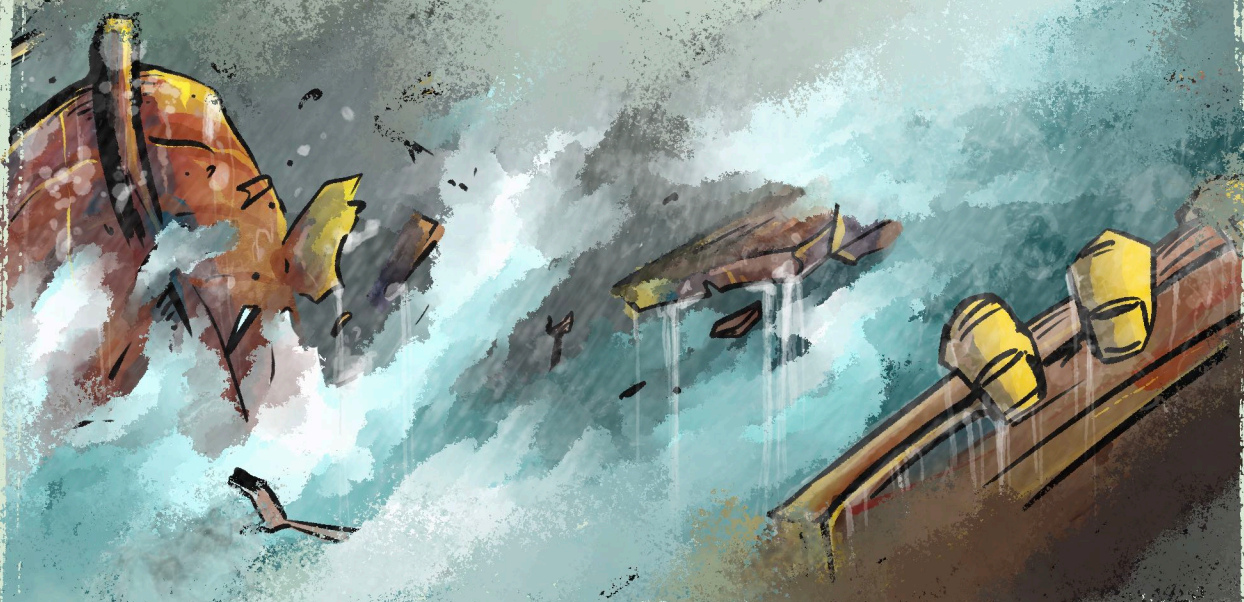


Through the Bible

# ACTS II

Of the Apostles

Zac Poonen



Illustrations by Vinay Kuruville

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## CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

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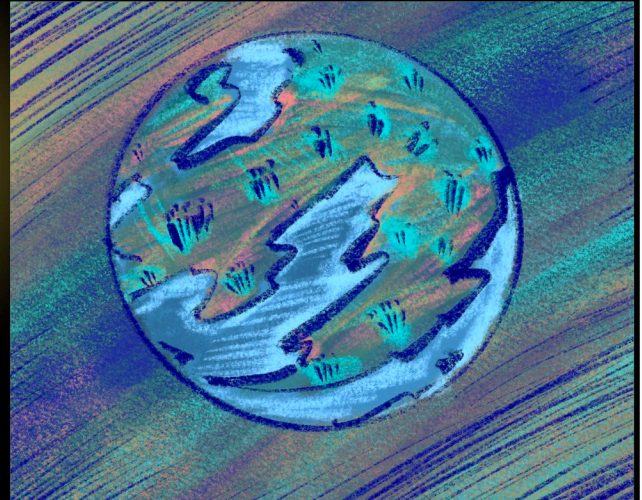




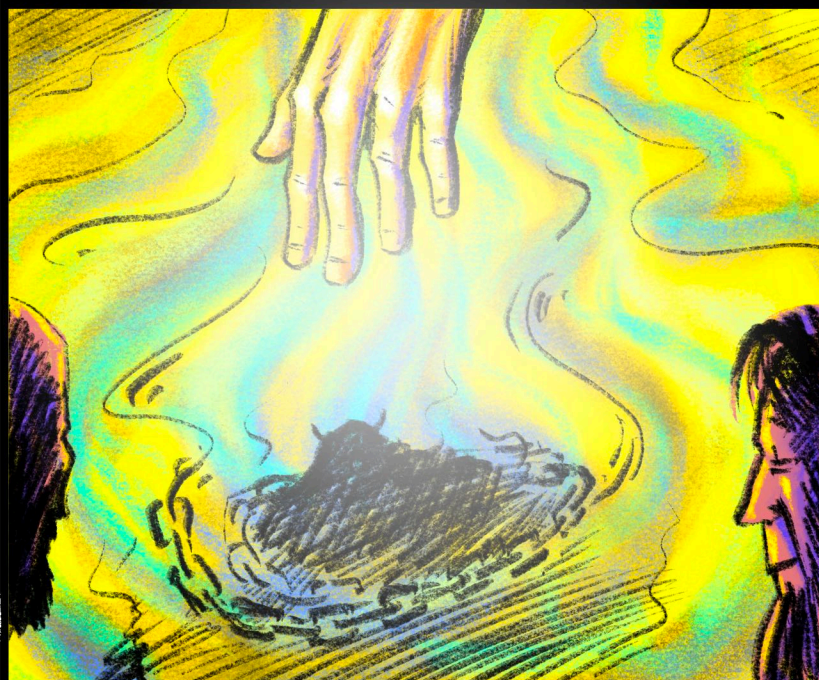
IN 14:23, WE SEE PAUL AND BARNABAS APPOINTING **ELDERS**, NOT PASTORS, IN EVERY CHURCH THEY PLANTED. THE WORD '**PASTOR**' IS FOUND ONLY **ONCE** IN THE BIBLE WHICH **SHOULD** HAVE BEEN TRANSLATED AS **SHEPHERD**. SHEPHERDS ARE **GIFTS** THE LORD GIVES TO THE CHURCH JUST AS HE GIVES APOSTLES, PROPHETS, EVANGELISTS AND TEACHERS TO THE CHURCH. '**ELDER**' HOWEVER IS AN **OFFICE** OF LEADERSHIP IN THE CHURCH. AND THERE WAS ALWAYS MORE THAN ONE ELDER.



