centurion to winter in Crete?

3. From which direction did the gale blow?

4. How was the ship lightened?

5. How did Paul encourage those on board?

6. Why were the sailors prevented from leaving the ship?

7. How long had they been storm-tossed?

8. What did Paul urge them to do?

9. How many people were on board?

10. What did the soldiers intend to do to the prisoners?

10. Whom did he call to see him?

11. What did he tell them?

12. What was their answer?

13. Did they accept the truth?

14. What were his final words to the Jews? (v. 28)

15. How long did the Roman captivity last?

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Part 4

Number 10

TWENTY-EIGHTH CHAPTER

Verses 1 – 31

Read Verses 1 - 10 : The wet, cold and hungry castaways were welcomed and fed by the people of Malta. Though called " natives " , they were not coloured people. The Greeks and Romans called all other races natives or barbarians.

A viper failed to harm St. Paul, to the wonder of the onlookers (Read the footnote).

Other miracles were worked, and the Apostle received great honour.

Read Verses 11 - 15 : A ship which had wintered at Malta took the prisoners on board. Rhegium is now Reggio, on the straits of Messina. Puteoli is now Pozzuoli, near Naples. It was a favourite port for large ships from Egypt.

The delay en route, enabled news to reach Rome that Paul was on his way, so that small groups of Christians met him all along the Appian Way. Paul was thankful that there were no unfriendly Jews waiting to make trouble for him.

READ verses 16-22: In Rome, Paul was kept in custody, but under fairly easy conditions. The leading Jews were called and came ready to learn what Paul had to say.

READ verses 23 – 28: The Gospel was accepted by some' Jews, and rejected by others, and Paul repeated his frequently uttered intention of preaching to the Gentiles.

READ verses 29 - 31 : The long but fruitful imprisonment ended with acquittal. This is not mentioned, because it had not happened when St. Luke wrote.

The imprisonment lasted from A.D. 58 - 60, in all probability, so that altogether St. Paul was deprived of freedom for more than four years from the time of the riot at Jerusalem. During the Roman captivity he wrote or dictated, four of his letters; to the Colossians, to the Ephesians, to Philemon and to the Philippians.

QUESTIONS

1. On what island did the shipwrecked people land?

2. How were they received?

3. What did the natives think when they saw the viper attack St. Paul?

4. What did they think when he was not harmed?

5. Whom did St. Paul heal?

6. What followed this miracle?

7. How long was the stay in Malta?

8. At what port did the party land?

9. How long was the stay there?

16. How did they now go towards Rome?

17. Why were there groups of Christians to greet them on the way?

18. How was St. Paul imprisoned?

1. What happened to him there?

2. How was he treated in Rome?

3. Who were his faithful friends?

10. How did St. Paul die?

11. How was St. Peter executed?

12. When do we keep the feast of the Apostles' martyrdom?

13. How many great Roman persecutions were there?

14. Is it a sign of weakness to be a good Catholic?

15. What virtues do we need to be faithful to our religion?

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THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

Part 4

Number 11

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

CONCLUSION

The Acts of the Apostles contain, as you have seen, only a part of the laborious and dangerous life led by St. Paul after his conversion. Of the work of the other Apostles we know little for certain, but we do know that they obeyed Our Lord's command to "go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature." This command is and always has been the duty of the Church to obey, and we must help to fulfil it at least by prayer, good example and alms giving.

Through the Acts and his letters we know more about St. Paul than about any other Apostle. Later you may have an opportunity to study the letters of St Paul. In any case, if we follow the Mass carefully, using a Missal, or a prayer book containing the Readings of the day, we will get to know something of his writings. On most Sundays of the year the second reading and sometimes the first reading are taken from one of his letters.

The last verses of the letter to the Hebrews prove that it was written after his being set at liberty, but while still in Italy.

It is probable that St. Paul first went eastwards and visited Philippi. Then perhaps he went to Spain. There is a strong tradition that he visited that country, and he had definitely said that he meant to go there. After two years, he went to Crete with Titus, and left him there as bishop. He wrote

to him later, saying he would winter at Nicopolis, now called Preveza, on the north-west coast of Greece. It was probably during this winter that he was again arrested, and sent once more to Rome for trial.

This second imprisonment was much more severe than the first. He was treated as an evil-doer and kept in chains. He dictated his last letter — the second to Timothy. He says that Luke is with him, and that a friend named Onesiphorus had not been ashamed of his chains, and had visited him.

The first terrible persecution of Christians (there were ten during the first three hundred years) — was taking place at this time, and very many martyrs suffered. Of the first thirty Popes, all but two were martyred. St. Paul was martyred by beheading in A.D. 67. We are told by St. Jerome that St. Peter suffered on the same day, being crucified, head downwards at his own request. This death of St. Peter fulfilled Our Lord's words to him at the lakeside: "When you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and somebody else will put your belt round you and take you where you would rather not go." (Jn. 21: 18)

The feast of their martyrdom is celebrated on 29th June.

One great lesson we can all learn from the Gospels and the Acts is that there is nothing weak about living a good Catholic life. It always needs courage and self-sacrifice to be faithful, even if our own inclinations are the only enemy to overcome.

St. Peter, pray for us.

St. Paul, pray for us.

QUESTIONS

4. What do we know of the work of the other Apostles?

5. What are we sure they did?

6. How must we share in the spreading of the Gospel?

7. Where did St. Paul go after his release?

8. Who went with him to Crete?

9. Where did he go for the winter?