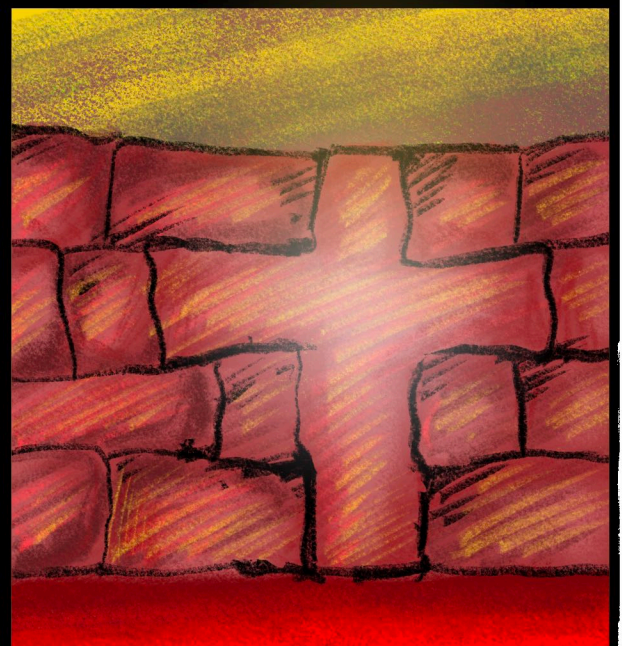
UNDER THE **OLD COVENANT**, GOD CALLED **LONE INDIVIDUALS** TO BE THE **LEADERS** OF HIS PEOPLE --BUT ONCE **JESUS** CAME, HE STARTED SENDING OUT HIS DISCIPLES **TWO BY TWO**. UNDER THE **NEW COVENANT**, THE HOLY SPIRIT CALLED **PAUL** ALONG WITH **BARNABAS**. GOD'S WILL IS THAT A **MINIMUM OF TWO** BROTHERS LEAD EVERY **LOCAL CHURCH** - THE EXPRESSION OF THE BODY OF **CHRIST**



JESUS SPOKE ONCE ABOUT THE **WORLDWIDE CHURCH** (MATTHEW 16:18) AND ONLY ONCE ABOUT THE **LOCAL CHURCH** (MATTHEW 18:17).



AND IN THE CONTEXT OF THE **LEADERSHIP** OF THE LOCAL CHURCH, HE SAID THAT HE WOULD BE **PRESENT** IN THE MIDST, WHEN A MINIMUM OF **TWO** WERE PRESENT (MATTHEW 18:20). A MINIMUM OF **TWO** ELDERS (WHO ARE ONE WITH EACH OTHER) ARE REQUIRED TO **BIND SATAN'S** ACTIVITIES IN A LOCAL CHURCH (MATTHEW 18:18, 19). TWO ELDERS ALSO ARE ABLE TO GIVE A **BALANCED** LEADERSHIP TO A CHURCH.



IN 15:36, PAUL SUGGESTS TO BARNABAS THAT THEY VISIT THE **NEW CHURCHES AGAIN** AND **ESTABLISH** THE BELIEVERS IN THEM. THERE WERE STILL **THOUSANDS** OF PLACES WHERE THE GOSPEL HAD **NOT** YET BEEN PREACHED. BUT PAUL KNEW THAT IT WAS **IMPORTANT** TO BUILD THE BABES IN CHRIST **TOGETHER** INTO ONE **BODY**.





BARNABAS THEN SUGGESTED THAT THEY TAKE **JOHN MARK** ALSO ALONG WITH THEM. JOHN MARK HAD GONE WITH THEM ON THEIR **FIRST JOURNEY**, BUT HAD **DROPPED OUT**, FINDING MISSIONARY WORK **DIFFICULT**. PAUL **REFUSED** TO GIVE MARK A SECOND CHANCE, BUT **BARNABAS** WANTED TO. MARK WAS BARNABAS' **COUSIN** (COLOSSIANS 4:10) THE DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN PAUL AND BARNABAS OVER THIS ISSUE WAS SO **SHARP** THAT THEY **SEPARATED** FROM EACH OTHER (15:39). PAUL WAS A **STRICT** MAN, MAJORING ON **TRUTH**. BARNABAS WAS A **GENTLE** PERSON WHO MAJORED ON **GRACE**. BETWEEN THE TWO OF THEM, THE **GLORY OF GOD** COULD HAVE BEEN **MANIFESTED** "FULL OF **GRACE** AND **TRUTH**" (JOHN 1:14).



BUT THEY COULD NOT GET ALONG WITH EACH OTHER. IF THEY HAD **CONTINUED** TO WORK TOGETHER, HOW MUCH **MORE** THE WORK OF THE LORD WOULD HAVE **PROGRESSED!** AT THE **END** OF HIS LIFE, PAUL SAID, "**MARK** IS **USEFUL** TO ME" (2 TIMOTHY 4:11).



THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES MENTIONS A NUMBER OF THE **MISTAKES** THAT THE APOSTLES MADE. THAT IS WHY WE SHOULD **NEVER ESTABLISH** ANY **DOCTRINE** FROM THE BOOK OF ACTS. BUT THE APOSTLES **LEARNED** FROM THEIR MISTAKES. **GOD TURNED** THEIR MISTAKES FOR THE **FURTHERANCE** OF THE GOSPEL. NOW INSTEAD OF **ONE** TEAM GOING FORTH, **TWO** TEAMS WENT FORTH. AND **BOTH** TEAMS HAD ONE **EXPERIENCED** PERSON IN IT. BARNABAS TOOK MARK AND PAUL TOOK SILAS. SO THE GOSPEL SPREAD **EVEN FURTHER**. GOD USES THE THINGS THAT THE DEVIL DOES, FOR THE **FURTHERANCE** OF THE GOSPEL. PRAISE THE LORD! HE CAN DO THE SAME WITH **OUR** MISTAKES TOO.





IN 16:1, 2, WE READ OF PAUL MEETING **TIMOTHY**. IT WAS PAUL WHO HAD CHOSEN **SILAS** TO BE HIS CO-WORKER. BUT GOD HAD SOMEONE **ELSE** IN MIND FOR PAUL -- TIMOTHY. WHEN BARNABAS LEFT PAUL, GOD SAW THAT PAUL NEEDED **ANOTHER GENTLE PERSON** TO **REPLACE** HIM. AND SO HE GAVE HIM **TIMOTHY**, AN **OUTSTANDING YOUNG DISCIPLE** WHOSE **TEMPERAMENT** WAS VERY **SIMILAR** TO THAT OF BARNABAS.



THEN WE SEE **ANOTHER MISTAKE** THAT PAUL MADE: HE **CIRCUMCISED TIMOTHY** IN ORDER TO **PLEASE THE JEWS**. LATER, PAUL GOT **LIGHT** ON THIS AND SAID THAT CIRCUMCISION WAS **UNNECESSARY** (GALATIANS 5:2, 3). BUT THE APOSTLES WERE IN A **TRANSITION** PERIOD BETWEEN THE **OLD AND NEW COVENANTS** AND IT TOOK TIME FOR THEM TO GET **CLEAR LIGHT**.



IN 16:9, WE SEE AN EXAMPLE OF HOW THE EARLY CHRISTIANS UNDERSTOOD **SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP**. PAUL WAS THE LEADER OF THE TEAM AND HE **ALONE** SAW THE VISION OF A **MAN** INVITING HIM TO "COME TO **MACEDONIA**". IN THE **NEXT VERSE** (16:10), WE READ, "WHEN PAUL SAW THE VISION, **ALL OF US** SOUGHT TO GO TO **MACEDONIA**." THE **REST** OF THE TEAM HAD SUCH **CONFIDENCE** IN PAUL'S **LEADERSHIP**

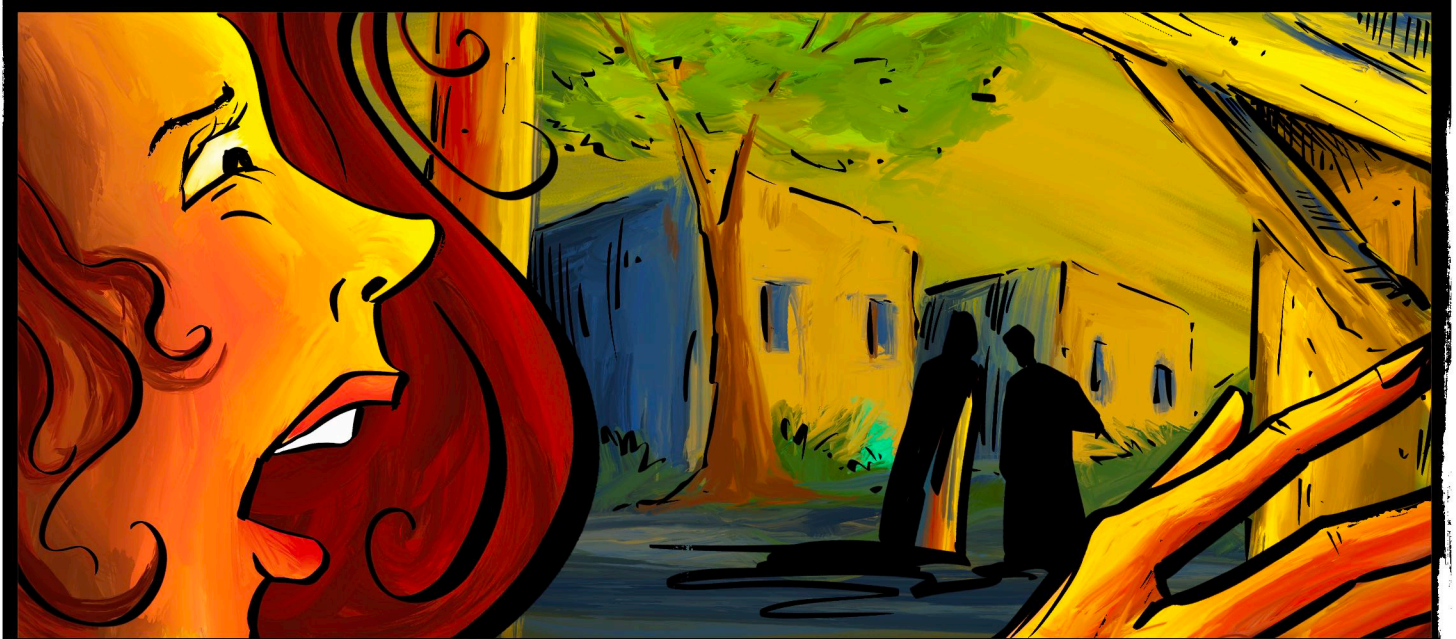


IT'S **WONDERFUL** WHEN A TEAM HAS SUCH A **GODLY LEADER**. THERE ARE MANY CHRISTIAN WORKERS WHO WORK ALL BY **THEMSELVES WITHOUT ANY FELLOWSHIP OR LEADERSHIP**. THEY CHOOSE THAT, BECAUSE IT IS **EASIER** ON THEIR **FLESH!** THOSE WHO **REJECT** GODLY LEADERSHIP ARE ON **DANGEROUS GROUND**.





IN 16:6, WE READ. "THEY PASSED THROUGH THE GALATIAN REGION AND WERE **NOT PERMITTED** BY THE HOLY SPIRIT TO SPEAK IN THE ASIAN REGION." **HOW?** PAUL EXPLAINS IN **GALATIANS 4:13**, "YOU KNOW THAT IT WAS BECAUSE OF A **BODILY ILLNESS** THAT I PREACHED THE **GOSPEL** TO YOU THE **FIRST TIME**". **GOD PERMITTED** PAUL TO BE **SICK** SO AS TO **STOP** HIM IN A CERTAIN PLACE WHERE THERE WERE PEOPLE TO BE **SAVED**. SO DON'T THINK THAT YOU WILL MISS THE **WILL OF GOD** IF YOU FALL **SICK**.



IN 16:17 WE READ OF A **DEMON-POSSESSED GIRL** FOLLOWING PAUL AND SILAS AROUND AND SAYING, "THESE ARE THE **SERVANTS OF THE MOST HIGH GOD**." PAUL **IGNORED** HER FOR A FEW DAYS AND THEN **COMMANDED** THE DEMON TO COME **OUT** OF HER. NEITHER DID **JESUS** NOR **PAUL** WANT A **TESTIMONY** FROM ANY **DEMON**.



IN 17:10, 11 WE READ THAT PAUL AND SILAS WENT TO **BEREA**. THE **BEREANS** ARE CALLED **NOBLE-MINDED**, BECAUSE THEY RECEIVED THE WORD OF GOD **EAGERLY** AND THEN STUDIED THE **SCRIPTURES DAILY** TO CHECK WHETHER WHAT THEY HAD HEARD WAS **SCRIPTURAL** OR NOT. SINCE THEY CHECKED EVERY PREACHER'S DOCTRINE WITH THE SCRIPTURES, THEY WERE **NEVER** IN DANGER OF BEING **DECEIVED** BY ANY **PREACHER** PREACHING **FALSE** DOCTRINES. AND THAT IS WHY PAUL **NEVER** HAD TO WRITE A **LETTER** TO THE **BEREANS** CORRECTING **FALSE** DOCTRINE, AS HE HAD TO WRITE TO SOME OF THE **OTHER CHURCHES**!







IN 18:9, 10, WE READ THAT THE LORD TOLD PAUL WHILE HE WAS IN **CORINTH**, "DON'T BE **AFRAID** OF THE **OPPOSITION**. GO ON **PREACHING BOLDLY** BECAUSE I HAVE **MANY** PEOPLE IN THIS CITY." WE **DON'T** HAVE TO RUN AWAY FROM SOMEWHERE, JUST BECAUSE THERE IS **OPPOSITION** TO THE **GOSPEL** THERE.



“Whenever they  
persecute you in one  
city, flee to the next”  
Matthew 10:23

IF WE FACE **PERSECUTION**, THE LORD HAS COMMANDED US WHAT TO DO IN MATTHEW 10:23. BUT IT IS GOOD TO **SEEK** THE LORD EVEN THEN, **BEFORE** WE **FLEE**. IT'S GOOD TO **LISTEN** TO GOD AND **NOT** TO GO BY THE **WITNESS** OF **EXTERNAL CIRCUMSTANCES** ALONE.



IN 18:24--28, WE READ OF A **GODLY** SISTER, **PRISCILLA** AND HER HUSBAND **AQUILA**, HELPING **APOLLOS** (A **ZEALOUS** BROTHER) TO GET A **CLEARER** UNDERSTANDING OF THE **GOSPEL**. **PRISCILLA** APPEARS TO HAVE KNOWN THE **TRUTH** OF THE **GOSPEL** MORE **CLEARLY** THAN HER HUSBAND -- BECAUSE HER NAME COMES **AHEAD** OF HER HUSBAND'S IN **FOUR** OUT OF THE **FIVE** PLACES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT WHERE THEIR NAMES APPEAR **TOGETHER** (18:26).



AT THE **SAME** TIME, SHE KNEW HER **PLACE** AS A **SISTER** AND **DIDN'T** TRY TO SHARE THE **TRUTH** WITH **APOLLOS** ALL **BY HERSELF**. SHE CALLED **APOLLOS** **HOME** AND SAT DOWN WITH HER **HUSBAND** AND THEY **EXPLAINED** THE **GOSPEL** TO HIM. AS A **RESULT**, **APOLLOS** WENT ON TO BECOME A **MIGHTY** **PREACHER** OF THE **TRUTH**. **SISTERS** CAN HAVE A **GREAT** **MINISTRY** IN THIS **NEW-COVENANT** AGE.

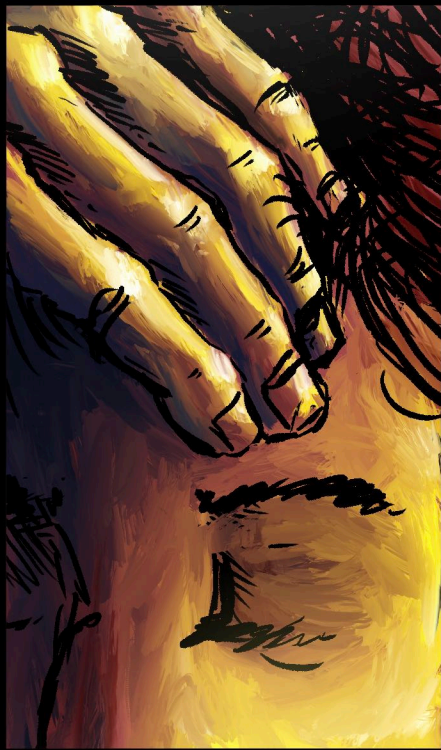




IN 19:2, PAUL ASKS A QUESTION OF SOME DISCIPLES IN EPHESUS: "DID YOU RECEIVE THE **HOLY SPIRIT** WHEN YOU BELIEVED?" PAUL'S QUESTION HERE **CLEARLY** TEACHES US THAT: 1. IT IS POSSIBLE TO RECEIVE THE **HOLY SPIRIT** AT THE **SAME TIME** AS ONE **BELIEVES** IN **CHRIST**, 2. IT IS POSSIBLE TO BELIEVE IN JESUS AND YET **NOT** RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT. THAT MEANS ONE IS NOT REALLY **BORN-AGAIN**. 3. WE CAN KNOW WITH **CERTAINTY** WHETHER WE HAVE RECEIVED THE HOLY SPIRIT OR NOT.

WE HAVE NOT HEARD IF  
THERE EVEN **IS** A HOLY SPIRIT

INTO WHAT  
THEN  
WERE YOU  
**BAPTIZED**  
?



THIS SHOWS THAT CHRISTIANS IN THOSE DAYS WERE BAPTISED **NOT** IN THE NAME OF **JESUS ALONE** BUT "IN THE NAME OF THE **FATHER**, THE **SON JESUS CHRIST** AND THE **HOLY SPIRIT**". THAT WAS WHY PAUL **EXPECTED** THEM TO HAVE HEARD ABOUT THE **HOLY SPIRIT** WHEN THEY WERE **BAPTISED**.

THEY THEN TOLD HIM THAT THEY HAD BEEN BAPTISED INTO **JOHN'S BAPTISM**. THEN PAUL BAPTISED THEM IN THE NAME OF THE **FATHER**, THE **SON JESUS CHRIST** AND THE **HOLY SPIRIT**. THEN PAUL **LAID HANDS** ON THEM AND THE **HOLY SPIRIT** CAME UPON THEM AND THEY SPOKE IN **UNKNOWN LANGUAGES** AND **PROPHESIED**. NOTICE THE **DIFFERENT OPERATIONS** OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN ACTS CHAPTERS **2,8,9,10,19**. THIS TEACHES US THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT CAN BE RECEIVED **WITH** OR **WITHOUT** THE LAYING ON OF **HANDS**, AND **BEFORE** OR **AFTER** **WATER BAPTISM**. THE **METHOD** IS **NOT** THE MAIN THING BUT THE **REALITY**.



IN 20:17--35, PAUL WARNS THE **ELDERS** IN **EPHESUS** AFTER HAVING BEEN WITH THEM FOR 3 YEARS. THERE ARE A NUMBER OF THINGS WE CAN LEARN HERE ABOUT HOW WE SHOULD **SERVE** THE **LORD**.



FIRST OF ALL, PAUL PREACHED "**REPENTANCE AND FAITH**" (20:21).



HE POINTS THEM TO THE **HUMBLE AND SIMPLE LIFE** OF **SERVICE** THAT HE **LIVED** AMONG THEM (20:18, 19).

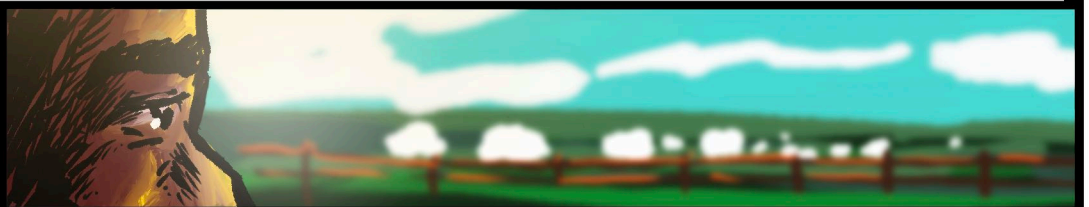


Follow me as I  
follow  
**Christ**

1 COR 1:11

PAUL COULD SAY THIS! **OUR LIFE** MUST **SPEAK** TO THOSE WE HAVE **LIVED** WITH, **MORE** THAN OUR **WORDS**.

THEN HE WARNED THEM TO **WATCH** THEIR OWN **LIVES** FIRST AND THEN TO **WATCH** OVER THEIR **FLOCK** (20:28).



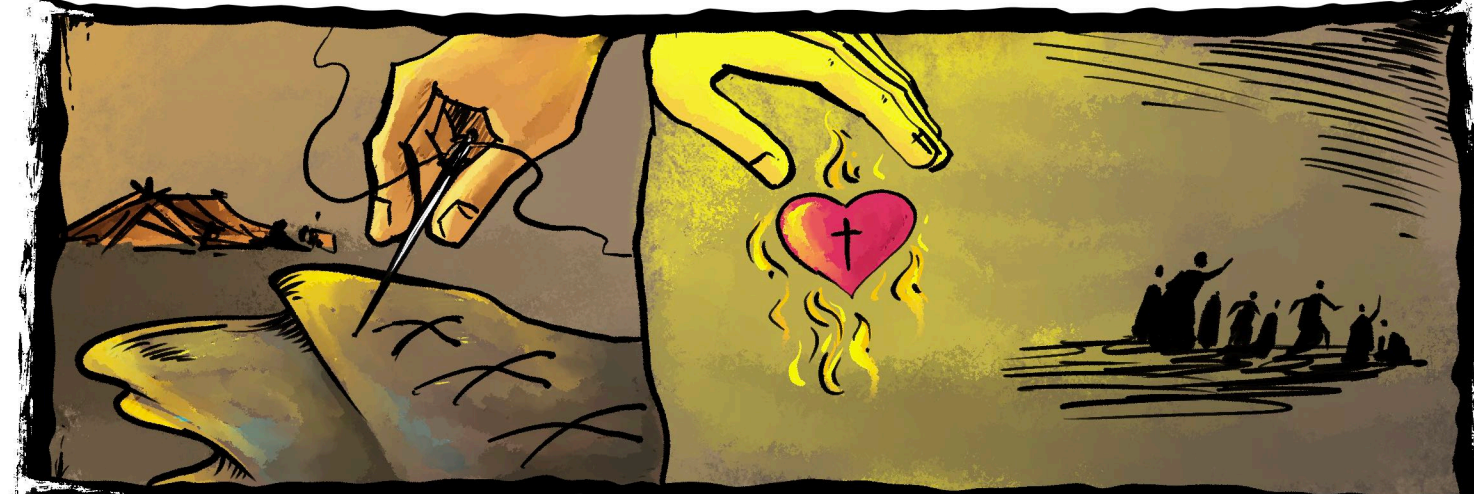




HE WARNED THEM THAT **WOLVES** WOULD COME INTO THE CHURCH ONCE HE HAD **LEFT** (20:29). WHY DIDN'T THOSE WOLVES COME IN WHEN **PAUL** WAS THERE? BECAUSE **PAUL** WAS A VERY **STRICT GATEKEEPER**. EVERY CHURCH NEEDS AT LEAST **ONE** ELDER WHO IS A **STRICT GATEKEEPER** WHO USES HIS **ROD** TO **PROTECT** THE **SHEEP** FROM THE **WOLVES** (PSALM 23:4).



IF ON THE OTHER HAND, THE **ELDERS** SEEK TO GET A **REPUTATION** FOR **GENTLENESS**, THEN THE CHURCH CANNOT BE KEPT **PURE**, FOR THE **WOLVES** IN **SHEEP'S CLOTHING** WILL **TAKE OVER** AND THE CHURCH WILL BE **DESTROYED**.



**PAUL** ALSO TOLD THEM HOW HE HAD **SUPPORTED HIMSELF** AND HIS **CO-WORKERS** ALL THOSE **THREE YEARS** AND NEVER BEEN A **BURDEN** TO ANYONE (20:33--35).

THOSE **ELDERS**, HOWEVER, DID **NOT** GIVE HEED TO **PAUL'S WARNINGS** AND SO THE CHURCH IN **EPHESUS** **DRIFTED AWAY** FROM THE **LORD** (REVELATION 2:1--5).





IN 21:3--14, WE SEE A CONTRAST BETWEEN **CARNAL** AND **SPIRITUAL** "PROPHECY". IN TYRE, SOME CHRISTIANS "PROPHESED" AND TOLD PAUL THAT HE SHOULD **NOT** GO TO JERUSALEM. THEY WERE **WELL-MEANING** BELIEVERS, BUT THEY DID NOT KNOW HOW TO **STAY** WITHIN THE **BOUNDARIES** OF **NEW-COVENANT** PROPHECY.



A LITTLE LATER, A **TRUE** PROPHET AGABUS, CAME AND HE **PROPHESED** (21:11). BUT HE **KNEW** WHERE TO **STOP**. HE ONLY SAID THAT PAUL WOULD BE **BOUND** IN JERUSALEM. BUT HE **DID** NOT TELL PAUL WHETHER HE SHOULD **GO** TO JERUSALEM OR **NOT**.



SO PAUL WENT TO JERUSALEM. DID HE GO THERE IN THE **WILL** OF **GOD**? HE **CERTAINLY** DID. THE **LORD** APPEARED TO PAUL THERE AND TOLD HIM, "TAKE **COURAGE**, PAUL. AS YOU HAVE **WITNESSED** FOR ME IN **JERUSALEM**, YOU WILL **WITNESS** IN **ROME** ALSO" (ACTS 23:11). SO, IF PAUL HAD **LISTENED** TO THOSE WELL-MEANING IMMATURE CHRISTIANS WHO "PROPHESED" AND TOLD HIM **NOT** TO GO TO JERUSALEM, HE WOULD HAVE **MISSSED** THE **WILL** OF **GOD**.



IT WAS IN THE **PRISON** IN **ROME** THAT HE WROTE **EPHESIANS**, **PHILIPPIANS** AND **COLOSSIANS**. WE WOULD **NOT** HAVE GOT THOSE LETTERS, IF PAUL HAD **LISTENED** TO THOSE **SELF-APPOINTED** PROPHETS



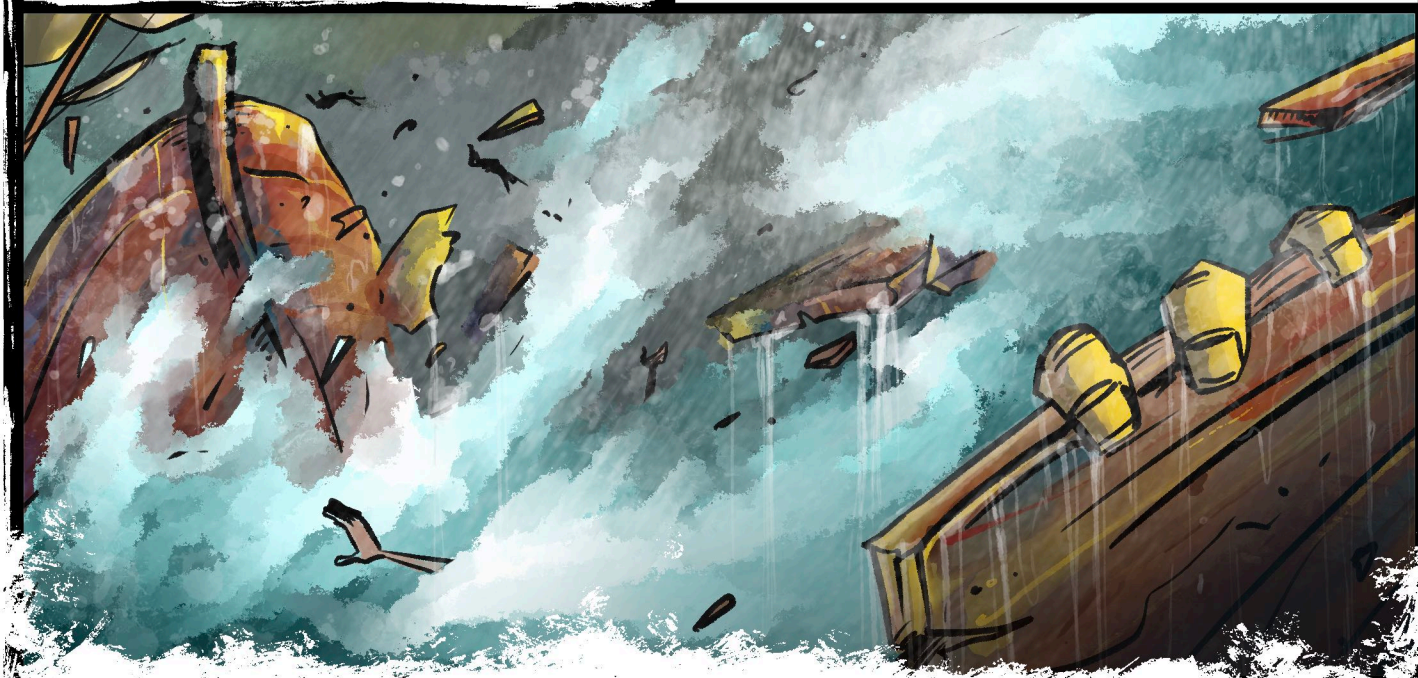
BUT IN THE SAME CHAPTER (CHAPTER 21) HE LISTENED TO **MEN** AND **NOT** TO THE **SPIRIT**. IN 21:18--26, WE READ HOW HE YIELDED TO **PRESSURE** FROM THE **JERUSALEM** CHURCH, TO FOLLOW SOME JEWISH TEMPLE RITUALS AND TO **SHAVE** HIS **HEAD**. THIS SHOWS US HOW THE **GREATEST** MEN OF **GOD** CAN FAIL WHEN THEY STOP **LISTENING** TO THE **INNER WITNESS** OF THE **SPIRIT** IN THEIR **HEART**.



IN **PAUL'S** TESTIMONY IN 24:16, WE SEE ONE **GREAT SECRET** OF HIS LIFE: "I ALWAYS **MAINTAIN** A CONSCIENCE **BLAMELESS** BEFORE **GOD** AND BEFORE **MEN**." HE NEVER ALLOWED **SIN** TO REMAIN ON HIS CONSCIENCE EVEN FOR A MOMENT. HE **CONFESSED** IT TO **GOD** AND **MAN** AND SET IT **RIGHT IMMEDIATELY**.



IN 26:19, WE SEE **YET ANOTHER SECRET** OF **PAUL'S** LIFE: "I **WAS NOT** **DISOBEY** TO THE **HEAVENLY VISION**." THE **LORD** DID **NOT** GIVE **PAUL** A **BLUEPRINT** FOR HIS **WHOLE** LIFE WHEN HE MET HIM ON THE **DAMASCUS ROAD**. HE SHOWED **PAUL** ONLY **ONE STEP** AT A TIME. AND **PAUL OBEYED** -- ONE STEP AT A TIME. THAT IS ALL THAT **WE** ARE CALLED TO DO **AS WELL**.



IN CHAPTER 27, WE READ THE STORY WHERE THE SHIP IN WHICH **PAUL** WAS TRAVELLING TO **ROME** AS A **PRISONER** WAS **WRECKED**. **YET, NO-ONE DIED**. BECAUSE **PAUL** WAS ON BOARD, **GOD** PROTECTED **ALL** THOSE WHO WERE ON THAT SHIP FROM **DEATH**. WHETHER IT BE A **SHIP**, **CAR**, **AIRPLANE** OR **HOUSE**.. **ALL** WHO ARE IN IT GET **BLESSED** IF **ONE MAN** OF **GOD** IS IN THERE.



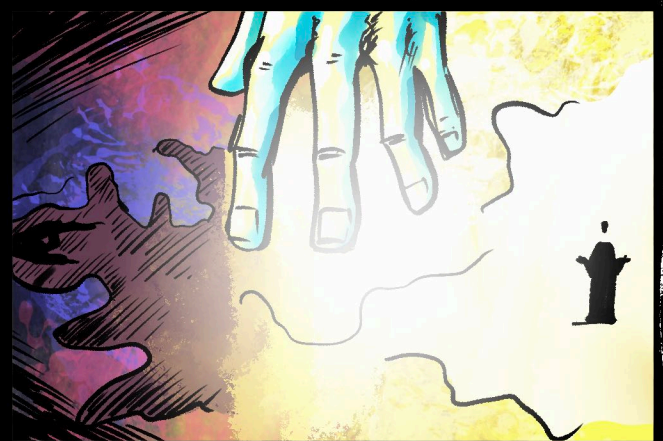


IN 28:30, 31, WE READ THAT PAUL STAYED TWO YEARS IN HIS OWN **RENTED** HOUSE IN ROME. HOW COULD HE AFFORD THIS **WITHOUT** TAKING **MONEY** FROM THE CHURCH? PAUL'S **FATHER MUST HAVE** BEEN A VERY **RICH** BUSINESSMAN, FOR ONLY SUCH JEWS COULD **AFFORD** TO GO **ABROAD** TO PLACES LIKE **TARSUS** AND GIVE THEIR SONS THE **HIGH EDUCATION** THAT PAUL RECEIVED. BUT PAUL MUST HAVE BEEN **DISINHERITED** BY HIS FAMILY WHEN HE BECAME A **CHRISTIAN**.

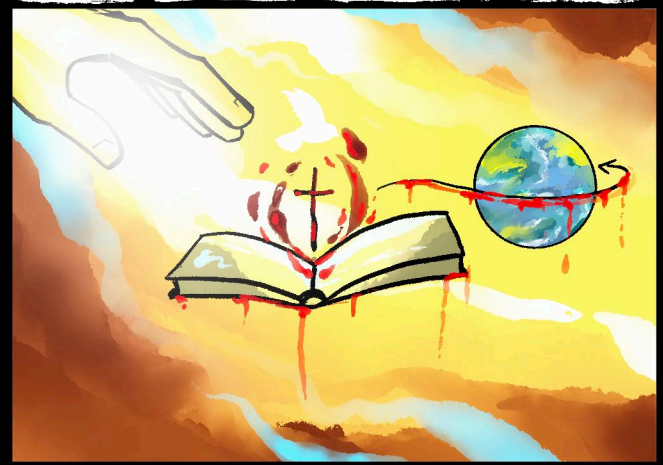
HOWEVER, IT IS **LIKELY** THAT THE FAMILY CHANGED THEIR MIND **LATER** AND DECIDED TO GIVE PAUL HIS SHARE OF THE **FAMILY INHERITANCE**. WHEN HE WAS **ARRESTED** IN JERUSALEM, WE READ THAT HIS **SISTER'S SON** CAME TO MEET HIM (23:16). THIS YOUNG MAN **MUST HAVE** BROUGHT PAUL THE NEWS THAT THE FAMILY INHERITANCE HAD BEEN **RELEASED** FOR HIS USE. IT IS **WONDERFUL** TO SEE HOW GOD **CARES** FOR HIS SERVANTS WHEN THEY ARE **OLD** AND **WEAK**, SO THAT THEY ARE **NOT** PUT TO **SHAME**. "HE SILENTLY PLANS FOR US IN **LOVE**" (ZEPHANIAH 3:17 - ).



WHILE PAUL WAS A **PRISONER** IN THAT HOUSE WITH A **ROMAN** SOLDIER GUARDING HIM, HE PREACHED THE **GOSPEL** OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD TO **ALL** WHO CAME TO HIM. ALL THE SOLDIERS WHO WERE **GUARDING** HIM HEARD THE GOSPEL AND **SOME** WERE **CONVERTED** TOO (PHILIPPIANS 1:13; 4:22).



WHILE **IMPRISONED**, PAUL WROTE SOME OF HIS **FINEST** EPISTLES -- WHICH **MIGHT NEVER** HAVE BEEN WRITTEN **OTHERWISE** -- EPISTLES THAT HAVE NOW BEEN A **BLESSING** TO PEOPLE FOR **20 CENTURIES**. GOD'S PLANS ARE ALWAYS FOR OUR VERY **BEST**. HE TURNS THE **EVIL** THAT **SATAN** DOES FOR HIS **GLORY**.



THE LAST WORD IN ACTS IS "**UNHINDERED**". ALL **AUTHORITY** IN HEAVEN AND EARTH BELONGS TO THE LORD **JESUS**, AND SO THE **GOSPEL** HAS GONE FORTH **UNHINDERED** FOR **20 CENTURIES** NOW -- AND IT WILL **CONTINUE** TO DO UNTIL **CHRIST** RETURNS.